Examining Studies on the Relationship Between Employee Experience and Digital Transformation Through Bibliometric Analysis

Çalışan Deneyimi ve Dijital Dönüşüm İlişkisi Bağlamındaki Çalışmaların Bibliyometrik Analiz ile İncelenmesi

ABSTRACT

Digital technologies have caused significant changes in the business world. As businesses strive to adapt to these changes, they are compelled not only to redesign their technological infrastructure but also to restructure their entire operational systems. The success of the redesigned business system in the digital transformation process is based on the partnership between digital technology and human resources. The digital transformation process also influences the shaping of employee experience. There has been a notable increase in studies related to the concept of employee experience, which encompasses all perceptions of employees before and after starting a job. The aim of this study is to explore the current state of the concept of employee experience in the literature, to shed light on the relationship between digital transformation and employee experience by examining the current status of related studies, and to propose new ideas for future research. For this purpose, studies addressing the concepts of "digital transformation and employee experience" together in the Web of Science database were scanned, and 122 articles were identified. The articles were analyzed using bibliometric analysis techniques to determine their distribution by year, the most influential authors, journals, citation topics, micro-citation topics, most frequently used keywords, and the similarity maps of the articles.

Keywords: Employee Experience, Digital Transformation, Experiential Learning Psychology, Bibliometric Analysis

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ÖZET

Dijital teknolojiler iş yaşamında büyük değişikliklerin yaşanmasına neden olmuştur. İşletmeler yaşanan değişimlere uyum sağlamaya çalışırken sadece teknolojik alt yapılarını değil tüm işletme sistemlerini yeniden tasarlamak durumunda kalmaktadır. Dijital dönüşüm sürecinde yeniden tasarlanan işletme sisteminin başarısı ise dijital teknoloji ve insan kaynağı arasındaki ortaklığa dayanmaktadır. Dijital dönüşüm süreci çalışan deneyiminin şekillenmesinde de etkili olmaktadır. Çalışanların, işe başlamadan önce ve başladıktan sonraki tüm algılarını kapsayan deneyimlerinin toplamı olarak ifade edilen çalışan deneyimi kavramına ilişkin çalışmaların sayısında son yıllarda dikkate değer bir artış görülmektedir.Bu çalışmanın amacı çalışan deneyimi kavramının yazındaki mevcut durumunu keşfetmek, ilgili çalışmaların mevcut durumunu inceleyerek dijital dönüşüm ile çalışan deneyimi ilişkisine ışık tutmak ve gelecek araştırmalar için yeni fikirler öne sürmektir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda bu iki kavram arasındaki ilişkinin daha iyi anlaşılmasını sağlamak için Web of Sciens veritabanında " dijital dönüşüm ve çalışan deneyimi" kavramlarını birlikte ele alan çalışmalar taranmış ve 122 makaleye ulaşılmıştır. Bibliyometrik analiz tekniği kullanılarak incelenen makalelerin yıllara göre dağılımı, en etkili yazarları, dergileri, alıntı konuları, mikro atıf konuları belirlenmiş, en çok kullanılan kelimeleri ve makalerin benzerlik haritaları ortaya çıkarılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çalışan Deneyimi, Dijital Dönüşüm, Deneyimsel Öğrenme Psikolojisi, Bibliyometrik Analiz

INTRODUCTION

The integration of digital technologies into the business world has led to an increased emphasis on the use of automation in business processes (Klein, 2020). Digital technologies, becoming the driving force of change in the workplace, offer various opportunities and challenges to businesses in this regard. In the face of these challenges and opportunities, businesses need to find new ways to retain their employees and create added value (Skog, 2019). Digital transformation enhances the competitiveness of businesses, enabling more effective decision-making while significantly impacting employees' knowledge, skills/abilities, performance, and productivity (Foerster-Mertz et al., 2018). However, businesses heavily utilizing digital technologies in their digital transformation processes often neglect the role and digital skills of their employees (Çetindamar, 2021).

