

ADAPTIVE PERFORMANCE IN THE DIGITAL ERA: THE ROLE OF EMPLOYEE AGILITY

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Abstract—*This study examines adaptive performance in the digital era by focusing on the role of employee agility as a key mediating factor. Rapid technological advancements and evolving work environments require employees to continuously adjust their skills and behaviors to remain effective. The study proposes a conceptual framework linking digital competence, learning agility, organizational support for digital transformation, digital leadership, and psychological empowerment with adaptive performance through employee agility. Drawing on recent literature, the model suggests that these factors do not directly influence performance but operate through agility, which enables employees to respond quickly and effectively to change. The study adopts a conceptual approach to integrate existing findings and highlight relationships among variables. The findings emphasize that employee agility plays a central role in translating organizational and individual capabilities into adaptive outcomes. The study contributes to the growing body of knowledge by offering a structured framework and suggests directions for future empirical research in diverse organizational contexts.*

Keywords: *Adaptive Performance, Employee Agility, Digital Competence, Learning Agility, Digital Leadership, Workforce Adaptability.*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has significantly transformed the nature of work, requiring organizations to rethink how employee performance is defined and measured. The integration of artificial intelligence, automation, and digital platforms has created dynamic and often unpredictable work environments where employees must continuously adjust their skills and behaviors. In this context, the concept of adaptive performance has gained prominence, referring to an individual's ability to respond effectively to changing job demands and environmental conditions. Recent studies indicate that adaptive performance is becoming a critical determinant of organizational success in the digital economy (Munawaroh & Khaerunnisa, 2026).

The growing complexity of digital workplaces has also increased the importance of employee agility, which reflects an individual's capacity to quickly sense changes, respond appropriately, and learn from new experiences. Research shows that since 2020, there has been a notable rise in studies examining employee agility as a key capability in managing uncertainty and technological disruption (Ramzuni et al., 2026). Agile employees are more likely to embrace innovation, adjust to new systems, and maintain productivity under shifting conditions. This suggests that agility is not only a desirable trait but a necessary competence for sustaining performance in modern organizations.

In addition to individual capabilities, organizational factors play a crucial role in shaping adaptive outcomes. For instance, digital transformation initiatives and HR practices have been found to influence how employees develop and apply their skills in changing environments (Nababan & Saputra, 2026). Organizations that invest in digital infrastructure, training, and supportive leadership create conditions that encourage flexibility and responsiveness among employees. Similarly, studies have highlighted the role of digital leadership and strategic HRM in fostering a culture that supports continuous learning and adaptability (Suwandi et al., 2026).

Furthermore, the relationship between agility and performance is often explained through mediating mechanisms. Empirical evidence suggests that agility serves as a bridge between various antecedents—such as digital competence, learning ability, and organizational support—and performance outcomes. For example, Goraya et al. (2026) found that organizational agility and responsiveness significantly contribute to improved performance in digital strategies. Likewise, research in the sustainability and HR domain indicates that digital self-efficacy and leadership agility enhance employees' ability to adapt to technological changes (Elsawy & Abu-Alhaija, 2026).

Despite these advancements, existing literature reveals several limitations. Many studies focus on isolated factors influencing performance, without examining how these variables interact within a unified framework. Therefore, this study aims to address these gaps by developing a comprehensive model that examines the role of employee agility in enhancing adaptive performance in the digital era. By integrating multiple determinants such as digital competence, learning agility, organizational support, leadership, and psychological empowerment, the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how employees can effectively navigate change.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Munawaroh & Khaerunnisa (2026) conducted a research in Indonesia focusing on employees undergoing digital transformation in public sector organizations. The researchers adopted a systematic review approach combined with purposive sampling of prior empirical studies. Data were collected using secondary database analysis and thematic synthesis tools. The findings indicated that digital competence significantly enhances employee agility, which in turn improves adaptive performance in dynamic environments. The study emphasized that agility acts as a mediator between skills and performance outcomes. Future research was suggested to include primary empirical validation using longitudinal data.

