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THE ROLE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN HYBRID AND DIGITALLY TRANSFORMING WORKPLACES

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Abstract

The rapid transformation of workplaces through digitalization, artificial intelligence, remote work, and hybrid employment has changed how employees communicate, collaborate, and perform their roles. Although these developments provide greater flexibility and new opportunities for productivity, they also create challenges related to employee well-being, psychological safety, organizational identification, social connection, and engagement. This conceptual article examines the role of employee engagement in hybrid and digitally transforming workplaces by integrating perspectives on employee engagement, corporate social responsibility (CSR), organizational culture, employee well-being, employee voice, organizational citizenship behavior, and performance. Drawing on Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions of meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability, together with Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) dimensions of vigor, dedication, and absorption, the article conceptualizes employee engagement as a central mechanism connecting organizational conditions with employee and organizational outcomes. The proposed framework suggests that CSR, organizational culture, leadership support, autonomy, employee voice, meaningful work, and well-being contribute to the psychological conditions necessary for engagement. Engagement subsequently supports task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, adaptability, knowledge sharing, innovation, and sustainable organizational behavior. The article argues that digital transformation should be understood not only as a technological process but also as a psychological and social transformation requiring meaningful work, supportive leadership, psychological safety, employee autonomy, and responsible organizational practices.

Keywords: employee engagement, hybrid work, digital transformation, CSR, employee well-being, organizational culture, employee voice, organizational performance

1. Introduction

Digitalization, artificial intelligence, remote work, and hybrid employment have fundamentally changed contemporary workplaces. Employees increasingly work across physical and virtual environments, use multiple digital platforms, and communicate with colleagues they may rarely meet face-to-face. While these changes can increase flexibility and productivity, they may also produce social isolation, digital overload, blurred work-life boundaries, and weaker organizational identification.

These developments have increased the importance of employee engagement. Kahn (1990) conceptualized engagement as the psychological presence of employees in their work roles and identified three conditions necessary for engagement: *meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability*. These conditions remain highly relevant in hybrid workplaces because employees need to understand the value of their work, feel safe participating in organizational life, and possess sufficient psychological resources to perform effectively.

Schaufeli et al. (2002) further conceptualized engagement through *vigor, dedication, and absorption.* These dimensions are particularly relevant to digital transformation. Vigor enables employees to sustain effort during periods of change; dedication provides a sense of purpose; and absorption supports concentration in complex and technology-mediated work.

Engagement is also associated with important organizational outcomes. Rich et al. (2010) found relationships between job engagement and job performance, while Shantz et al. (2013) connected engagement with task performance and organizational citizenship behavior. Rees et al. (2013) demonstrated the relationship between employee voice and engagement.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) may also contribute to engagement. CSR can strengthen employee-company identification (Kim et al., 2010), organizational commitment (Turker, 2009), and employee well-being (Kim et al., 2018). In hybrid organizations, CSR may provide a shared sense of purpose that helps compensate for reduced face-to-face interaction.

2. Methods

This study employs a conceptual integrative literature review. Rather than collecting primary data, it synthesizes theoretical and empirical research on employee engagement, CSR, organizational culture, employee well-being, employee voice, and performance.

The theoretical foundation is based primarily on Kahn (1990), Macey and Schneider (2008), Saks (2006), Schaufeli et al. (2002), and Rich et al. (2010). Research on CSR and employee outcomes includes Kim et al. (2010), Kim et al. (2018), Rupp et al. (2006), Slack et al. (2015), and Turker (2009). Research on employee contribution and performance includes Organ (1988), Rees et al. (2013), Shantz et al. (2013), and Lee et al. (2019).

The literature was organized into six stages: changing workplace context, organizational conditions, psychological conditions, employee engagement, employee outcomes, and organizational outcomes.

