How can employees flourish during digital workplace transformation?

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ABSTRACT

During Covid, digital workplace transformation was facilitated rapidly, and organizations need to find new solutions for employees' workplaces to maintain their business. Yet, it is unknown how the digital workplace transformation influences employees' digital flourishing. Thus, this research investigates how daily work and workflows are affected by digital workplace transformation, and how employees can use digital tools to support their work. 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted across different organizations and were analyzed using grounded theory approaches. This research found that the topic must be considered at two levels, the organizational level, and the individual level. Hence, at the macro level, this research found that good human resource management, workplace management, and process management are the foundation, the company must create to enable employees to flourish in a digital workplace environment. At the individual level factors like soft skills, competence, connectedness, self-management/ planning, and personal development are important to support employees´ digital flourishing. A conceptual framework summarizes the findings, with 6 propositions to propose topics for future research on digital workplace transformation and employee flourishing.

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Keywords

Digital Flourishing, Digital Workplace Transformation, Job satisfaction, Semi-structured Interviews, Thematic Analysis, and Qualitative Research,

1. INTRODUCTION

Living in a constantly changing environment with rapidly changing technologies, digital workplace transformation has been an emerging topic and has gained more importance through the years. Yet, recent literature shows that it is still a topic in its embryotic state (Weritz et al., 2020).

Research states that digital workplace transformation includes both an addition logic and a subtraction logic. This means that rather than constantly adding new technologies and routines, sometimes they need to be removed so that new ones can emerge (M. P. Zimmer et al., 2023; M. Zimmer et al., 2020). However, whilst before Covid-19, digital workplace transformation within organizations could last decades (Dennis, 2021), after the pandemic, digital transformation of workplaces increased rapidly (Sundermeier, 2022). Companies were forced to implement digital workplaces as their top priority, such as supporting remote work (Sundermeier, 2022). Indeed, companies not only tried to prevent their employees from illness but were also forced by lockdown regulations to enforce digital workplace transformation to maintain their business within the market. With that, employees were challenged to find a suitable place to work undisturbed at home while taking care of family members and friends or looking after their children (Sundermeier, 2022).

Two years post-pandemic, research on employees´ hybrid workplace preferences shows that individuals tend to work with technologies differently. Organizations recognized the time of change in how people work (Weritz et al., 2022). This change in people's workplace arrangement also affects the organization's performance, which is important to maintain the business within the market. Hence, the pandemic increased the evolution of digital transformation and the concerns regarding people's digital flourishing (Dennis, 2021).

Flourishing is a term that originates in psychology but gains more importance in a digital workplace context used as digital flourishing (Janicke-Bowles et al., 2023). Consequently, digital flourishing is a new term that emerged during the last decade and gained more importance in the previous few years. It can be understood as the perceived positive state of mental health in a digital workplace environment. This includes an individual's psychological, social, and emotional well-being (A'yuninnisa et al., 2023). As the workplace shifted, individuals' use of online behavior increased. Research shows that spending extended periods online will affect our digital flourishing, and there is consensus that our ability to flourish is impacted (Dennis, 2021). Additionally, the decrease in people´s well-being and the different workplace arrangements also impact the individual's performance (Weritz et al., 2022). If the individual's performance at the workplace decreases, it may lead to a decrease in their satisfaction. As a result of the change in the work situation, the boundaries between work and private life have become blurred. With that, a good and healthy work-life balance becomes more and more important for employees (Weritz et al., 2022). Furthermore, Dennis (2021) shows that previous research has found that people's digital flourishing is influenced by the way they interact with digital tools rather than the amount of time they spend online. Hence, looking at how employees' interactions with digital technologies are influenced by the digital workplace environment, may help to increase their possibility of flourishing. Since digital technologies are constantly changing and developing, investigating how organizations implement their digital workplace strategy to support employees' flourishing is important. Yet, it is still barely researched how digital workplace transformation impacts employees flourishing. Therefore, the following question emerges:

"How can employees flourish during digital workplace transformation?"

Applying a qualitative approach, this research aims to explore the factors connecting digital workplace transformation and digital flourishing. Hence, the use of semi-structured interviews helps to gain insight into the daily work of employees and how companies set up a digital workplace environment and promote digital flourishing.

This research contributes to the theoretical understanding of the relationship between digital workplace transformation and digital flourishing. This research aims to highlight the factors that answer the question of how employees can flourish during digital workplace transformation. In addition, based on the findings, recommendations have been formulated that support the company in implementing the digital workplace transformation and thus enable employee flourishing.

The remaining parts of this research are structured as follows. The theory and literature that is relevant are discussed in Section 2. While section 3 covers the used methodology and elaborates on how the interviews will be analyzed, the results of the analysis are presented in section 4. Finally, Section 5 discusses the results, summarizes the limitations, and suggests directions for future research, ending with a conclusion in Section 6.

2. LITERATURE
2.1 Digital Workplace Transformation

Digital workplace transformation can be seen as a long-term change process through digital technologies (Nosegaard et al., 2023). It is not surprising that it has gained more and more interest as people worldwide face the same problem of adapting to a digital world (Kraus et al., 2021). As digital transformation introduces new processes and mechanisms in how organizations do business, digital transformation also applies to the workplace (Kraus et al., 2021). Therefore, looking at digital workplace transformation is vital to understand the impact of technologies on the organization and the employees to benefit from the digital workplace transformation, and to improve organizational effectiveness (M. P. Zimmer et al., 2023).

Since Meske (2019) found that research pays less attention to the individual´s workplace environment and the digital tools used, digital workplace transformation was defined as a phenomenon of new technologies that crucially changes how employees carry out tasks and processes and impacts their social relations within the organization as well as their overall workplace environment (Meske, 2019). More recent literature stresses the need for organizations to adjust their processes and strategies to stay competitive during the digital workplace transformation (Weritz et al., 2020). Consequently, a successful digital workplace transformation is essential to perform well and improve the organization's performance. M. P. Zimmer et al. (2023) show that the mindful use of digital collaboration technologies and a shift in leadership culture are key activities for achieving digital workplace

transformation. New workplace routines emerge as digital technologies enable novel ways of working within an organization. Since digital workplace transformation is about adding new technologies and removing workplace technologies that conflict with the intended digital workplace strategy, removing existing technologies leads to a disruption of routines (M. P. Zimmer et al., 2023). This makes it even more important and relevant to investigate how employees can flourish during digital workplace transformation as disruption in working routines leads to a decrease in performance.