Edward, Goh & Toni (2025) carried out a research among employees in Malaysian service industries using a quantitative survey design with stratified random sampling. A structured questionnaire and PLS-SEM analysis were used as tools. Findings revealed that workforce agility and innovation behavior significantly influence employee performance in digital contexts. The study also found that agility improves adaptability under technological disruptions. However, the study was limited to one sector. Future studies were recommended to explore cross-industry comparisons and cultural influences on agility.

Alainati, Alsaber & Alkandari (2025) examined employees in Kuwaiti organizations using a cross-sectional research design with convenience sampling. Data were gathered through digital competency and performance assessment scales, analyzed using regression techniques. The findings showed that employee agility and creativity significantly predict adaptive performance. Digital leadership was also identified as a supporting factor. The study highlighted the importance of integrating agility into HR systems. Future research should examine causal relationships using experimental or longitudinal designs.

Goraya et al. (2026) conducted a study in the UK, focused on organizations implementing digital strategies using a random sampling technique across multiple firms. Tools included survey questionnaires and structural equation modeling (SEM). The findings demonstrated that agility, resilience, and responsiveness collectively enhance adaptive performance. Employee support systems were also found to strengthen this relationship. The study contributed to distinguishing agility from general performance constructs. Future research should explore industry-specific agility models.

Ananda & Hidayanti (2026) conducted a research involving Indonesian employees working in AI-driven environments using a descriptive survey method with purposive sampling. Data collection tools included digital literacy and adaptive capability scales. The study found that technological competence combined with personal agility significantly boosts adaptive performance. It also highlighted the growing importance of AI readiness. The findings emphasized the need for continuous skill development. Future research should focus on AI-human collaboration and its long-term effects.

Kahfi (2022) explored digital technology adoption among Indonesian employees using a simple random sampling method. Questionnaires and statistical analysis tools (SPSS) were used. Findings indicated that digital transformation positively impacts employee adaptability and organizational performance. Agility was identified as a key behavioral outcome of digital exposure. The study also noted improved responsiveness to change. Future research should include larger sample sizes and sector-specific analysis.

Salmela, Baiyere & Tapanainen (2022) made a conceptual study was conducted in Finland using a theoretical and qualitative research design. The authors used literature synthesis and conceptual modeling tools. Findings introduced the concept of digital agility as a critical capability for adaptive performance. The study emphasized behavioral and

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organizational mechanisms supporting agility. It provided a strong theoretical foundation for empirical studies. Future research should focus on operationalizing digital agility through measurable indicators.

Elsawy & Abu-Alhaija (2026) conducted a research in Egypt using a survey-based design with stratified sampling across industries. Tools included SEM and adaptive performance scales. Findings showed that adaptive digital leadership and self-efficacy enhance employee agility and performance. Employees with higher confidence in digital skills were more adaptable. The study linked leadership with agility development. Future research should examine moderating variables like organizational culture.

Tan & Antonio (2022) conducted an empirical study used convenience sampling of employees in Indonesian firms. Data were collected via structured questionnaires and regression analysis. Findings revealed that learning agility significantly influences adaptive performance during crises like COVID-19. The study emphasized agility as a survival skill. However, results were limited to a single organization. Future research should include multi-organizational and cross-country studies.

Saptarini & Mustika (2023) focused on government employees of Indonesia using a purposive sampling method. Tools included SEM and work engagement scales. Findings indicated that workforce agility positively affects adaptive performance, mediated by work engagement. Employees who were engaged showed higher adaptability. The study highlighted HR's role in fostering agility. Future research should explore digital HR interventions for improving engagement and agility.

