

## ALGORITHMIC MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT IN THE FUTURE OF HUMAN WORK: A CRITICAL REVIEW AND THE H.U.M.A.N DESIGN FRAMEWORK

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**Abstract:** The global diffusion of algorithmic management—the process where data-driven computer systems automatically allocate work tasks, follow task execution, select execution steps, evaluate employee performance, and enforce organizational discipline—has fundamentally transformed labor relations across modern business operations globally. Initially focused only within digital labor platforms as a mechanism of gig economy coordination, these systems have rapidly expanded to traditional, standard workplaces. However, these algorithmic systems have then rapidly expanded to traditional, standard workplaces, bridging physical labor in logistics and warehousing with cognitive tasks in remote-first and hybrid knowledge economies. This paper conducts a critical review of the literature regarding algorithmic management and its deep intersections with operations management in the business sector. While algorithmic management oversight can lead to greater operational effectiveness, higher productivity, a more consistent working pace, and lower coordination costs, research indicates that unchecked systems have serious negative effects on human work. However, research shows that these algorithmic management systems can also have serious negative effects on human work. Specifically, unmanaged algorithmic management systems usually reduce employee autonomy, bring much higher-tension surveillance anxiety, downgrade tacit and experiential knowledge, and disrupt traditional supervisory (control) and relational networks inside operational functions in an organization. By analyzing these outcomes through the lenses of the Job Demands-Resources model, Socio-Technical Systems theory, and the Demand-Control-Support stress model, we identify how automated "6Rs" sub-mechanisms—restricting, recommending, recording, rating, replacing, and rewarding—can lead to severe psychosocial risks. To bridge the existing gap between using algorithmic management technology for some managerial function such as planning and control on one side and employee well-being on the other, we propose the H.U.M.A.N framework (mnemonic involving Human-in-Command, User Involvement, Mitigation of stress, Algorithmic transparency, and Negotiated parameters) as an actionable socio-technical design protocol to audit the ethical implementation of these new workplace technologies. We also establish a 2x2 Algorithmic Management Seeding Matrix as a specific tool that can guide information technology companies, software developers, and operations management to transition algorithmic management systems from strong-arm surveillance mechanisms to collaborative, trust-based augmentation tools.

**Keywords:** algorithmic management, operations management, employee autonomy, workplace trust, psychosocial risks, human-centered design, future of work.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Operations are the heart of delivering customer value. However, contemporary operations management is undergoing a silent reconfiguration. Across multinational supply chains, logistics, customer service, and remote-first firms, organizations are delegating core managerial functions to automated, data-driven systems. This change—algorithmic management (AM) or AI-based worker management (AIWM)—uses computer programs and artificial intelligence (AI) to automate planning and control managerial functions such as task assignment, scheduling, performance tracking, evaluation, and discipline (Baiooco et al., 2022; Bowdler et al., 2026; EU-OSHA, 2022).

AM was originally developed for gig economy platforms in order to manage dispersed workforces, but it is now common in traditional workplaces (Lee et al., 2015; Parent-Rocheleau & Parker, 2022; Rani et al., 2024). In these environments, algorithms do more than just help with task planning. They now organize work, change the work environment, and affect the balance of power between employers and employees (Krzywdzinski et al., 2025; Parent-Rocheleau & Parker, 2022).

This rapid technological expansion has brought a long-standing historical tension in operations management back to the forefront. From the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, operations functions have been guided by the pursuit of mathematical effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity, which required standardization, cost minimization, and output maximization. Today, modern algorithmic management is often characterized as "digital Taylorism" or

scientific management on digital steroids, using the same measures of operational success (Gautié et al., 2020). Under classical Taylorism, human work was segmented, timed, and standardized based on physical time-and-motion studies (Braverman, 1974). In the digital era, AM systems achieve an unprecedented scale of this logic, utilizing wearable sensors, smartphone applications, keystroke loggers, augmented and virtual reality tools, and predictive data analytics to monitor operational workers down to the microsecond with surveillance mechanisms and standardize workflows that were previously considered too complex to automate (Kellogg et al., 2020; Zuboff, 2019). However, while traditional operations management saw human behavior as something to control and improve, modern organizational psychology stresses that lasting productivity depends on people's well-being, inner motivation, and feeling safe at work (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Parker & Grote, 2022).

