



Human centered leadership strengthening employee adaptability through emotional intelligence and digital workplace collaboration during transformation

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ABSTRACT

Organizational transformation requires organizations to strengthen employee adaptability amid rapid technological change and evolving workplace dynamics. This study examined how human-centered leadership enhances employee adaptability through emotional intelligence and digital workplace collaboration. A qualitative library research approach was employed by systematically reviewing and synthesizing contemporary scholarly literature on leadership, emotional intelligence, digital collaboration, employee adaptability, and organizational transformation using thematic synthesis. The findings showed that human-centered leadership fosters trust, empowerment, participation, and continuous learning, thereby creating conditions that support employee adaptability. Emotional intelligence strengthens employees' psychological readiness to manage change, while digital workplace collaboration facilitates knowledge sharing, collective learning, and collaborative problem-solving. The study proposes an integrated conceptual framework in which emotional intelligence and digital workplace collaboration serve as complementary mechanisms linking human-centered leadership to employee adaptability and successful organizational transformation. These findings provide a holistic conceptual foundation for understanding adaptive organizational capability and future empirical research.



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Introduction

Organizations across industries are experiencing unprecedented transformation driven by digital technologies, changing business models, and increasingly dynamic competitive environments. Digital transformation has evolved beyond the adoption of new technologies into a comprehensive organizational process that reshapes strategic decision-making, operational systems, organizational culture, and workforce management. Consequently, organizations are expected not only to invest in

digital infrastructure but also to develop human capabilities that enable employees to respond effectively to continuous organizational change (Kane et al., 2019). Recent studies emphasize that successful transformation depends on the alignment between technological innovation and employees' ability to adapt to new organizational demands rather than on technological investment alone (Alnuaimi et al., 2022; Verhoef et al., 2021; Vial, 2019; Warner & Wäger, 2018). Likewise, digital business strategy increasingly recognizes human capital as a strategic resource for sustaining organizational competitiveness in rapidly changing environments (Bharadwaj et al., 2013; Nadkarni & Prügl, 2020). These developments highlight employee adaptability as a critical organizational capability that determines whether transformation initiatives generate sustainable organizational value.

The increasing importance of employee adaptability has shifted scholarly attention toward leadership practices that encourage learning, collaboration, and resilience during organizational change. Traditional leadership approaches that primarily emphasize authority and control are increasingly considered inadequate for organizations operating in complex and technology-driven environments. Contemporary leadership literature instead advocates leadership models that prioritize employee well-being, empowerment, trust, and collaborative relationships while maintaining organizational performance (Northouse, 2025; Petriglieri et al., 2018; Yukl & Gardner, 2019). This perspective is reflected in the growing interest in human-centered leadership, which positions employees as strategic partners rather than organizational resources. At the same time, emotional intelligence has been widely recognized as an important psychological capability that enables individuals to regulate emotions, manage uncertainty, and maintain productive interpersonal relationships during organizational change (Goleman et al., 2002; Joseph et al., 2014; Miao et al., 2021). Parallel to these developments, the expansion of digital workplace collaboration has transformed how employees communicate, share knowledge, and coordinate work across digital platforms, creating new opportunities for organizational learning while simultaneously requiring greater adaptability and collaborative competence (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Colbert et al., 2016; Leonardi, 2020; Wang et al., 2021). Collectively, these studies indicate that leadership, emotional capability, and digital collaboration represent complementary organizational resources that may strengthen employee adaptability during organizational transformation.

Previous studies have extensively examined leadership, digital transformation, emotional intelligence, and employee adaptability as independent or partially related constructs. Leadership research has demonstrated the positive influence of servant leadership, ethical leadership, authentic leadership, and complexity leadership on employee engagement, organizational commitment, and performance (Eva et al., 2018; Hoch et al., 2016; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Research on emotional intelligence consistently reports its contribution to leadership effectiveness, job performance, teamwork, and organizational behavior (Carmeli & Josman, 2006; Miao et al., 2017). Similarly, studies investigating digital workplaces highlight the importance of virtual collaboration, digital learning, and remote working practices in improving organizational agility and knowledge sharing (Gilson et al., 2014; Raghuram et al., 2018; Sousa & Rocha, 2019; Waizenegger et al., 2020). Furthermore, organizational change literature has emphasized the significance of adaptive performance, employee readiness, and organizational resilience in supporting transformation initiatives (Park & Park, 2019; Pulakos et al., 2019; Schaufeli, 2021). Despite these important contributions, the existing literature remains fragmented because these variables are predominantly investigated separately or through direct relationships, providing limited conceptual understanding of how human-centered leadership strengthens employee adaptability through the complementary roles of emotional intelligence and digital workplace collaboration during organizational transformation. This conceptual fragmentation limits the development of an integrated perspective capable of explaining the interaction between leadership, psychological capability, and digital collaboration in contemporary organizations.