Table 1. Conceptual Framework for Employee Engagement in Hybrid and Digitally Transforming Workplaces

Stage	Key Constructs	Main Components	Proposed Relationship
1. Workplace Context	Hybrid and digital transformation	Remote work, hybrid work, AI, digital technologies, virtual collaboration	Creates new conditions for work, communication, and organizational relationships
2. Organizational Conditions	Organizational and social resources	CSR, organizational culture, leadership, autonomy, employee voice, trust, meaningful work, well-being	Creates the foundation for psychological connection to work
3. Psychological Conditions	Kahn's psychological conditions	Meaningfulness, psychological safety, psychological availability	Determines employees' readiness to engage
4. Employee Engagement	Positive work state	Vigor, dedication, absorption	Converts psychological readiness into active work involvement
5. Employee Outcomes	Individual contributions	Performance, citizenship behavior, employee voice, adaptability, knowledge sharing, innovation	Engagement increases effort, participation, and discretionary contribution
6. Organizational Outcomes	Sustainable effectiveness	Productivity, resilience, innovation, well-being, identification, sustainability	Employee engagement contributes to broader organizational effectiveness

The framework positions engagement as the central link between organizational conditions and employee outcomes. Hybrid and digital transformation creates the broader context, while organizational resources influence the psychological conditions necessary for engagement.

3. Results

3.1 Employee engagement in hybrid workplaces

The reviewed literature suggests that engagement is more than employee satisfaction. Macey and Schneider (2008) emphasize that engagement involves active psychological and behavioral investment in work. This distinction is particularly important in hybrid organizations.

Employees may be satisfied with working from home because of greater flexibility while remaining disconnected from organizational goals. An engaged employee, however, invests energy, attention, and effort in organizational responsibilities.

Schaufeli et al. (2002) identify vigor, dedication, and absorption as the central dimensions of engagement. In digitally transforming organizations, vigor supports persistence during technological change, dedication strengthens connection with organizational purpose, and absorption enables employees to concentrate on complex tasks.

Lee et al. (2019) demonstrate that engagement and performance can vary within individuals across different working days. This suggests that engagement is influenced by changing work conditions rather than being entirely a stable employee characteristic.

3.2 Psychological conditions of engagement

Kahn's (1990) three psychological conditions provide a useful explanation of engagement in digital workplaces.

Meaningfulness refers to the perception that work has value and purpose. In digitally mediated environments, employees can sometimes become focused on tasks and technological processes without understanding their broader significance. CSR can help address this issue by connecting organizational activities with social and environmental objectives.

Kim et al. (2010) show that CSR can strengthen employee-company identification, while Turker (2009) demonstrates its relationship with organizational commitment. These findings indicate that responsible organizational behavior can provide employees with a stronger sense of organizational belonging.

Psychological safety is the perception that employees can express ideas, concerns, and opinions without fear of negative consequences. It is particularly important in hybrid workplaces, where communication may be less personal and spontaneous interaction is limited. Rees et al. (2013) demonstrate the relationship between employee voice and engagement.

Psychological availability concerns whether employees possess sufficient physical and emotional resources to engage in their work. Digital technologies can increase flexibility but may also create constant connectivity and excessive communication. Kröll et al. (2017) highlight the importance of stress-management practices, while Kim et al. (2018) demonstrate the relationship between CSR and employee well-being.

Thus, sustainable engagement requires organizations to protect employees from excessive digital demands and support recovery.

3.3 CSR and organizational culture

CSR can serve as an important source of meaning, identification, and participation. Kim et al. (2010) demonstrate the connection between CSR and employee-company identification, while Slack et al. (2015) emphasize employee participation in CSR from a social exchange perspective. Employees may become more engaged when they believe that their organization contributes positively to society.

However, CSR must be perceived as authentic. Rupp et al. (2006) demonstrate that employee responses to CSR are influenced by perceptions of organizational justice. If an organization presents

itself as socially responsible while treating employees unfairly, CSR may fail to generate positive engagement.

Organizational culture is therefore essential. Shared values and assumptions shape how employees interpret organizational behavior. In hybrid organizations, these values need to be communicated consistently across physical and digital environments.

3.4 Engagement and employee performance

The literature demonstrates a positive relationship between engagement and performance.

Rich et al. (2010) found that job engagement is associated with job performance. Shantz et al. (2013) similarly connected engagement with task performance and citizenship behavior.

Engaged employees are more likely to invest effort, maintain concentration, persist through challenges, and contribute beyond minimum job requirements. These characteristics are particularly valuable during digital transformation because employees must continually learn new technologies and adapt to changing processes.

Engagement therefore represents an important human resource for organizational transformation.

3.5 Engagement, employee voice and citizenship behavior

Hybrid organizations increasingly depend on voluntary employee contributions.