Apart from that, the literature has shown that adding new digital technologies can create new work routines and simplifies working life in a dynamic and frequently unstructured working environment (M. P. Zimmer et al., 2023). Weritz et al. (2020) elaborated that digital transformation affects organizational tasks, structure, people, and culture and requires new communication due to the shift in demand and increasingly competitive environments. As digital workplace transformation provides opportunities and competitive advantage, it should be supported by the organization.

However, implementing digital technologies and tools is not always easy, and yet not all organizations reach digital maturity (Weritz et al., 2020). Further research shows that digital transition, like any other change process, poses risks and challenges and that it is difficult to implement any change process, with about 70% of large organizational changes failing (Kraus et al., 2022). Hence, how important the rapid impact of digital workplace transformation is, was shown by the Covid-19 pandemic (Kraus, et al., 2021).

In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic rapidly changed the way we do things and caused millions to integrate digital technologies into their daily routines (Dennis, 2021). With the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, workplaces shifted from physical workplaces to digital workplaces (Sundermeier, 2022). As workplace routines for employees changed towards remote settings, the workplace design was no longer dependent on geographical, physical, and organizational boundaries (Weritz et al., 2022). Therefore, employees were forced to adapt rapidly to the new situation. However, post-Covid, Weritz et al. (2022), discovered differences in employees' workplace preferences make it crucial for firms to provide solutions for individual workplace preferences.

The constant change in digital technologies used in the company, the associated change in work processes, and the change in workplace preferences make it necessary to investigate *(1) How employees can benefit from the digital tools used (2) Future trends and changes to adapt in good time (3) How to ensure the company's performance.* Hence, it is crucial to investigate how employees can use digital resources to their advantage and positively influence their workday and everyday life, among which flourishing.

2.2 Digital Flourishing

Digital flourishing is an emerging term within the last few years (Dennis, 2021; Rosič et al., 2022; Janicke-Bowles et al., 2023; A'yuninnisa et al., 2023). Flourishing originates in psychology research and is understood as both, "feeling well" and "doing well" (Janicke-Bowles et al., 2023). While "feeling well" refers to a person's perception of their experiences, "doing well" refers to a person's behavior with mediated social interactions (Janicke-Bowles et al.,

2023). Based on that, digital flourishing is defined as the positive perception of an individual's experiences and behaviors in mediated social interactions.

With the increasing integration of digital technologies into people's daily routines, research has applied the concept of well-being to the context of computer-mediated communication (CMC) (Rosič et al., 2022). Since the positive side of mental health is referred to as well-being or flourishing, Janicke-Bowles et al. (2023) suggest that meditated social interaction, in other words, computer-mediated communication, is essential to understanding digital flourishing. CMC is defined as "an umbrella term for multimodal human-to-human social interaction mediated by information and communication technologies (ICT)" (Janicke-Bowles et al., 2023, p. 2).

While the negative effects of mediate devices have been researched for more than a decade (Dennis, 2021), the positive effects of digital communication have been less researched (Rosič et al., 2022). As digital flourishing is related to positive mental health status (A'yuninnisa et al., 2023), a conceptualization of how people perceive it is presented by Janicke-Bowles et al. (2023). Thus, Janicke-Bowles et al. (2023) propose six main dimensions on which people perceive digital flourishing. The first three dimensions that enhance employees' competence are authentic self-disclosure positive social comparison and civil participation (Janicke-Bowles et al., 2023). The next dimension that enhances employees' relatedness is social connectedness. Finally, self-control enhances employees' autonomy (Janicke-Bowles et al., 2023).

Roffarello et al. (2023) stated that technology improves people's lives in several ways and without technologies it would have been harder to overcome the pandemic. During the pandemic, workplace situations and social relationships changed. Millions of people rapidly integrated digital technologies into their daily lives and started working, socializing, and attending online medical appointments (Dennis, 2021). Yet, the consequences of such a large-scale shift are unpredictable. However, M. P. Zimmer et al. (2023) show that changes in the workplace situation, like adding new technologies or subtracting old ones, disrupt routines. This makes it even more important to look at the impact of the digital workplace transformation on employees flourishing as any kind of disruption in the workflow could lead to dissatisfaction and a decrease in employees' performance.

As the workplace shifted, individuals' use of online behavior increased. Research shows that spending extended periods online will affect our digital flourishing, and there is consensus that our ability to flourish is impacted (Dennis, 2021). Further research shows that nowadays, people use different devices in several contexts and for a variety of purposes (Roffarello et al., 2023). As the use of digital technologies increases continuously in our daily life at the workplace as well as in our private surroundings, affecting our digital flourishing it is crucial to investigate how employees can perceive benefits from digital communication and technology use in general. One way of doing so is to investigate an individual's experiences and behaviors in mediated social interactions in a workplace situation. Therefore, it is important to have a look at how digital technology is used within the organization and to what extent it impacts the employee's workplace. While other research focuses on specific devices, digital flourishing relates to mediated social interactions, making it a more generalizable concept (Janicke-Bowles et al., 2023). Based on that, identifying

how employees can flourish during a digital workplace transformation might help to apply these concepts to other areas of our life. Doing so increases employees' knowledge and confidence in handling digital technologies. Consequently, they would benefit from that at the workplace as well.

Hence, in light of the findings in the literature digital workplace transformation bears several challenges for employees and organizations. Knowing how the implemented digital workplace transformation impacts the employees, provides the possibility to increase their performance, satisfaction, and consequently employee flourishing.

3. METHODOLOGY
3.1 Research Design

Inductive, qualitative research was conducted to investigate the relevant topic, by using semi-structured interviews. Digital flourishing is a new emerging topic based on subjective experiences. Therefore, qualitative analysis, especially conducting interviews, is efficient to identify the individual perception of digital flourishing in the context of a digital workplace environment (Saunders et al., 2012). As one characteristic of qualitative research is to investigate topics in real-life settings (Yin, 2015) semi-structured interviews provide the possibility to get a deeper insight into the topic, by allowing for additional questions that arise during the interview (Saunders et al., 2012). Applying inductive reasoning provides the possibility to investigate the relationship between digital workplace transformation and digital flourishing and make propositions that can be tested in future studies (Saunders et al., 2012).

