

THE ROLE OF DIGITALIZATION IN CONTEMPORARY ORGANIZATIONS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

The role of digitalization in contemporary organizations is a current and highly relevant topic, which is why the specialized literature requires frequent revision and updating of the theoretical framework. Therefore, this paper aims to provide a recent contribution to this framework, enabling a better conceptualization of digitalization in relation to the most important organizational process, more exactly, decision-making. In this regard, the main objective of the study is to determine the role that digitalization plays in contemporary organizations, particularly in relation to decision-making. The research employs a systematic literature review methodology, relying exclusively on sources indexed in the Web of Science Core Collection. Furthermore, the research findings answer its central question, providing a current, rigorous and coherent perspective on the subject under analysis. Additionally, the study concludes by highlighting the role and importance of digitalization in the organizational environment.

Keywords

Digitalization, contemporary organizations, decision-making, systematic literature review

JEL Classification

A10, L20, L21, L29, M00, M12, M15, M19, O30, O32

Introduction

Contemporary organizations are transforming day by day, with emerging technologies strongly asserting themselves in all processes found at the company level. A special distinction in this regard is held by digitalization and the role it plays in organizations, predominantly impacting one of the most important processes, namely, decision-making. The digitalization of any organizational process also appears as a consequence of the digitalization of the decision-making process, precisely because it is extremely necessary for decision-makers to use and understand the implications of these technologies in order to recognise their value when applied to other processes.

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The present research aims to analyse the role of this phenomenon through a systematic literature review, an approach which, according to certain authors (Ngereja, Hussein and Wolff, 2024), contributes to highlighting and analysing the key aspects of the digitalization adoption, thereby facilitating the determination of its role within contemporary organizations. All the more so since the literature emphasizes the importance of analysing digitalization within organizational contexts (Baumgart, Boos and Braunsmann, 2023).

Therefore, this paper aims to explore the chosen topic in greater depth and is structured into three main parts: the literature review, which is intended to highlight the importance of the research topic by outlining the implications of digitalization on contemporary organizations; the research methodology, which provides explanations regarding the approach and criteria used to conduct the systematic literature review and the final section, namely the results and discussion, which presents the research findings and seeks to answer the research question.

Eventually, the results aim to make an original contribution to the field of study through a perspective that demonstrates high rigour in selecting relevant works; moreover, the topicality of digitalization in organizations makes continuous analysis of the literature in this area extremely relevant and necessary.

1. Review of the scientific literature

Contemporary organizations have undergone major changes driven by the COVID-19 pandemic and the simultaneous need to remain competitive. The adoption of digital technologies, which implicitly led to the digitalization of organizational processes, was one of the "consequences" of this event (Golinelli et al., 2020). Thus, in the area of decision-making, the term "big data" or even digital tools is frequently encountered, and some authors believe that these have the potential to optimize decision-making (Poulose, Bhattacharjee and Chakravorty, 2024).

For example, in a paper that addresses digitalization in the context of non-governmental organizations, emphasis is placed on the fundamental role that various digital features play for decision-makers, highlighting that these help in making more rational decisions (Leitoniene, Waniak-Michalak and Perica, 2025).

Additionally, the role of digitalization in organizations, especially in the decision-making process, is often highlighted in the specialized literature through the digital tools used in practice. One example is that of algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI), which, through their integration into organizational processes, are able to generate resolutions that serve as the basis for subsequent decisions (Baumgart, Boos and Braunsmann, 2023). Moreover, there are authors who believe that in order to make more strategic decisions, organizations must focus on the use of digital tools (Cherviakov et al., 2020).

Regarding the competitiveness mentioned earlier, there are also studies that present the role of digitalization in contemporary organizations as something imposed by external factors, highlighting the pressure on managers to align with contemporary practices such as eco-friendly or green approaches (Mohammed et al., 2022).

Decision-making in the context of current organizations has undergone major changes, and one of the missions of digitalization in this process has been to help reduce the

speed of this process (Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri, 2019). Therefore, the current literature presents both the implications of this phenomenon and highlights a constant need for analysis and updating of research in the field by emphasizing the scope and relevance of the subject (Leitoniene, Waniak-Michalak and Perica, 2025).

However, a very important consideration noted in the literature is that contemporary organizations can no longer function without adapting to technologies and in this regard, the so-called "digital mindset" also emerges (Chaushi, Veseli-Kurtishi and Chaushi, 2024).

2. Research methodology

The chosen research methodology is a systematic literature review, a method that enables the development of a rigorous and coherent study by significantly minimizing possible errors and preconceived notions (Higgins and Green, 2011). Therefore, the research aims to synthesize the scientific literature and identify the most relevant articles for the research question. This is all the more significant given that the targeted field of study represents an emerging area.

