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Digital Workforce Development and Skill Transformation in the Post-Pandemic Organizational Landscape

M.Rajeswari

Associate Professor, Department of CSE(AIML), Madanapalle Institute of Technology and Sciences, Madanapalle, Andra Pradesh.India. Email: drrajeswarim@mits.ac.in, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2329-1627

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly catalyzed the digitalization of organizations, and this essential reorganization of workforce and skills needs at an international scale, especially in developed economies like the United States. This paper explores the history of digital workforce development and how the competencies of employees will change in the post-pandemic organization. The main goals are to detect the new expertise needs, determine the success of organizational reskilling efforts, and determine the preparedness of workforce in digitally enthusiastic settings. The mixed-method methodology was used, incorporating both the survey data (n=150 professionals within the various industries) and secondary analysis of information available in the literature. The results indicate that there is a significant change in the direction of digital, cognitive, and adaptive skills, and the data literacy, virtual collaboration, and problem-solving are the key competencies. Those companies which adopted systematic digital training programs exhibited greater organization regarding employee productivity, commitment and flexibility than those which depended on informal learning processes. With such improvements, however, there are still critical shortcomings in the workforce preparedness, especially in the non-technical sectors and the middle level workers. The paper offers a Digital Workforce Transformation Framework that can be used to enact a strategic alignment between the organizational goals and those of skill development strategies. The study adds to the overall discussion of organizational resilience of the workforce, human capital development, and sustainable organizational change in the digital age.

1. INTRODUCTION

The world was shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic that has shattered the usual organization systems and had boosted the use of digital technologies in the industries. The need to quickly switch to remote and hybrid working models required organizations to make a fundamental change in workforce dynamics. This sudden change unveiled fundamental gaps in staff skills, especially digital ones, flexibility, and online collaboration. The abrupt need to utilize digital platforms revealed the insufficiency of the already established workforce development plans in dealing with large-scale, technology driven disruptions [1]. Before the pandemic, digital transformation projects were more of gradual and strategically planned change, which means that over time organizations would be able to match workforce capabilities with technological changes to match the transformation. But the pandemic had to enforce immediate deployments of digital systems, so the opportunity to prepare the workforce in a structured way remained little. This created additional stress on employees to learn new skills within short periods of time, and organizations were finding it difficult to keep their productivity, engagement, and continuity of operations high [2]. Significance of digital workforce development has consequently stepped up in a post-pandemic period. Systematic reskilling and upskilling approaches have become a priority to organizations as they strive to be competitive in a more digitalized economy. Workforce transformation has become more than acquiring technical skills and includes cognitive flexibility, collaborating digitally, and lifelong learning abilities [3]. Although research on the topic has been on the rise, the literature largely addresses either adoption of digital technology or remote work, and little has been done with an integrated framework of workforce transformation in alignment to organizational strategy. Additionally, an empirical investigation integrating the

perceptions of the workforce, and organized training outcomes by sectors is lacking [4].

Against this backdrop, the current research seeks to examine digital skill transformation, assess organizational reskilling efforts and offer an extensive Digital Workforce Transformation Framework.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Pre-Pandemic Workforce Models

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, labor organization models were largely standardized in terms of employment positions, organizational hierarchies, and the lack of diffusion of sophisticated digital technologies. The methods of skill development were mostly role-specific and incremental with emphasis on the improvement of technical skill in the given job functions. Efficiency and specialization were prioritized and there is a low focus on cross-functional or digital competencies within organizations. According to [5], the traditional workforce models were not flexible and were not modelled to address the rapid technological disruptures hence limited their flexible aspect in cases of crisis.

2.2 Impact of COVID-19 on Work Structures

The COVID-19 pandemic had hazardous impacts on the organization of work, raising the pace of remote and hybrid working. Remote working tools, cloud computing systems, and virtual communications systems were made central to business activities. Such a sudden change meant that staff had to learn at a higher pace how to adjust to new digital environments with little training or preparation. As mentioned in [6] organizations both realized productivity benefits and operational difficulties because of the rapid change in operations, which underscores the importance of resilient and digitally-capable workforces.

2.3 Evolution of Digital Skills

During the post-pandemic period, the number of people requiring the use of digital skills has increased significantly. The main skill sets identified in all industries are data literacy, cloud computing, cybersecurity awareness, digital communication and basic knowledge of artificial intelligence and automation technologies. Such skills are not limited to IT positions but they are becoming more essential in all the organizational functions. Continuous skill development has become an important aspect of workforce sustainability due to the integration of digital technologies into the basic business processes as stressed in [7].

