

Ethical Dimensions of Digital Human Resource Management and Employee Well-Being: An Employee-Centered Conceptual Framework for the IT Sector

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Abstract:

The rapid growth of digitization of Human Resource Management (HRM) functions in organization includes recruitment, performance evaluation, engagement monitoring and workforce planning which has shifted the HR from an administrative support function to technology mediated decision system. The Information Technology (IT) sector is considered as one of the earliest and highly intensive adopters of digital HR technologies. The digital tools such as AI-driven recruitment systems, cloud-based HR platforms, people and performance analytics offer significant strategic alignment and proposed a coherent perspective for understanding ethical dimensions in DHRM from an employee-centered one especially in the IT sector. This research paper identifies seven ethical dimensions of DHRM from employee perspective in IT sector. The seven ethical dimensions are “Privacy and Data Protection, Surveillance and monitoring, Algorithmic bias and discrimination, Fairness, Transparency and explainability, Consent and employee autonomy, Accountability and responsibility. Based on the theories like privacy calculus, organisational justice, self-determination theory and social exchange theory, this research article proposes that employee’s perception on these seven ethical dimensions shape their trust and in turn that trust shape their well-being. This conceptual paper contributes an integrated theory-based account of ethical DHRM and a foundation for empirical testing.

Keywords: Digital HRM, HR Ethics, employee well-being, algorithmic bias, Data privacy, trust

1. Introduction:

Recent times, the internet technology enables the human resource management functions to be carried out much faster and easier in all the process of the company. Digital Human resource management has replaced the traditional HR functions by integrating technologies such as cloud computing, AI and self-service portals for recruitment, training, communication and to track employee performance. Digital technologies in HR systems can reduce the workload, improve accessibility of information and data driven decision making.

The emergence of Human Resource Analytics renders it support by enabling organisation to use workforce

data of employees to support HR decision making. Instead of depending on some random intuition or managerial experience, HR professionals can use employee records and other digital data platforms to identify the work patterns and supports in work related decisions. Thus, the HR analytics is considered as one of the critical components in the transformation of digital Human Resource Management. Along with HR analytics; the artificial intelligence also extend it helps to HR professionals in processing the large amount of information, identifying the workforce patterns and also supports in recruitment, performance analysis and employee development. The dynamic nature of the IT industry exposes employees to continuous technological advancements and high work demands. Thus, high dependence on digital HR functions makes the employee perspective important while considering broader implications of DHRM. However, rapid increase in adoption of digital technologies also creates a various set of ethical concerns about how employee's data, activities and employment-related decisions are handled. As HR processes highly rely on the digital systems, employees may experience the less transparency into how their data is used or how outcomes are decided. Therefore, this will directly affect the relationship between employee and organisation. The ethical concerns have emerged into seven dimensions such as privacy, security, fairness, discrimination, accountability, data protection, transparency, surveillance and human oversight in digital HR and from employee perspective these concerns are interrelated to several digital HR processes. Likewise, these ethical concerns are not necessarily arisen from AI alone, it can also be emerged from the wide use of digital platforms. Thus, the evaluation of ethical challenges within DHRM needs a wide perspective of how digital HR practices affects employees.

Therefore, the rapid increase in the digitalisation of human resource management has create a need for ethical considerations as a core part of responsible Digital HRM, making it necessary to examine the ethical challenges associated with the digital technology from employee perspective.

1.1 Aim of this research paper

The aim of this research article is to develop a conceptual framework that explains perception of IT sector employees towards seven ethical dimensions of digital human resource management and how it shape their trust in the organisation and through trust how it shape their well-being.

1.2 Objective of the Study

- To understand the concept of digital human resource management and its ethical dimensions.
- To review and identify the major ethical challenges associated with digital HRM function faced by employees in the IT sector.
- To propose a conceptual framework, grounded in theory, linking the dimensions to employee trust and well-being.

Research Approach

This is a conceptual paper and does not collect primary data. The framework was developed based on the review of literature on digital HRM and its ethical implications. Earlier foundational work on digital and electronic HRM and on organizational theory was used to explain the concept of digital HRM and recent literature from (2020 to 2026) on ethics in digital HRM, algorithmic and AI-enabled HRM and by organizing ethical concerns raised in that literature into seven dimensions. The relevant sources are selected to explain the ethical challenges faced by employees in IT sector. Sources were identified through databases such as Scopus and google scholar using search terms such as evolution in HRM, digital HRM, algorithmic HRM, people analytics, AI in HR, ethical challenges in DHRM and employee perception on ethical issues, well-being and trust.