Although most of the organizations using AM often promote these technologies as empowering and supportive of remote-first or flexible working models, employees face major limits on their freedom because of unclear performance measures, constant digital monitoring, and automatic punishments (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016; Wusono et al., 2025). This imbalance seriously disrupts the balance between job demands and resources. By increasing work pressures (such as fast work pace, tracking small goals, and always being connected) while steadily reducing important job supports (like freedom to make decisions, support from coworkers, and good relationships with supervisors), AM systems create mental and social risks (Bowdler et al., 2026; Demerouti et al., 2001; Fernández-Macías et al., 2023).

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Employee trust and well-being should not be given up for technical efficiency or short-term business benefits. Based on a review of research on AM in traditional and platform-based work, we identify important social, relationship, and organizational risks. From this study, we suggest the H.U.M.A.N. operational protocol to protect workers' independence and trust, along with a 2x2 Algorithmic Management Seeding Matrix to help organizations avoid controlling methods and move toward cooperative tools.

In the early 1900s, classical scientific management created a strict divide between planning, which was handled only by managers, and execution, which was left to operations workers, to make labor processes more uniform (Braverman, 1974). Today, the digital revolution has sped up this approach, now seen as 'digital Taylorism' in both manual and office-based service jobs (Gautié et al., 2020). Using machine learning, big data, and natural language processing, modern algorithms now break down complex 'white-collar' tasks into simple, rule-based steps. Supporters of "digital Taylorism" argue that AM removes supervisor bias, but critics argue that automating planning and scheduling processes into hard-to-understand computer code simply centralizes control function, reduces workers to only task-followers, and causes human expertise less valuable (Baiocco et al., 2022; Parent-Rocheleau & Parker, 2022; Zuboff, 2019). As a result, work becomes more transactional and standardized, which takes away from the depth and meaning of operations work (EPRS, 2025).

The operational execution of AM covers three main areas: Direction, Evaluation, and Discipline, which are further divided into the "6Rs" model (Kellogg et al., 2020). Direction involves **restricting**, or limiting information, and **recommending**, or prescribing actions (Kellogg et al., 2020; Rosenblat & Stark, 2016). This approach removes situational judgment and forces employees to comply with behaviors that are presented as technically optimal (Parent-Rocheleau & Parker, 2022). Evaluation depends on **recordings** that are processed by opaque algorithms to create performance **ratings** (EU-OSHA, 2022; Kellogg et al., 2020). As a result, employees are constantly monitored and judged by a single performance metric.

The last two R's are responsible for discipline ensured through **rewarding** and **replacing**. AM systems allocate bonuses, shifts, or prioritize tasks totally based on rating data and then set automated sanctions on those who fail to meet rigid targets (Gagné et al., 2022; Kellogg et al., 2020). The 6Rs model demonstrates that AM is not only a supportive administrative tool but also a highly integrated control system that replaces human supervision (Meijerink & Bondarouk, 2023).

On the one hand, remote-first and platform-based workers often have a new level of scheduling freedom, allowing them to choose their working hours and do tasks from anywhere (Wusono et al., 2025; Yalçınyıit, 2026). According to self-determination theory, this kind of flexibility meets workers' basic need for independence, which improves job satisfaction and involvement at work (Gagné et al., 2022).

However, research reveals that this perceived freedom is often an illusion, serving as a hidden means of exerting company control over workers (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016). This tension between insignificant flexibility and extreme algorithmic surveillance creates painful psychological strain. Because the rules governing work performance are opaque and subject to constant, automated modification, workers experience chronic uncertainty and "algorithmic precarity". On the other hand, autonomy is no longer seen as a way to grow personally; instead, it becomes a strict demand for workers to control themselves, making them speed up their work and limit their behavior to meet the

strict rules of the algorithm (Cram et al., 2022). This paradox shows that when AM systems are not managed well, they take away the main psychological benefits of remote and flexible work. Instead of clear physical boundaries, workers face a constant, unseen digital connection.

Operations management has long understood the importance of active team involvement, close relationships, and mentoring in improving operations and keeping employees (Ehrhardt & Ragins, 2019). However, using automated algorithm-based management brings serious risks to relationships that deeply affect the workplace environment (Cebulla, 2025). The first significant risk is losing the traditional supervisor relationships, even though they are important. Under traditional operations, human supervisors served as mentors, conflict brokers, and team builders, adjusting work demands to fit contextual realities. In AM environment offices and logistics centers, supervisors are more often seen as people who watch digital dashboards and solve problems between machines and humans instead of having casual check-ins or giving detailed feedback (Cebulla, 2025).