Organ (1988) conceptualized organizational citizenship behavior as discretionary behavior that supports organizational effectiveness. In digitally distributed workplaces, this may include helping colleagues, sharing knowledge, mentoring new employees, solving problems, and supporting organizational initiatives.

Employee voice is equally important. Rees et al. (2013) demonstrate the connection between voice and engagement. Employees often identify technological and organizational problems through their everyday experiences. Engaged employees may therefore become an important source of organizational learning and innovation.

3.6 Engagement, adaptability and sustainability

Digital transformation requires employees to continually learn and adapt. Engagement can facilitate this process by providing the energy, motivation, and concentration necessary for learning.

Vigor supports persistence, dedication provides motivation, and absorption facilitates concentration. Thus, engagement may function as a psychological resource during organizational change.

Sustainability is another important dimension. Pham et al. (2019) demonstrate the relationship between green HR practices and organizational citizenship behavior. Engaged employees may similarly be more willing to participate in environmental initiatives when sustainability is integrated into organizational purpose.

Engagement can therefore contribute to productivity while also supporting social and environmental organizational objectives.

4. Discussion

The analysis suggests that employee engagement has become a strategic resource for organizations undergoing digital and hybrid transformation.

First, *technology alone does not create engagement*. Digital platforms can support communication and flexibility, but they cannot independently create meaningfulness, psychological safety, or psychological availability. These conditions depend on leadership, organizational culture, job design, and employee experience.

Second, *CSR can strengthen engagement* by providing meaning and reinforcing organizational identification. However, CSR must be authentic and consistent with internal organizational practices.

Third, *employee well-being is essential for sustainable engagement*. Organizations should recognize that flexibility can become problematic if employees are expected to remain constantly

available. Excessive digital communication, workload, and technological pressure can undermine engagement.

Fourth, *employee engagement supports organizational adaptability*. Employees who are psychologically connected to their work are more likely to learn new technologies, share knowledge, communicate ideas, and participate actively in organizational change.

The conceptual framework therefore positions engagement as a *bridge between organizational conditions and organizational outcomes*. CSR, culture, leadership, autonomy, employee voice, and well-being create the conditions; meaningfulness, safety, and availability transform these conditions into engagement; and engagement contributes to performance, citizenship, voice, adaptability, and innovation.

5. Practical Implications

Organizations seeking to strengthen engagement in hybrid and digitally transforming workplaces should focus on several areas.

- Meaningful work: Leaders should communicate organizational purpose and demonstrate how employees' work contributes to wider organizational and social goals.
- Psychological safety: Employees should be encouraged to express concerns, provide feedback, and propose new ideas.
- Employee well-being: Organizations should establish reasonable expectations for digital communication and protect employees' recovery time.
- Employee voice: Digital platforms should provide opportunities for employees to participate in decision-making and organizational improvement.
- CSR and responsible culture: Social and environmental responsibility should be reflected in everyday organizational practices, not only external communication.
- Continuous learning: Employees should receive opportunities to develop digital competencies and adapt to technological change.
- Inclusive hybrid work: Remote and office-based employees should have equitable access to information, recognition, professional development, and participation.

6. Conclusion

Hybrid and digitally transforming workplaces have changed the conditions under which employees work, communicate, and identify with organizations. These changes make employee engagement increasingly important while also creating new challenges for maintaining it.

This article conceptualized engagement as a central psychological mechanism connecting organizational conditions with employee and organizational outcomes. Drawing on Kahn's (1990) framework, meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability provide the psychological foundation for engagement. Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) dimensions of vigor, dedication, and absorption explain how this psychological readiness becomes active involvement in work.

The analysis further indicates that CSR, organizational culture, leadership, autonomy, employee voice, and well-being can strengthen engagement. Engaged employees are more likely to demonstrate task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, adaptability, knowledge sharing, innovation, and sustainable behavior.

The central conclusion is that *digital transformation should be understood as both a technological and human transformation*. Technology changes how work is performed, but organizational practices determine whether employees remain connected, motivated, psychologically safe, and willing to contribute.

Therefore, organizations should move beyond measuring whether employees are satisfied with hybrid work. They should also examine whether employees find their work meaningful, feel safe

expressing themselves, possess sufficient psychological resources, and remain connected to organizational purpose.

Employee engagement is consequently a critical human foundation for productive, adaptive, and sustainable workplaces in the digital era.

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