In this sense, regarding the formulation of the research question and the determination of the criteria for including and excluding studies, the paper will apply a logical framework commonly known in practice as PICOC (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcomes, and Context), which is a tool based on the necessary criteria for conducting a systematic review (Kholili, Dewantoro and Surur, 2023). Therefore, the conceptual framework for selecting the scientific literature is as follows (see Table no. 1):

Table no. 1. PICOC

PICOC elements	Definition	Application in the present research
Population	Target group	Contemporary organizations
Intervention	Method, tool or technology applied	Digitalization
Comparison	Method, tool or technology compared.	Traditional decision-making methods
Outcome	Expected outcomes	Efficiency and quality of the decision-making process
Context	Setting where comparison occurs	The contemporary organizational environment

Source: Own processing based on the model provided by Carrera-Rivera et al. (2022)

Thus, based on the criteria identified through the application of PICOC, the main research question (RSQ) guiding this study is formulated as follows:

RSQ: What is the role of digitalization (Intervention) in improving decision-making (Outcome) in contemporary organizations (Population) in the current organizational context (Context)?

At the same time, both through the research question and with the help of PICOC, a series of keywords were identified and used in selecting relevant sources for the literature review, as follows: *digitalization, decision-making, organizations, contemporary organizations, role of digitalization*; these will be combined using Boolean operators, specifically "AND" and "OR." (Gumley, 2022), combinations that will support the research by narrowing it down to the most relevant studies related to the research question.

In this sense, the keywords will be applied to the Web Of Science Core Collection database. Next, to ensure the highest possible relevance of the studies to be analysed, a series of filters was applied to the results obtained from the keyword search. Thus, only articles and review articles published within the targeted time frame, namely from 2020 to 2025, were selected. Moreover, only studies written in English and with open access were considered.

To maintain an even stricter level of relevance to the research question, a filter by research area was also applied, including only works from the following fields: *business economics, operations research, management science, social sciences, other topics, science and technology, and social issues*.

The very rigorous filtering applied to the initially generated result led to a drastic decrease in the total number of works. It must be noted that the sorting was not accidental, as it was largely due to the rigour upon which this research aimed to be built. Therefore, given the specificity of this work, namely that of systematic literature review, it was extremely important that the selected works were only open access ones, precisely so that they could then be analysed in detail.

Under the same motivation, language filtering was implemented, given that analysing English written publications simplifies content comprehension. Additionally, to maintain the study's focus, works were selected starting from the pandemic period, a moment that represents a critical juncture in the digitalization of organizations.

Consequently, after sorting the initially generated results and creating a data set that met the filtering conditions, a careful screening of them was carried out, at which point it was identified that not all of them had a strong connection with the researched subject, due to which the final number of retrieved works was relatively low.

Hence, from the identification of sources generated through keywords to the rigorous selection of the most relevant studies, their number underwent a significant reduction. In this regard, to be able to ensure a transparent presentation of this process, a PRISMA scheme was created. A scheme which is commonly used as a useful guide to present the selection of scientific literature transparently and comprehensively in systematic reviews (MacLure, Paudyal and Stewart, 2016). Considering these, the present work aims to respect the standards in the literature and to integrate into the study this important point for systematic reviews (see Figure no. 1).

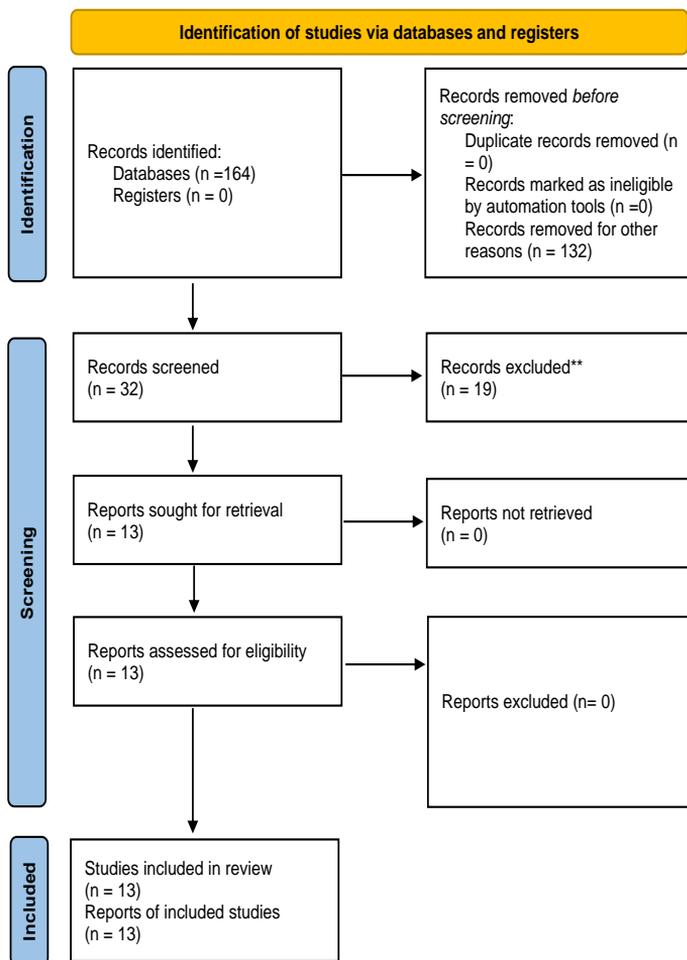


Figure. No. 1. PRISMA

Source: Own processing on the model offered by PRISMA (2020)

Therefore, according to the above PRISMA diagram, out of a total of 164 articles generated through the application of keywords, only 13 papers remained after a rigorous selection process, studies which will be analysed in detail in the Results and Discussion section.