2. Review of Literature:

2.1 Digital HRM

Ruel et al, (2009) The extension of Human resource management has predominantly changed from administrative practice to technology-enabled approaches. In preliminary stages the main focus of HR activities is on administrative functions such as maintenance of employee records, recruitment and personnel administration. With the progressive orientation of HRM, the substantial growth has been implemented on aligning the activities of HR with organisational performance and objective. Thus, this integration of information technology into HRM resulted in development of Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) and later Electronic-HRM and Digital HRM to support HR activities and create value for employees and HR managers.

Bondarouk, et al (2021) reported that rapid digitalization, the functions of traditional HRM are increasingly shifted to address the changing requirements of contemporary organisations. Earlier, the traditional HRM depends on manual processes and established methods of managing employees whereas Digital Human resource Management includes wide assimilation of digital technologies into HR activities. **Strohmeier, (2020)** states Digital Human Resource Management constitutes an progressive substantial advancement behind the earlier technology-based forms of HRM. This distinction not only includes converting HR information into digital form but reflects a more profound integration of digital technologies into HR Processes. Digital HRM incorporates technologies like cloud-based HR platforms, HR analytics, AI and other digital applications to support HR activities effectively.

Armbrust et al., (2010) states that advent shift in the cloud-based HRIS during the period of early 2000 has allowed a business to store, process and evaluate the extensive amount of data on remote servers instead of depending on the internal infrastructure.

Bassi L, (2012) describes that HR analytics is a systematic way of using the work-force related data to render a support for human resource decision-making process. It consists of HR intelligence, predictive analytics, talent analytics and workforce intelligence. HR analytics is referred as an evidence-based approach that empower organisations to make sophisticated decisions concerning employees and addressing specific HR-related issues.

Lengnick-Hall, (2013) demonstrates that experts system such as Artificial Intelligence will tend to be accompany with the managers at each stage of decision process on human-related issues. The smart self-service events such as inclusion of communication through smart phones and personal data assistance HRM systems, will present the filtered information based on the role of employees in the company, thus this ensures that employees perform optimally.

Sharma et al., (2025) The Information Technology provides important aspect for analysing the Digital Human Resource Management because the technology is blended into operations and work force management of the organisations. Generally, IT sectors significantly depends on digital systems, cloud technologies, data analytics and other technology-enabled platforms. Recent studies states that HR analytics and AI adoption in the IT sectors, being integrated into HR practices and also influencing the HR decision making and managerial processes.

2.2 Ethical Dimensions of Digital HRM:

2.2.1 Privacy and Data Protection

Ebert et al, (2021) reports that Digital HRM systems collect and process large amount of employee's personal data starting from biometric attendance records to communication logs. The aim of their study is

to analyse how employee privacy can be protected when data-driven technologies used for monitoring and algorithmic management. They argue for a human-rights-based approach in which employers take responsibility for respecting privacy and proposed a process-oriented model “Privacy Due Diligence”. This is important for digital HRM it shows privacy is considered as a matter of rights from an employee perspective and also the study suggest that organisation should treat employee privacy the way they treat the human rights risks.

2.2.2 Surveillance and Monitoring

Vitak et al (2023) added direct evidence from workers. They examined 645 U.S adults who worked from home during COVID-19 pandemic, used factorial vignette design to study attitudes toward increased workplace monitoring. Findings show that employees do not reject all monitoring, they draw lines between practices they see as acceptable and practices they find concerning, and women found more types of data collection than men. This is important for digital HRM because it shows that employee judge monitoring by its type and purpose not simply whether it exists.

Binson, (2024) states that digital tracking on performance of employees has risen sharply with remote work. In this paper, they surveyed 633 participants on keyboard and camera monitoring. Based on this study, employees are accepting the process of digital monitoring as a part of the organisation rules at the same time they also concerned about the risks to their privacy. Thus, the trust among the organisation was strongly linked with the positive attitude of monitoring.