Addressing this gap is important because organizational transformation is fundamentally a human-centered process in which technological change can only be sustained when employees possess the capability and willingness to adapt. Developing an integrated conceptual explanation is therefore essential for extending current leadership literature beyond traditional leadership-performance relationships toward a broader understanding of adaptive organizational capability. This study responds to that need by synthesizing contemporary literature to examine the

relationships among human-centered leadership, emotional intelligence, digital workplace collaboration, and employee adaptability within the context of organizational transformation. Rather than generating empirical evidence, this study adopts a qualitative library research approach using thematic synthesis to critically analyze and integrate previous scholarly works related to the research topic. Through this approach, the study develops a comprehensive conceptual framework that explains how human-centered leadership contributes to employee adaptability by simultaneously strengthening employees' emotional capabilities and collaborative behaviors in digital work environments.

Accordingly, the objective of this study is to analyze the role of human-centered leadership in strengthening employee adaptability through emotional intelligence and digital workplace collaboration during organizational transformation. Specifically, this study seeks to integrate fragmented findings from previous research into a coherent conceptual framework that enriches the literature on leadership and organizational transformation. The proposed framework is expected to contribute theoretically by offering a more holistic explanation of the interaction between leadership, psychological capability, and digital collaboration, while providing practical insights for organizational leaders seeking to improve workforce adaptability in digitally transforming organizations. Based on these objectives, this study addresses the following research question: How does human-centered leadership strengthen employee adaptability through emotional intelligence and digital workplace collaboration during organizational transformation? The findings are expected to expand current understanding of human-centered leadership and provide a conceptual foundation for future empirical research examining adaptive organizational capability in increasingly digital and dynamic organizational environments.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a library research design to develop a comprehensive conceptual understanding of how human-centered leadership strengthens employee adaptability through emotional intelligence and digital workplace collaboration during organizational transformation. A library research approach was considered appropriate because the objective of this study was not to generate empirical evidence but to critically synthesize and integrate existing scholarly knowledge into a coherent conceptual framework. The unit of analysis comprised published scientific literature addressing human-centered leadership, emotional intelligence, digital workplace collaboration, employee adaptability, and organizational transformation. The literature included peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and review papers published between 2017 and 2026, with priority given to publications indexed in internationally recognized academic databases and published by reputable scientific publishers.

The literature selection followed purposive sampling principles to ensure that only publications directly relevant to the research objective were included in the analysis. The inclusion criteria consisted of four considerations: first, the publication explicitly discussed one or more of the core constructs investigated in this study; second, the publication was written in English and published in peer-reviewed academic sources; third, the publication contributed conceptual or empirical insights relevant to organizational transformation, leadership, employee adaptability, emotional intelligence, or digital workplace collaboration; and fourth, the publication provided sufficient theoretical or practical evidence to support conceptual synthesis. Based on these criteria, forty references were selected as the primary sources of analysis and served as the foundation for developing the conceptual relationships presented in this study.

Data collection was conducted through systematic document review by identifying, reading, classifying, and extracting relevant information from the selected literature. The extracted data included research objectives, theoretical perspectives, key findings, conceptual relationships, and practical implications reported in previous studies. To enhance consistency during data organization, the literature was grouped according to the four principal themes examined in this study, namely human-centered leadership, emotional intelligence, digital workplace collaboration, and employee adaptability within the context of organizational transformation. This thematic categorization

facilitated the identification of recurring patterns, conceptual similarities, complementary perspectives, and unresolved issues across the existing body of knowledge.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic synthesis, which involved three sequential stages: literature coding, thematic categorization, and conceptual integration. During the coding process, key concepts and recurring arguments were identified from each selected publication. These concepts were subsequently organized into broader analytical themes representing the relationships among leadership practices, employees' emotional capabilities, collaborative digital work environments, and adaptive organizational behavior. The final stage integrated these themes into a unified conceptual framework explaining how human-centered leadership contributes to employee adaptability through the complementary roles of emotional intelligence and digital workplace collaboration during organizational transformation.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied source triangulation by comparing theoretical arguments and research findings reported across multiple scholarly publications rather than relying on a single source. Conceptual consistency was maintained by continuously comparing similarities and differences among previous studies before formulating the final synthesis. Nevertheless, this study is subject to several methodological limitations. The proposed framework is derived exclusively from secondary data and therefore does not provide direct empirical verification of the conceptual relationships identified. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as a theoretical synthesis intended to support future empirical investigations rather than as evidence of causal relationships among the examined constructs.

