

Chapter 12

Resilience as a Moderator Between Perceived HR Digitalization and Positive Employee Outcomes

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the moderating role of employee resilience on the relationship between perceived HR digitalization and positive employee outcomes such as work effort (WE) and affective commitment (AC). A combination of qualitative interviews with 6 employees and survey data collected from 248 participants were analyzed. The results showed a positive relationship between perceived HR digitalization and positive employee outcomes such as AC. This relationship was moderated by resilience such that satisfaction with HR digitalization predicted AC in employees with low resilience. A positive correlation was found between perceived digitalization and resilience. No strong relationship was found between perceived digitalization and WE. Perceived digitalization of HR tools that enabled communication and training opportunities positively impacted outcomes such as commitment and motivation. Employees with experience working digitally and with a higher perceived digitalization reported the most favorable WFH experience. These employees had a more positive view of HR digitalization.

INTRODUCTION

Digitalization has been one of the most popular topics of the last decade, and its popularity is increasing more than ever. In the organizational context, the digitalization of human resources (HR) had already started to gain more attention as companies realized its importance in terms of strategic consequences.

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However, it was still not the priority for many organizations until recently. The Covid-19 pandemic, which stroke the world in 2019, significantly impacted the employees' lives and increased the importance of HR's digitalization.

The Covid-19 pandemic served as a driving force in the adoption of digitalization at an "unprecedented" speed and extent (Aurelia & Momin, 2020). According to a survey conducted on behalf of McKinsey (LaBerge et al., 2020), participants reported that their organizations digitalized 20 to 25 times faster than they had foreseen. This pace exceeded their expectations by 40 times. The investment into HR digitalization increased to triple the amount of the investments in 2017 by reaching 3.1 billion dollars, and it is expected to reach 30 billion dollars by 2025 (Aurelia & Momin, 2020). Moreover, employees' expectation for an implementation process was one year, whereas it only took 11 days to implement digital solutions in reality (LaBerge et al., 2020).

During the pandemic period and the lockdown situations in many countries, it came to the surface that many organizations were not ready to ensure business continuity in times of unexpected, massive, sudden changes such as this. Some organizations needed to find quick-fix solutions for the unforeseen technological needs of long-term homeworking. Many large organizations which have a diverse workforce with many different national backgrounds, cross-border workers, distant team members as well as immigrants, and ex-pats had to implement digital solutions in order to be able to continue their businesses. The accuracy of the data in the HR systems showed to be the resource that helped the organizations to be prepared for the lockdown situation in a very short time. The organizational practices which were done face-to-face had to be replaced with new remote practices. The lengthy discussions on organizational matters and longsome bureaucratic processes had to be cut shorter to reduce the effort on communication. All of these new conditions required employees to adjust to many changes, which created various implications on employee well-being and related business outcomes (De-la-Calle-Durán & Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2021).

With the working conditions imposed by the unexpected pandemic regulations, it has become apparent to many people and organizations that digitalization is indispensable in the globalized world. Moreover, the digital way of working is seen as the "new way of working" (Fogarty et al., 2020), and the winnings of digitalization are expected to be kept and built upon.

Throughout the pandemic, the physical danger of the virus, the psychological impact of the traumatic event, and the atmosphere of uncertainty created stress globally. Along with this, employees had to change their daily routines, working styles, social interactions, and relations to technology among many other workplace practices. Away from the habitual work environment, establishing work routines became a challenge while the border between private and professional life got blurry. For example, parents had to take care of their children while working from home. Some employees had difficulties in finding a proper physical space that allows productivity. Managing time was challenging for some employees, and they found themselves working more than before. For many organizations, the business expectations from the employees remained the same while the issues that the employees had to deal with increased. These factors, along with their psychological outcomes such as emotional exhaustion or burnout (King & Sethi, 1997), brought attention to positive employee outcomes such as well-being as well as organizational commitment, motivation, and productivity.

Even though the situation was experienced globally, the consequences were not the same for everyone. During this time, two concepts have become more distinctive than ever: the importance of digitalization and the importance of resilience. The extensive diffusion of digitalization during Covid-19 has been a

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