As this research includes primary data collection, ethical approval was requested at the ethics committee BMS of the University of Twente.

3.2 Data Collection & Sampling
3.2.1 Sampling

For the sampling, a purposeful sampling method was chosen. It is a non-probability sampling technique where the chances to be selected for this research are unknown (Saunders et al., 2012). The focus was to investigate the relationship between digital workplace transformation and digital flourishing. As the data could not be collected from the whole population and there was a clear focus on selecting the data, heterogeneous purposive sampling was the most suitable sampling method for this research, since it helped to reveal key themes within the data (Saunders et al., 2012).

The sample size with non-probability sampling techniques depends on the nature of the study. The minimum sample size for semi-structured interviews is between 5-25 participants. However, in qualitative research, it is recommended to collect data until data saturation is reached: meaning additional data collection does not add any new information to the research (Saunders et al., 2012). 10 Interviews were conducted, and participants were selected based on several criteria. *(1) All interviewees should work in a digital workplace environment. (2) The interviewees should be of working age between 18 and 65 years. (3) The interviewees should have a tenure of at least one year.* Following these criteria, Interviewees have been selected from 10 different companies located in the Netherlands or Germany, ranging from small- (<50 employees) to large-sized (>300 employees) organizations. Out of these 10 participants, 7 (70%) were female and 3 (30%) were male, with an average age of 46 years. An overview of the participants, the associated company and industry, as well as age and position, is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants Characteristics

Participant/ Role/ Tenure	Gender/ Age	Industry	Firm Size	Function Title
P1 Employee 1.5 years	Female, 23	Franchise, Coffee Industry	< 50, Small	Supply Chain associate
P2, Employee, 28 years	Female, 47	Dutch Government	> 300, Large	Senior in the intelligence business
P3, Employee, 22 years	Female, 58	Dutch Government	< 50, Small	Managing Partner
P4, Employee, 8 years	Female, 26	Medical Sector	> 300, Large	Purchaser in logistics
P5, Employee, 2 years	Female, 25	Dutch Government	> 300, Large	Advisor of deputy secretary general
P6, CEO, 23 years	Male, 58	Electronic Industry	< 50, Small	CEO
P7, Employee, 30 years	Female, 60	Water Industry Association	> 300, Large	Clerk for a drinking water company
P8, Employee, 33 years	Male, 58	Dutch Insurance	> 300, Large	IT
P9, Employee, 3 years	Female, 53	Electronic Industry	< 50, Small	Assistant for office management
P10, Employee, 24 years	Male, 47	Dutch Government	> 300, Large	Strategic Advisor

3.2.2 Research Instruments

Within qualitative research, three different interview types can be used to investigate the topic – structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and unstructured interviews (Saunders et al., 2012). As structured interviews are based on predetermined and standardized questions they are also called "quantitative research interviews" (Saunders et al., 2012). Compared to structured interviews, semi-structured and unstructured interviews provide the possibility of deeper insights into a topic and allow for additional questions to come up during the interview (Saunders et al., 2012).

Within qualitative research, semi-structured interviews are the most common type of interview (Doody & Noonan, 2013). However, some biases need to be considered. One possible bias is that the interviewer influences the participant through non-verbal communication (Saunders et al., 2012). Moreover, open-ended questions bear the risk that participants understand the questions differently, as the interviewer does not have to stick to the exact formulation. Semi-structured interviews with approximately 10 open-ended questions were chosen to obtain the information needed to answer the research question and to help to avoid bias (Saunders et al., 2012).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 employees from different organizations and industries in the Netherlands and Germany. The interviews were conducted via MS Teams, in English or German, depending on the participant's preference, and lasted about one hour each. Data was collected between May 26, 2023, to June 7, 2023. Responses were recorded through notes and conversations were recorded with consent. In addition, an interview protocol was prepared.

3.3 Data Analysis

An inductive approach to thematic analysis was used to analyze the data from semi-structured interviews. Inductive coding is a process within the thematic analysis that analyses the data without trying to fit it into pre-determined coding frames (Braun & Clark, 2006). Therefore, thematic analysis is data-driven as the identified themes are related to the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative analysis method within and beyond psychology, analyzing and reporting patterns or themes within data.

Before analyzing the data, the video recordings were transcribed into written form by using Amberscript. Next, the transcriptions were uploaded to Atlas.ti, to conduct thematic analysis. The first step of analyzing the data was to generate initial codes like expertise, development, flexibility, and motivation. Once the initial codes have been generated, the codes have been sorted into different themes. In the next step, the themes were reviewed to ensure that there is a clear distinction between the themes (Braun & Clark, 2006). Afterward, the themes were named and defined as human resource management, workplace management, process management, soft skills, competence, connectedness, self-management/ planning, and personal development. Finally, the themes were summarized into the aggregated dimensions: the organizational level and the individual level. For a better understanding, the codes were structured according to the grounded theory terminology suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990) – open, axial, and selective coding, and the Gioia Method terminology – first-order codes, second-order codes, and aggregated dimensions (Gioia et al.,2012). The data structure is summarized in Figure 1 in Appendix 8.1.

4. RESULTS

This research investigated "How employees can flourish during digital workplace transformation?".

Figure 1, in Appendix 8.1, illustrates the data structure which indicates two aggregated dimensions: organizational level, and individual level, which will be discussed below.

4.1 Organizational Level

The data indicated that different organizational topics are important to consider during a digital workplace transformation. These topics are Human Resource Management, Workplace Management, and Process Management, which will be discussed below.

4.1.1 Human Resource Management

Looking at the interviews, participants indicated that education and training are important within a digital workplace environment. Participant 8 stated: *"The need for change is education. People don't know how this stuff works, and that's why they don't use it properly and miss out on a lot of possibilities. So that's why I'm here for it, to explain it to them and to tell them: if you use it in a good way, you benefit from it"* (P8). Participant 2 supports that training is important as well to enhance employee's motivation: *"they motivate us to take courses to catch up with everything that motivates us to teach each other"* (P2).