Results and Discussions

Human-Centered Leadership as the Foundation of Employee Adaptability

The synthesis of the reviewed literature demonstrates that human-centered leadership constitutes the fundamental organizational capability for strengthening employee adaptability during organizational transformation. Across the selected studies, leadership is consistently portrayed as extending beyond managerial authority and strategic decision-making toward facilitating employee development, psychological well-being, trust, and collaborative engagement. Rather than emphasizing organizational control, contemporary leadership increasingly recognizes employees as strategic assets whose knowledge, commitment, and adaptive capacity determine organizational resilience in rapidly changing environments. This perspective reflects a significant shift from traditional leadership paradigms toward approaches that integrate organizational performance with human development. Consequently, organizations undergoing digital transformation require leadership practices that simultaneously address technological change and employees' emotional and behavioral readiness to embrace new ways of working (Northouse, 2025; Yukl & Gardner, 2019).

The literature further indicates that employee adaptability is not solely determined by individual competencies but is strongly influenced by organizational conditions established by leaders. Employees are more likely to demonstrate adaptive behaviors when leaders create an environment characterized by psychological safety, open communication, mutual trust, and opportunities for participation in organizational change initiatives. Such environments encourage employees to perceive organizational transformation as an opportunity for professional growth rather than as a source of uncertainty or threat. This finding aligns with the broader understanding that adaptive behavior emerges from continuous interaction between individual capabilities and supportive organizational contexts. Accordingly, leadership functions not only as a mechanism for directing organizational change but also as a catalyst for developing employees' confidence and willingness to adjust to evolving organizational expectations (Park & Park, 2019).

Another prominent finding emerging from the literature concerns the close relationship between human-centered leadership and employee empowerment. Leadership approaches that encourage autonomy, shared responsibility, and participative decision-making consistently demonstrate greater potential to strengthen adaptive organizational behavior than leadership styles relying primarily on hierarchical control. Employees who are trusted to contribute ideas, solve problems collaboratively, and participate in organizational decision-making are more likely to develop ownership of

organizational transformation initiatives. This participatory environment stimulates continuous learning and encourages employees to proactively acquire new competencies required by changing organizational demands. Consequently, human-centered leadership contributes to adaptability not through direct supervision but by cultivating organizational conditions that promote learning agility, innovation, and shared responsibility for organizational success (Eva et al., 2018; Hoch et al., 2016; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

The findings also suggest that the increasing complexity of digital transformation reinforces the strategic importance of leadership approaches centered on human values. Digital transformation frequently introduces technological uncertainty, redesigned work processes, and evolving job roles that require employees to modify established routines while simultaneously acquiring new digital competencies. Such conditions cannot be effectively managed through authority alone because organizational transformation involves substantial psychological adjustment in addition to technological adaptation. Studies examining digital leadership emphasize that successful leaders combine technological understanding with interpersonal competence, enabling them to communicate organizational vision, facilitate collaboration, and maintain employee engagement throughout the transformation process (Avolio et al., 2000; Contreras et al., 2020; Cortellazzo et al., 2019). This synthesis suggests that human-centered leadership provides an appropriate strategic response to contemporary organizational challenges because it balances digital innovation with employees' social and psychological needs.

A further observation emerging from the reviewed literature is that organizations capable of embedding human-centered leadership principles tend to demonstrate stronger organizational resilience. Rather than focusing exclusively on short-term performance indicators, human-centered leaders invest in long-term capability development by strengthening employees' learning orientation, interpersonal relationships, and organizational commitment. This investment becomes particularly valuable during periods of organizational disruption, where adaptive employees represent an essential source of organizational flexibility and sustainable competitiveness. In this context, employee adaptability should not be interpreted merely as an individual characteristic but as an organizational capability continuously developed through supportive leadership practices and collaborative organizational cultures. This perspective broadens the understanding of leadership by emphasizing its role in shaping organizational systems that encourage continuous adaptation rather than simply directing employee performance (Schaufeli, 2021; Yukl & Gardner, 2019).