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Digital transformation generally encompasses all changes in an organization, such as the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, machine learning, augmented reality, and in-memory computing (Vial, 2019). With the adoption of digital technologies, businesses implement changes that enhance their operations, organizations, infrastructure, and employees' organizational performance (Cui et al., 2020; Westerman et al., 2014). A review of the literature on digital transformation reveals a significant focus on customer-centric approaches, while the role of employees in this process is often overlooked (Çetindamar & Abedin, 2020). However, digital transformation affects business elements, the work environment, organizational structure, culture, and employees' organizational experiences. Considering that the implementation and shaping of digital transformation steps are crucial in meeting the experiential needs of employees (Abhari et al., 2021), this study examines studies that address the variables of digital transformation and employee experience together.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Digital Transformation

Digital transformation, which encompasses holistic business transformation arising from organizational, fundamental economic, and technological changes within businesses and information systems, provides opportunities for businesses to better manage and predict business processes, improve cash flow and marketing activities, and enhance performance and control operations (Özgeldi, 2020; Besson & Rowe, 2012; Crowston & Myers, 2004; Venkatraman, 1994). Digital transformation signifies more than just the digital redesign of a business; it entails a radical strategic change and a shift in the business culture (Leipzing Von et al., 2017). In this context, businesses must strategically encompass all departments in their digital transformation efforts (Matt et al., 2018).

In recent years, rapid changes in consumer purchasing behavior, the challenge of competing with agile businesses, the dominance of digital companies in the market, and consumers' expectations for personalized experiences have led to a rapid acceleration of digital transformation and an expansion of its application scope (Chopra, 2015).

In the literature, the impact of digitalization on business structure is of significant interest, and discussions continue on the outcomes that different technologies and applications may produce. It is argued that while digitalization may lead to positive changes in productivity, efficiency, and well-being, it could also threaten equal opportunity and lead to polarization due to the profound changes it introduces in the workplace (Reimann et al., 2020).

Even if the latest technologies and systems used in the digital transformation process are designed to be in harmony with individual work, these technologies will have either positive or negative effects on the organizational system. Any change in a system within the business will impact individuals either positively or negatively (Turan, 2019). In this context, potential impacts on employees should be considered when implementing digital transformation steps in businesses.

Unplanned digital transformation steps may introduce uncertainty, leading to anxiety and stress among employees. Therefore, it is crucial to inform employees about their feelings and thoughts, concerns and fears, expectations and suggestions, processes, and issues during digital transformation, establish open communication, and share information with employees. Additionally, analyzing employees' knowledge, skills, and competencies, identifying the necessary human resources, and rapidly addressing emerging needs are essential (Özgeldi, 2020). In this regard, focusing on employees' experiences during the digital transformation process, creating employee experience maps, and redesigning employee experience are necessary.

Employee Experience

In recent years, continuous changes in the workplace have been transitioning from physical to digital domains. Businesses must recognize and take the necessary steps to understand the role of technology not only in automating work but also in enhancing employee experience (Morgan, 2017). While digital transformation plays a critical role in how businesses operate, organizations need to rethink and develop their digital employee experiences to achieve successful transformation and increase productivity. Successful digital transformation is achieved by redesigning employee experience to enhance employee engagement and productivity, meet employee needs, and attract and retain top talent (Gheidar & Zanjani, 2021). Employee experience, defined as the perceptions, feelings, and emotions experienced by an employee through their engagement with the job and organization, which positively support their development, contribution, and persistence within the organization (Itam & Ghosh, 2020), influences businesses' ability to have more engaged employees compared to their competitors. Indeed, research shows that businesses with an engaging employee experience have 22% higher engagement compared to others (Mazor et al., 2019).

The concept of employee experience encompasses all interactions between employees and the organization. These interactions can be defined as the physical space used by the employee daily, the organization's culture, and the tools and technologies provided by the employer (Morgan, 2017). Employee experience includes a range of perceptions employees have about their workplace in response to their interactions with the organization (IBM & Globoforce, 2016).

Human resource strategies such as enriching work environments, providing employee benefits, career planning and development, rewards and incentives, and other employee engagement strategies contribute to employees gaining enduring experiences and developing emotional connections (Itam & Ghosh, 2020). A successful employee experience design consists of elements such as the organizational environment, physical environment, technological environment, and organizational culture (Green, 2016). Managers must consider employees' physical spaces, the applications and software they use, how employees are treated within the organization, and the ways employees perform their work (Morgan, 2017).