2.4 Workforce Reskilling and Upskilling Strategies

Organizations have implemented different reskilling and upskilling practices in response to the new skills required. These are online education tools, virtual training tools, certification tools and AI-based personalized learning tools. Although these efforts have enhanced access to training, they have been more effective in some sectors compared to the others because of the disparities in infrastructures, organizational backing, and levels of employee engagement. Studies [8], [9] suggest that, organizations that have well organized and ongoing learning structures record higher adaptability of the workforce than their counterparts who use ad hoc training methods.

2.5 Research Gap

Despite the importance of the existing works in terms of shedding light on digital transformation and the adoption of remote work, the gap in the workforce transformation model development is enormous. The majority of the studies are concerned with the implementation of technologies but not matching the skill development approach with the long-term goals of organizations. Moreover, empirical evidence of the relationship between structured reskilling programs and the quantitative performance in a wide range of industries is scarce [10] -[12]. The existence of this gap shows that there is the necessity of an integrated framework combining skill measurement, training systems, and performance measurement as part of a single strategic model.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper applies the mixed-method research design that combines primary and secondary data sources to offer an in-depth analysis of the digital workforce development and skill transformation in the post-pandemic organizational environment. The mixed methods approach provides a high level of methodological rigor as the research integrates both quantitative and qualitative analysis and insights into existing literature.

3.1 Data Collection

A structured survey was used to collect primary data which comprised 150 professionals in four sectors namely, information technology, healthcare, education and manufacturing. These industries were chosen to represent the dynamism in digital maturity and employee adjustment. The sample was made up of employees in the entry, mid-level and managerial levels to provide representativeness across organizational levels. The general research methodology, i.e. population selection, sampling method, sectoral

representation and sources of data are depicted in Figure 1. The questionnaire was sent through the online medium, which made it easily accessible and helped in collecting data effectively. The study was a voluntary participation with anonymity to minimize the effects of response bias and increase the authenticity of the data. Peer-reviewed journals, industry reports, publications of the world economic forum, OECD, and Deloitte were sources of secondary data. This helped to provide theoretical background and comparative confirmations of results.

