



A Study of the Influence of Person-Organization Fit on Emotional Labor in the Digital Transformation Context: A Literature Review

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Abstract. Currently, digital technologies represented by the internet, big data, and artificial intelligence are rapidly evolving and permeating all sectors. As the core units of the digital economy, enterprises are actively undergoing digital transformation. This transformation often involves the adoption of new technologies and business models, altering the traditional work environment, methods, and content within organizations. Consequently, the alignment between employees' conventional knowledge and skills and the novel digital business paradigms diminishes. Changes in job characteristics exacerbate individuals' career insecurity, and the resulting occupational uncertainty may hinder employees' ability to regulate their emotions effectively. They may become irritable and anxious, and these negative emotional responses can impede their professional development. Moreover, the collective effects of psychological and emotional issues may lead organizations to decline due to internal inefficiencies. Therefore, examining the impact of person-organization fit on employees' emotional labor in the context of digital transformation can not only facilitate smoother organizational adaptation to digital transformation but also help address employees' psychological distress, improve their mental well-being, and ultimately create greater value and a more stable team environment for enterprises.

Keywords: Person-Organization Fit, Digital transformation, emotional labor, Digital transformation performance, basic psychological need

1 Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technologies (e.g., internet, big data, AI) is accelerating corporate digital transformation, fundamentally altering employees' work environments, methods, and content^[1]. This technological shift has diminished the relevance of traditional skills in digital business contexts, intensifying professional insecurity among workers. Employees must consequently engage in emotional labor to adapt to these new demands^[2]. Current research predominantly examines individual or organizational factors in isolation, with limited exploration of the interactive dynamics between employees and organizations during this transformation.

Person-organization (P-O) fit - the alignment of values, competencies, and resource allocation - emerges as a critical resource for mitigating digital transformation pressures^[3]. From the Conservation of Resources perspective, employees with strong P-O fit receive greater organizational support (e.g., compensation, promotions)^[4], which reduces emotional resource depletion and promotes deep acting (authentic emotional regulation) over surface acting (emotional pretense). The Self-Determination Theory further suggests that high P-O fit satisfies three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy (decision-making authority), competence (skill development), and relatedness (team identification), thereby optimizing emotional labor strategies^[5].

Although it has been hypothesized that person-organization (P-O) fit may influence employees' emotional labor in the context of digital transformation, the underlying mechanisms and boundary conditions through which P-O fit affects emotional labor remain underexplored. According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), humans possess three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these basic needs are adequately satisfied, individuals' intrinsic motivation is significantly enhanced, thereby fostering a range of positive behavioral outcomes, such as promoting employees' adoption of deep acting rather than surface acting during digital transformation.

P-O fit can create an organizational environment that fulfills employees' basic psychological needs. When employees' values and goals align closely with those of the organization, a strong sense of identification and mutual trust is established. This high level of congruence encourages organizations to grant employees greater autonomy, allowing them more discretion in their work. In turn, employees, feeling trusted, become more engaged, forming a virtuous cycle that satisfies their need for autonomy. Furthermore, organizations provide digital platforms, infrastructure, and other resources that facilitate efficient knowledge acquisition and professional development opportunities, helping employees achieve work objectives and advance their careers—thereby fulfilling their need for competence.

Additionally, P-O fit fosters smoother interpersonal interactions among colleagues, enhancing employees' sense of identification with the company. Team collaboration becomes more effective, strengthening employees' organizational commitment. Harmonious workplace relationships reinforce employees' sense of belonging, while improved communication fosters loyalty. A more cohesive work environment significantly elevates employees' attachment to the organization, satisfying their need for relatedness.

Thus, the satisfaction of basic psychological needs may serve as the core psychological mechanism explaining how P-O fit influences employees' emotional labor. This mechanism highlights the critical role of person-organization alignment in shaping employees' emotional engagement. From a psychological perspective, when individuals' intrinsic needs are met, their emotional expressions within the organization undergo corresponding changes. Therefore, investigating this psychological process is essential for understanding the nature of employees' emotional labor.

The digital transformation process creates dynamic fluctuations in P-O fit, often triggering employee resistance. Transformational digital leaders play a pivotal role in this context by: (1) identifying environmental changes and providing necessary resources

(e.g., digital skills training); (2) strengthening emotional bonds with employees; and (3) enhancing psychological need satisfaction, thereby amplifying the positive impact of P-O fit on emotional labor regulation^[6]. In the context of digital transformation, an innovative leadership approach is emerging^[7].

This integrated framework, combining Conservation of Resources and Self-Determination theories, reveals the mediating mechanism (psychological needs) and boundary condition (leadership) through which P-O fit influences emotional labor. Practically, it offers organizations actionable strategies to improve emotional management during digital transformation, reduce negative emotional accumulation, and enhance overall organizational effectiveness.

2 Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Person-Organization Fit and Emotional Labor

P-O fit enhances employee well-being by reducing role conflict and increasing job satisfaction. Employees with high P-O fit experience less emotional dissonance (surface acting) and engage in more genuine emotional expression (deep acting) (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002)^[8].

2.2 Basic Psychological Needs as a Mediator

SDT posits that autonomy (volitional choice), competence (effectiveness), and relatedness (social connection) are essential for motivation and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000)^[5]. P-O fit likely satisfies these needs, thereby reducing emotional exhaustion and increasing authentic emotional regulation (Van den Broeck et al., 2016)^[9].

2.3 Transformational Digital Leadership as a Moderator

Transformational digital leaders use digital platforms to articulate a compelling vision, provide individualized support, and stimulate innovation (Kane et al., 2021)^[10]. Such leadership may strengthen the P-O fit → need satisfaction → emotional labor pathway by fostering a digitally empowered yet psychologically secure work climate.