Experiential Learning Psychology

The emergence of experiential learning psychology, proposed by John Dewey, was influenced by Kurt Lewin's emphasis on the importance of the individual in the learning process and Piaget's view that intelligence is not an innate feature but rather a result of interactions between individuals and their environment (Dewey, 1958; Kolb, 1984; Yoon, 2000).

Experiential learning psychology, introduced by Dewey and further developed by Kolb (1984), is categorized into four types: behavioral experience, cognitive experience, emotional experience, and social experience. This study utilizes these four classifications to explain the relationship between digital transformation and employee experience.

Behavioral experience refers to the enduring changes in an individual's behavior as a result of their experiences (Doğanay, 2016). In the digital transformation process, the use of digital technologies will involve employees in learning by doing and experiencing beyond their typical work methods. This can be considered a typical example of behavioral learning experience. The behavioral experience gained through the use of digital technologies contributes to employees' work-related experiences (Abhari et al., 2021).

Cognitive experience arises from an individual's use of their mind and engagement in learning activities. Cognitive experience encompasses a more detailed and comprehensive situation than merely thinking about a task or using knowledge to complete a task. It includes connecting ideas, critical thinking, successful problem-solving, and integrating broader themes (Marr et al., 2003). In this context, the new learning opportunities provided by digital tools have a direct contribution to employees' cognitive experiences (Abhari et al., 2021).

Emotional experience consists of emotional states that impact our long-term behaviors rather than short-lived emotions (Solomon, 2007). Employees' feelings about the digital technologies they use or their effects can be exemplified as emotional experiences (Abhari et al., 2021).

Social experience is the type of experience individuals encounter most frequently in daily life. Individuals learn from their interactions with others, either consciously or unconsciously. These learnings influence individuals' behaviors (Bacanlı, 2011). Social experience can be defined as the interactions employees have in the workplace. The impact of digital technologies on employees' ability to communicate more effectively, network, and socialize can be cited as an example of social experience (Abhari et al., 2021). In this context, while examining the current state of employee experience in the literature, studies addressing the relationship between digital transformation and employee experience have been reviewed.

The aim of this study is to shed light on the relationship between these two interrelated concepts, which have been extensively studied in recent years, and to propose new ideas for future research. This research aims to contribute to the theoretical gap by discussing the gaps in the literature and examining the theoretical structure of the employee experience concept. Additionally, exploring the theoretical structure of employee experience and its relationship with digital transformation is important for providing practical guidance for employees and managers. In this context, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

- How is the distribution of publications addressing both employee experience and digital transformation over the years?

- Which authors have most frequently published on the topics of employee experience and digital transformation?

- How is the distribution of citation topics in publications addressing both employee experience and digital transformation?

- What is the distribution of citation topics in publications on employee experience and digital transformation?

- How is the distribution of journals and research fields in publications addressing both employee experience and digital transformation?

- What are the most notable keywords and codes in publications addressing both employee experience and digital transformation?

- How similar are the publications addressing both employee experience and digital transformation?

RESEARCH METHOD

To shed light on the theoretical structure of the employee experience concept and its current state in the literature, this study examines works that address both employee experience and digital transformation. In line with the research objectives, bibliometric analysis, a qualitative research method, has been utilized. Bibliometric analysis allows for the examination of academic works such as books, theses, and articles through numerical analyses and statistics (Keskin, 2022). Studies conducted using bibliometric analysis may consist of works published in specific years or evaluate how publications on a given topic within a particular time frame impact subsequent studies (McBurney & Novak, 2022). Bibliometric analysis is crucial for providing an overview of academic works (Zupic & Cater, 2015).

In this research, data obtained from the Web of Science database were used to perform the bibliometric analysis. The selection of Web of Science as the database was influenced by its status as having the oldest and most comprehensive records (Li et al., 2010).

To identify studies addressing both digital transformation and employee experience between 2014 and 2024, the search was narrowed by selecting criteria from fields such as business, management, sociology, psychology, and social sciences. The keywords "employee experience and digital transformation" were used in the search, resulting in a total of 122 articles. The collected articles were visualized using the Maxqda 2022 software, which is frequently employed in qualitative research.

FİNDİNGS AND DİSCUSSİON

Table 1 shows the distribution of the 122 articles examined within the scope of the study by year.