2.2.3 Algorithmic Bias and Discrimination

Kochling, (2020) reports that AI based hiring and evaluation tools are based on historical organisational data, if past decisions reflected bias, then the use of algorithms can result in same bias. The aim of their study is to analyse how discrimination and fairness are treated in research on digital decision making. This can affect activities like recruitment, selection and other HR decisions. The study found that the algorithmic decision-making in HR can lead to implicit discrimination, unfair treatment and perceived unfairness.

2.2.4 Fairness

Ochmann et al, (2024) reports that fairness is considered as a key issue when algorithms are used in recruiting. The aim of this study is to understand how transparency and human-like design influence applicants’ perception of algorithmic fairness. The paper suggest that applicants do not see digital decision as fairer than a human decision maker.

2.2.5 Transparency and Explainability

Barima et al. (2026) reports that digital HRM involves algorithms and AI system has a dark side which can harm employees. Aim of the study is to build employee centred framework that elaborate how algorithmic bias, digital workplace monitoring, opacity and digital control affect employees perceptions of injustice, privacy and autonomy. In this study, opacity is identified has one of the main mechanism.

2.2.6 Employee Consent and Autonomy

Kriebitz, (2023) Aim is to evaluate how algorithmic transparency, fairness and human-in-loop oversight shape employee autonomy in AI-enabled HRM. The study explains that these three factors strengthened employees trust in AI, human oversight reduced techno stress, thus the trust and psychological safety were positively related to employee autonomy. This is important for digital HRM because is states that employee keep their autonomy when systems are transparent and fair.

2.2.7 Accountability and Responsibility

Becker et al. (2026) states that when advanced digital systems are used for recruitment, performance eval-

uation and other HR decisions, then the organisation need to make sure that responsibility for the outcome of this system is clearly delineated. Thus, accountability is considered as important one for enabling algorithmic decisions need to be evaluated, monitored and reviewed when issue arises. Based on this research framework, the accountability and responsibility must be considered as both technical and managerial dimensions of digital systems in order to support their responsible deployment within HRM.

2.3. Trust:

Patnaik et al. (2026), reports about trust by studying 290 employees in the Indian organisations which uses AI-enabled HRM. Based on this survey, transparency, fairness and human oversight strengthened trust in AI. Thus, employees trust among the organization is depend on how they perceive ethical features of digital human resource management practices.

2.4 Well-being:

Edwards et al. (2024) reports that how perception of employee on algorithmic HR systems shape their well-being, motivation and behaviour. The effect of digital HR system depends on how employee review the usage of these systems. Thus, if they see the system is highly controlling harms the motivation and if the system seen as giving feedback then they take that as a supportive system. Therefore, well-being is based on how employee perceive HR practices and not merely depends on technology itself.

2.5 Theoretical Background

Privacy calculus

Dinev et al. (2006) explains that people share their information only when they believe the benefits outweigh the risks. Employees don't get to make this choice freely because collection of their data is a part of the job. Employee gain little from it and face risk of breaches or misuse of data. Therefore, excessive data collection or unexplained data is seen as threat. Hence, this weakens employee's trust in the organisation.

Organisational Justice

Colquitt, (2001) describes how employees decides based on how they treated fairly. This theory intensively looks into four things, employees ask about whether the outcome was fair, whether the process used to reach was fair, whether they treated with respect and whether they have given a clear explanation. Digital HRM affects all four, thus when a hidden process or an unexplained decision reaches an employee, then they consider this as an unfair treatment from the organization. Hence, this lowers the perceived justice.

Self-determination theory

Ryan, (2000) states that people work in best when they feel in control of their own actions. Employees need a sense of choice, skill and connection with others. They should feel free to make their own choices. According to this theory, digital HRM can reduce autonomy by excessive monitoring and automated decision-making system, because employees cannot say no to these tracking and decisions it can affect their job. They assume that organisation is not trusting them, then they fail to trust the organization back, hence loss of autonomy can weaken the trust.

