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Delving into digital HRM practices: Their impact on employee experience and organizational commitment

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A B S T R A C T

This study investigates the impact of digital human resource management (HRM) practices on employee experience and organizational commitment. A quantitative research approach, utilizing surveys with 229 samples, was employed to gather insights from leading telecommunication companies in Vietnam. By analyzing data using PLS-SEM, the findings suggest that digital training and performance management positively influence Employee experience, which in turn demonstrates mediating effect on the relationship of these HR practices and Organizational commitment. Meanwhile digital recruitment and compensation and benefits practices show insignificant impact. We also highlight the importance of a balanced approach to digital HRM, combining technological advancements with human-centric practices to enhance key factors to retain employees.

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1. Introduction

As the world becomes increasingly digitized, with AI, Big data and robotics are dominant trends in various industries, organizations are undergoing rapid transformations over innovation pressure. Additionally, the rise of the digital workforce demands a corresponding evolution in HR practices. Over the years, traditional HR practices are increasingly being digitized, with the support from continuously improved technology (Sengupta et al., 2021). Obviously HRM (Thite, 2018) plays a pivotal role in shaping various organizational outcomes such as retention, engagement, and commitment. Under the current circumstances, employee experience (EX) is getting more attention, stated as a missing link to engage people (Malik et al., 2023) and enhance organizational commitment (OC) (Wright & Kehoe, 2008). Accordingly, EX presenting various touch points and interactions within an organization, has emerged as a critical driver of organizational performance. This is particularly true in emerging economies like Vietnam where a young and tech-savvy workforce is eager to embrace digital technologies. On national level, the Vietnamese government has issued "National Digital Transformation Program to 2025, with a vision to 2030" by Decision No. 749/QD-TTg. According to this program, the mentioned Decision promotes the digital transformation of both state agencies and private companies to gradually transform and digitize data, processes and procedures. Obviously, this approach from the government has accelerated the digital transformation trend, forcing organizations to adapt and innovate their HR strategies to meet the demands of the digital age (Lei & Jing, 2016; Fenech et al., 2019; Vardarlier, 2020; Vial, 2021).

Given the transformative potential of digital HR, it is essential to explore specific practices and strategies that can enhance employee experience and influence organizational commitment. As a result, our study is grounded in the Resource-based view theory developed by Barney in 1991 and the concept of organizational commitment by Allen and Meyer (1990). The resource-based view indicates that organizations possess unique resources and capabilities that can provide a sustainable competitive advantage. As people and technology are considered the most important resources (Bondarouk et al., 2017), these resources and capabilities can be viewed as the organization's ability to effectively leverage its performance and outcomes. By investing

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in digital HR practices, organizations can develop valuable human capital and enhance their competitive position. Organizational commitment, on the other hand, refers to the psychological attachment of employees to their organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). It has been linked to a variety of positive organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction, performance, and turnover intentions. By understanding the factors that influence organizational commitment, organizations can take steps to improve significant aspects (Cherif, 2020; Obeidat, 2012, 2016).

By examining the experiences of Vietnamese organizations, particularly in Telecommunication sector, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on digital HR and offer valuable insights for emerging markets. Vietnam, an emerging market with immense potential, boasts a young and tech-savvy workforce eager to embrace digital advancements (World bank, 2024). This dynamic workforce, supported by the government's strong emphasis on digital transformation, positions Vietnam as a prime example of a rapidly evolving digital economy (Bukht & Heeks, 2017). The telecommunications sector, a key driver of economic growth, takes the leading position in digital transformation. Driven by high technological demands, this sector requires significant investments in technology across all aspects of operations, including human resource management. Given this context, the telecommunications sector in Vietnam was selected as the ideal setting for this study to investigate the impact of digital HR practices within a dynamic and high-tech industry (Kovach & Cathcart Jr, C., 1999).