Table 1: Distribution of Articles by Year
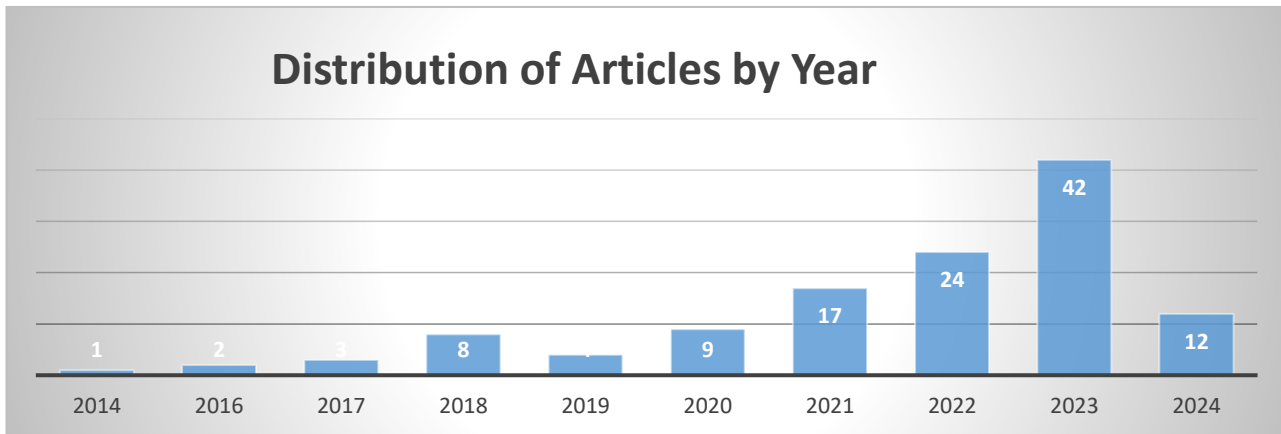
Kaynak: Yazarlar tarafından oluşturulmuştur.

The number of studies addressing both employee experience and digital transformation has shown an increase over the years. In 2023, 42 studies were conducted, while 12 studies were completed in the first quarter of 2024. These data support the view that recent developments in the field of human resources have led to increased interest in employee experience approaches and the concept of digital transformation (Başaran, 2021; Gheidar & Shamizanjani, 2020).

Table 2 shows the names and institutions of the top 10 authors who have conducted studies on both employee experience and digital transformation.

Table 2: Ranking of the Top 10 Authors

Authors	Institution	Number Of Articles	Percentage
Fernandez, Roberto M	Universidade Estadual Paulista	2	%1.6
Gupta, Sangeeta	Shobhit University Shobhit Inst Engn & Technol	2	%1.6
Hassan, Yusuf	Institute Of Management Technology, Dubai	2	%1.6
Lakhani KR	Harvard University Technol & Operat Management Unit,Digital Data & Design Inst	2	%1.6
Lane JN	Harvard University Technol & Operat Management Unit,Digital Data & Design Inst	2	%1.6
Mbama CI	Sheffield Hallam University Merı Sheffield, S Yorkshıre, England	2	%1.6
Misha S	Birla Institute Of Management Technology	2	%1.6
Napathorn	Thammasat University Thammasat University Faculty Of Commerce And Accountancy Bangkok, Thaıland	2	%1.6

Kaynak: Created by the authors

As shown in Table 2, the authors who have conducted research on digital transformation and employee experience are ranked as follows: Fernandez, Roberto; Gupta, Sangeeta; and Hassan, Yusuf.

Table 3: Distribution by Web of Science Category

Web of Science Category	Number	Percentage
Management	85	%69.6
Business	55	%45.0
Industrial Relations Labor	7	%5.7
Information Science Library Science	6	%4.9
Economics	5	%4.0
Communication	2	%1.6
Engineering Industrial	2	%1.6
Ergonomics	2	%1.6
Regional Urban Plannig	2	%1.6
Business Finance	1	%0.820

Kaynak: Created by the authors

Table 3 shows the distribution of studies by Web of Science category. According to Table 3, the categories with the highest number of studies are Management (85) and Business (55).

Table 4: Distribution by Citation Topics

Citation Topics	Number	Percentage
Management	73	%59.8
Gender Studies	9	%7.3
Education Research	6	%4.9
Communication	6	%4.9
Design	3	%.4
Robotics	2	%1.6
Operations Research and Management Science	2	%1.6
Social Reform	2	%1.6

Kaynak: Created by the authors

Table 4 shows the distribution of studies by citation topics. According to Table 4, the most frequently cited topics in the examined papers include Management, Gender Studies, Education Research, Communication, and Design.