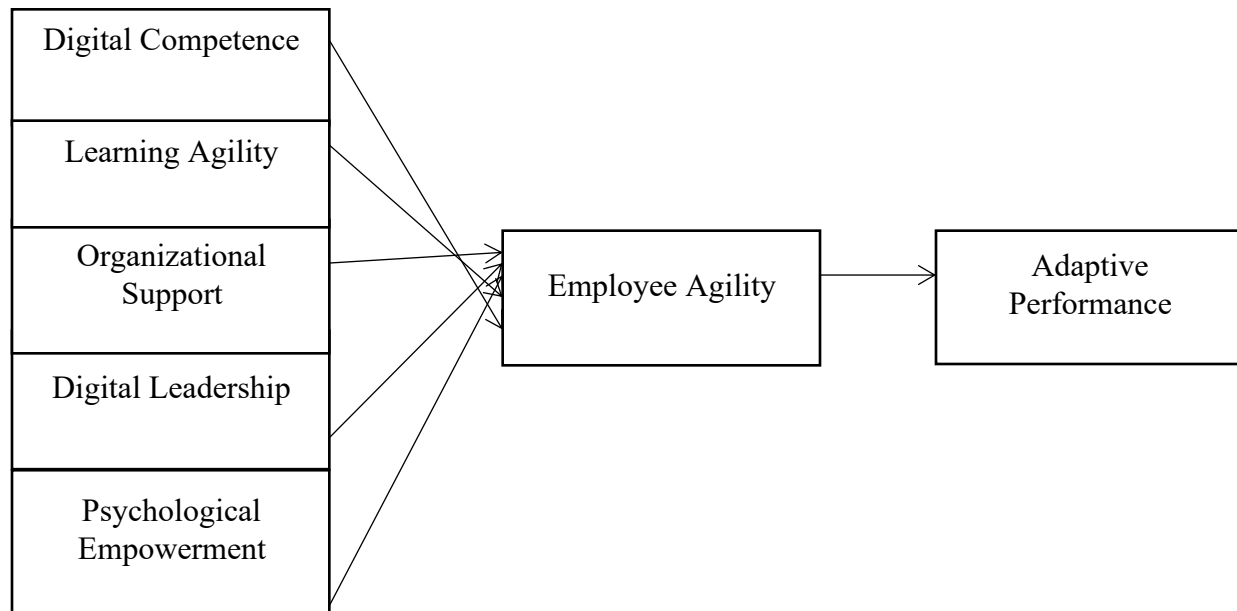
Atobishi et al. (2024) conducted a study in public sector organizations in Middle East, this study used a random sampling technique. Data collection involved organizational agility and performance metrics tools. Findings showed that digital capabilities indirectly enhance adaptive performance through organizational agility. The study confirmed the mediating role of agility. It also emphasized structural flexibility. Future research should examine private sector comparisons.

Hoang, Ngoc & Ha (2025) examined graduates in Vietnam using a survey design with stratified sampling. Tools included digital skills assessment and performance measurement scales. Findings revealed that digital skills significantly improve adaptive performance. The study also linked employability with agility. It highlighted the importance of education systems. Future research should focus on industry readiness and skill gaps.

Alsakarneh et al. (2024) conducted a research in Jordan's cement industry using a random sampling technique. Tools included E-HRM systems and agility measurement scales. Findings showed that E-HRM positively influences workforce agility and adaptability. Employee engagement was found to mediate the relationship. The study emphasized digital HR practices. Future research should explore other industries and emerging technologies.

Majeed (2025) made a conceptual study used a framework-based approach without primary sampling. Analytical tools included dynamic capability theory and conceptual modeling. Findings suggested that AI and automation significantly enhance adaptive performance through organizational agility. The study linked technology with human adaptability. It proposed a new theoretical model. Future research should validate the framework using empirical data.

Wijaya et al. (2025) conducted a study among employees in Indonesian firms using a quantitative survey with purposive sampling. Tools included SEM and organizational support scales. Findings indicated that agile leadership and workforce agility significantly improve adaptive performance. Organizational support strengthened this relationship. The study highlighted leadership as a key driver. Future research should investigate leadership styles in different cultural contexts.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The conceptual model for the study is grounded in the idea that employee performance in modern organizations is no longer static, but highly dependent on how effectively individuals respond to rapid technological and environmental changes. In digitally evolving workplaces, employees are expected to continuously adjust their skills, behaviors, and work approaches, making adaptive performance a critical outcome variable. However, existing research suggests that such adaptability does not occur automatically; instead, it develops through a combination of individual capabilities and organizational conditions that shape employee behavior.