Accordingly, our research questions are developed as follows (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2018):

> *Which digital Human resource management practices have a positive impact on Employee experience?*
>
> *What is the mediating effect of Employee experience on the relationship between digital HRM practices and Organizational commitment?*

Our paper is followed by a comprehensive literature review of key concepts, from which we develop into a proposed framework. The methodology part explains clearly our quantitative approach using PLS-SEM to analyze collected data. Our research results would be discussed in details and lead to implications for both academic scholars and practitioners in corporate.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Digital human resource management practices

Digital HRM is a term getting more popular in recent research on HRM by Halid et al. (2020); Strohmeier (2014; 2020); Theres & Strohmeier (2023). It can be seen as a research trend of many scholars under the effect of current digital era. Saini (2018) defines digital HRM as management activities based on digital platforms, applications and the Internet to build an integrated system serving both employees and managers. While Banu (2019) stated that digital HRM includes HR operations using AI, social media, the Internet and other technologies, Sengupta et al. (2021) shared similar approach which link digital HRM to modern technologies named SMAC – Social, Mobile, Analytics and Cloud. It can be seen that there has been mutual agreement on the technology application of HRM to transform digital practices of all HRM functions. Traditional HRM practices such as recruitment, training, performance appraisal, rewarding…which have been supported by advanced technology have been gradually digitalized for long (Bondarouk et al., 2017).

Sengupta et al. (2021) identified four key HR functions that have been significantly impacted by technological advancements:

Recruitment and Selection: Digital technologies have revolutionized the recruitment process, with 70% of companies currently utilizing digital platforms for job posting, application collection, and online assessments (Sengupta et al., 2021). AI-powered tools are increasingly employed to automate screening processes and predict candidate suitability (Lee & Kim, 2021; Budwar et al., 2021). As a result, *digital recruitment* refers to the recruitment process with technology support to attract and shortlist candidates via online platforms and applications.

Training and Development: Digital training has emerged as a powerful tool, offering flexible and personalized learning experiences. E-learning platforms enable employees to access training materials at their own pace and convenience. However, organizations must provide adequate support to address the limitations of online learning, such as the lack of face-to-face interaction.

Performance Management: Technology-enabled performance management systems streamline processes, enhance accuracy, and facilitate real-time feedback. These systems support setting objectives, evaluation, tracking progress and predicting potential performance. They often integrate with other HR functions, such as training and compensation, to create a holistic approach to talent management.

Compensation and Benefits (C&B): Digital tools have automated routine tasks like timekeeping and salary calculation, improving efficiency and accuracy. Additionally, these systems can facilitate transparent communication between employees, managers, and HR departments regarding compensation and benefits.

Accordingly, our study adopts these four functions to develop variables for digital HRM practices in this paper, including: *digital recruitment, digital training, digital performance management* and *digital C&B practices*.

2.2 Employee experience and its relationship with HRM

The concept of EX has been defined in various ways. Morgan (2017) conceptualized EX as the intersection of employee needs and organizational design, while Plaskoff (2017) viewed it as the holistic employee perception of their relationship with the organization. Both perspectives emphasize the importance of the employee journey and the various touchpoints that shape their experience. Notably, the concept of EX has been developed from on insights of service management and customer experience while employees are considered as internal customers (Mudie, 2003; Rahman et al., 2018; Schuler & Jackson, 1987).

Regarding roles of EX in organizations, recent research has underscored the significant link between employee experience (EX) and firm performance. Companies with exceptional EX have outperformed the S&P 500 by a substantial 122% (IBM & Globoforce, 2017). This highlights the importance of prioritizing EX as a strategic approach. Accordingly, many studies have undermined the drivers of positive EX, which HRM practices contribute to. Research by Barik & Yadav (2021) conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic has identified key employee experience drivers, including technology, communication, leadership trust, and employee health and well-being. Another study examining the management of healthcare workers during the pandemic highlighted the importance of effective communication and talent management (Eftimov & Bozinovska, 2021). Report from IBM & Globoforce (2017) also stated key drivers of EX including effective HRM practices, strong leadership, and supportive management.