Table 5: Micro Citation Topics

Micro Citation Topics	Number	Percentage
Customer Satisfaction	23	%18.8
Job Satisfaction	20	%1.3
Knowledge Management	13	%10.6
Work-Family Conflict	9	%7.3
Technology Acceptance Model	5	%4.0
Social Movements	4	%3.2
Industry 4.0	3	%2.4
Human-Robot Interaction	2	%1.6
International Students	2	%1.6
Learning Assurance	2	%1.6

Kaynak: Created by the authors

Tablo 5 shows the distribution of micro citation topics for the examined studies. Among the micro citation topics covered in the articles, notable ones include customer satisfaction, job satisfaction, knowledge management, work-family conflict, technology acceptance model, and social movements.

Tablo 6: Web of Science Index

Web of Science Index	Number	Percentage
Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)	61	%50
Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI)	58	%47.5
Book Citation Index- Social Sciences & Humanities (BKCI-SSH)	3	%2.4
Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI- EXPANDED)	3	%2.4

Kaynak: Yazarlar tarafından oluşturulmuştur.

Tablo 6 shows the distribution of the examined studies according to the Web of Science Index. According to Table 6, 50% of the articles (61) fall under the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), while 47.5% (58) are indexed in the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI).

Tablo 7: Journal Distribution

Journal	Number	Percentage
Cogent Business Management	4	%3.2
International Journal of Human Resource Management	3	%2.4
International Journal of Manpower	3	%2.4
International Journal of Organizational Analysis	3	%2.4
Magement Decision	3	%2.4
Marketing and Management of Innovations	3	%2.4
Asıa Pacıfıc Journal of Human Resources	2	%1.6
Benchmarking an International Journal	2	%1.6
Business Process Management Journal	2	%1.6
Employee relations	2	%1.6

Kaynak: Created by the authors

Table 7 illustrates the distribution of journals where the reviewed studies have been published. According to the table, the journals with the highest number of articles are Cogent Business Management (4), International Journal of Human Resource Management (3), International Journal of Manpower (3), and International Journal of Organizational Analysis (3). These journals make significant contributions to the topics of digital transformation and employee experience, providing high-impact publications in the research field.

Table 8: Code Cloud

Kaynak: Created by the authors

Table 8 illustrates the code cloud for studies addressing both employee experience and digital transformation. These codes are derived from key terms. The code cloud is created using the principle that the most frequently used codes are placed at the center and displayed in the largest font. According to Table 8, the most frequently used code is "performance," followed by "Impact," "Information-technology," "Innovation," "Technology," "Model," "Satisfaction," "Digital Transformation," "Framework Management," "COVID-19," "Techno-stress," and "Work."

Table 9: Word Cloud

Kaynak: Created by the authors

Table 9 illustrates the word cloud for the most frequently occurring terms in the studies examined within the research scope. The approach used in creating the word cloud involves placing the most frequently used word at the center and in the largest font size. Upon examining Table 9, it can be observed that in studies addressing both digital transformation and employee experience, the most frequently used term is "digital." This is followed by the terms "employees," "time," "management," "work," "study," and "business."

The prominence of the term "digital" in the word cloud underscores the central role of digital transformation in research on employee experience. The frequent appearance of "digital" indicates that digital transformation is not merely a supplementary factor but a central theme influencing various aspects of employee experience. This emphasis signals a trend towards examining how digital innovations reshape traditional organizational practices and employee interactions.

The frequent occurrence of the terms "employees," "time," "management," "work," and "business" provides additional context on the effects of digital transformation and how these effects are investigated. The prominence of the term "employees" highlights the critical role of the workforce in discussions about digital transformation, emphasizing the importance of understanding how digital changes affect employee roles and experiences.

Despite the significant emphasis on digital transformation, the word cloud reveals a need for more detailed investigation into the interaction between digital transformation and employee experience. While "digital" is a dominant term, specific aspects of employee experience—such as job satisfaction, engagement, and well-being— have not been sufficiently addressed within the context of digital change. Future research should examine the various dimensions of digital transformation's impact on employee experience, including psychological and emotional aspects.