Social exchange theory

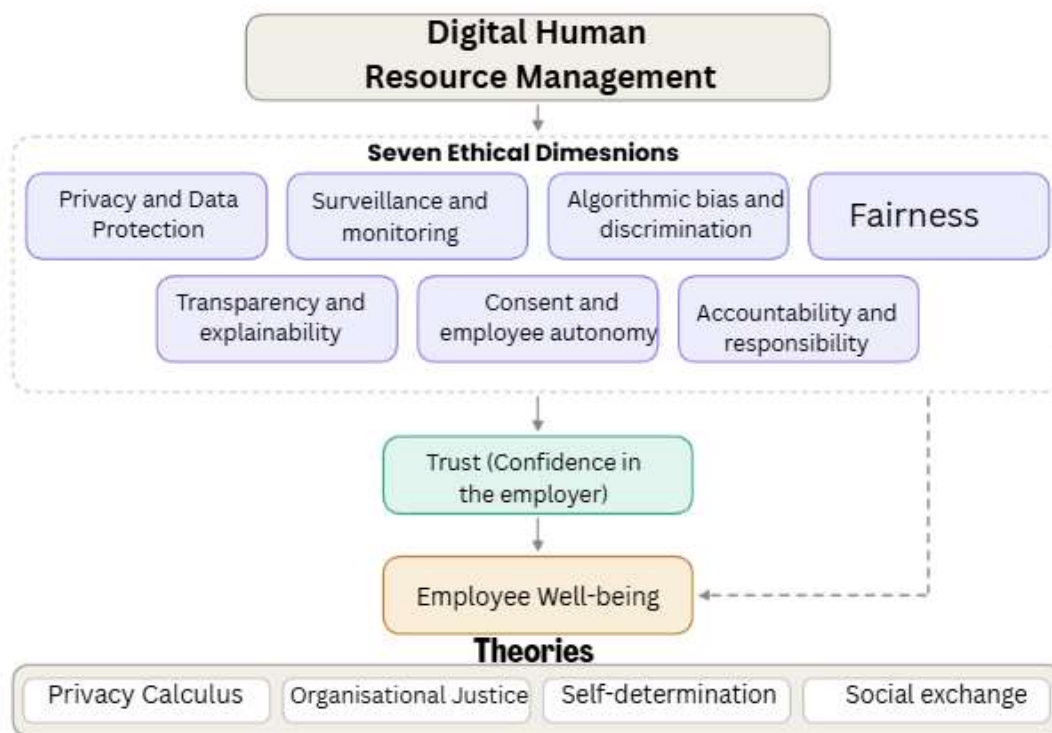
Blau, (1964) explains that relationships at work depend on what kind of treatment they receive and give it back the same to others. Thus, employees who treated fairly and openly respond with trust and goodwill than employee who treated unfairly. Digital HR practices should be transparent to employees in protecting their data, explaining the decisions and pointing out who is responsible for everything, all of these shows

a respectful treatment for employees, Thus, employees will return this respect with trust. Hidden or unfair treatment will show the distrust among the employees.

2.6 Research Gap

Existing literature mostly examined the one ethical concern of digital HRM at a time such as privacy or bias or fairness or data security. Some recent studies focused on employee view but it is about ethics in AI and with different outcomes, not a broader of DHRM. Furthermore, limited attention has given to theories such as organizational justice, privacy calculus, self-determination and social exchange to examine about employee outcomes. This conceptual paper identifies the gap by proposing a theory-based framework of seven-ethical dimensions of digital human resource management from the perspective of employee in IT sector and linking them with trust and perceived justice.

3. Conceptual Framework:



3.1 Ethical challenges faced by IT employees in DHRM

Digital Human Resource Management practices are referred as the use of digital tools such as HR analytics, AI in recruitment and selection, HRIS, digital monitoring software to manage employees. However, in IT sector these tools are carried out on digital platforms, adopted early and used intensively. Thus, it leads to create ethical challenges which employee experience directly. Privacy and data protection, surveillance and monitoring, algorithmic bias and discrimination, fairness, transparency, explainability, consent and autonomy and accountability and sustainability, these are the eight ethical challenges faced by IT employees.

Privacy and Data Protection

It includes personal data, performance related data, behavioural data and other professional data, which are collected and stored by DHRM intensively. The ethical challenges arise, when employees are known about what is stored, how long it is stored and who can access it. Employee may worry about misuse of data or leaks of their data.

Surveillance and monitoring

Digital technologies allow companies to monitor employee activities via digital platforms like digital productivity systems, communication tools and other technology enable mechanism. Remote and hybrid work can lead to long term monitoring of employee activities. Thus, employee may feel constantly watched and this will also affect their privacy and lead to poor quality of work. Therefore, the ethical challenges is that analytics designed to support employees can become a source of pressure.