Participant 2 indicated: *"We are with 67 people from the police, firemen, and ambulance together in the same room. Sometimes it can be frustrating to work in a big surrounding with a lot of people. There is a lot of noise, and it's a high work pressure."* (P2). This shows that group size is sometimes important to the atmosphere at the workplace since it affects the effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity of employees.

Besides the training, there are different kinds of support from the organization. One participant stated, *"The disadvantage of this, which not many employees are aware of, is that you also have expenses at home. My employer, for example, does not cover any electricity costs."* (P7). However, another participant indicated the opposite: *"If I want to go to the office, I can. They don't block me from coming to the office, but they also gave some money to for to compensate for some heating and stuff like that and the Internet connection."* (P8). Hence, different support options increase the employee's competence and therefore confidence. Additionally, the organization becomes more attractive by offering different benefits for employees.

Another important factor besides the group size and the support of the company was indicated by Participant 7: *"We have this employee meeting once a year, where an annual plan is made, and you can also measure from that whether everything fits, what you have discussed, what your goal is and how, that then coincides with the employer"* (P7). Offering employee interviews to provide feedback and discuss personal and professional goals increase employees' competence.
Based on these findings, human resource management considers all decisions that include personal availability

having the personnel at the right place, setting goals as well as creating a good team. Doing so influences the workplace atmosphere, employees' connectedness, productivity, and work-life balance.

4.1.2 Workplace Management
The research indicates that from a CEO perspective: *"It's a question of the resources you have available, I think. Digitization in the workplace requires a certain amount of resources, just to implement the innovation, create the structures, and have creative ideas. How do we do that with the processes and so on? And that's where the biggest challenge for us is that we just don't have enough resources that they can keep people busy enough that you can do it in one go."* (P6). From the employee perspective participants 1 and 5 support this: *"I think that you're equipped with the right things that you have, like a good running system that is provided by work where you don't need to like, purchase things yourself, is important"* (P1), and *"First of all, just technically that it works, not a system that is ten years old."* (P5). Providing this foundation positively influences the workflow, and helps employees to reach their personal and professional goals. Moreover, managing the workplace in terms of providing the right hard- and software, systems, and equipment, influences the employees' flexibility. Through the right equipment and systems, employees can work remotely. In addition, *"I think that the mixture best of both worlds actually. it's important that an employee can, has the freedom to do what is best for them"* (P5) is one example that having the autonomy to decide whether to work at the office or from home increases employees work-life balance, efficiency, and satisfaction.

Furthermore, old technology decreased employees' workflow as well as their productivity and satisfaction at the workplace. Participant 5 *stated "Regarding that system, two years ago it was really old and slow. And that was for the whole organization annoying. Um, it was always stuck and yeah, it was terrible"* (P5). Hence, workplace management is about everything that needs to be organized within a digital workplace environment. This includes simple things such as the accessibility of documents and data needed to execute the tasks.

4.1.3 Process Management
Regarding process management, this research found that *"Since Covid, everybody had to work at home. So the organization made systems."* (P2). Indicating that due to the Covid-19 pandemic processes needed to be redefined and adapted to the situation.

Furthermore, one example of how important the communication process is, within the organization comes from Participant 3: *"I think the mixture of being face-to-face and being digital is really good because if you're only having meetings via teams, you're missing a lot of information with the non-verbal communication and you also miss a little bit of the easy chit-chat you have with people, which is important to have a good relationship, which also affects the work I'm doing. But if it means I don't have to sit in my car for 2.5 hours one way and have a meeting of one hour, I prefer to do it via teams, so I think the mixture is great."* (P3). Here, the research shows that depending on the issue that is discussed as well as the time ratio of traveling and meeting time, influences the decision-making whether the meeting takes place physically, or online. Additionally, this enhances

employees' connectedness as they can maintain good relationships with other employees. Furthermore, in the context of meetings, Participant 5 said: *"There's always one person who takes the lead. I think it's important that that person, allows, and gives the possibility to people to make their points for others to react. And it depends on how many people you are. So, if you're like 20 people that good luck with the discussion."* (P5). Consequently, the organization needs to provide rules and regulations for how communication and information workflow should proceed. These rules should then apply to both digital and physical communication. Additionally, it is one example of the importance of a chairman or a mediator who leads the conversation and guides the discussions. Providing these structures, rules, and regulations guides the employees in the fast-changing digital workplace environment and helps to improve their handling of digital tools and enhance their confidence.

4.2 Individual Level
Besides the organizational level, the data displays different topics considering the individual level. Topics that have been discovered are Soft Skills, Competence, Connectedness, Self-management/ Planning, and Personal Development.

4.2.1 Soft Skills
At the individual level, the data indicated that employee flourishing is also dependent on the individuals' soft skills. Participant 3 indicates that: *"I don't have any trouble making sure that my point is taken into meetings and things like that. But I think that also has to do with the kind of person you are."* (P3). Additionally, it was stated that *"There are a lot of programs like teams or Zoom or SharePoint or whatsoever, and I'm not very patient when it comes to those tools."* (P3). This shows that another important soft skill of employees is to be patient with things and change. Moreover, in a meeting context, employees' soft skills influence how they behave. Participant 2 provided an example of that: *"Some people, don't like to be at the podium, and some people can grow in it because employees will give you compliments or will you let take classes."* (P2). Furthermore, participant 3 stated: *"I found out I'm a pretty person-person, so I like to be in the office to be able to see my colleagues and talk with each other by the coffee machine."* (P3). This indicates that soft skills also influence how you connect with others in the workplace. Here, the research found that in a rapidly changing digital workplace environment, employees handle new situations differently, depending on their soft skills. Thus, depending on their personality and character traits, as well as their motivation to deal with digital transformation in the workplace, people engage differently with the increasing use of technology in the workplace.

