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**The Impact of Digital Transformation on Employee Well-being: A Case Study of
Hybrid Teams in UAE Organizations**

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Abstract

Purpose: Digital transformation quickly reconstructs how organisations work globally, and the UAE is no exception. Technological progress and the COVID-19 pandemic have provided significant benefits such as adaptations, flexibility, and operational efficiency in rapid hybrid and remote teams. However, it has also aroused concern for employees' welfare, including questions such as the balance between work and life, technostress, and social isolation. The purpose of this research proposal is to check the impact of digital transformation on employee welfare in hybrid teams in UAE organisations.

Methodology: An approach with mixed methods will be used, including both average class trends and rigorous analysis and qualitative interviews to gain deep insight. The study will investigate how hybrid work settings affect job satisfaction, mental health, and productivity, while also discovering organisational strategies to reduce negative effects.

Findings: Conclusions are expected to contribute to limited empirical evidence in the context of the United Arab Emirates and provide practical recommendations to leaders to balance technological progress with a human-focused work environment. The study is in accordance with HBMSU research priority areas to handle hybrid/hybrid teams and promote welfare for the quality of life.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The insights achieved can support policy development and future research directions with a view to creating permanent, healthy, and digitally flexible jobs in the United Arab Emirates.

Keywords: *Digital Transformation, Employee Well-being, Hybrid Teams, UAE Organizations, Hybrid Work*

JEL Classification: O33, J23, J24

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, digital transformation has emerged as an important organisational change in industries worldwide. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), this change has been intensified by rapid technological progress, government initiatives that support smart services, and the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Organisations have increasingly adopted hybrid work arrangements to maintain operational continuity and flexibility in a rapidly changing and competitive business environment. While these developments provide important benefits, including improved efficiency, flexibility, and access to global talent, they also raise important concerns regarding employees' well-being.

The UAE has distinguished itself as a leader in digital adoption within the MENA region, with initiatives such as Smart Dubai and the We the UAE 2031 vision supporting digital transformation, government efficiency, and citizen well-being. According to the UAE Digital Government, the percentage of digital transformation of government services reached 98.59% in 2021 (UAE Government, 2025). Although these technological advances have improved service delivery and operational agility, they have also significantly changed traditional work patterns. Employees are now operating in environments characterised by continuous digital connectivity, frequent hybrid meetings, and extensive reliance on digital communication platforms.

This new reality brings both opportunities and risks. On the one hand, remote and hybrid work can reduce commuting time, provide greater autonomy, and support work–life flexibility when appropriately managed. On the other hand, blurred boundaries between work and personal life, reduced face-to-face interaction, ineffective communication, and excessive digital connectivity may contribute to work–home interference, loneliness, stress, and reduced well-being. Wang et al. (2021), for example, identified work–home interference, ineffective communication, procrastination, and loneliness as key challenges experienced by remote workers. Their findings also indicated that workload and monitoring were associated with greater work–home interference, while social support and job autonomy could help reduce some of these challenges. Although international research has increasingly examined these challenges, there remains a need for more empirical evidence on employee well-being in hybrid work environments within the UAE. This context is particularly relevant because UAE organizations operate within a diverse, multicultural workforce and a rapidly evolving digital economy, which may shape employees' experiences of digital transformation and hybrid work differently from those reported in other national contexts.

Addressing this gap in understanding is important because digital transformation may have complex effects on employee well-being in hybrid teams in UAE organisations. While digital tools and hybrid collaborative platforms have enabled continuity and innovation, they may also introduce new workplace stressors. For some employees, continuous connectivity, increased digital monitoring, and expectations of constant availability may contribute to higher levels of stress and burnout and lower job satisfaction. Organisations that are unable to recognise and address these factors risk reducing employee engagement and overall productivity, potentially limiting the benefits of digital transformation.

The primary goal of this research is to examine the relationship between digital transformation and employee well-being, using hybrid teams in UAE organisations as a case study. In particular, the study seeks to identify important factors that are associated with employee well-

being in the hybrid work environment, evaluate existing organisational practices, and propose evidence-based recommendations that balance technological progress with human-centred management practices.

This study is important for several reasons. First, it addresses a gap in research in the United Arab Emirates, providing valuable insight to both scholars and practitioners. Second, findings are expected to support managers and decision-makers in designing strategies that promote employee well-being by taking advantage of the full potential of digital transformation. Third, the research corresponds to the growing importance of effectively managing hybrid teams and digitally enabled work environments, thus contributing to the development of sustainable organisational practices. Finally, the results can inform future human resource policies, remote and hybrid work structures, and digital transformation strategies that place employee well-being, health, and satisfaction at the centre of organisational decision-making.

