

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: A LITERATURE REVIEW AND DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS ON EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the role and impact of digital transformation on achieving excellence in public administration through innovation in human resource management (HRM). The study conducts a literature review as well as a documentary analysis to examine the integration of digital tools and technologies within public sector organizations and its implications for HRM practices with a focus on identifying advances in administrative efficiency, employee engagement, the provision of services and on organizational performance attributable to digital transformation initiatives.

The research findings provide an overview of the conceptual frameworks of digital transformation and HRM innovation in the public sector and investigate the evolving nature of public administration and the shift towards technology-based operations and services. The research findings identify both the benefits and challenges and opportunities associated with digital transformation, provide insights into best practices and strategies for successful and sustainable implementation, and provide practical recommendations for public sector leaders and policy makers seeking to use digital technologies for increased administrative efficiency and the provision of public services.

KEYWORDS: *Digital Transformation, Public Administration, Human Resource Management Innovation, e-Government, Administrative Efficiency*

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has become a basic concept in modern public administration that directly influences the way public organizations operate and manage their human resources because in a world increasingly dependent on technology, the integration of digital tools is not only an opportunity for improving administrative efficiency, but also a necessity for maintaining relevance and competitiveness in the face of contemporary challenges. Our research explores the impact of digital transformation on excellence in public administration, with a particular focus on the innovation of human resource management practices. The dissemination of findings in the form of this article provides a comprehensive literature review and documentary analysis of how digitization impacts practices such as recruitment, professional development, performance management and employee retention. Through this analysis we have highlighted the developments and trends in the field of public administration that have the potential to redefine both the organizational performance and the public services that are delivered by these organizations.

In public administration, most research shows that the implementation of digital technologies not only optimizes internal processes, but also contributes to increasing employee engagement and improving the quality of services provided to citizens. During the research, we approached and

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analyzed concepts and themes such as e-Government, digital literacy, change management and the use of data for decision-making. In addition, the research highlights the challenges and opportunities associated with digital transformation, themes that have given us unsuspected insights into the strategies and best practices needed for a sustainable and successful implementation, so we believe that this work can contribute to a deeper understanding on the one hand of how the public administration can achieve remarkable results through the innovation of human resources management, but also opens new directions of research and dialogue on the topic of leveraging digital technologies for the improvement of public administration.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

More and more authors believe that digital transformation has become a determining factor for the efficiency and innovation of public organizations, especially in the context of human resource management, and argue that digital technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), process automation and data analysis have begun to redefine how in which public organizations manage the recruitment, professional development, performance evaluation and retention of employees (Bannister & Connolly, 2014; Dunleavy et al., 2006) and in this context, Burlacu et al. (2022) emphasize that digital public administration is not only a means of making internal processes more efficient, but also an essential factor in promoting sustainable development in Romania.

West (2004) believes that the first step in digital transformation would have been the implementation of e-Government, which optimizes administrative processes and improves interaction with citizens, but according to Popescu et al. (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the global digitization trend, having a significant impact on how governments interact with citizens.

Bannister and Connolly (2014) suggest that digitization can reduce bureaucracy and increase organizational efficiency by eliminating printed documents and replacing them with electronic documents through the use of digital platforms or applications, a fact also supported by Călin et al. (2022), which highlights the role of digital governance in public management and the need to adopt advanced technologies to improve the services offered to citizens.

In the same sense, Dunleavy et al. (2006) emphasized that the digitization of public services would allow organizations to become more flexible and responsive to citizens' needs and thus contribute, on the one hand, to increasing citizens' trust in state institutions and, on the other hand, to increasing the efficiency of the act administrative or governance and according to Burlacu et al. (2024), post-pandemic technological innovations have the potential to transform inclusive digital governance, strengthening the role of public administration in promoting sustainable development.

In terms of human resource management (HRM), according to the research of Bondarouk and Ruël (2009), digitization would have dramatically changed the way employees are managed through e-HRM (electronic human resource management) systems that offer innovative solutions for recruitment, employee training and assessment, but also through AI, in particular, which is used to automate recruitment processes, by filtering CVs and identifying the best candidates (Huang & Rust, 2018). Also, Marler & Fisher (2013) believe that innovation in HRM is related to the use of data analytics tools to improve talent management and increase employee satisfaction, and predictive analytics would allow HR managers to anticipate workforce fluctuations and optimize employee retention through personalized professional development programs (Stone et al., 2015) and Burlacu et al. (2022) point out that digitization contributes to organizational resilience, enabling rapid adaptation to changes and improving employee performance.

Despite some eloquent results and obvious benefits, more and more researchers still believe that the implementation of digital transformation in public administration is not without challenges. Thus, some of these challenges would be the lack of mass digital literacy and resistance to change, which thus remain major obstacles in the implementation of digital transformation (Berman & Tettey, 2001) and according to Negescu et al. (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for digitization of public administration, but also revealed the paradigms and challenges associated with this process.