In this framework, digital competence is positioned as a key driver because it equips employees with the technical knowledge and confidence needed to function effectively in technology-driven environments. Studies indicate that individuals who are comfortable with digital tools are more likely to respond positively to change and demonstrate flexible work behaviors. Alongside this, learning agility plays a crucial role by enabling employees to quickly acquire new knowledge, unlearn outdated practices, and apply insights in unfamiliar situations. This ability becomes particularly important in dynamic contexts where job roles and technologies are constantly evolving.

The model also incorporates organizational support for digital transformation, recognizing that employee adaptability is influenced by the extent to which organizations provide training, infrastructure, and a supportive climate for change. When employees perceive strong support, they are more willing to experiment, take initiative, and adjust to new systems. Similarly, digital leadership is included as a significant factor, as leaders set the tone for adaptability by encouraging innovation, guiding employees through uncertainty, and fostering a culture that embraces change. Leadership behaviors that promote openness and flexibility have been consistently linked to higher levels of workforce responsiveness.

Another important component is psychological empowerment, which reflects an employee's sense of autonomy, competence, and impact within the organization. Empowered employees tend to take ownership of their roles and are more proactive in adapting to new challenges. Rather than resisting change, they are more likely to view it as an opportunity for growth. This psychological state strengthens the effect of other variables by enhancing motivation and engagement in adaptive behaviors.

At the center of the model is employee agility, which acts as a mediating mechanism connecting these independent variables to adaptive performance. Employee agility represents the behavioral capability to sense changes, respond quickly, and adjust effectively in uncertain situations. Prior studies have highlighted that while factors such as skills, leadership, and support create the conditions for adaptability, it is agility that translates these inputs into actual performance outcomes. In other words, employees may possess digital skills or receive organizational support, but without agility, these factors may not fully result in improved adaptive performance.

Finally, the model proposes that adaptive performance is the ultimate outcome, reflecting an employee's ability to modify actions, solve new problems, and remain effective under changing conditions. The framework suggests that the relationship between the independent variables and adaptive performance is largely indirect, operating through employee agility. This mediating structure provides a more nuanced understanding of how different factors interact, offering a stronger theoretical and empirical basis for analyzing workforce behavior in the digital era.

Hence, the conceptual model highlights that adaptive performance is not driven by a single factor but emerges from the interaction of competencies, organizational environment, leadership influence, and psychological readiness, with employee agility serving as the critical link that transforms these elements into measurable performance outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how adaptive performance can be enhanced in the digital era, with particular attention to the role of employee agility as a central mechanism. The findings reinforce the idea that modern workplaces require employees who are not only technically competent but also capable of adjusting quickly to changing demands. Adaptive performance has emerged as a key indicator of effectiveness, especially in environments characterized by rapid technological advancements and uncertainty.

The analysis highlights that factors such as digital competence, learning agility, organizational support, digital leadership, and psychological empowerment do not directly influence performance in isolation. Instead, their impact is largely channeled through employee agility, which serves as a behavioral link between these inputs and performance outcomes. This suggests that organizations cannot rely solely on training or technology investments; they must also focus on cultivating agility as a core workforce capability.

Another important insight from the study is that employee agility is not a fixed trait but a developable capacity. When organizations create supportive environments—through leadership, learning opportunities, and empowerment—employees are more likely to demonstrate flexible thinking and adaptive behaviors. This aligns with recent research emphasizing that agility can be strengthened through intentional HR practices and organizational culture (Buttigieg et al., 2023).

The study also contributes to the existing body of knowledge by offering a mediated framework that explains how multiple factors interact to influence adaptive performance. By positioning employee agility as a central variable, the model provides a clearer understanding of the process through which employees translate skills and resources into effective action. This helps address a gap in prior research, where many studies examined these variables independently rather than as part of an integrated system.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that organizations aiming to improve performance in the digital era should prioritize agility-building strategies. These may include continuous learning programs, leadership development, and initiatives that encourage autonomy and innovation. Such efforts can help create a workforce that is better prepared to change and sustain performance over time.

In conclusion, adaptive performance in the digital era is best understood as an outcome of dynamic interaction between individual capabilities and organizational conditions, with employee agility acting as the key connecting element. Future research can build on this work by testing the model across different industries and cultural contexts, as well as by using longitudinal approaches to capture changes over time.

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