In short, this research proposal emphasizes the urgency of understanding how digital transformation affects employees beyond operational outcomes. By focusing on employee well-being in the discussion, this study wants to contribute to the development of flexible, productive, and healthy hybrid workplaces in the United Arab Emirates that are prepared to meet future demands while taking care of their most important asset: their people.

Research Questions

RQ1: What is the relationship between digital transformation and employee well-being among employees working in hybrid teams in UAE organisations?

RQ2: Which digital-work factors, including digital connectivity, workload, digital monitoring, and communication practices, are associated with employee well-being in hybrid work environments?

RQ3: What organisational practices can UAE organisations adopt to support employee well-being while maintaining the benefits of digital transformation and hybrid work?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital transformation has become the cornerstone of modern organisational strategy, where work is structured and experienced with significant implications for it. According to Reis et al. (2023), digital transformation is a process in which digital technologies make significant adaptations in business operations and organisational models and eventually affect all stakeholders. While the operational benefits of digital transformation—that increased efficiency, flexibility, and competition—is documented in a good way (Brain and Cress, 2016), its human implications, especially on employees' welfare, are still an emerging field of study.

Hybrid Work and Hybrid Teams

One of the most visible manifestations of digital transformation is the use of hybrid work and hybrid teams broadly. Gartner (2020) estimates that about half of the employees now work remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hybrid teams are defined as a group of geographically scattered employees who collaborate through digital platforms to achieve general goals (Bell and Cozelowski, 2002). While these teams increase cost savings, access to different talents, and increased flexibility (Dulbohn & Hoc, 2017), they also present challenges related to communication, trust, and social involvement.

Studies have shown that the lack of physical co-expression can lead to feelings of isolation and injury, and if effectively controlled, job satisfaction can decrease (Ferrera et al., 2021). Jarvenpaa and Leader (1999) said that confidence is an important factor in the performance of the hybrid team, but still, the interaction and maintaining confidence can be more complicated when the interaction is mainly digital.

Employee Well-being and Technostress

Stress is defined as inspired stresses; digitally operated work environments. Tarafdar et al. (2024) have become a significant concern in the use of information and communication technologies (ICT). Iyagari et al. (2011) identify the usual technoscapes, including additional fees, continuous connection, and role-voicing, which can destroy employees' psychological welfare. In the context of hybrid teams, these stresses can always be expected to affect availability and colour the limits of working life (Durks et al., 2015). According to the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, employee well-being is influenced by the balance between job demands and job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job demands in digitally enabled hybrid work environments may include constant connectivity, high workload, digital monitoring, frequent virtual meetings, and expectations of continuous availability. These demands may deplete employees' psychological energy and contribute to stress, exhaustion, and burnout. In contrast, job resources such as job autonomy, social support, organisational support, effective communication, flexibility, and right-to-disconnect policies can help employees manage these demands and support their well-being. Therefore, the JD-R model provides a useful theoretical framework for examining how digital transformation and hybrid work conditions may be associated with employee well-being in UAE organisations.

Distance work naturally improves the balance between working life and shows many studies that it is very conditional. For example, Alan et al. (2015) found that although distance work can reduce stress and increase autonomy, it can at the same time accelerate work-family struggles if organisational norms do not support clear boundaries. Eurofound & ILO (2022) report similar conclusions, given that traditional work has increased unpaid overtime and burnout in many European contexts outside the hours of traditional working hours.

Digital Transformation in the UAE Context

In the UAE, the government has made significant investments to position the country as a global leader in smart services and digital innovation. Initiatives such as Smart Dubai, the UAE National Innovation Strategy, and the Dubai Paperless Strategy have pushed both public and private sector organisations toward rapid digital adoption (Smart Dubai, 2021). According to the UAE Digital Government, the percentage of digital transformation of government services reached 98.59% in 2021 (UAE Government, 2025).

However, despite these advances, the human dimension of digital transformation has received comparatively less scholarly attention. Al Mazrouei and Zacca (2021) argue that UAE organisations must move beyond technology implementation to consider employee-centric approaches that mitigate negative well-being outcomes. Their study on digital adoption in Emirati banks found that while digital tools improved service delivery, employees reported increased work pressure and stress due to unrealistic performance expectations and frequent system adaptations.