Comparison across the reviewed studies reveals substantial convergence regarding the positive contribution of leadership to employee adaptability, although different leadership perspectives emphasize distinct mechanisms. Servant leadership highlights employee empowerment and personal development, ethical leadership stresses fairness and trust, authentic leadership focuses on transparency and relational integrity, while complexity leadership emphasizes organizational learning and adaptive interaction in dynamic systems (Eva et al., 2018; Hoch et al., 2016; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Human-centered leadership synthesizes these complementary perspectives by positioning employees at the center of organizational transformation while simultaneously acknowledging the strategic importance of innovation and organizational performance. Consequently, this study extends previous discussions by proposing that employee adaptability should be understood as the cumulative outcome of leadership practices that simultaneously foster psychological safety, empowerment, learning capability, and collaborative engagement rather than as the isolated consequence of a single leadership style.

The synthesis conducted in this study therefore advances the existing literature by integrating fragmented leadership perspectives into a unified explanation of adaptive organizational capability. Rather than examining leadership solely through its direct influence on organizational performance, the present synthesis demonstrates that leadership contributes to successful organizational transformation by creating organizational conditions that enable employees to learn continuously, respond constructively to uncertainty, and actively participate in organizational change. Human-centered leadership thus functions as the foundational capability upon which emotional intelligence and digital workplace collaboration can subsequently strengthen employee adaptability. This integrated interpretation directly addresses the research question by demonstrating that leadership

represents the primary organizational driver through which adaptive behavior can be systematically cultivated in digitally transforming organizations.

Emotional Intelligence as the Psychological Mechanism of Employee Adaptability

The thematic synthesis of the selected literature identifies emotional intelligence as the primary psychological mechanism through which human-centered leadership strengthens employee adaptability during organizational transformation. While leadership establishes organizational conditions that encourage learning, trust, and participation, employees' responses to these conditions are largely influenced by their ability to recognize, regulate, and utilize emotions when confronting uncertainty and continuous change. Organizational transformation frequently generates ambiguity, increased workloads, changing job expectations, and technological disruption, all of which may trigger emotional reactions such as anxiety, resistance, or reduced confidence. The reviewed studies consistently indicate that employees possessing higher levels of emotional intelligence are more capable of managing these emotional responses, enabling them to remain engaged, resilient, and productive throughout transformation initiatives (Goleman et al., 2002; Joseph et al., 2014). Consequently, employee adaptability should not be interpreted solely as a behavioral outcome but also as the result of psychological processes that allow individuals to respond constructively to organizational change.

The literature further demonstrates that emotional intelligence enhances adaptability by strengthening employees' capacity for emotional regulation, self-awareness, empathy, and interpersonal communication. These competencies enable employees to cope more effectively with uncertainty while maintaining constructive relationships with colleagues and organizational leaders. During digital transformation, employees are frequently required to collaborate with diverse teams, acquire unfamiliar technological competencies, and modify established work routines within relatively short periods. Such circumstances require not only technical expertise but also emotional stability and interpersonal flexibility. Studies examining emotional intelligence consistently report positive relationships with job performance, teamwork effectiveness, organizational citizenship behavior, and collaborative problem-solving, suggesting that emotionally intelligent employees are more likely to embrace organizational change rather than resist it (Miao et al., 2017; Miao et al., 2021; Carmeli & Josman, 2006). The synthesis therefore indicates that emotional intelligence functions as an adaptive psychological resource that enables employees to transform organizational uncertainty into opportunities for learning and professional development.

Another important finding emerging from the literature is the reciprocal relationship between human-centered leadership and emotional intelligence. Rather than treating emotional intelligence exclusively as an individual characteristic, several studies suggest that leadership behaviors significantly influence employees' emotional experiences within the workplace. Leaders who demonstrate empathy, active listening, fairness, and genuine concern for employee well-being contribute to psychologically safe environments where employees feel respected, valued, and supported. Such environments encourage open communication, constructive feedback, and mutual trust, thereby strengthening employees' confidence in responding to organizational challenges. Conversely, leadership practices characterized by excessive control, limited communication, or insufficient emotional support may intensify employees' uncertainty and reduce their willingness to participate in organizational transformation. This comparison suggests that emotional intelligence is simultaneously an individual capability and an organizational outcome shaped by leadership practices that prioritize human relationships and employee development (Goleman et al., 2002).