4.2.2 Competence
Participants indicated that proper training increases employee competence: *"I think training would help because with teams you can simplify a lot of things by changing the settings."* (P4). One factor that is indicated by participants 6 and 8 is that proper training increases employee competence. While participant 6 states: *"For me, it's important that I understand the technology or how the systems work, or that I can master the systems. For me,*

that's the key to being able to use them optimally, so that they also support me. Yes, it's no use if I have a great Outlook program, but I can't use or operate the functions that are in it. Then I can take a paper calendar, and you can't use the advantages. So, that's already, a basic requirement for me, if you want to work more effectively with these systems, you must master them. And I think that is also the basic challenge that every employee must meet today, that they learn to understand these systems, learn to operate them, and learn to use them correctly. So, I think there is still a lot of training work needed, but that's where it should go." (P6). Participant 8 adds *"I think it improves the well-being on the job because when you know how to use the tools, you're happier with it, you're not frustrated and you're more productive."* (P8). Hence, employees need to have proper training since it increases their confidence in using those tools and consequently their competence.

4.2.3 Connectedness

This research found that employee connectedness is important to maintain during the digital workplace transformation. While participant 1 indicates how to stay connected in a digital workplace environment: *"I've mentioned before already the business lunches that we do, um, and they are online, of course, so that's one way of networking between colleagues."* (P1). Another participant states that: *"You'd probably have to cut back on digitization a bit. It's true that if you're only in contact with your colleagues once a week, the bond between you and them is already receding a bit."* (P7). However, participant 8 thinks: *"So it's second best. So for the real connection, I want to do it physically. To meet people in person. But once a connection is made, then you can use the electronic version to continue on them."* (P8). Therefore, whether employees feel connected in a digital workplace environment is also influenced by their personality. Yet, participant 1 indicates that: *"So I think our HR department and our CEOs, and everyone who's head of the department, did a great job of like creating a team that works well together."* (P1). Hence, a good working atmosphere and good teamwork increase employees' connectedness.

Furthermore, the connectedness of employees is also influenced by those small conversations at the workplace. *"If I'm working and I have a question when I'm in my office, I just leave my room, go to my colleague, and ask the questions. Then sometimes we have something like, Oh, you want to have a cup of coffee and you have some social interaction."* (P3). Finally, Participant 4 also indicated that during Covid social contact decreased: *"During Covid, we then had only home office. So, I thought, okay, I'll lose my social contacts, but that's it. When I take stock of this mixture of home office and office days, it's a positive change."* (P4).

Socializing and connecting with other people rests in human beings. Feeling connected to coworkers, therefore, increases the employees' flourishing. To increase the perceived connectedness both, employees and the organization need to create a good workplace atmosphere. Opportunities such as Teamwork, having lunch together, or doing fun activities outside the workplace increase social interactions and employees' social belonging.

4.2.4 Self-Management/ Planning

About self-management and planning, participant 1 stated *"I work a lot from home. And you always work in places where surrounded by a lot of distractions"* (P1). On the other hand, participant 3 said: *"I don't want to be at home or digital all the time because then I'm getting crazy because the problem is when I'm working at home, then I'm going to sit in my chair and I'm going to start working and I don't get out of my chair only when I have to go to the bathroom or want to have a cup of coffee"* (P3). Moreover, Participant 4 stated, *"Okay, then you just do the laundry or the household simply so that you can have that work-life balance"* (P4). Additionally, this indicates that flexibility is an important factor for employees. Besides that participant 8 suggests that: *"Take care of yourself. Plan time for yourself. So don't do meetings all day long. Just after another. Sometimes, just say half an hour, do something else."* (P8). Similarly, participant 10 indicates: *"I have to plan, or I have every two hours, ten minutes outside, a little bit walking and that sort of thing."* (P10) Reminding themselves to take a break or end the workday increases the work-life balance and helps employees to stay motivated, focused, and productive. Additionally, managing their time in terms of meetings and working on the tasks that need to be done after the meetings, increases the employee's productivity and efficiency. Finally, one example of using an agenda for planning as well as taking notes is given by Participant 1: *"If it's a really big meeting, I usually write things down beforehand as well. I prepare for the meeting and write the things down that I want to say, and then I cross out what I've already spoken about or what I already wanted to say."* (P1). This helps employees beside and during the meetings to stay organized.

4.2.5 Personal Development

Findings from the research include personal development opportunities. Employees indicated that if they can improve their skills, gain knowledge, and develop personally, it increases their confidence as well as their competence in how to deal with the technologies used. One example is *"The, need for change is education. People don't know how this stuff works. So, and that's why they don't use it properly, and they miss out on a lot of possibilities."* (P8). Another example is *"The ministry always offers training, and everyone can follow it, masterclasses, etcetera. So, it's about how you feel when you're working at the office?"* (P5). Participant 10 adds to the importance of personal development as well: *"It's a large company, so you've got lots of opportunities to grow in the company. There is a budget for you for training, education, and that sort of thing."* (P10). Thus, providing the opportunity to improve and develop personally, increases employees' responsibility, knowledge, and competence within their workplace. Additionally, it is important how the training is done. *"Yes, it must be structured in such a way that you can follow and understand the steps later. Because it's simple, when you're sitting in this training, it's always the case that you already understand what the person at the front is explaining. At the latest, when you are sitting alone in front of it, you realize that you are missing something. And so, I find a good training that has structured it in such a way that you can follow the steps afterward."* (P9). Research shows that employees strive to achieve personal and professional goals, which can be supported by the organization by providing the foundation for continuing education. This increases the employees' confidence in a

digital workplace transformation as well as their satisfaction at the workplace.

5. DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

5.1 Discussion

This Thesis examined the relationship between digital workplace transformation and digital flourishing, its influence on perceived digital flourishing, and the impact of the digital workplace on employees flourishing during the digital workplace transformation.

The findings of this research can be summarized at the organizational level and the individual level.

At the macro level, the first important factor is human resource management. Human resource management is important within a company since it deals with workforce management, job design, training, and development, managing employees' competencies as well as performance management (Lepak & Gowan, 2010). Therefore, good HR practices contribute to the organization's performance. Furthermore, providing feedback to employees in terms of employee interviews is seen to increase employees' job satisfaction according to the job characteristics model from Hackman and Oldham (1976).

The second factor is workplace management. Participants indicated that they are dissatisfied with the technical equipment in their company, because in some cases old technologies are used or employees are not adequately equipped with hardware and software. This leads to interruptions in the workflow, as it is time-consuming when employees must wait for the devices to respond. That employees are increasingly dissatisfied with their workplace capabilities, and technologies used has been researched by Attaran et al. (2019). Furthermore, Attaran et al. (2019) indicated that the adoption rate of smart workplace technology in organizations is low. Hence, improving the workplace for employees is crucial to increase employees' performance and satisfaction.