Algorithmic bias and discrimination

Intensive use of algorithmic and data driven systems in HR activities such as recruitment, selection, screening and employee performance evaluation can lead to system bias and amplify discriminatory outcome. The ethical concern is not only based on the use of technology, whether it treats employees fairly. Thus, unequal treatment can occur through systems that appear neutral and employees are not aware of it.

Fairness

Digitalised automation in employee performance ratings, rankings, promotion decision ignore the concept of emotional support among employees, project difficulties, or team contribution. Thus, ethical challenges from employee perspective, they feel decision is technically or digitally consistent but still they feel unjust.

Transparency and explainability

The design of few digital systems can process information through complex algorithms will lead to difficulty in understanding the process by employees. Thus, employees may not know how their data is used and in which criteria the performance scores are predicted. The ethical challenges in these dimensions are employees cannot judge or prepare for decisions that affect them. Thus, providing an appropriate information about purpose and process of digital HR practices make employee to understand and evaluate the decisions affecting them.

Consent and employee autonomy

The collection and use of employee data sometimes raise a question about whether employees have knowledge about how their information is used. Employees may not have rights to refuse monitoring software, data sharing and HR practices because of the employment relationship. The ethical challenges is a loss of control and choice over one's data and work.

Accountability and responsibility

Responsibility for an automated decision may be spread across the HR team, manager and also software vendor and grievance routes may be weak. When the digital system or Hr decisions is unfair then the question like who is responsible will raise among employee The ethical challenge in this part is employees may not have clear party to question and no way to seek correction.

Trust:

Digital human resource management places employees in a fragile position. Employee provide all their information to the organisation and unable to see how it is used. Therefore, trust becomes the main way employees judge whether their data and career decisions are in safe hands. Privacy, data security and protection, directly shape trust they believe if data is protected and used for specific purposes, then employee will likely to trust the organisations. However, if the employee information is breached or reused without explanation then the trust will fall. Likewise, surveillance and monitoring shape trust, when organisation tracks or monitor heavily then employees feel that they are trusted less. So, in return they also don't trust the organisations. Thus, less monitoring and clear explanation for tracking down the employee activity can strengthen the trust. Algorithmic bias and discrimination also affect trust because

unequal treatment suggest that companies act in not good faith. Likewise, fairness also shapes in related way, employees who feel they treated equally and with respect then the likely to trust the organisation more, if the feel decisions are unjust and unfair they don't trust organisation in turn. Transparency and explainability affect trust when employees see that decisions are not made honestly and the explanation is also not clear them their trust declines. However, the accountability and responsibility affect trust because employees need to know who is answerable and who can they seek for correction. Somebody is responsible and answerable the trust grows at the same time when the employees feel no one is answerable then the trust falls. Therefore, these dimensions are depends on how employees see and interpret the organisation's digital practices.

How trust affects well-being:

Trust affects employee well-being through three routes, employees feel psychologically safe and can raise any ethical concerns without fear when they trust the organisations and believe they treated fairly, thus this belief make them to work peacefully without worrying about how every action will be judged. Therefore, this feeling of safety can lower the stress and strain. Likewise, when employees do not trust the organisation then they stay caution all the time, they raise concern for each and every process. They question every decision and worry about their data. Thus, this leads to drain out their energy and leaves them tired and anxious. When employees feel the organisation treats them well then they work in a co-operated manner this may lead to calmer and more supportive environment which protect their well-being. If the trust lost employees become guarded and cut back cooperation. Therefore, the trust acts like a protection for well-being and loss of trust acts like a extra burden.

How the theories explain the framework:

Privacy calculus: This theory explains why privacy, data protection and surveillance and monitoring affect trust. Employees benefit less by sharing their data and face lot of risks such as risk of breaches and misuse of data. Excessive collection of data and high amount of monitoring can lower their trust in the organisation.

Organisational justice: It explains why algorithmic bias and discrimination, fairness, transparency, explainability, accountability and responsibility affect trust. Thus, employee concerned about whether the decision is made fair and the process was fair. They also expect a respectful treatment from the employer side. Employee expect very clear explanation. Biased results and unexplained process can make the employee to lower the trust among the organisation.