The synthesis also reveals that emotional intelligence contributes to adaptive organizational behavior by reinforcing employees' learning orientation and resilience. Organizational transformation rarely follows a linear process; instead, it often requires repeated adjustments as technologies, business strategies, and customer expectations continue to evolve. Employees with strong emotional intelligence demonstrate greater persistence when facing setbacks because they are better able to regulate frustration, maintain motivation, and seek constructive solutions. These characteristics support continuous learning, experimentation, and knowledge sharing, all of which are essential components of adaptive organizations. Furthermore, emotionally intelligent employees are more likely to perceive organizational change as a developmental opportunity rather than a disruptive threat, thereby reducing resistance and facilitating smoother implementation of

transformation initiatives (Schaufeli, 2021; Pulakos et al., 2019; Park & Park, 2019). This finding extends previous discussions by emphasizing that adaptability depends not only on employees' willingness to change but also on their psychological capacity to sustain positive engagement throughout prolonged transformation processes.

Comparison across the reviewed studies demonstrates a high level of consistency regarding the strategic value of emotional intelligence, although individual studies emphasize different organizational outcomes. Some investigations primarily associate emotional intelligence with leadership effectiveness and decision quality, whereas others focus on employee performance, teamwork, organizational commitment, or interpersonal relationships (Joseph et al., 2014; Miao et al., 2021). The present synthesis integrates these perspectives by proposing that emotional intelligence serves as the connecting mechanism linking leadership practices with adaptive employee behavior. In other words, leadership alone may establish favorable organizational conditions, but employees' capacity to interpret, internalize, and respond positively to these conditions is substantially influenced by their emotional competence. This integrated interpretation broadens existing knowledge by positioning emotional intelligence as an essential intermediary through which leadership practices translate into adaptive organizational outcomes.

The findings of this study therefore suggest that strengthening employee adaptability requires organizations to invest not only in leadership development but also in initiatives that cultivate emotional capabilities across the workforce. Leadership development programs emphasizing empathy, emotional awareness, coaching, and interpersonal communication may strengthen organizational readiness for transformation by reinforcing employees' psychological resilience. Likewise, organizational learning initiatives that encourage reflection, collaboration, and emotional support can enhance employees' ability to cope with technological disruption and changing work environments. These implications reinforce the central argument of this study that successful organizational transformation depends on the interaction between human-centered leadership and employees' emotional capabilities rather than on technological readiness alone. Emotional intelligence thus represents the psychological foundation that enables leadership practices to generate sustainable adaptive behavior, preparing employees to participate actively in increasingly digital, collaborative, and continuously evolving organizational environments.

Digital Workplace Collaboration as an Enabler of Adaptive Organizations

The thematic synthesis of the reviewed literature identifies digital workplace collaboration as a critical organizational capability that strengthens employee adaptability by facilitating knowledge exchange, collaborative learning, and collective problem-solving during organizational transformation. As organizations increasingly rely on digital technologies to support communication, coordination, and decision-making, collaboration has evolved from conventional face-to-face interaction into an integrated digital ecosystem connecting employees across functional, geographical, and organizational boundaries. This transformation has fundamentally changed how employees acquire knowledge, coordinate tasks, and respond to organizational challenges. Rather than functioning merely as technological infrastructure, digital workplace collaboration represents a socio-technical environment where digital platforms, organizational culture, leadership practices, and employee capabilities interact to support organizational adaptability. Consequently, the effectiveness of digital transformation depends not only on the availability of digital technologies but also on the organization's capacity to cultivate collaborative behaviors that enable employees to continuously learn and adapt to changing organizational demands (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Colbert et al., 2016; Leonardi, 2020).

The reviewed literature consistently demonstrates that digital workplace collaboration contributes to employee adaptability by expanding opportunities for continuous learning and knowledge sharing. Digital collaboration platforms facilitate real-time communication, cross-functional teamwork, and rapid dissemination of organizational knowledge, allowing employees to access information and expertise regardless of physical location. Such collaborative environments accelerate organizational learning because employees are encouraged to exchange experiences, solve problems collectively, and develop innovative responses to emerging challenges. These collaborative processes become particularly important during organizational transformation, where employees are required to acquire new competencies while simultaneously adjusting to revised work processes and

organizational structures. Previous studies indicate that organizations capable of integrating digital collaboration into everyday work practices demonstrate greater flexibility, faster organizational learning, and stronger adaptive capacity than organizations relying primarily on conventional communication mechanisms (Sousa & Rocha, 2019; Raghuram et al., 2018; Gilson et al., 2014). This finding suggests that digital workplace collaboration should be understood as a strategic organizational resource supporting continuous capability development rather than simply as a technological communication tool.