Furthermore, the term "management" suggests a need for in-depth research into how digital tools and technologies are reshaping management practices and decision-making processes. Studies exploring the impact of digital transformation on managerial roles, decision-making efficiency, and leadership styles are essential.

In conclusion, the analysis of Table 9 underscores the centrality of digital transformation in employee experience while also highlighting areas that require further exploration in future research. By addressing identified gaps and conducting studies to understand the multifaceted effects of digital transformation, future research can better grasp how organizational dynamics and employee experiences are shaped by digital innovations.

Table 10: Document Similarity Map
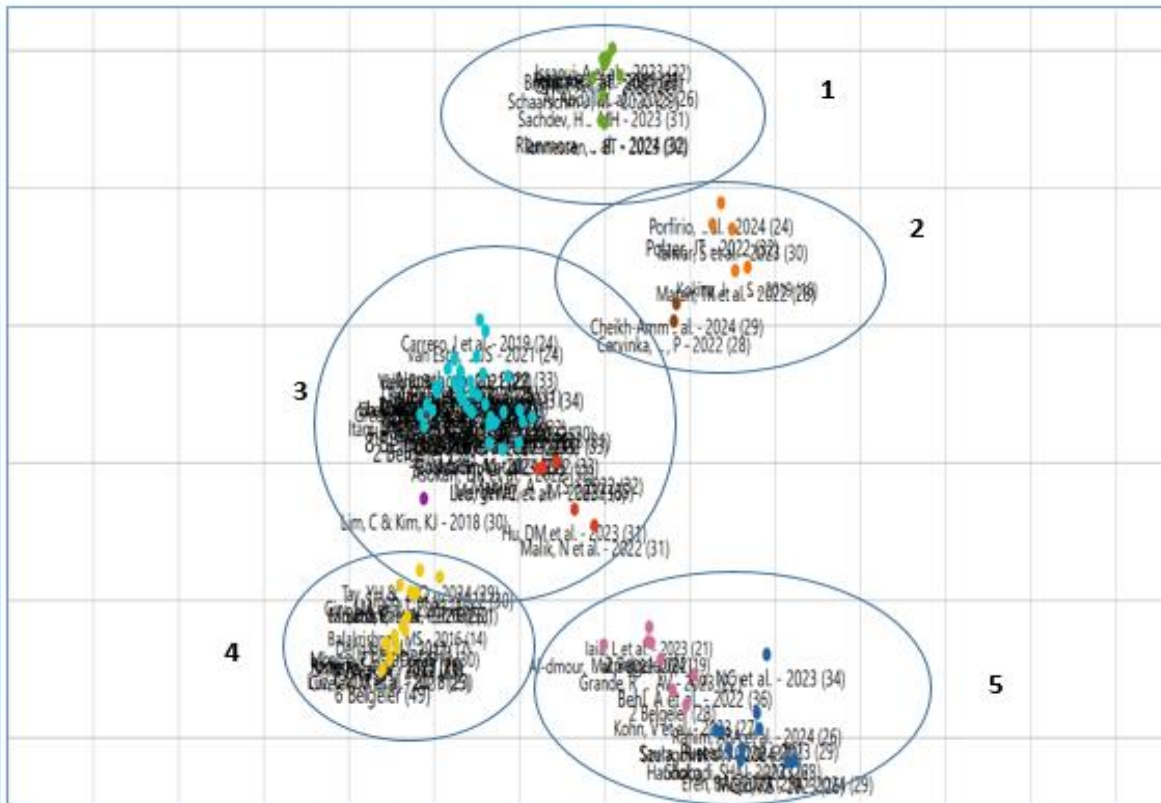
Kaynak: Created by the authors

Table 10 illustrates the code similarities among the articles addressed within the research scope. According to Table 10, it is possible to categorize these studies into five distinct groups. These categories are as follows:

1. Studies on organizational behavior and brand loyalty.
2. Studies on customer experience and artificial intelligence.
3. Studies on skills and digital transformation.
4. Studies on business performance, human resources, and employee relations.
5. Studies on digital transformation and culture.

In light of these results, it is evident that further research is needed to better elucidate the relationship between digital transformation and employee experience. Specifically, more comprehensive studies should address the following areas:

- The impact of digital tools on behavioral outcomes and employee experience. There is a need for extensive research into how digital tools affect organizational behavior and employee satisfaction.