A study by Alhajri, R., & Alnaqbi, S. (2023) examining hybrid work models in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries underscores the cultural nuances that influence how digital transformation affects employee well-being. They highlight that diverse expatriate workforces, hierarchical organisational cultures, and varying levels of digital literacy can all moderate how hybrid work impacts job satisfaction and mental health. Similarly, Syed and Ahmad (2023) note that in the UAE, flexible work policies are often unevenly implemented, which can create disparities in well-being outcomes across industries and employee groups.

Organizational Strategies and Best Practices

Emerging evidence indicates that organisations can constantly formulate digital transformation strategies that protect employees' welfare. Using flexible work policies, providing clear guidelines for digital communication expectations, and providing digital tools training can reduce technostress (Suh & Li, 2017). In addition, it is important for a supportive organizational culture that emphasizes psychological safety and trust for hybrid team efficiency. Zhang, M., & Liu, Y. (2023).

A relevant model Durks et al. (2015) Study is on border management, which argues that clear criteria and management support can help employees handle the permeability of work and personal life. In the United Arab Emirates, multinational companies have begun to pilot "the right to disconnect" policy, although adoption is still inconsistent in some areas (Khaleej Times, 2023). Recent research suggests that organisational support, autonomy, and clear communication are important resources for helping employees manage the demands associated with digitally enabled and hybrid work environments (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Wang et al., 2021).

Gaps in the Literature

While an increasing body of international research has examined the relationship between digital transformation, hybrid work, and employee well-being, relatively limited empirical research has examined these relationships specifically within the UAE context, particularly among employees working in hybrid teams. In addition, there is limited research that examines practical strategies that organisations can implement to balance technological progress with employee-centric practice. There is also a lack of evidence on how cultural factors and leadership styles have affected the welfare and experience of technology and hybrid surroundings.

Given the specific work of the workforce—the characteristics of migrant employees using a high percentage of fast technology—this setting is important for both specific insight theory and behaviour. By fulfilling these intervals, the purpose of this study is to contribute to the global discourse on digital transformation and welfare by providing action-rich recommendations to the unique context of the UAE.

Conclusion of the Literature Review

Overall, the literature suggests that digital transformation provides sufficient operating benefits but also introduces new complications for employees' welfare. In the UAE, where hybrid teams are quickly becoming common and digital maturity is a national priority, it is necessary to understand this mobility to create a sustainable work environment. This review reflects the requirement for empirical research that examines the fine effects of digital transformation on

employees' welfare and discovers practical strategies to support a healthy, productive, and digitally flexible workforce.

METHODOLOGY

This research proposal adopts a mixed-method approach to understand the effect of digital transformation on employee welfare in hybrid teams in organisations in the United Arab Emirates. The design matches best practice to examine the events of the complex workplace, including both quantitative variable and deep relevant understanding (Creswell, 2014). The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods provides a richer, better understanding of how digital transformation affect employees, who cannot receive a single method alone (Tashkori and Tedli, 2010).

Research Design

A mixed-method research design will combine quantitative and qualitative techniques to capture both the width and the depth of the problem. No real data is collected at this stage; all described schemes are imaginary, and if the proposal is approved, it will be implemented. The quantitative component will include a structured study designed to assess large constructions such as alleged technology, work and life balance, job satisfaction, and organisational support. The qualitative component will include semi-composed interviews with leaders and HR professionals, who will gain deep insight into strategies that are intended to use or use employee welfare under the Digital transformation organisation.

Using both methods makes it possible to function trigonometrically, which increases the reliability of research by cross-validating findings from several data sources (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2017). Investigative data will help identify average trends, while interviews will provide reference-specific insight into organisational approaches and management practices.

Sampling

The goal population will include knowledge workers who are employed by UAE organisations and have used hybrid or hybrid work models. Organisations can be selected from different fields such as education, banking, authorities, technology, and professional services to ensure widespread representation. The selection "Strategic management of service quality innovation" will be based on the criteria used in examples—including digital adoption scale, presence of hybrid teams and UA's smart government initiative, and relevance to digital strategies in the private sector.