Another significant finding emerging from the literature concerns the complementary relationship between digital workplace collaboration and human-centered leadership. Although digital technologies enable communication and information sharing, they do not automatically produce effective collaboration. The reviewed studies consistently emphasize that successful digital collaboration requires leadership capable of fostering trust, psychological safety, and shared organizational purpose. Employees are more willing to exchange knowledge, participate in virtual teamwork, and contribute innovative ideas when leaders encourage openness, mutual respect, and inclusive participation. Conversely, digital technologies implemented without supportive leadership often result in fragmented communication, reduced employee engagement, and limited knowledge integration despite sophisticated technological infrastructure. Studies on digital leadership therefore argue that effective organizational transformation requires leaders to combine technological competence with interpersonal skills that encourage collaboration across increasingly digital work environments (Avolio et al., 2000; Contreras et al., 2020; Cortellazzo et al., 2019). This synthesis reinforces the argument developed in the previous sections that leadership functions as the organizational foundation upon which collaborative digital capabilities can be successfully developed.

The synthesis further indicates that digital workplace collaboration strengthens employee adaptability by encouraging collective resilience rather than individual adjustment alone. Organizational transformation frequently involves complex problems that cannot be addressed through isolated individual efforts. Instead, adaptive organizations rely on collaborative networks where employees jointly interpret organizational changes, exchange expertise, and develop shared solutions to emerging challenges. Digital collaboration platforms facilitate these processes by reducing communication barriers and supporting continuous interaction among employees with diverse professional backgrounds. Furthermore, virtual teamwork enables organizations to utilize distributed expertise more effectively, thereby increasing organizational agility and innovation capability. Studies conducted during the rapid expansion of remote and hybrid work environments demonstrate that organizations maintaining high levels of collaborative communication and knowledge sharing are better positioned to sustain employee engagement, productivity, and adaptive performance despite significant workplace disruption (Waizenegger et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021; Kniffin et al., 2020). These findings indicate that organizational adaptability increasingly represents a collective capability emerging from collaborative interaction rather than solely an individual employee characteristic.

Comparison across the reviewed studies also reveals broad consensus that digital workplace collaboration contributes positively to organizational performance, although researchers emphasize different dimensions of its impact. Some studies focus primarily on knowledge management and organizational learning, while others examine virtual teamwork, employee engagement, digital human resource management, or remote working effectiveness (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Leonardi, 2020; Raghuram et al., 2018). Despite these differing perspectives, the literature consistently suggests that collaborative digital environments improve employees' ability to respond to organizational change by enhancing communication quality, accelerating knowledge transfer, and strengthening organizational connectedness. The present synthesis extends these findings by integrating digital workplace collaboration into a broader conceptual explanation of employee adaptability. Rather than treating collaboration as an independent organizational practice, this study proposes that digital workplace collaboration functions as the organizational mechanism through which leadership values and employees' emotional capabilities are translated into adaptive work behaviors during organizational transformation.

The findings therefore suggest that organizations seeking to improve employee adaptability should prioritize the development of collaborative digital ecosystems alongside investments in technological infrastructure. Such ecosystems require not only reliable digital platforms but also organizational cultures that encourage knowledge sharing, interdisciplinary cooperation, continuous learning, and inclusive participation. Human-centered leadership plays a central role in creating these conditions by fostering trust and empowering employees to engage actively in collaborative processes, while emotional intelligence enables employees to communicate effectively, manage interpersonal differences, and maintain productive relationships within digitally mediated work environments. Consequently, digital workplace collaboration represents the organizational context in which leadership practices and emotional capabilities converge to strengthen adaptive organizational behavior. This integrated perspective advances current understanding by demonstrating that successful organizational transformation is achieved not through technology alone but through the continuous interaction between human-centered leadership, employees' emotional competence, and collaborative digital work environments that collectively enhance employee adaptability.

An Integrated Conceptual Framework of Human-Centered Leadership for Organizational Transformation

The synthesis of the reviewed literature indicates that organizational transformation should be understood as a multidimensional process in which technological advancement, leadership practices, employees' psychological capabilities, and collaborative work environments continuously interact. Rather than functioning as independent determinants of organizational success, these elements collectively influence employees' capacity to adapt to organizational change. The findings presented in the previous sections demonstrate that human-centered leadership provides the organizational foundation by establishing a work environment characterized by trust, empowerment, participation, and continuous learning. These leadership practices encourage employees to perceive organizational transformation as an opportunity for development rather than as a source of uncertainty. However, the literature also indicates that leadership alone is insufficient to produce sustainable adaptive behavior unless it is accompanied by employees' emotional capability and supported by collaborative digital work environments. This integrated interpretation advances current understanding by positioning employee adaptability as the product of interrelated organizational and psychological mechanisms rather than the direct outcome of leadership behavior alone.