AM systems also make "tacit knowledge" less valuable. This type of knowledge includes the intuition, improvisation, and informal authority people gain from years of hands-on experience (Cebulla, 2025). Because algorithms are trained on standardized, massive datasets, there is an organizational perception that human judgment is no longer necessary or is even a liability, leading to algorithmic dehumanization. Knowledge and service-based operations are lowered to mechanical observation, and in such a way, turning specialists into passive observers who must simply execute on machine-generated signals, even when they are in conflict with real-world common sense (Cebulla, 2025; Baiocco et al., 2022). Also, continuous monitoring and high performance requests from AM systems can make the workplace more competitive, which hurts teamwork and leaves colleagues feeling isolated (EU-OSHA, 2022; Baiocco et al., 2022).

### 3. RESULTS

To connect technical effectiveness and efficiency with respect for people, we suggest the H.U.M.A.N Operational Protocol. Based on well-known workplace safety, psychology, and organizational design principles, this flexible guide provides operations managers with a specific way to create and use AM systems that help people perform better rather than making things harder.

**H – Human-in-Command:** This principle requires that important decisions affecting employees, like task scheduling, performance penalties, contract terms, or termination, should not be made only by automated systems. Instead, trained human supervisors must always review and verify these decisions. Based on Socio-Technical Systems (STS) and Transactional Theory of Stress (TTS), this principle stops the scary feeling of "algorithmic abandonment" and "accountability gaps" by making sure a caring, responsible manager has the final say (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Trist & Bamforth, 1951). In practice, software developers must hardcode "human-in-the-loop" override checkpoints in AM software, allowing managers to easily adjust or override erroneous machine evaluations to account for contextual, real-world exceptions.

**U – User Involvement:** To simply meet workers' basic needs for autonomy and fairness, companies should include employees, safety representatives, and union partners in designing, selecting, and testing algorithmic systems. According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and the JD-R model, involving users directly helps reduce work pressure and lowers the chance of employee resistance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Gagné et al., 2022; Wusono et al., 2025). Operations managers must set up joint Labor-Management AI Review Committees that regularly check and discuss algorithm rules, making sure the technology fits local workplace needs and respects human physical and mental limits (EU-OSHA, 2022).

**M – Mitigation of Stress:** This principle requires organizations to officially include specific stress factors from algorithms (such as anxiety from being watched, time pressure, and mental tiredness) into their usual Work Health and Safety (WHS) management systems. Based on the DCS (Demand-Control-Support) and ERI (Effort Reward Imbalance) models, reducing stress needs active management of work speed and amount (Karasek, 1979; Siegrist, 1996). System designers must build strict safety measures into the system's code, such as limiting how fast tasks are assigned, setting required "cooling-off" times, and making sure rest breaks happen at the same time to support social interaction and emotional recovery (EPRS, 2025; Trist & Bamforth, 1951; Yalçinyiğit, 2026).

**A – Algorithmic Transparency:** To reduce the stress caused by unclear performance metrics, there is a need for fair processes and the use of Explainable AI (XAI) modules (Möhlmann et al., 2023). Transparency with AM requires sharing exactly which data sources, tracking parameters, and weighting calculations are used to assign tasks or measure performance through rating, in simple language that workers can understand (Langer & König, 2023; Möhlmann et al., 2023). With XAI, whenever an algorithm changes a schedule or gives a rating, it should offer a clear, easy-to-follow explanation. In such a case, AM will become more of a learning and feedback tool for improvement.

**N – Negotiated Parameters:** For this principle, there is a need for agreed-upon limits on when and where digital monitoring can happen (Doellgast et al., 2023). It is based on Boundary Theory, Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, and Psychological Contract Theory. Such agreed-upon rules will prevent the constant deficit of personal coping energy and ensure the separation between work and home life (Rousseau, 1995; Yalçinyigit, 2026). Employers must limit ongoing monitoring during off-hours and ensure a built-in digital "Right to Disengage," which turns off push notifications and task reminders outside of work hours (EU-OSHA, 2022; van Zoonen et al., 2023). To turn the H.U.M.A.N. operational protocol into a practical guide, we create the 2x2 AM Seeding Matrix. This matrix sorts algorithm design types based on two key parts of social and technical design: System Control and Automation (vertical axis) and Employee Agency and Voice (horizontal axis). By using these axes, operations leaders can see their system's current state and take specific "seeding" steps to move toward lasting setups.