Based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula, the hypothetical sample size of organisational units will be calculated as follows:

$$S = \frac{X_2 NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + X_2 P(1-P)} \quad S = \frac{d^2(N-1) + X_2 P(1-P)}{X_2 NP(1-P)}$$

Where:

- s = required sample size
- n = total population
- p = population ratio (0.5 for maximum sample size)
- D = Accuracy (0.05)

- X- = 95% confidence level (3.84)

For a population of 50 organisations, the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table indicates a sample size of approximately 44 organisations. For employee surveys, at least 100 hypothetical respondents will be targeted to ensure statistical significance. Hybrid teams will be administered with direct experience by choosing 10-15 leaders, HR authorities, or team leaders for qualitative interviews.

Data Collection

Primary data collection tools will be a draft structured questionnaire and a draft semi-structured interview guide. These tools are part of the proposed design — no real data collection has been done yet.

To ensure clarity and alignment between the planned survey items and the research objectives, a mapping diagram has been developed. This diagram visually illustrates how each survey question aligns with specific objectives and hypotheses. See Figure 1 below.

Research Objectives	Survey Questions	Linked Hypotheses
Obj1: Identify Key Factors affecting virtual employee well-being	Q1, Q2, Q3	H1
Obj2: Evaluate organizational strategies for digital work	Q4, Q5, Q6	H2
Obj3: Propose balanced recommendations	Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10	H3

Figure 1: Mapping of Survey Questions to Research Objectives and Hypotheses

Questionnaire (hypothetical): The study will measure constructions such as technology, balance between work and life, trust and job satisfaction, using a 5-point liqueur scale from "Confidentiality will be strictly maintained" to "Confidentiality will be strictly maintained" to "To" The mapping charts (attached below) show how each planned question matches research goals and hypotheses. The questionnaire will be designed in English and translated into Arabic when needed.

Interview (planned): 5-point liqueur scale will detect relevant factors that affect organisational practices, leadership strategies, and employees' welfare. The interview questions will be prepared on the basis of a literature review, and if performed, the pilot will be processed after the test.

Data analysis (planned): Quantitative data will be analysed using SPSS to perform descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis. Qualitative data from the interview will be coded to identify patterns and insights to complement the results of the examination.

Reliability and Validity

In order to ensure the reliability of the proposed quantitative equipment, Cronbach's alpha will be calculated to test the internal stability after the real data is collected. Cronbach's alpha is calculated using the following formula:

$$\alpha = \frac{k-1}{k} \left[1 - \frac{\sum \sigma_i^2}{\sigma_{total}^2} \right]$$

Where K is the number of elements, σ_i^2 is the variance of each element, and σ_{total}^2 is the total variance of the scale. A pilot sample with a small, thought sample will be

recommended to limit the tool and improve clarity. The triangulation will strengthen the validity of the study by cross-verifying results from quantitative and qualitative threads.

Ethical Considerations

Before any real data collection, moral approval will be applied for from the university's Research Ethics Committee. All participants will require informed consent, which will make them aware of their rights to withdraw at any time without punishment. Privacy and confidentiality will be strictly maintained, and all data will only be stored safely and accessible to the researcher. A moral approval test form is attached as an attachment for this proposal.

Mapping Diagram

The visually proposed mapping diagrams indicate how planned examination elements match research goals and hypotheses and ensure connection and transparency in equipment design. (*Attach your "Mapping Survey Questions" image here as Figure 1.*)

CONCLUSION AND EXPECTED FINDINGS

This research proposal aims to detect significantly investigated relationships between digital transformation in hybrid teams in UAE organisations and the well-being of employees. While digital transformation has become an indispensable reality in modern workplaces, technological innovation cannot change market status and national policy driven by priorities, its impact on the human dimension of work cannot be ignored. Hybrid and hybrid team transitions defined how employees speak, perform their tasks, and experience the balance between work and life. This study not only responds to the need to check how organisations use digital devices but also how they can maintain a healthy, motivated, and flexible workforce in a digital-first environment.

Through an approach to the mixed method, this research is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of factors affecting employees' welfare in general teams, including technology, trust, border management, and organisational support systems. The proposed survey and interviews will generate data that, when analysed together, is expected to highlight major challenges and opportunities for UAE organisations. Although no actual data has yet been collected for this proposal, expected findings will show that, together with the operational capacity brought by digital transformation, there is a high risk of hidden costs and burnout if not in the right welfare strategies.