A recurring pattern identified across the reviewed studies is the complementary relationship among human-centered leadership, emotional intelligence, and digital workplace collaboration. Human-centered leadership shapes organizational values and managerial practices that encourage empathy, inclusion, and employee participation. These conditions foster emotional intelligence by strengthening employees' self-awareness, emotional regulation, resilience, and interpersonal competence, enabling them to respond constructively to uncertainty and organizational change (Goleman et al., 2002). Simultaneously, leadership promotes collaborative organizational cultures in which digital technologies facilitate knowledge sharing, collective learning, and cross-functional cooperation. Digital workplace collaboration therefore extends the influence of leadership by creating organizational structures that enable employees to continuously exchange knowledge and collectively solve emerging organizational problems (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Leonardi, 2020; Wang et al., 2021). The synthesis suggests that emotional intelligence and digital workplace collaboration do not operate independently but reinforce one another in strengthening adaptive organizational behavior.

Based on the thematic analysis, employee adaptability emerges as the principal organizational outcome generated through the interaction of these complementary capabilities. Employees who work under human-centered leadership are more likely to develop emotional resilience and participate actively in collaborative learning processes, allowing them to acquire new competencies, embrace innovation, and adjust effectively to changing organizational requirements. Such adaptive behavior subsequently contributes to broader organizational outcomes, including organizational resilience, continuous learning, innovation capability, and the successful implementation of digital transformation initiatives. This finding expands previous discussions by demonstrating that organizational transformation is fundamentally a human-centered process in which technology

serves as an enabling resource rather than the sole determinant of organizational performance. Consequently, organizations pursuing digital transformation should simultaneously invest in leadership development, emotional capability enhancement, and collaborative digital ecosystems to strengthen long-term adaptive capacity.

The integrated framework proposed in this study also contributes to leadership literature by synthesizing fragmented theoretical perspectives into a coherent conceptual explanation. Previous studies have examined leadership, emotional intelligence, digital collaboration, and employee adaptability primarily through separate theoretical lenses. The present synthesis consolidates these perspectives into a unified framework explaining how leadership influences adaptive organizational capability through interconnected psychological and organizational mechanisms. This contribution addresses the conceptual gap identified in the introduction by providing a comprehensive explanation of the pathways through which human-centered leadership supports successful organizational transformation. Furthermore, the framework offers practical implications for organizational leaders by emphasizing that transformation initiatives should balance technological investment with human development strategies that cultivate emotional capability, collaborative behavior, and continuous organizational learning.

Although this study provides an integrated conceptual perspective, several limitations should be acknowledged. The proposed framework is derived exclusively from secondary literature and therefore represents a theoretical synthesis rather than empirically validated causal relationships. The conceptual relationships identified in this study may also be influenced by organizational context, industrial characteristics, national culture, and the maturity of digital transformation initiatives, which were beyond the scope of the present review. Future empirical studies may therefore examine the proposed framework using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method approaches across different organizational settings to validate the relationships among human-centered leadership, emotional intelligence, digital workplace collaboration, and employee adaptability. Comparative studies involving public and private organizations or cross-cultural contexts may further extend understanding of how these variables interact under different organizational conditions. Nevertheless, the present synthesis provides a robust conceptual foundation for future investigations while offering practical guidance for organizations seeking to strengthen adaptive capability during ongoing organizational transformation.

Table 1. Thematic Synthesis of the Reviewed Literature

Theme	Main Findings	Representative References	Contribution to the Conceptual Framework
Human-Centered Leadership	Leadership emphasizing empathy, empowerment, participation, trust, and employee development strengthens organizational readiness for change.	Carmeli et al. (2006); Eva et al. (2018); Yukl & Gardner (2019); Northouse (2025); Avolio et al. (2000)	Establishes the organizational foundation for employee adaptability.
Emotional Intelligence	Emotional intelligence improves emotional regulation, resilience, interpersonal relationships, teamwork, and adaptive responses to organizational uncertainty.	Goleman et al. (2002); Joseph et al. (2014); Miao et al. (2017, 2021)	Functions as the psychological mechanism linking leadership with adaptive behavior.
Digital Workplace Collaboration	Digital collaboration enhances knowledge sharing, organizational learning, virtual teamwork, innovation, and communication effectiveness.	Bondarouk & Brewster (2016); Sousa & Rocha (2019); Raghuram et al. (2018); Leonardi (2020); Wang et al. (2021)	Provides the organizational mechanism that supports collective adaptability.