The third factor is process management. Based on the research process management include everything that has to do with defining the processes within the organization. Process management can be seen as part of operations management since it includes managing services and goods, process management, supply chain and inventory, and quality control (Slack et al., 2016). Therefore, defining the key processes within the organization, and providing rules and regulations on how to execute the work, improve the workflow within the organization and increase employee satisfaction.

At the individual level, the first factor that was indicated is the employees' soft skills. The soft skills indicated by the participants include characteristic traits, personality, flexibility, patience, and motivation. They are important for the person-job fit because HR can place the right person in the right job within the organization, as personal characteristics are part of the selection process (Lepak & Gowan, 2010).

The second factor is employees' competence. According to Lepak & Gowan (2010), HR is about managing employees' competencies as well as providing training and development. Therefore, employees can gain knowledge and improve their expertise with support from the organization to enhance their satisfaction at the workplace as well as their digital flourishing. In addition, skill variety at the workplace increases employees' job satisfaction (Ali et al., 2014).

The third factor is employee connectedness. Janicke-Bowles et al. (2022) pointed out that social connectedness is a factor that promotes relatedness, which increases employees' perception of digital flourishing. Since this is a dimension in which employees perceive digital flourishing, both employees and companies should promote a good atmosphere in the workplace. Furthermore, how important social connectedness is, was shown during the Covid-19 pandemic (A. Brown & Leite, 2022).

The fourth factor is self-management and planning. Breevaart et al. (2014) pointed out that work is becoming more flexible as it is no longer dependent on location. Therefore, working independently is becoming more and more important for employees. Furthermore, In addition, self-management refers to controlling and monitoring one's behavior and being responsible for one's own decisions (Breevaart et al., 2014). However, in this research self-management refers more to planning the workday, including breaks and preparing for meetings on time.

The fifth factor is personal development. Personal development within the organization is supported by the HR department, by offering and providing different training and development opportunities (Lepak & Gowan, 2010). The research found that proper training help employees become more confident in executing their tasks. The extent to which employees need personal growth affects their relationship with dimensions of the job characteristics model and, therefore, job satisfaction. (Brown & Lent, 2013).

5.2 Theoretical Contribution

At the macro level, the first major contribution to the literature is that companies must provide the foundation for a digital workplace to enable digital flourishing. This research found that whether a company can provide the foundation is dependent on its resources and capabilities which vary with the organizational size. This corresponds with the literature of Weritz et al. (2020) that implementing digital tools and technology is not always easy. Hence, organizations should use their resources properly to facilitate employees' daily work and support them during the digital workplace transformation. This aligns with the literature from M. P. Zimmer et al. (2023) that a successful digital workplace transformation is essential to improve the organization's performance.

Furthermore, this research found that indeed new technologies are significantly changing the way employees perform tasks and processes, and how they impact their social relationships within the organization as well as their overall work environment. (Meske, 2019). As the workplace situation changed during Covid, participants said they were able to work more remotely, which improved both their flexibility and productivity. This supports the research by Weritz et al. (2020) that adding new technologies can create new work routines and simplify work. However, this research also supports that digital technology is based on adding new technologies and removing existing ones, which disrupts routines and

impacts employees' workflow as well as decreases their efficiency (M. P. Zimmer et al., 2023).

Another contribution to the literature is that organizations need to manage their business in terms of human resource management, workplace management, and process management. This involves companies defining and organizing processes within the organization and providing employees with a guide for using and managing digital tools and processes. In addition, supporting employees through training and assigning them the right workstation increases productivity and job satisfaction.

At the individual level, contributions to the literature are grouped into soft skills, competence, connectedness, self-management/ planning, and personal development.

The first contribution indicated is the soft skills of the employees. Here this research found that depending on employees' personality, behavior, and character traits, people tend to engage differently with digital technology. In addition, it also adds to the literature that employee flourishing depends not only on the digital workplace environment but also on employees' attitudes toward working with digital technologies.

The second contribution indicated employee competence as a factor that enhances employee flourishing. This support the literature of Janicke-Bowles et al. (2023) that competence is one of three factors of the basic psychological needs, a subsection in self-determination theory. Moreover, it is argued that satisfying these three psychological needs (competence, relatedness, and autonomy), is key and leads to short-term and long-term flourishing. In addition, the second factor that was indicated is connectedness. This corresponds to Janicke-Bowles et al. (2023) which indicated social connectedness as a relatedness-enhancing perception in mediated interactions. However, this research shows that both factors either impact how employees use and engage with technology or that the digital workplace provides the structures that can both facilitate or hinder social interactions.

The next factor that came up is self-management/ planning. This represents a new contribution to the literature, as it has not been previously mentioned in the context of digital workplace transformation or digital flourishing. Therefore, in this study, self-management/planning was referred to as the ability of workers to properly plan their own time in a digital workplace environment and be able to take care of themselves by planning their workday responsibly, not overloading it, and taking adequate breaks.

Finally, a new contribution to the literature is made by the personal development factor. Here, this research indicates that personal growth and development are important for employees since it increases their knowledge of how to do things and therefore their confidence as well.

Concluding, the individual level is mainly influenced by the organization in terms of its resources and capabilities to implement a digital workplace strategy. This finding is somewhat new, as Weritz et al. (2020) pointed out that the introduction of new technologies can create new routines and simplify work in a dynamic work environment. However, this does not consider the impact at the individual level, which adds to the literature. Hence, if the organization is not able to provide good working systems that decrease errors and interruptions in the workplace, employee flourishing is negatively impacted. Therefore, organizations need to provide a good working system and support its development to reduce the frequency of making mistakes, offer more flexibility to the employees, and increase employee satisfaction.