It is expected that the study will reveal the difference in how different organisations look at digital transformation and employees' support, which are influenced by factors such as industrial sector, organisational culture, and leadership style. In the context of the UAE, where the workforce is very multicultural and using technology is fast, cultural factors and digital literacy can moderate how employees experience hybrid work adaptations. By identifying these nuances, the purpose of this research is to provide practical recommendations for leaders, human resource doctors, and decision-makers on how to design digital transformation initiatives that are balanced, inclusive, and excellent for the good of the employee.

The expected contribution from this study is twofold. First, it will provide limited empirical literature on the human side of digital transformation in the United Arab Emirates, where such studies are rare despite ambitious national smart strategies. Secondly, it will provide actionable insights for organisations to help build healthy hybrid workplaces. For example, findings can inform the development of flexible work policies, clear guidelines for digital communications,

and training programs that reduce techno stress and promote trust and involvement in hybrid teams. This insight is in line with HBMSU research priority areas to handle hybrid teams and promote welfare for the quality of life.

In addition, research is expected to emphasise areas where organisations may need to reevaluate how performance is measured and administered in hybrid surroundings. Leaders who understand the dynamics of distance work can use leadership styles that promote psychological safety and connections and reduce the risk of social isolation. This is particularly relevant because the UAE continues as a global centre for innovation and smart governance.

Finally, this proposal confirms the importance of using human-focused lenses when navigating opportunities for digital transformation and challenges. By bridging the difference between technological progress and employees' welfare, UAE organizations can build more durable, productive workplaces prepared for the future. Although the findings presented here remain hypothetical until research is conducted, the expected insight has the ability to influence both organizational practice and political framework, which aims to support a digitally flexible workforce.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Sample Questionnaire (Quantitative Survey)

Section 1: Development of demography

Age: ____

Gender: Male / Female / Other

Nationality: ____

Sector: Government / private / semi-government

Role: Employees / Supervisor / Manager / Executive

Year in current role: ____

Work mode: Completely external / hero website / hybrid

Section 2: Digital Transformation Experience

8. My organization uses modern digital platforms to support external work.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐

9. I have received adequate training in digital tools.

10. My productivity has increased since hybrid work infection.

Section 3: Technostress

11. I feel overwhelmed by the continuous flow of digital communication.

12. I find difficulty disconnecting work after hours.

13. I feel pressure to respond to messages outside working hours.

Section 4: Balance between work and life

14. Hybrid work helps me maintain a better balance between work and life.

15. My personal life is often interrupted by digital functions related to work.

Section 5: Organizational Support

16. My organization supports mental health and well -being.

17. I think my manager understands the challenges of hybrid work.

Section 6: Job Satisfaction

18. I feel happy with my current job.

19. I feel connected to my team and organisation.

20. I would suggest my organisation as a good place to work.

Appendix B: Mapping Diagram

The mapping diagram below shows how the planned survey questions align with the research objectives and hypotheses.

Research Objectives	Survey Questions	Linked Hypotheses
Obj1: Identify Key Factors affecting virtual employee well-being	Q1, Q2, Q3	H1
Obj2: Evaluate organizational strategies for digital work	Q4, Q5, Q6	H2
Obj3: Propose balanced recommendations	Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10	H3

Figure 1: Mapping of Survey Questions to Research Objectives and Hypotheses.

Important topics and questions:

Digital adoption

What techniques are implemented to support hybrid teams?

Employee welfare

What are the most important welfare problems that hybrid employees face?

Organizational response

What are the strategies to support emotionally and mentally hybrid teams?

Leadership and culture

How has management adapted to digital changes and hybrid control?

Policy and practice

Are there any formal guidelines to prevent overwork or digital burnout?

Appendix C: Ethical Approval Draft Form (Summary)

Project title:

Effect of digital change on employee welfare in hybrid teams: a UAE Case study

The purpose of the study:

The Impact of Digital Transformation on Employee Well-being in Hybrid Teams: A UAE Case Study

Participant information:

Participation is voluntary

All reactions will remain confidential

Data will be anonymized and stored safely

Participants can withdraw at any time without punishment

Moral risk level: low

Appendix D: Mapping of Survey Questions to Research Objectives

Research Objective	Survey Question(s)
Examine effects of digital transformation on well-being	Q8, Q9, Q10
Identify technostress indicators among hybrid workers.	Q11, Q12, Q13
Assess perceived work-life balance.	Q14, Q15
Measure organizational support and trust.	Q16, Q17
Evaluate overall job satisfaction and engagement.	Q18, Q19, Q20