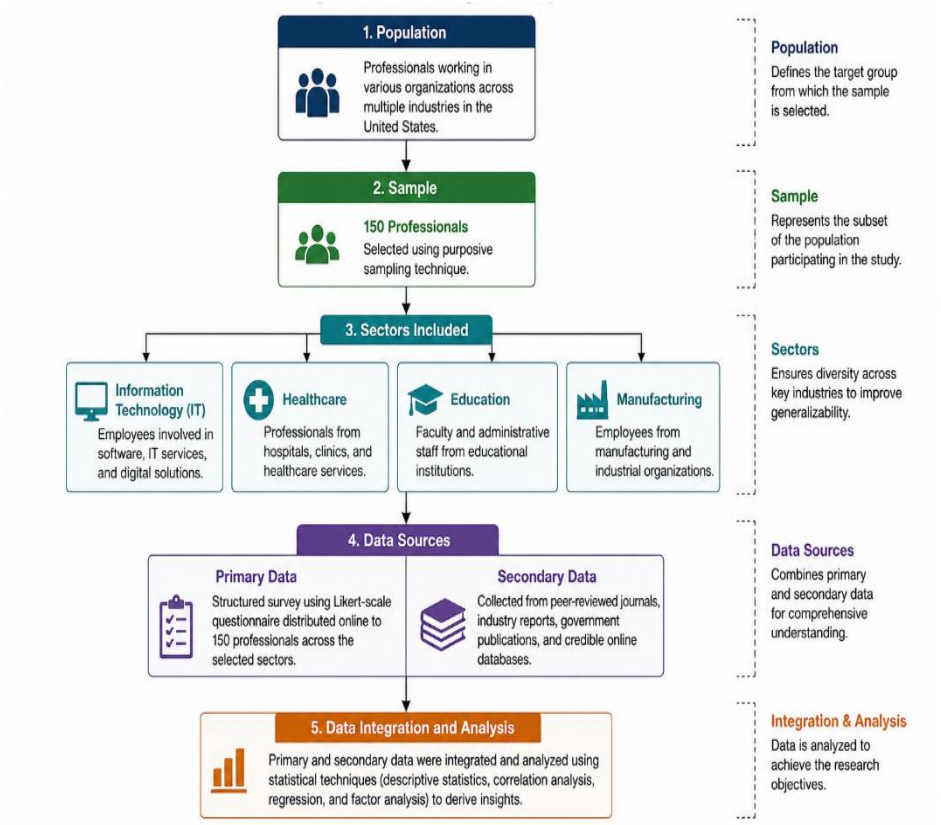


Fig. 1. Research Design Flow Diagram for Data Collection and Integration

3.2 Survey Design and Reliability Analysis

The questionnaire was designed to be based on a five-point Likert scale, which is strong disagreement (1) through strong agreement (5). It was categorized into four big constructs; digital skills, adaptability, organizational support and productivity impact. Internal consistency and reliability of the measurement scale was obtained by obtaining Cronbach alpha coefficients of each construct. The reliability coefficient overall was greater than the acceptable 0.70 meaning that items in the survey have high internal consistency. Specifically, digital skills (α = 0.82), adaptability (α = 0.79), organizational support (α = 0.84), and productivity impact (α = 0.81) demonstrated satisfactory reliability levels, confirming the robustness of the instrument.To ensure the questionnaire was clear and relevant, a pilot study was gotten before rolling out in large scale. Refinements were done in minor ways according to the feedback of the participants.

3.3 Data Analysis Techniques

The statistical analysis of the data collected was done with the help of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and cross-validated data analysis with Python (Pandas, NumPy and SciPy libraries). They were analyzed by describing the trends in the transformation of workforce skills using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation. These questions gave a summary of the level of digital adaptation amongst the participants. Correlation analysis was performed to find out the dependencies between training programs in organizations and employee productivity and between digital skills and adaptability. To further measure these relationships, a multiple regression equation was prepared to measure the effect of major independent variables on the productivity of the workforce. The model is expressed as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

Where, Yrepresents employee productivity, X_1denotes digital skills, X_2represents adaptability, X_3corresponds to organizational support, $\beta_0$is the intercept, $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$are regression coefficients, $\epsilon$is the error term.

To make the model clearer:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon$$

This regression model allows distinguishing the relative contribution of each factor to productivity results. P-values ($p < 0.05$) were used to determine statistical significance and the coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to determine the model adequacy.

There was also an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) that was conducted in order to cluster together the related variables into dimensions of underlying skills. This assisted in categorizing workforce skills into larger groups like technical, cognitive, and interpersonal skills.

3.4 Software Tools and Validation

The statistical modeling and reliability testing were achieved mainly with SPSS and data preprocessing, visualization, data validation were performed with Python. The two- Tools methodology provided accuracy and reproducibility of analysis. Data validation checks done were to ascertain missing values, outliers and normality of distribution. Where the need arises, standardization techniques have been used to ensure uniformity of variables.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Digital Skill Transformation

The analysis shows that there is a significant rise in the usage of digital tools and competencies by the respondents. Most respondents (72) said that they experienced a huge increase in dependency of digital platforms in their daily working activities. Moreover, 65% of them rated data literacy as a key skill, and 58% of them asked about the significance of cybersecurity awareness in the changing workplace. In order to make these findings systematically, Table 1 recapsulates the main trends of digital skills.

Table 1. Digital Skill Transformation Trends

Skill Dimension	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Increased use of digital tools	72%
Data literacy importance	65%
Cybersecurity awareness	58%

These findings have shown that digital competence is not an option anymore but a necessity in all industries. The widespread focus on data literacy can be explained by the global trends in the workforce that have been reported in [1], according to which analytical skills are regarded as one of the fundamental future skills.