As one of the key factors contributing to EX, many HRM practices have shown their direct impact via several studies (Malik et al, 2023; Yadav & Vihari, 2023) along with factors related to leadership and working environment. Specifically, some factors such as rewards, recognition, career development in HRM have a positive impact on employee experience (IBM & Globoforce, 2017). Other studies also show the impact of performance evaluation (Farndale & Kelliher, 2013) or flexible work arrangements also significantly affect employee experience (Chen & Fulmer, 2018).

Malik et al.'s research (2023) investigated the impact of digital HRM systems on AI platforms on employee experience and argued that the impact of digital HRM has not been explored much and is changing rapidly. Maurer (2019) in the SHRM report also stated that employee experience is supported by many HRM activities, internal communications, and IT systems. Accordingly, companies that score high on employee experience will have higher candidate attractiveness, lower turnover rates, and higher customer satisfaction. The study by Yadav & Vihari (2023) also emphasized that HRM activities need to focus on employee engagement to improve the positive experience of employees while in the organization. Accordingly, employees are considered as internal customers of the business and HRM activities are services provided to employees.

In general, because the topic of employee experience is still a new topic in recent times, studies on the relationship between HRM and employee experience are still limited. Malik et al. (2023) emphasized that this relationship in the digital age still has much potential to be explored as the digitalized work environment is changing every day (Kim & Gatling,2018).

2.3 Organizational commitment – the expected result from effective practices

Organizational commitment, a concept deeply rooted in organizational psychology, has been extensively studied since the 1990s (Iles et al., 1990; Meyer and Smith, 2000). It refers to an employee's psychological attachment to their organization, encompassing a sense of loyalty, identification, and involvement (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Yuksel, 2000; Armstrong, 2009). Researchers have proposed various conceptualizations of organizational commitment, with Meyer and Allen's three-component model, affective, normative, and continuance commitment, being one of the most influential. This model suggests that employees may be committed to their organization due to emotional attachment, a sense of obligation, or a perceived lack of better alternatives.

While the relationship between OC and HRM has been widely studied, their relationship with EX presents few studies. Since 2013, Farndale and Kelliher's research has pointed out the mediating role of Employee Experience in the relationship between performance appraisal and organizational commitment. By 2023, Malik et al. in their research also clarified this mediating role of Employee Experience in the context of an AI-based HRM system. Malik et al. (2023) showed that the theoretical basis for the relationship between Employee Experience and employee engagement has two distinct research directions: one direction suggests that these two concepts should be considered separately, without any connection; the other direction considers Employee Experience as a factor leading to the outcome of employee engagement. In other words, employee experience has a clear impact on employee engagement. Lee and Kim's (2023) research also reinforces the argument about the impact of employee experience on employee commitment to the organization. In a study using SEM modeling with more than 500 samples in Korea, Lee and Kim (2023) found that physical experience has a stronger impact on commitment than technological experience.

3. Proposed Framework And Hypothesis Development

Based on the previous studies and above review, we propose the analytic framework in Figure 1 to demonstrate the relationship between digital HRM practices and EX and OC, how they interact within organizations.