Based on the findings the conceptual model in Figure 2 is proposed, and the following propositions can be formulated to answer the research question. (1) The foundation for the digital workplace needs to be provided by the organization in terms of human resource management, workplace management, and process management to enhance employees' flourishing. (2) How employees interact with digital tools and technology depends on their soft skills. (3) Perceiving social connectedness at the workplace, increases employee's ability to flourish. (4) Employees' competence is increased by appropriate training supporting employee flourishing. (5) Good self-management and planning, simplifies their workday by having more control over their tasks and therefore decreasing employees' stress level that then enhances employee flourishing. (6) Having the possibility of constantly developing personally, increases employees' abilities to execute their tasks, which increases employee's efficiency, effectiveness, and satisfaction at the workplace. This positively impacts employees flourishing.
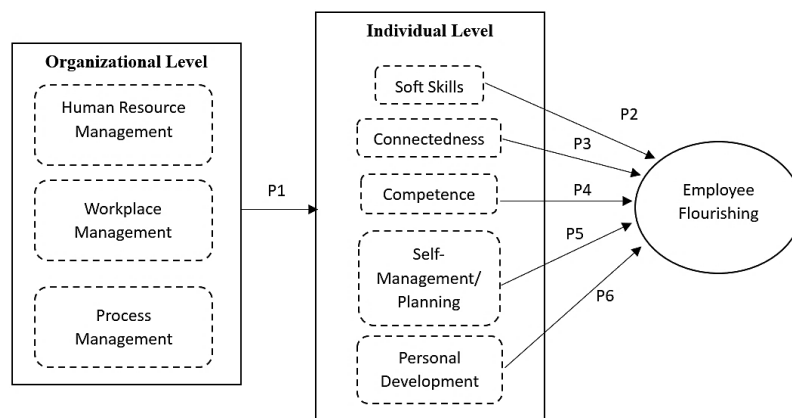

Figure 2. Proposed conceptual model of how employees can flourish during digital workplace transformation

5.3 Practical Implications

For the practical implications of this research, both employees and organizations can benefit from employee flourishing. By providing the foundation for a digital workplace the company enables its employees to flourish digitally. In addition, good HR practice that support employees in terms of training, motivation, and development helps to influence their competence, boost their confidence in getting things done, and increase their job satisfaction as they make fewer mistakes. For employees, increasing their competence also means improving their digital flourishing.

Providing a well-equipped workplace at a time when work is becoming increasingly independent of the workplace also facilitates workflow by keeping systems running smoothly and wasting less time waiting. In addition, employees' flexibility increases when they have the option to work remotely. By providing employees with the right equipment and ensuring a good digital workplace, the company can improve employees' attitudes toward working with digital technologies and increase their performance and satisfaction in the workplace.

Since process management is part of an organization's operation management, it is crucial to define the processes within the organization to increase its effectiveness and performance. Providing rules and regulations for the use of digital tools within the organization increases the workflow, and employees' effectiveness and saves time, as everyone knows where to find documents, etc. Moreover, Optimizing the processes so that everything runs smoothly increases the company's performance.

On an individual level, employee flourishing is influenced by their soft skills, competence, connectedness, self-management/planning, and personal development. Depending on how employees behave and the extent to which they can increase their competence, develop personally, and feel connected to their colleagues, digital flourishing increases. In addition, the ability to take responsibility for their well-being by managing their time appropriately increases digital flourishing, which in turn has a positive impact on employee satisfaction and performance affecting organizational performance positively.

In summary, both companies and employees are responsible for enabling employees to flourish digitally. The organization operates as a facilitator of a digital workplace environment and the individual uses its competence and capabilities to make the best use of the resources provided to increase employee flourishing.

5.4 Limitations & Future Research

This research is limited by the researchers' lack of experience in executing qualitative research. Besides that, it is limited to the timeframe, as there was a limited time for the data collection. Furthermore, during the interviews, the researcher noticed that participants sometimes did not understand the questions they were asked, due to language barriers as English is not their mother tongue. Based on that the researcher was forced to reformulate the questions and add additional information. However, this increased the possibility that researchers' experience and knowledge guided the answer of the participants. The language barriers were reduced by helping with vocabulary or translating the original word into English. When rephrasing the questions, the researcher used similar words to reduce their influence on the participants. Furthermore, the researcher tried to rephrase or explain the questions, once the participant already answered.

In conducting similar research, future research on digital workplace transformation and digital flourishing should consider that workers are not very familiar with the term "flourishing". Besides that, it could be helpful to focus on one organization instead of many different ones, to better compare the participants and investigate how this could be applied to other companies.

It is suggested for future research to have a look at different organizational sizes and compare them in terms of their resources and implemented digital workplace transformation. In addition, it could be interesting to investigate to what extent employee flourishing is affected by the organization's culture. A final suggestion for future research is to examine the impact of cultural differences within the organization and generational differences on how employees engage with digital technologies.

6. CONCLUSION

This research explored the relationship between digital workplace transformation and digital flourishing to answer the question:

"How can employees flourish during digital workplace transformation?"

By applying qualitative research with an inductive approach, the researcher found that employee flourishing is impacted at the organizational level in terms of human resource management, workplace management, and process management. Without the foundation of a digital workplace, including good running systems, structures, rules, and regulations, there is no environment for employees to flourish. Beyond the support of the company, employees can foster their digital flourishing by constantly working on their soft skills, competence, self-management/ planning, and personal development. In addition, maintaining social interactions can contribute to a better workplace climate and thus improve employees' digital flourishing.

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8. APPENDIX
8.1 Data Structure

First-order codes (Open coding) → Second-order codes (Axial coding) → Aggregated dimensions (Selective coding)

Human Resource Management
- Availability
- Employee interviews
- Facilitating Wellbeing
- Feedback
- Group size
- Support
- Training

Workplace Management
- Accessibility
- Digital organization
- Equipment
- Old Technology
- Platforms
- Remote Work
- Resources
- Systems
- Work pressure
- Workflow

Process Management
- Communication
- Decision Processes
- Digital Attacks
- Fast charging
- Information flow
- Mediator
- Meetings
- Rules
- Security

→ **Organizational Level**

Soft Skills
- Adaptability
- Character traits
- Flexibility
- Motivation
- Patience
- Personality

Competence
- Expertise
- Experience
- Skills
- Strengths

Connectedness
- Connected to colleagues
- Fun activities
- Social Interaction
- Teamwork

Self-Management/Planning
- Keeping up with the change
- Plan Breaks
- Take care of yourself
- Time management