- The transformation of employee experience by artificial intelligence. Longitudinal and in-depth studies are required to understand how artificial intelligence reshapes employee experiences, considering the effects of continuously evolving technological environments.

- The role of human resource strategies and employee relations in the digital transformation process. More research is needed on how digital transformation impacts human resource practices and how these impacts can be managed effectively.

- The effects of digital transformation on cultural adaptation processes. In-depth studies examining how digital transformation influences cultural adaptation can assist organizations in managing their digital transformation processes more effectively.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Employee experience encompasses a broad spectrum of interactions and perceptions, starting from a worker's pre-employment perceptions of the organization, through the application process, all job experiences, and feelings after leaving the job. In recent years, the concept of employee experience has garnered significant attention in human resources due to the need for organizations to redesign their cultural, technological, and physical conditions. This concept involves investing in employee value and restructuring organizational conditions based on the type of environment employees seek in their workplace. Digital transformation, on the other hand, refers not only to technological advancements but also to extensive changes in organizational culture, work processes, and working styles. The use of technological tools is a fundamental component shaping employee experience, and the effective integration of these tools can significantly enhance employees' experiences with their work and organization.

This study utilized bibliometric analysis to explore the current state and direction of research examining the variables of digital transformation and employee experience together. The findings aim to deeply understand the interactions between these two concepts and address gaps in the literature.

As a result of this research, it has been observed that the number of studies addressing both employee experience and digital transformation has increased over the years. In 2023, 42 studies were conducted, while 12 studies were conducted, while 12 studies were completed in the first quarter of 2024. These data support the view that recent development in the field of human resources have led to increased interest in employee experience approaches and the concept of digital transformation (Başaran, 2021; Gheidar & Shamizanjani, 2020). The research also examined the distribution of micro citation topics for the studied papers. Among the micro citation topics covered in the articles, notable ones include customer satisfaction, knowledge management, work-family conflict, technology acceptance model, and social movements.

According to the code cloud created for studies addressing employee experience and digital transformation, the most frequently used code is "performance", followed by " impact", " information technology", "innovation" , "technology", "model", "satisfaction", "digital transformation", "framework management" , "covıd-19", "techno-stress", and "work".

Examining the word cloud for the most frequently occurring terms in the studies within the research scope, it is observed that the most frequently used term in studies addressing both digital transformation and employee experience is "digital". This is followed by terms such as "employees" , "time", "management", "work", "study" and "business".

Contributions to the Literature:

This research provides a thorough examination of the relationship between digital transformation and employee experience, aiming to fill gaps in the literature and enhance understanding of the interactions between these two areas. Specifically, by systematically examining the effects of digital transformation on employee experience, the study seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice in academic literature.

The analysis of keyword and code clouds has identified the most frequently used terms and topics related to digital transformation and employee experience, highlighting key trends in the field. This provides researchers with insights into areas that require further investigation.

The identification of micro-level topics and code similarities, such as customer satisfaction, job satisfaction, information management, and work-family conflict, illustrates how these important issues are addressed within the context of digital transformation. These findings reveal significant themes and research directions in the existing literature, offering a foundation for more comprehensive and detailed studies.

Practical Contributions:

This study offers valuable insights for organizations planning and implementing digital transformation processes. It provides recommendations on how technology and digital transformation strategies can be integrated with employee experience, emphasizing the need for organizations to consider employee experience in their digital transformation efforts.

For human resources managers, understanding the impact of digital transformation on employee experience can aid in developing more effective HR strategies and policies. The analysis of the effects of digital tools and technologies on the workforce provides crucial information for aligning HR practices with digital transformation.

The research offers practical suggestions for improving employee experience during the digital transformation process. It can assist organizations in developing strategies to enhance employee satisfaction and engagement.

By highlighting the effects of digital transformation on management practices and decision-making processes, the study underscores the need to reshape leadership approaches and management strategies. This can help businesses adopt more effective management and leadership practices in the digital age.

In conclusion, this study contributes significantly to our understanding of the interactions between digital transformation and employee experience, providing important insights for both academic literature and practical applications. Future research should delve deeper into these topics to better understand how organizational dynamics and employee experiences are shaped by digital innovations.

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