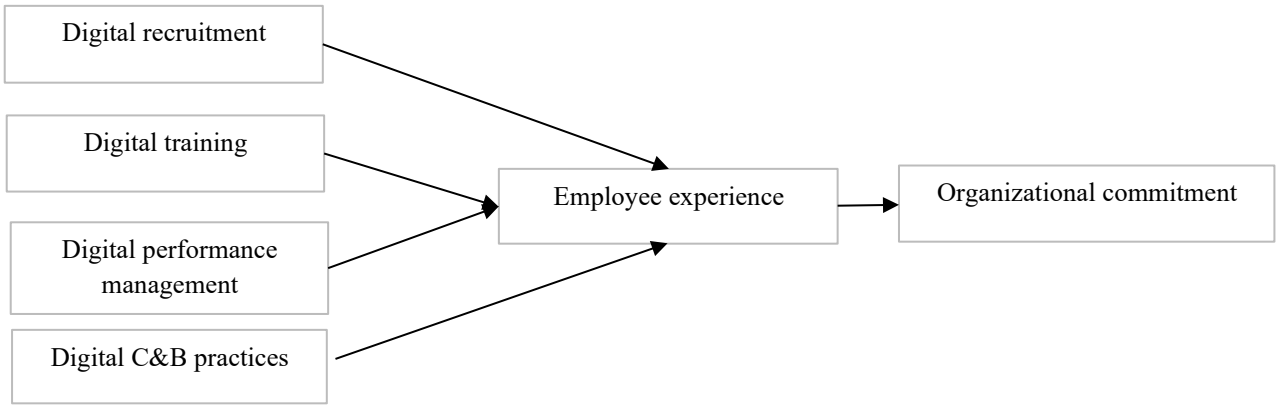

Fig. 1. Proposed analytic framework
Source: Authors' own work

Thus, the following hypotheses illustrate the relationship between digital HRM practices with Employee experience and Organizational commitment.

- **Hypothesis 1:** *Digital recruitment* practices have a positive impact on *Employee experience* in telecommunication companies in Vietnam
- **Hypothesis 2:** *Digital training* practices have a positive impact on *Employee experience* in telecommunication companies in Vietnam
- **Hypothesis 3:** *Digital performance management* practices have a positive impact on *Employee experience* in telecommunication companies in Vietnam
- **Hypothesis 4:** *Digital compensation and benefits practices* have a positive impact on *Employee experience* in telecommunication companies in Vietnam
- **Hypothesis 5:** *Employee experience* has a positive impact on *Organizational commitment*

4. Methodology

This research employed a quantitative approach, utilizing structured surveys to gather data. The sampling technique used is snowball technique when we asked participants to introduce others in their network. Questionnaires were distributed to a sample of 263 employees of companies in the Telecommunication sector. As mentioned above, telecommunication companies in Vietnam are leading technology adoption and implementing digital transformation in operations. As a result, we chose this sector to conduct our research on digital HRM practices. Data cleaning was conducted to ensure data quality. 34 responses were filtered out as they exhibited consistent answers across all questions, including a reverse-coded item. This indicated potential issues with data quality, such as inattentive responses or a lack of understanding of the survey questions. Hence, those responses have been removed. Afterall, there is a final sample size of 229 usable responses. A five-point Likert scale was used for each survey item, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Table 1
Demography of participants

Category	Details	Frequency	Ratio
Length of service	Less than 5 years	161	70%
	5 – 10 years	25	11%
	More than 10 years	43	19%
Position	Non-managerial	162	71%
	Managing team size less than 5	28	12%
	Managing team size from 5 and above	39	17%
Age	< 30	94	41%
	30 – 50	128	56%
	>50	7	3%

Source: Authors' own work

Among 229 samples, most participants are in non-managerial positions with 71%. It is notable that most surveyed employees are above 30 years old and more than 19% have shown high loyalty with more than 10 years of service.

To conduct quantitative analysis, the researchers follow basic steps including checking reliability and validity, calculating correlations among variables and path coefficients. To test the proposed framework and hypotheses, we applied Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) - a multivariate analysis technique widely used in social sciences research. In the guidelines of PLS-SEM application, Hair et al. (2021) have recommended this method if a study aims to balance explanation and prediction. Magno et al. (2022) claimed that researchers in QM increasingly employ PLS-SEM. It was also stated that one of the key reasons for using PLS-SEM is its robustness even with small sample sizes. Becker et al. (2022) agrees that the application of PLS-SEM fits well with modern research environment, including testing hypotheses and implying suggestions for management. With only 229 observations, traditional SEM methods may face limitations due to sample size constraints. Therefore, PLS-SEM is more suitable for our samples and SmartPLS is the analytical software used in this research.