Personal Development
- Development
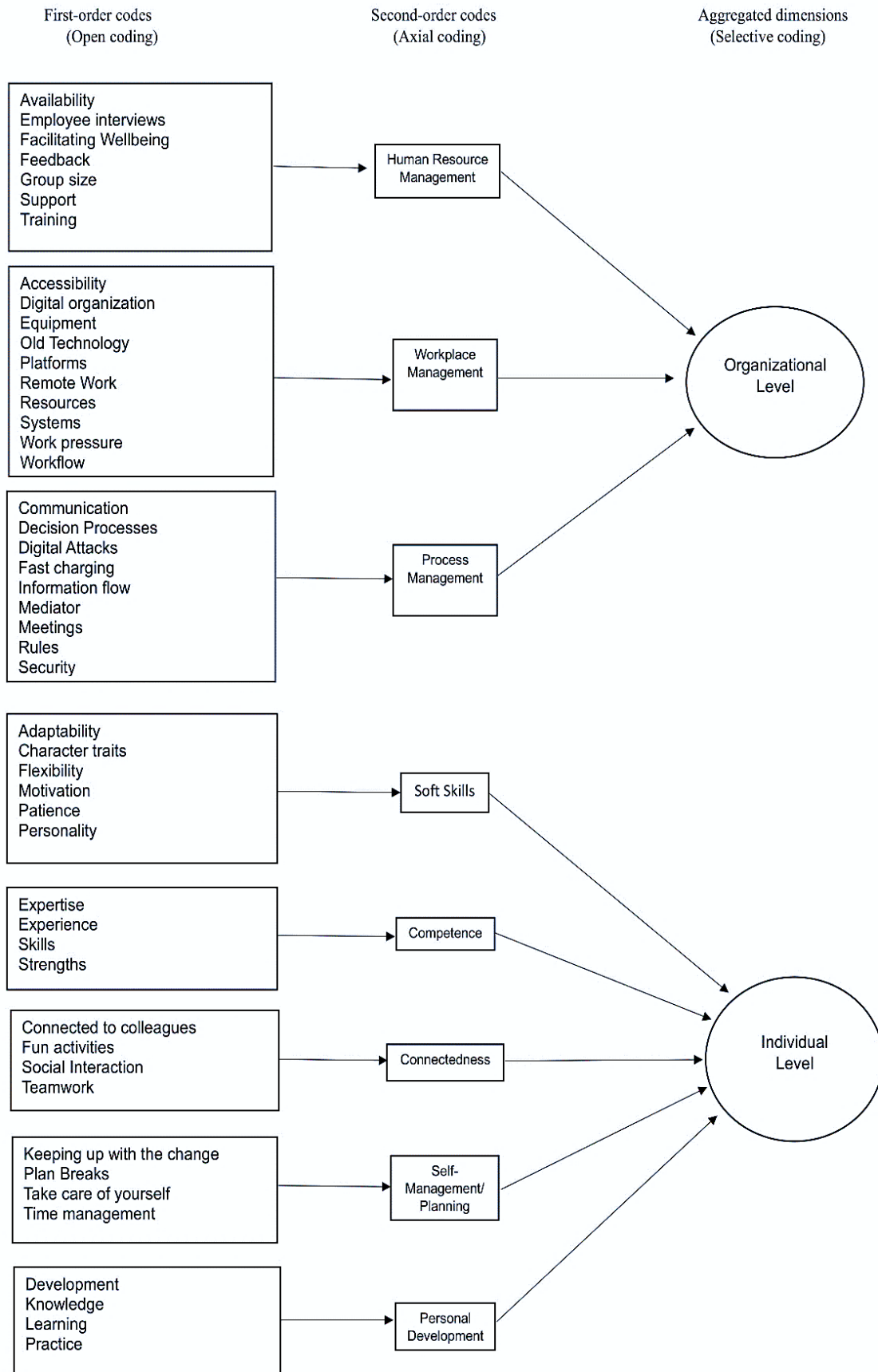- Knowledge
- Learning
- Practice

→ **Individual Level**

Figure 1. Data Structure

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8.2 Interview Guideline

Interview Protocol

"How can employees flourish during digital workplace transformation?"

Date:	Location:
Start:	End:
Participants:	
Organization:	
Minutes:	
Topic:	

1. OPENING

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your Gender?
4. In what company do you work and in which position/ role?
5. What are your tasks?
6. Which industry does your company belong to?
7. How long have you been working with the company and what made you join?
8. How does the digital part of your workday look like?

2. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. HOW did the way you do things changed during the last 5 years/ after Covid?
   a. How do you feel about it?
   b. How does the change impact your work, well-being, and satisfaction?
   c. Can you identify a need for a change within your work/ tasks?
2. In what way does your company ensure that you can compare yourself with other colleagues in terms of learning, motivation, and improvement?
3. What makes you feel (not) in control over your own time in the digital workplace?
4. What change did you perceive over the last years regarding your workplace environment in terms of digital technologies and how did this impact your satisfaction at the workplace?
5. How do mediated social interactions take place? Could you name one or two examples?
   a. How do they impact your work in terms of well-being?
   b. To what extent are you satisfied with this situation?
   c. Would you wish for a more active or passive role and why?
6. How do you feel during online meetings when it is about bringing across your points? What feels different in terms of making comments or having a discussion?
7. What measure does your company offer to be your true self online – meaning that you can be the same person professionally and privately?
8. What training does your organization offer to support you during digital transformation?

  a.   How does the training look like and to what extent is it helpful to execute your task?

  b.   How does this affect your well-being on your job?

  c.   How would appropriate training in terms of the use of digital technologies improve the quality of your (digital) workplace and why?

9.   What is your company doing to facilitate workflows and everyday work in the digital workplace transformation?

10. What activities does your company do to ensure connectedness in the digital workplace?

11. Please describe how your ideal (digital) workplace arrangement would look to…

  a.   … be able to act in a self-determined manner?

  b.   … feel your strengths and ability, as well as your actions as effective and meaningful?

  c.   … experience connectedness with others, acceptance, and recognition?

3. ENDING

12. What else is important about a digital workplace to support your personal and professional goals, and why?

13. What changes would you like to see to make your day-to-day work easier and why?

14. Who else do you think would be suitable for this interview?

Signatures

I confirm that the protocol is accurate.

_____   _____   _____

Participant Name: Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____

Researcher name: Signature   Date