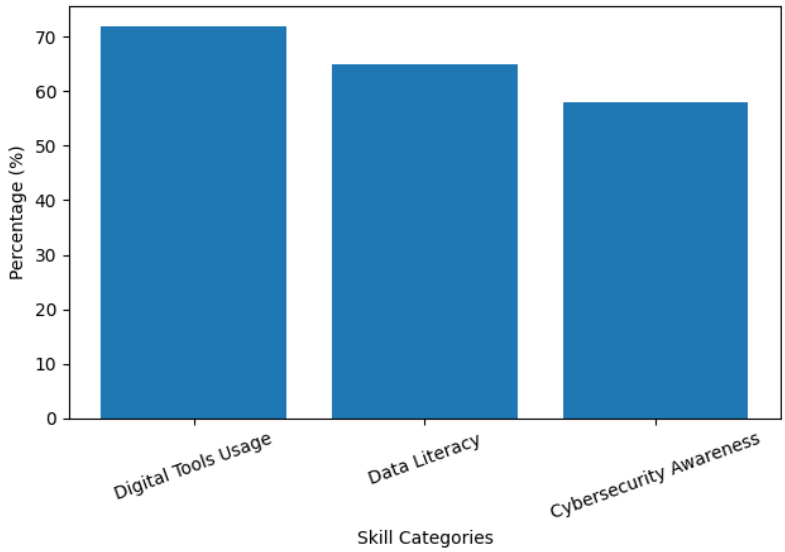


Fig. 2. Digital Skill Transformation Trends

4.2 Organizational Training Effectiveness

The results also indicate the effectiveness of organizational training programs on the performance of workforce. About 60 percent of the respondents indicated that they had been given formal digital training programs. It is interesting to note that organizations that have well-organized training systems have raised the level of

productivity by 25 percent as opposed to those that have adopted unstructured learning processes.

Table 2. Training Effectiveness and Productivity Outcomes

Training Approach	Productivity Impact
Structured training	+25% improvement
Informal/self-learning	Moderate/variable
No training	Low performance

These results validate that planned reskilling programs can lead to a significant improvement in employee performance and activity. The outcomes are similar to the previous researches [2], which state a positive correlation of the formal training programs with the organizational performance.

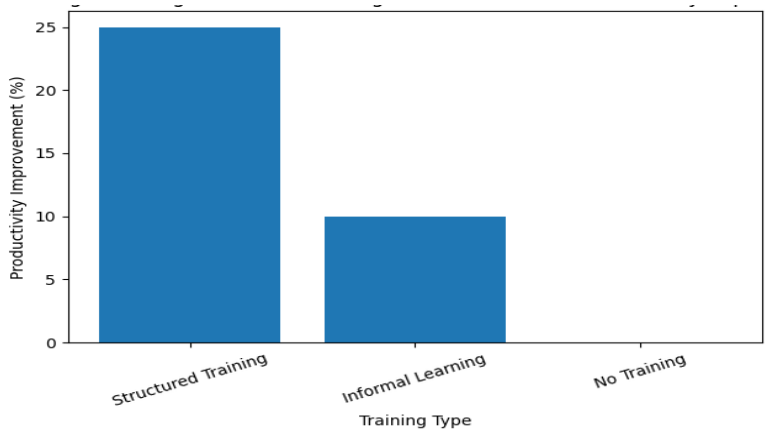


Fig. 3. Organizational Training Effectiveness and Productivity Impact

4.3 Emerging Skill Categories

Factor analysis categorized the workforce competencies into three broad areas including technical, cognitive and interpersonal skills. These categories offer an indication of the multidimensional character of the digital change of workforce.

Table 3. Emerging Workforce Skill Categories

Skill Category	Key Components
Technical Skills	Cloud computing, data analytics, cybersecurity
Cognitive Skills	Critical thinking, adaptability, problem-solving
Interpersonal Skills	Virtual communication, collaboration, emotional intelligence

The existence of these categories implies that the issue of workforce transformation is broader than technical skills to behavioral and cognitive flexibility. This is in line with [3] where hybrid skills models are highlighted as key to the current workplaces.

4.4 Key Challenges in Workforce Transformation

Although the improvements have been observed, a number of issues make it difficult to develop a digital workforce effectively. These are the skills deficiencies of non-technical staff, technological change resistance, lack of access to training materials, and employee burnout as a result of the hasty digital transformation.

Table 4. Key Challenges Identified

Challenge	Impact Level
Skill gaps (non-technical staff)	High
Resistance to change	Moderate
Limited training access	High
Employee burnout	Moderate

Such issues underscore organizational and structural constraints that need to be overcome in order to realize sustainable workforce change.

4.5 Regression Analysis Results

A multiple regression analysis was further done to further investigate the relationship between the key workforce factors and the productivity of the employees. Table 5 shows the results of the regression model.