5. Results

5.1 Measurement test

To ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs, Cronbach's alpha and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were calculated using SmartPLS. The Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.85 in Table 2, indicating strong internal consistency, except for OC at 0.7 – acceptable value. Additionally, the AVE values for all constructs were greater than 0.5, confirming convergent validity. These findings demonstrate the reliability and validity of the measurement scales used in this study, aligning with the guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2021).

Table 2
Reliability and validity test

Variables	Cronbach alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Digital recruitment	0.893	0.926	0.758
Digital training	0.935	0.953	0.837
Digital performance management	0.902	0.931	0.772
Digital C&B practices	0.854	0.90	0.693
Organizational commitment	0.760	0.847	0.544
Employee experience	0.931	0.948	0.784

Source: Authors' own work

5.2 Correlation analysis

All variables have been checked for correlation analysis. It is shown in Table 3 that there is moderate correlation between digital HRM practices and all selected dependable variables. Particularly*, Digital performance management* have remarkable correlation with *Employee experience* (above 0.7) while *Digital recruitment* demonstrates the lowest correlation value with EX (0.49) and OC (0.424). Organizational commitment is slightly correlated with other variables, showing the highest result with Employee experience.

Table 3
Correlation results

	DR	DT	DP	DC	EX	OC
Digital recruitment	1	0.718	0.569	0.48	0.490	0.424
Digital training	0.718	1	0.639	0.623	0.630	0.463
Digital performance management	0.569	0.639	1	0.733	0.758	0.560
Digital C&B practices	0.480	0.623	0.733	1	0.599	0.519
Employee experience	0.490	0.630	0.758	0.599	1	0.655
Organizational commitment	0.424	0.463	0.560	0.519	0.655	1

Source: Authors' own work

5.3 Hypothesis testing

To examine hypotheses on the relationships among suggested variables, PLS-SEM has been applied by Bootstrapping in Smart PLS software. The values shown in table 4 with p-value have clearly demonstrated our results. It can be noticed that the relationships between digital performance management and digital training on Employee experience have been supported with p-values less than 0.05. On the other hand, if p-value is less than 0.05, no significant impact is identified. Thus, the digital HR practices of recruitment and C&B practices have not shown a positive impact on Employee experience. According to results in Table 4, Hypothesis 2, hypothesis 3 and hypothesis 5 are accepted, confirming the positive impact of digital training and digital performance management on Employee experience as well as the influence of employee experience on organizational commitment. In addition, the mediating effect of Employee experience between digital HR practices and

Organizational commitment has been confirmed, specifically mediating the relationships of digital training and digital performance management and organizational commitment.

Table 4
Path coefficients

Relationships among variables	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values	Note
H_1: Digital recruitment → Employee experience	-0.06	0.078	0.769	0.442	Not supported
H_2: Digital training → Employee experience	0.279	0.075	3.713	0	Supported
H_3: Digital performance management → Employee experience	0.607	0.07	8.707	0	Supported
H_4: Digital C&B practices → Employee experience	0.009	0.06	0.152	0.879	Not supported
H_5: Employee experience → Organizational commitment	0.655	0.041	16.032	0	Supported

Source: Authors' own work

6. Main findings and discussion

By examining the interactions of selected variables within the context of Telecommunication sector of Vietnam, our main findings are presented as follows:

The positive impact of Digital Training and Digital Performance Management: The results indicate that digital training and performance management practices have a positive impact on EX. This finding aligns with previous research (Farndale & Kelliher, 2013), which suggests that digital performance management can enhance employee experience. Notably, by providing employees with access to timely and relevant training opportunities and effective performance feedback mechanisms, organizations can foster a constructive work environment leading to positive employee experience.