Wirtz and Kurtz (2017) point out in their paper that the success of digital transformation would depend on the ability of organizational leaders to promote a culture of change and ensure adequate digital literacy among employees, and challenges related to data security and information privacy become a major concern for public organizations adopting digital technologies (Bannister & Connolly, 2014) but Burlacu et al. (2021) highlight the impact of digital globalization on the economy and society, emphasizing the need for appropriate policies to manage the associated risks and benefits. Stone et al. (2015) also emphasize the need to implement data protection measures, especially in the context of using HR data analysis and maintaining its confidentiality, however Burlacu et al. (2021), the digitization of public finances represents an opportunity for development in the new economy, but requires adequate security measures to protect sensitive data.

A recent study by Janssen et al. (2015) highlight the importance of public-private partnerships for the successful implementation of digital transformation initiatives and show that these partnerships could provide the necessary technological expertise, on the one hand, and allow, on the other hand, to support public administrations in adopting innovative HRM solutions, ideas also found in Burlacu et al. (2022), digital globalization has significant effects on the economy and society, and collaboration between the public and private sectors is essential to capitalize on the opportunities created by new technologies.

Also, West (2004) tells us that participatory approaches, involving employees in the digitization process, contribute significantly to reducing resistance to change, and human resource managers can have a defining role in facilitating this transition by creating training policies and development adapted to the new digital skills needed (Huang & Rust, 2018), an aspect also supported by Călin et al. (2022), which highlights the importance of digital governance in public management and the need to involve employees in digital transformation processes.

Alfes et al. (2013) believe that another important aspect in digital transformation would be employee engagement and increasing their job satisfaction, because according to their studies, the use of digital technologies could increase employee engagement by creating more flexible and collaborative work environments, and digital platforms, such as Microsoft Teams or Slack, facilitate communication and collaboration between employees, regardless of their geographic location, which contributes to increasing efficiency and strengthening teams (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016), and in the same sense, according to Burlacu et al. (2021), the digitization of public administration contributes to sustainable development, providing opportunities for improving the working environment and employee satisfaction.

In addition, Bonet and Salvador (2017) demonstrate that data-driven performance management platforms allow HR managers to monitor and improve employee performance in real time, and these digital tools not only optimize internal processes, but also enable employees to receive instant feedback, which can lead to better personal and professional development. Likewise, Fountain (2001) argues that digital transformation would have enabled the automation of many repetitive processes in public administration and thus the reduction of costs and human errors. Moreover, according to Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014), automation has become a key factor in reducing the time and resources needed to perform administrative tasks, and in public administration, this can be seen in processes such as data collection, application processing or document management. However, recent literature points out that full automation can lead to job loss or transformation, which raises labor reskilling challenges (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2017), and this is becoming an increasingly present negative aspect in human resource management, making it necessary for leaders to develop policies and strategies that balance the benefits of automation with their direct impact on employees but Burlacu et al. (2021) consider global digitization and its impact on economic and social life require a reevaluation of HRM strategies to ensure a fair transition for employees.

A topical topic increasingly debated in the specialized literature is the integration of emerging technologies such as blockchain and artificial intelligence that would also have direct and immediate influences in human resource management. Minbaeva (2020) believes that, together with e-HRM solutions, these technologies have the potential to revolutionize the way public organizations manage

employees, a fact also supported by the works of Nofer et al. (2017), who exemplify that blockchain could be used to secure and validate employment records and training documents, thereby providing a greater degree of transparency and security.

Also, Bersin (2018) claims that artificial intelligence could improve the recruitment and selection of employees through modern means that would allow the identification of successful patterns in employee performance and by automating the filtering processes, which Burlacu et al. (2021) also consider that digital finance represents an opportunity for development in the new economy, and the integration of emerging technologies can contribute to the efficiency of processes and increase the competitiveness of organizations.

2. FINDINGS

From the analysis of the specialized literature, we managed to highlight some patterns regarding the digital transformation in public administration, patterns that would allow predicting its impact on human resources management (HRM). Among them we mention:

1. Increasing administrative efficiency through digitization

Digital transformation is associated by most research with a positive impact on administrative efficiency in the public sector because the analyzed studies emphasize that the automation of repetitive processes and the implementation of e-government solutions can reduce processing times as well as operational costs, which can contribute to the improvement of the quality of services offered to citizens, as Brynjolfsson & McAfee also show in their 2014 work)

2. Improving employee engagement and performance

The use of digital platforms for human resource management and internal collaboration would increase employee engagement and satisfaction, a finding also supported by the studies of Alfes et al. (2013) and Cascio & Montealegre (2016) which show that digital technologies can facilitate communication and collaboration, on the one hand, and would allow the creation of a more flexible and efficient work environment, on the other hand, with a predominantly positive impact on individual and collective performance, which would also reduce the tensions related to the geographical distancing of employees or, on the contrary, would allow the preservation of social distancing, as a measure imposed by the authorities during the health crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Automation of HRM processes and workforce retraining

Automating HRM processes, such as recruitment and performance appraisal, would allow efficient management of employees and providing real-time feedback, a fact also supported by the research of Bonet & Salvador, (2017). However, the studies of Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2017 emphasize the need to retrain employees who are at risk of being replaced by technology as a moral, ethical and remedial measure, which however represents a major challenge for public sector managers, who will have to find a balance between automation and employee skill development.