Table 5. Regression Analysis Results

Variable	Coefficient (β)	p-value
Digital Skills	0.45	<0.05
Adaptability	0.32	<0.05
Organizational Support	0.51	<0.01
R^2	**0.68**	

The regression output shows that all three independent variables namely the digital skills, adaptability, and organizational support have a positive effect on employee productivity that is statistically significant. Of these, organizational support has the greatest impact ($\beta = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$), which indicates the many significant influences that institutional support may have on workforce performance. Digital skills ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.05$) also show that a positive correlation is significant between productivity and technological competence, which confirms that technological skills are one of the primary factors in the work environment after the pandemic. Equally, adaptability ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.05$) plays a significant role in productivity and it is important to note that cognitive flexibility is relevant in dynamic work environments. The coefficient of determination ($R 2 = 0.68$) indicates that the model explains in the form of a coefficient of determination about 68 percent of the variance in employee productivity, which is a good fit and a powerful explanation.

5. DISCUSSION

The results of this paper clearly reveal the paradigm shift in the skill requirements of the workforce precipitated by the accelerated digital transformation. The rise of the use of digital tools and the rise in the significance of data literacy and cybersecurity suggests the shift to a technology-based work environment. Such outcomes are aligned with those of the World Economic Forum [1], which highlights the increasing need in digital and analytical skills in industries. Additionally, the discussion indicates that organizations that invest in systematic training programs have much better levels of productivity. This supports the claim by [2] that formal reskilling programs are important to increase the performance and flexibility of the workforce. The good correlation of training and productivity also proves the regression model used in this research study. The multidimensionality of workforce transformation is emphasized by recognition of the technical, cognitive, and interpersonal skills areas. The present situation demands a mixed set of skills with both the technical competence and the cognitive flexibility and social intelligence, unlike pre-pandemic models that put more emphasis on the technical specialization. This finding concurs with the recent research [3], which recommends combined skill development models. Nevertheless, the research also reveals differences in labor preparedness especially in those sectors that have low levels of digital infrastructure. Non-technical employees have more problems with adapting to digital environments, which has created skill shortages and lowered productivity. Moreover, the unwillingness to change and access to informal training programs also undermine change initiatives. On the whole, the findings indicate that digital workforce development should not be seen as a response to external disruptions but a strategic priority of an organization. Companies that do not establish extensive reskilling models are prone to inefficiencies and incompetitiveness in the long run.

6. Digital Workforce Transformation Framework

This research will suggest an organized Digital Workforce Transformation Framework of four mutually supporting elements to meet the challenges of workforce readiness and skill misalignment. The framework is meant to offer a framework on which organizations can be able to match the workforce capabilities to quickly changing digital requirements. This model represents an improvement on fragmented reskilling efforts, as it incorporates assessment, development, infrastructure and performance monitoring into a continuous improvement process.

6.1 Skill Assessment Layer

The former component is devoted to analysing the state of the workforce competencies. The organization is obliged to find out the level of available skills, and spots the gaps against the new digital needs in a systematic way. This includes analytics-related assessment devices, competency mapping strategies, and data on employee

performance. This layer is very important since the majority of organizations fail not because of the absence of training, but because of the inability to comprehend the real skills gaps. Absent the proper estimation, training investments will be ineffective and unsuitable to organizational requirements.

6.2 Training and Reskilling Engine

The framework, which is based on the identified gaps in skills, focuses on the introduction of an organized training and reskilling mechanism. This involves unceasing learning systems, online training courses, and skill education initiatives of the job role. In contrast to conventional one-time training methods, this element encourages the adaptive and customized learning process, which is frequently facilitated through AI-powered systems to adapt the content according to performance and learning rate of employees. This guarantees that the development of work force is dynamic and in tandem with the prevailing technological developments.

6.3 Digital Infrastructure Integration

The third element is based in empowering the workforce with the correct technological infrastructures. This is coupled with the implementation of cloud-based applications, online collaboration tools, and safe communications systems. Moreover, computer safety and information security measures are necessary to create safe and effective online activities. This layer is important in that it is through this layer that the skill development undertakings are not done in a vacuum since the ecosystem enables the employees to utilize new competencies gained in real workplace settings. Even the hardest working employees cannot be able to perform without proper infrastructure.

6.4 Performance Feedback Loop

The last element provides a constant monitoring and evaluation system. Organizations need to measure employee performance, learning outcomes and improvements in productivity with data-based measures. This process is facilitated by feedback systems, performance dashboards and analytics tools. This loop forms a closed-cycle system, with the results of performance appraisal impacting on the skill assessment and training plans. This makes workforce development a dynamic, continuous process and not an intervention.