Employee experience is less likely to be affected by Digital Recruitment and digital C&B practices: Contrary to expectations, digital recruitment practices did not have a significant impact on EX. This may be attributed to the fact that digital recruitment primarily focuses on attracting and selecting candidates, rather than directly influencing the experiences of existing employees. While digital recruitment tools can streamline the hiring process, their impact on the ongoing employee experience may be limited.

Similarly to digital recruitment, digital compensation and benefits practices did not show a significant impact on EX. While these practices can improve the efficiency and transparency of compensation and benefits administration, they may not directly contribute to employee satisfaction and engagement. The key to enhancing EX through compensation and benefits lies in the strategic design and implementation of reward systems that align with organizational goals and employee needs (Armstrong, 2016) rather than C&B practices.

The mediating effect of Employee Experience to enhance Organizational Commitment

The study also found a positive relationship between EX and organizational commitment. This finding reinforces the notion that a positive EX can contribute to a strong commitment (Malik et al., 2023). In addition, EX is playing the role of mediator in our proposed framework. Given the established link, our results showed Employee experience has a mediating effect on the relationships between digital HRM practices and Organizational commitment. By fostering effective digital HRM practices, especially in training and performance management, organizational commitment can be enhanced via positive employee experience.

Future research could delve deeper into the specific mechanisms through other digital HR practices influence EX and OC, as well as explore the moderating effects of organizational factors, such as leadership style and organizational culture, on these relationships. Additionally, longitudinal studies could be conducted to examine the long-term impact of digital HR practices on employee outcomes.

In general, *Digital training and performance management* have a significant influence on *Employee experience*, which in turn acts as a mediator to improve Organizational commitment. Though not all digital HRM practices demonstrate the positive impact on Employee experience, these findings emphasize the strategic important delivery of digital HRM practices in fostering a work environment to provide positive experience for employees, from that enhance their commitment and loyalty.

7. Limitations And Implications

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of digital HR practices on employee experience, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations. Firstly, the study focused on a specific set of digital HR practices, namely digital training, performance management, recruitment, and compensation and benefits. Other emerging digital HR practices, such as career development and HR planning, were not explicitly examined.

Secondly, the sample size of the study was relatively limited, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research could consider larger sample sizes to increase the statistical power and generalizability of the results. Additionally, a longitudinal research design could provide deeper insights into the long-term impact of digital HR practices on employee experience.

On the other hand, with key findings presented above, our research also provides valuable implications for both academic and practical sides.

For academics: This study contributes to the growing body of research on digital HR and its impact on employee experience. By examining the specific effects of digital HRM practices such as digital training, performance management, recruitment, and compensation and benefits practices, this research provides valuable insights for future academic inquiry. Future research could explore the moderating and mediating effects of organizational factors, such as leadership style, organizational culture, and employee demographics, on the relationship between digital HRM practices and employee experience. Additionally, longitudinal studies could be conducted to examine the long-term impact of digital HR initiatives on employee outcomes.

For practitioners: Organizations should invest in robust digital training platforms and performance management systems to enhance employee experience and commitment. On the other hand, while digital recruitment tools can streamline the hiring process, organizations should focus on creating positive employee experiences throughout the entire employee lifecycle, not only to attract candidates. Moreover, digital tools can improve the efficiency and transparency of compensation and benefits processes. However, it is more important to consider the rewards which are essential to keep them engaged.

8. Conclusion

Overall, this study has explored the evolving role of digital HR practices in shaping employee experience and contributing to organizational commitment. While digital training and performance management have demonstrated a positive impact, the influence of digital recruitment and compensation and benefits practices on employee experience appears to be more limited. To maximize the benefits of digital HR, organizations should prioritize an innovative approach that considers the interplay between technology, human factors, and organizational culture. Future research could delve deeper into the specific mechanisms underlying these relationships and explore the potential of emerging technologies, and the implementation of digital human resource management to further enhance employee experience and organizational commitment.

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