3 Empirical Evidence and Research Gaps

3.1 P-O Fit and Emotional Labor

Person-organization fit (P-O fit) can alter the inherent work characteristics of an enterprise. In response to these changes, employees are required to invest not only physical and mental effort but also fully commit to regulating their emotional states. This dedicated effort is termed emotional labor.

Emotional labor refers to the process through which individuals regulate both internal feelings and external expressions to meet professional demands in both physical

and digital contexts^[11]. Studies indicate that employees with high P-O fit engage in less surface acting (Kim, H., & Vandenberghe C, 2021)^[12].

3.2 Mediating Role of Basic Psychological Needs

According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), human beings have three core psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these basic needs are adequately satisfied, an individual's intrinsic motivation can be significantly enhanced^[5], thereby driving a range of positive behavioral outcomes. For instance, in the context of corporate digital transformation, this may encourage employees to adopt deep acting rather than surface acting during emotional labor. Furthermore, person-organization fit (P-O fit) can help create an organizational environment that fulfills employees' fundamental psychological needs. Preliminary evidence supports that need satisfaction mediates the P-O fit → emotional labor link (Gagné et al., 2022)^[13]. Yet, few studies have examined all three needs simultaneously in digital work settings.

3.3 Moderating Role of Digital transformation performance

The study revealed that in today's wave of digital transformation, managers must master three core competencies to successfully guide their organizations through digital transformation: First, they need acute insight to timely capture the evolution of digital technologies and effectively integrate these innovations into daily operations; second, they must clearly define transformation objectives and pathways while developing scientifically sound resource allocation plans; finally, they should possess the capability to implement organizational changes swiftly and precisely (Porfirio et al, 2021)^[14]. Emerging research suggests that digital-savvy leaders buffer emotional labor strain (Gabriel, 2023)^[15], but empirical studies testing this moderation are scarce.

4 Discussion and Future Directions

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design, with all variables measured through self-reported data, which may potentially influence the robustness of the research findings. Although Harman's single-factor test indicated that common method bias was adequately controlled in the current study, completely eliminating this methodological issue remains challenging. To enhance data reliability, future research could employ longitudinal research designs for data collection.

The research variables in this study—person-organization fit, basic psychological needs, emotional labor, and transformational digital leadership—were all assessed through employees' self-evaluations based on their personal motivations and subjective perceptions. When completing self-reports, employees may be susceptible to social desirability bias, potentially compromising the authenticity of their responses. To enhance the precision and rigor of future research, methodological refinements could be implemented, such as incorporating objective assessments or adopting a multi-method approach that combines subjective and objective measures. Specific strategies may

include, but are not limited to: (a) implementing comprehensive data collection across at least three measurement waves, or (b) employing dynamic modeling techniques to conduct more nuanced analyses of the temporal relationships among variables.

Although this study examined the mechanism and boundary conditions of how person-organization (P-O) fit influences employees' emotional labor, it did not explore the antecedents of P-O fit. Understanding the influencing factors of P-O fit would not only help organizational managers better mitigate the negative impacts of digital transformation, but also facilitate optimal "person-job" matching. Therefore, future research could investigate how attitudinal variables (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment) and behavioral variables (e.g., work stress) affect P-O fit from multiple theoretical perspectives.

5 Conclusion

Person-organization fit (P-O fit) positively influences deep acting while negatively affecting surface acting. The results demonstrate that during corporate digital transformation, P-O fit exerts a significant negative effect on surface acting and a significant positive effect on deep acting. In the context of organizational digital transformation, value incongruence may trigger cognitive dissonance among employees, leading to a lack of identification with the transformation initiatives. When employees' needs remain unfulfilled, they tend to reduce work engagement and allocate more time to personal matters, thereby avoiding participation in organizational change activities. Furthermore, if employees' competencies exceed organizational requirements, they may not exert full effort; conversely, if their capabilities fall short of job demands, they may develop avoidance tendencies and even shirk work responsibilities due to perceived incompetence. Consequently, high P-O fit positively facilitates employees' deep acting while negatively suppressing their surface acting behaviors.

The findings reveal that basic psychological needs play a partial mediating role between person-organization (P-O) fit and deep acting, while serving as a complete mediator between P-O fit and surface acting. According to self-determination theory, individuals possess three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are satisfied, individuals' autonomous motivation is enhanced, thereby promoting positive behavioral outcomes, such as facilitating employees' adoption of deep acting rather than surface acting during digital transformation processes. When high P-O fit exists, organizations tend to grant employees greater work autonomy, enabling them to exercise their capabilities more flexibly. This facilitates better cultural assimilation while allowing organizations to fully trust employees' professional judgment, thereby satisfying their need for autonomy. Furthermore, organizations provide digital platforms, infrastructure support, and more efficient knowledge acquisition opportunities along with professional development programs. These resources assist employees in task completion and career advancement, fulfilling their need for competence. Interpersonal interactions among colleagues become more harmonious, strengthening employees' organizational identification. Effective communication fosters closer relationships among team members, enhancing employees'

organizational commitment. Such positive work climates increase employees' willingness to integrate into the collective, consequently elevating their sense of organizational belonging. Employees with high psychological need satisfaction demonstrate greater willingness to invest time and effort toward achieving organizational goals and making substantive contributions. Under these conditions, employees predominantly engage in deep acting while minimizing surface acting behaviors..

Leaders with transformational digital leadership proactively reshape their cognitive frameworks and actively engage in the wave of digital transformation. They articulate a resolute yet compelling digital vision to organizational members, leveraging this foresight to drive the development of corporate digital culture, reshape organizational structures and core values, and implement digital talent development programs—all designed to stimulate employees' creativity and innovative thinking. Under the influence of this leadership model and organizational climate, both managers and employees become actively involved in formulating and achieving digital objectives.

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