**Table 1. The 2x2 Algorithmic Management Seeding Matrix as a design implementation guide.**

|                                                                               | <b>OPAQUE &amp; COERCIVE CONTROL</b><br>(Low Employee Agency & Voice)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>TRANSPARENT &amp; PARTICIPATORY</b><br>(High Employee Agency & Voice)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AUTONOMOUS SYSTEM CONTROL</b><br>(High Automation / Algorithmic Dictation) | <b>QUADRANT I:<br/>COERCIVE DIGITAL TAYLORISM</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Characteristics: Continuous activity tracking, real-time pace monitoring, opaque rating formulas, and automated sanctions.</li> <li>- OSH Impact: High stress (SAR 1.66x), clinical fatigue, and identity erosion.</li> <li>- HUMAN Action: Seed A (Transparency) and N (Negotiated Parameters) to restore trust.</li> </ul>   | <b>QUADRANT II:<br/>COLLABORATIVE AUGMENTATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Characteristics: Automated matching with 'tiered autonomy' based on tenure; human override check-points, and co-designed performance targets.</li> <li>- OSH Impact: High motivation, psychological safety, and creative proactivity.</li> <li>- HUMAN Status: The Golden Standard. Maintain continuous psychosocial OHS auditing.</li> </ul> |
| <b>ASSISTED SYSTEM CONTROL</b><br>(Low Automation / Human-Led Decisions)      | <b>QUADRANT III:<br/>ADMINISTRATIVE CHORES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Characteristics: Rigid, manual bureaucracies where human supervisors enforce strict, unoptimized metrics.</li> <li>- OSH Impact: High administrative friction, role overlap, and moderate task dissatisfaction.</li> <li>- HUMAN Action: Streamline and co-design supportive digital tools using U (User Involvement).</li> </ul> | <b>QUADRANT IV:<br/>SUPPORTIVE CRAFT-WORK</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Characteristics: Open-ended digital assistants where the human has absolute freedom to override or ignore recommendations.</li> <li>- OSH Impact: High pride of craft and job ownership, but limited operational scale and coordination speed.</li> <li>- HUMAN Action: Scale technology carefully under M (Mitigation of Stress).</li> </ul>      |

Source: own source

The matrix shows that operations do not have to choose between standardization and well-being. Instead, by moving systems from strict, unclear control in Quadrant I to open, shared management in Quadrant II (Collaborative Augmentation), organizations can use computer-based scheduling and matching while keeping psychological safety and employee motivation. This change happens by deliberately introducing the HUMAN principles, including fairness in procedures and agreed limits, directly into the software design.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

To implement the H.U.M.A.N. protocol in logistics, organizations must move from strict, computer-controlled picking paths to "tiered autonomy" systems. In such a setup, experienced warehouse workers have the freedom to decide about the priorities of the tasks, different routes, and plan rest breaks, using the algorithm as a helpful tool, not a replacement for operations management. Second, to avoid the "two-leader" problem, human supervisors (managers) must keep the power to change automated speed targets during specific situations, such as very hot or cold weather or equipment problems, simply to protect workers' health and safety. By working together in labor-management committees to set pick-rate goals and matching rules, companies can keep high productivity while lowering worker injuries and turnover.

Using the HUMAN framework in cognitive work means protecting employees' sense of connection and their ability to make decisions. To help reduce stress, organizations should set clear boundaries on constant screen-time monitoring and replace it with weekly check-ins instead of close daily tracking. To support work-life balance and prevent ongoing mental fatigue in remote settings, tracking software should stop collecting data and sending notifications outside of work hours. This helps ensure employees have the right to disconnect. When remote workers feel their skills are valued and their time is respected, they are more motivated and produce better work.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

This review shows that fully integrated AM systems in business change how human work is organized in a risky way. While these technologies enable faster task coordination, more consistent procedures, and the ability to scale operations, using them without limits simply changes workplace control in ways that will reduce job output quality. Unlimited AM increases mental and social pressures while reducing important job resources. This causes stress, and workers simply feel disconnected from their companies.

To address these risks and build employee trust, organizations and software developers should move away from relying only on technical efficiency and instead focus on a human-centered approach to technology design. The HUMAN Operational Protocol gives a practical framework for turning algorithmic management systems from tools of surveillance into supportive and collaborative resources. In addition, the 2x2 Seeding Matrix helps operations leaders and OSH auditors by providing clear, measurable ways to review their systems and make sure technology supports people rather than replaces them.

Our recommendation is that before integrating AM systems four strategic steps must be taken first: (1) set up formal joint labor-management AI review committees to jointly design system settings; (2) ensure inclusion of algorithm-specific mental health risk indicators in regular work health and safety inspections; (3) build in required human override points; and (4) use strong XAI tools that give workers clear, situation-based reasons for automated ratings and schedules. Finally, we argue that the long-term competitive advantage of modern business depends not on making humans act like machines, but simply on creating automated systems that respect human dignity, independence, and well-being.

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