4. Emerging technologies and the future of HRM

Emerging technologies, such as blockchain and artificial intelligence, however, have a transformative potential on the way public organizations manage human resources as suggested by the results obtained by Minbaeva, (2020). For example, blockchain could provide innovative solutions for the security and transparency of employment documents, while artificial intelligence would enable the optimization of recruitment and selection processes and these technologies not only modernize HRM, but can also contribute to improving administrative efficiency and growth institutional and decision-making transparency.

5. Challenges related to data security and technology adoption

The literature reveals that the adoption of digital technologies in the public sector, however, raises some major challenges related to data security and privacy. Fountain (2001) argues that despite the clear benefits of digitization, public organizations are forced to invest in advanced cyber security solutions to protect sensitive data but also to ensure compliance with legal regulations.

6. The need for a cultural change in public organizations

More and more research conclude that digital transformation is not only a technological process, but also a cultural one. Bersin's (2018) research shows that the success of adopting new technologies would depend on the willingness of organizations to embrace change and develop an organizational culture favorable to innovation, and public administration managers will have as their main challenge the effective management of employees' resistance to change and, for this fact, they could be put in the position of a work environment open to the adoption of new digital solutions.

7. Development of employees' digital skills

Another key element for the success of digital transformation highlighted from the analysis of the specialized literature but also of the secondary documents as well as from the field observations would be the level of digital literacy of the employees. Bonet & Salvador, 2017 also emphasize the need to develop digital skills within the public sector workforce, to ensure the effective adoption of emerging technologies, an aspect that would become essential for maintaining competitiveness and for the long-term efficiency of public administrations.

Table 1: Challenges, Causes, and Effects of Digital Transformation in Public Administration

Challenge	Cause	Effects
Resistance to Organizational Change	- Lack of an organizational culture that fosters innovation - Lack of digital literacy - Inadequate change management (Wirtz & Kurtz, 2017; Călin et al., 2022) - Employees' reluctance toward new technologies - Need for leadership to promote a culture of innovation (Bersin, 2018)	- Delay in adopting digital technologies - Limiting the effectiveness of e-government implementation (West, 2004) - Need for change management strategies - Creating a flexible and innovative organization - Facilitating collaboration between departments - Increasing team performance (Alfes et al., 2013; Burlacu et al., 2022)
Lack of Digital Competencies Among Employees	- Deficiencies in training programs and development of digital skills - Lack of investment in digital education (Bonet & Salvador, 2017; Burlacu et al., 2021) - Lack of digital literacy at the organizational level (Stone et al., 2015)	- Inefficiency in using digital technologies - Decreased employee performance - Challenges in adopting new technologies (Minbaeva, 2020) - Slow technology adoption - Low productivity - Increasing gap between employees and technology (Stone et al., 2015)
Data Security and Privacy Protection	- Increasing use of data analytics and automation in HRM - Lack of robust cybersecurity solutions (Bannister & Connolly, 2014) - Growth of digitalization in public finance (Burlacu et al., 2021)	- Vulnerabilities to cyber-attacks - Risks related to employee data confidentiality - Need for strict regulation in information security (Fountain, 2001; Stone et al., 2015) - Necessity to implement data