Framework Integration and Strategic Value

This framework is a strong one due to its integrated nature. All elements are dependent on each other and create a seamless loop of evaluation, development, implementation and assessment. This comprehensive strategy will make sure that workforce transformation is sustainable, scalable, and aligned with organizational goals. With this framework, organizations will be able to shift beyond reactive development of skills toward proactive workforce strategy, which will allow them to achieve greater productivity, increased flexibility, and sustainability in the digital economy.

7. Implications

The implications of this study in the managerial practice, public policy and academic research are great. These inferences are based on the observed interdependence between the digital skills, organizational training and the productivity of the workforce, which points to the necessity of a well-coordinated and strategic workforce transformation.

7.1 Managerial Implications

As a manager, the study highlights how organizations are now in dire need to rebrand workforce development as a strategic initiative as opposed to a support HR role. The close correlation between formal training initiatives and productivity implies that the ad hoc or informal ways of learning are no longer effective in the digitally changing world. Human resource leaders need to embrace the use of data workforce planning strategies, which incorporate skill measurement, using specific training, and performance measurement. Digital learning platforms such as AI-based training systems and constantly learning environments must be invested in to make sure it is scaled and adaptable. Also, managers should instill a culture of life long learning whereby staffs are motivated to continually improve their skills with the changing trends in technology. The results further indicate that leadership commitment is very instrumental to effective transformation of the workforce. Even initiated well-designed training initiatives might fail to deliver desired results without the support of the executive level.

7.2 Policy Implications

On the policy level, the research addresses the need to have governments and regulatory bodies to aggressively promote the development of digital workforce. The fact that there are skill gaps, and especially those relating to non-technical staff, shows that there is a larger systemic problem that goes beyond individual organizations. Governments need to invest in national programs of digital education, vocational training and workforce reskilling to enhance digital literacy in

sectors. The policy frameworks should also facilitate equal access to digital infrastructure and learning opportunities in order to diminish workforce readiness disparities. Moreover, the cooperation of the state and business may be a key to addressing the discrepancy between the industrial needs and the academic achievement. Cooperation among institutions of learning, industry players and government can help in coming up with standard training systems that can meet the demands on the ground.

7.3 Academic Implications

Academically, this research has been able to add to the emerging research on digital workforce transformation by suggesting a comprehensive framework that connects the development of skills and organizational performance. Nevertheless, some of them are not fully investigated, which makes them be unexplored. Future studies must be aimed at creating industry-specific workforce transformation models since the impact of digitalization in the industry is different. Moreover, longitudinal research needs to be conducted to identify how reskilling programs prove to be effective in the long-term and their impact on organizational sustainability. More empirical studies, which involve the use of more sophisticated statistical modeling methods, including structural equation modeling, are also needed to understand better the causal relationships between skill development, organizational support and performance outcomes. The generalizability of the findings will be further improved by increasing the geographical area of the studies.

CONCLUSION

The organizational environment in the post-pandemic period has radically reestablished the structure of workforce and required transformation to digitally competent and flexible human capital. This paper was a systematic review on how digital workforce development has changed throughout the years, and has determined the main shifts in skill demands, training activities and employee output. The results show that the demand of digital, cognitive and interpersonal competencies are on the rise and structured training programs are critical towards improving the performance of the workforce. One of the main contributions made by the study is the creation of a complete Digital Workforce Transformation Framework supposed to offer a systematic method of aligning skill evaluation, reskilling plan, digital infrastructure, and performance analysis. The proposed framework is a comprehensive model that can be scaled by organizations to attain sustainable change in workforce, unlike fragmented methods evident in the literature. The research has also made an empirical contribution to the knowledge by developing the relationship between digital skills, organizational support, and productivity, which substantially supports the significance of strategic investment in the workforce development. The insights fill the gap between digital adoption and transformation of human resource that is fundamental in existing literature. Nevertheless, the research has its shortcomings. The sample size comprises 150 professionals in the selected sectors which can be a limitation to generalizability. Future studies ought to increase the field of study by using bigger, cross-regional datasets and making use of advanced methods of analysis like structural equation modeling. The longitudinal studies are also suggested to determine the effects of reskilling programs in the long run and new workforce trends. Finally, organizations should cease to be reactive in digital adoption and shift to proactive workforce transformation policies. On-going learning, leadership dedication and alignment of technological innovation with human capital building shall play a very key role in remaining competitive in the digital economy.

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