Theme	Main Findings	Representative References	Contribution to the Conceptual Framework
Employee Adaptability	Adaptive employees demonstrate learning agility, resilience, proactive behavior, and readiness for organizational change.	Pulakos et al. (2019); Park & Park (2019); Schaufeli (2021)	Represents the primary organizational capability supporting successful transformation.
Organizational Transformation	Sustainable transformation depends on the integration of technological innovation, leadership capability, human development, and organizational learning.	Vial (2019); Warner & Wäger (2018); Verhoef et al. (2021); Alnuaimi et al. (2022); Nadkarni & Prügl (2020)	Represents the ultimate organizational outcome of the integrated framework.

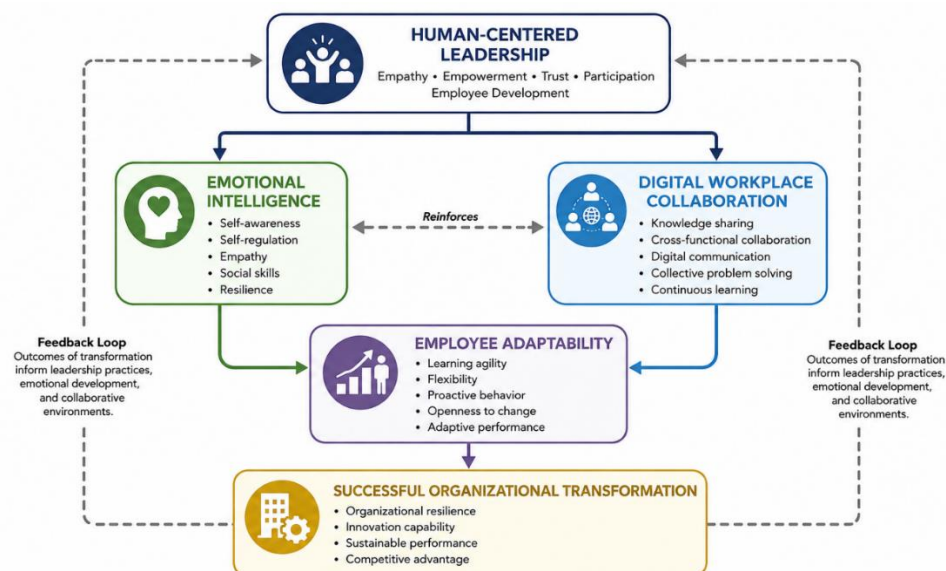


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework of Human-Centered Leadership Strengthening Employee Adaptability During Organizational Transformation

Figure Description the proposed conceptual framework illustrates that human-centered leadership functions as the primary organizational driver shaping employees' emotional capabilities and collaborative digital behaviors. Emotional intelligence enhances employees' psychological readiness to cope with uncertainty, whereas digital workplace collaboration facilitates continuous learning, knowledge sharing, and collective problem-solving. The interaction between these two complementary mechanisms strengthens employee adaptability, which ultimately supports successful organizational transformation. The framework synthesizes the findings of the reviewed literature and provides a conceptual foundation for future empirical validation across different organizational contexts.

Conclusions

Human-centered leadership emerges as the fundamental organizational capability for strengthening employee adaptability during organizational transformation by integrating human values with organizational change initiatives. The synthesis of the reviewed literature demonstrates that leadership practices emphasizing empathy, trust, empowerment, and participation create

organizational conditions that encourage employees to respond positively to continuous change. This adaptive capacity is reinforced through two complementary mechanisms. Emotional intelligence enhances employees' psychological readiness by improving emotional regulation, resilience, and interpersonal competence, while digital workplace collaboration provides a collaborative environment that facilitates knowledge sharing, continuous learning, and collective problem-solving. Rather than functioning independently, these mechanisms interact to strengthen employee adaptability, enabling organizations to respond more effectively to technological disruption and dynamic business environments. The principal contribution of this study lies in proposing an integrated conceptual framework that connects human-centered leadership, emotional intelligence, digital workplace collaboration, and employee adaptability within a single explanatory model of organizational transformation. This framework extends previous literature by moving beyond fragmented examinations of individual constructs and providing a more holistic understanding of how adaptive organizational capability can be developed through the interaction of leadership, psychological capability, and collaborative digital ecosystems. The findings highlight that sustainable organizational transformation depends not only on technological advancement but also on leadership approaches that prioritize people as the central driver of change. Accordingly, the proposed framework provides a valuable theoretical foundation for future empirical validation and offers practical guidance for organizational leaders seeking to build resilient, adaptive, and collaborative organizations capable of sustaining long-term transformation in an increasingly digital environment.

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