		protection measures (Burlacu et al., 2021)
Process Automation and Impact on Workforce	- Use of artificial intelligence for recruitment and evaluation - Automation of repetitive tasks (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014) - Emerging technologies like AI and blockchain (Minbaeva, 2020; Burlacu et al., 2021)	- Increased administrative efficiency - Reduction of jobs - Retraining employees - Ethical and social challenges in HRM (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2017) - Need to develop policies balancing automation benefits with employee impact (Burlacu et al., 2021)
Integration of Emerging Technologies (AI, Blockchain)	- Rapid technological progress - Need for secure and transparent solutions in HR management (Nofer et al., 2017; Minbaeva, 2020) - Integration of digital finance (Burlacu et al., 2021)	- Optimization of recruitment and retention processes - Securing and validating employment documents via blockchain - Improving organizational performance (Bersin, 2018) - Revolutionizing how public organizations manage employees (Burlacu et al., 2021)
Public-Private Partnerships for Digital Innovation	- Lack of internal technological expertise - Need for financial and technical support (Janssen et al., 2015) - Digital globalization and its impact on economy and society (Burlacu et al., 2022)	- Improved implementation of digital solutions - Accelerating digital transformation in HRM - Increased efficiency in delivering public services - Leveraging opportunities created by new technologies through public-private collaboration (Burlacu et al., 2022)
Need for Cultural Change in Public Administration	- Employees' reluctance to new technologies - Need for leadership to promote innovation culture (Călin et al., 2022) - Lack of an organizational culture that fosters innovation (Wirtz & Kurtz, 2017)	- Creating a flexible and innovative organization - Facilitating inter-departmental collaboration - Enhancing team performance (Alfes et al., 2013) - Involving employees in digital transformation processes (Călin et al., 2022)
Need for Digital Literacy at Organizational Level	- Low level of digital skills - Lack of public policies for digital development (Bonet & Salvador, 2017; Negescu et al., 2021) - Deficiencies in training programs (Marler & Fisher, 2013)	- Slow technology adoption - Low productivity - Growing gap between employees and technology (Stone et al., 2015) - Need to involve employees in digital transformation (Negescu et al., 2021)
Data-Driven Decision Making	- Lack of IT infrastructure - Lack of data analysis skills (Marler & Fisher, 2013) - Insufficient use of data analysis tools (Bonet & Salvador, 2017; Burlacu et al., 2022)	- Faster and more informed HRM decisions - Improved talent management - Optimizing employee retention and professional development (Stone et al., 2015) - Increasing efficiency and enhancing employee performance (Burlacu et al., 2022)
Automation and Reskilling of the Workforce	- Increasing use of AI and e-HRM - Emerging technologies like AI	- Need to retrain employees to stay relevant in the job market - Reducing job loss risk through

	and blockchain (Minbaeva, 2020; Burlacu et al., 2021)	reskilling (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2017) - Developing policies and strategies that balance automation benefits with employee impact (Burlacu et al., 2021)
Improving Employee Engagement and Performance	- Use of digital collaboration platforms (Teams, Slack) - Instant feedback and data-driven performance management (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016) - Digitalization of public administration (Burlacu et al., 2021)	- Increased employee satisfaction - Facilitating team collaboration and communication - Enhancing employee performance and retention (Bonet & Salvador, 2017) - Sustainable development by improving the work environment (Burlacu et al., 2021)

This table highlights the complexity of digital transformation in public administration, emphasizing both the potential benefits and the challenges that must be addressed to ensure effective and sustainable implementation. The main challenges of digital transformation in public administration, such as resistance to change, lack of digital skills and data security. These are caused by a poor organizational culture, lack of investment in training and IT infrastructure, but also by the need to integrate emerging technologies. The effects include the delay in the adoption of new technologies, the decrease in administrative efficiency and the need to retrain the workforce, but also opportunities to optimize processes and improve organizational performance.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of specialized literature reveals that the digital transformation in public administration has the potential to redefine the way human resources management activities are carried out and can contribute to increasing efficiency and improving organizational performance by realizing that the integration of digital technologies can optimize administrative processes and can facilitate data-driven decision making and increase employee engagement. However, the results obtained from the research also revealed the major challenges faced by public administrations in this process, such as resistance to change, lack of digital skills and data security, and a possible solution emerging from the analysis would be the promotion of an organizational culture to support innovation and digital literacy, alongside the development of clear strategies for reskilling employees affected by automation.

Cyber security and privacy protection are also central themes that have been found following the analysis of specialized literature, and as a possible solution it could be for public administration to implement advanced solutions to protect sensitive data and to comply with regulations. Public-private partnerships could also provide the technological expertise needed to accelerate the digital transformation process and facilitate innovation in human resource management, and automating processes such as recruitment or performance management can increase efficiency but must be accompanied by measures retraining of the labor force, to avoid job losses and ensure the adaptation of employees to the new technological realities.

Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and blockchain, at least on a theoretical level, also have the potential to revolutionize the field of HRM by optimizing selection processes and securing documents as well as making data-driven decisions enable better talent management and increased satisfaction employees.

The limitations of this research, however, consist in the lack of a detailed empirical analysis of the implementation of technological solutions in various national and institutional contexts because the study is largely based on the analysis of literature and documents, without exploring the individual experiences of public administrations that have implemented digitalization so that on future, an extension of research would be welcome by focusing on comparative case studies that examine how different governments and organizations have managed the challenges and capitalized on the digital

opportunities. Another direction of research could be to assess the long-term impact of digital transformation on the performance of employees and public services, as well as the development of best practice models for the effective integration of emerging technologies in the public sector, thus the future of digital transformation in public administration will depend on the ability of organizations to adopt a holistic approach that includes both technological and human, cultural and organizational aspects.

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