Self-determination theory: This theory states that consent and autonomy affect both trust and well-being. Employee also need a sense of choice and control over their information and work. High amount of data sharing and tracking down the activity can take this control away. Therefore, this reduces the trust and also harms well-being directly.

Social exchange theory: This theory explains why trust affects the well-being. The basic human tendency is to return the treatment received by them. Thus, fair and open treatment earns trust which make the employees to feel secure and supports their well-being.

Discussion

This conceptual framework suggests that employees judge DHRM through seven ethical dimensions and these judgements shape their well-being through trust. Four main theories are applied to explain how these dimensions work on employee trust and well-being. Trust is likely to depend on how employee's data and autonomy are handled. Employees sometimes hesitate to share their information with the organisation,

they concerned about risks of breaches, misuse and continuous monitoring can lead to distrust when data is used beyond the stated purpose or tracked without explanation. Sometimes employee cannot refuse monitoring, it may carry career costs. Transparency, explainability and accountability are central dimensions which allow employees to test a decision whether it is fair and non-discriminated. These dimensions are related but also pull against each other, thus collection of sensitive information to audit bias improves fairness but raises a concern against privacy risks. The need for communicating about ethical practice to employees is must because the dimensions are defined from their perspective, thus organisation cannot optimise one dimension alone, it need to address all the seven together. In IT sector the work is highly digital and job security can be uncertain. Ethical challenges in DHRM faced by employees in IT sector are multiple, connected and employee face them together. They judge the digital HRM system based on their own perception, so the system can be legal and accurate but still it seems to be unfair. The outcome of this research paper is pathway from ethical dimensions to trust which is explained by using privacy calculus, organisational justice theory and self-determination theory and from trust to well-being, as explained using social exchange theory.

Implication

Theoretically, the paper offers an employee centred map of ethical dimensions in digital HRM, links them to trust and well-being through theories and provides a basis for developing a measurement scale. Practically, use each ethical dimensions as a question before and after introducing a digital HR tool to an employee. Be transparent with employees, collect only required data, inform them why the data is collected, keep it securely and tell them about who is handling their data. Reduce the limit of monitoring to job related measures and inform employee what is tracked and for what purpose. Regularly or periodically check for bias especially with digital hiring tools, performance tools and give employees clear reasons for the automated decisions and also give access to one specific person to make a final decision based on the digital HR tools and inform about that person to employees, this will help them to raise a concern. Educate employees about existing safeguards systems and update them whenever new tools are implemented.

Limitations and future research

This paper is a conceptual proposed not empirically tested, hence employee perceptions are inferred from theories and related literature and not from current employees. The review is narrative and not systematic, thus the selection of sources reflects the author's judgement. The seven ethical dimensions are theoretically derived and there could be a chance of overlap. The perspective of IT sector employees and their well-being are not based on primary data. Therefore, future research can develop and validate a scale for the seven dimensions and test whether they hold as separate constructs. Furthermore, it can test this framework through surveys among IT employees or explore the tensions between these ethical dimensions through interviews and it can also compare contract-based employees, level of employees, remote and permanent employees, also compare sectors and countries and also gender and can extend the outcomes to engagement, autonomy or turnover intention and analyse how perceptions change over time as employee become more digital systems.

Conclusion

This conceptual paper included the concept of digital HRM and examined the ethical dimensions related with digital HRM from the employee perspective in the IT sector. Based on the review of foundational and recent literature, the paper identifies seven ethical dimensions such as privacy, data protection, security; surveillance and monitoring; algorithmic bias and discrimination; fairness; transparency and explainability; accountability and responsibility; consent and autonomy. It explained how each dimensions affect the IT employees and reviewed the main studies behind each one. The paper proposed an employee conceptual framework anchored in privacy calculus, organisational justice, self-determination theory and social exchange theory to explain how employees perception of seven ethical dimensions influence their trust and how trust influence their well-being. This is a conceptual paper hence these relationships are proposed and not tested. Furthermore, this paper contributes a structured basis for empirical testing, a checklist for the ethical review of digital HR practices and pointers for implementing policies. Therefore, ethical digital human resource management is not only a matter of compliance but also a base for trust and fair treatment in the employment relationship.

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