3. Results and discussion

This section will present the results obtained from the systematic analysis of the specialized literature, examining a total of 13 indexed papers in Web of Science Core Collection. As a starting point, the Excel file from Web of Science Core Collection was

downloaded and based on that file, several PivotTables were made. In this sense, the first one is focused on the papers' temporal distribution as shown in the next table (see Table no. 2):

Table no. 2. Distribution of articles by year

Article Title Counter		
Publication Year		Total
	2020	1
	2021	2
	2022	2
	2023	4
	2024	3
	2025	1
Total general		13

Source: Own processing in Excel

By analysing their temporal distribution, it can be observed that the period with the highest interest in the studied field was the one between 2023-2024. However, given that at the time of the extraction 2025 was only halfway through, a positive trend can be anticipated for the entire year as well. Nevertheless, 2023 stands out as a pivotal year for organisations. While the years between 2020-2022 were defined by the immediate shock of the COVID pandemic, 2023 can be said to represent the point where the cumulative effects of these changes may have fully materialised. Additionally, it could be assumed that the trend will be kept in the future, with more works focusing on this subject.

During the period mentioned above, articles such as „*Decision-Making on Selection of Talent Management Methods in the Era of Digitalization*” (Cai et al., 2023) and „*Technological transformation in HRM through knowledge and training: Innovative business decision making*” (del Val Núñez et al., 2024), highlight the role of digitalization in contemporary organizational management and address its implications for optimizing organizational performance. A fact which demonstrates that one of the main interests when it comes to the digitalization of organizations or one of the main directions pursued is that of increasing organizational performance.

At the same time, considering the specific characteristics of both talent management and human resource management, it could be marked that there is a clear research trend towards digitalization of decision-making processes when it comes to searching, selecting and recruiting personnel.

Furthermore, in order to coherently structure the most relevant themes found within the 13 articles, a thematic distribution analysis was conducted based on the extraction of the authors' keywords from the Excel file (see Table no. 3).

Table no. 3. Relevant themes based on authors' keywords

Theme	Number of Articles with Theme Present
Digitalization & Digital tools	9
Decision-making	3
AI & ML	4
Organizational Strategy & Performance	3
Supply Chain & Logistics	2
HR & Talent Management	4
Innovation & Technology	1
Methodologies & Approaches	6
Other / Miscellaneous	7

Source: Own processing in Excel

From Table no. 3, it can be observed that the most relevant theme among the 13 papers was Digitalization and digital tools, with papers such as „*Decision Algorithm for Digital Media and Intangible-Heritage Digitalization Using Picture Fuzzy Combined Compromise for Ideal Solution in Uncertain Environments*” (Chang, 2025), „*Elusive boundaries, power relations, and knowledge production: A systematic review of the literature on digitalization in accounting*” (Knudsen, 2020) and „*Performance measurement of construction suppliers under localization, agility, and digitalization criteria: Fuzzy Ordinal Priority Approach*” (Mahmoudi1, Sadeghi and Deng, 2022), highlighting the role of digitalization in various organizational contexts, such as the use of digital tools for making optimal decisions. They present the implications of digitalization on traditional methods like the Fuzzy approach, emphasizing the added value it brings. In the area of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), the papers „*Riding a bicycle while building its wheels: the process of machine learning-based capability development and IT-business alignment practices*” (Mucha, Ma and Abhari, 2023), „*Quantum-inspired modeling of distributed intelligence systems with artificial intelligent agents self-organization*” (Alodjants et al., 2024) and „*Artificial intelligence as an enabler for entrepreneurs: a systematic literature review and an agenda for future research*” (Giuggioli and Pellegrini, 2022), emphasize the development of organizational capabilities through the automation of the decision-making process, which is currently based on digital assistants and the use of these tools to make the best decisions, thereby optimizing the decision-making process.

The decision-making process is frequently encountered in the context of human resource management (HRM), which is an organizational setting where decisions are made continuously, with works such as „*Examining the Role of AI-Augmented HRM for Sustainable Performance: Key Determinants for Digital Culture and Organizational Strategy*” (Mollah et al., 2024) and „*Innovating HRM recruitment: a comprehensive review of AI deployment*” (Tsiskaridze, Reinhold and Jarvis, 2023) underscoring the role

of digitalization as a factor in improving the decision-making process through the emerging need in current contexts for collaboration between the human factor and AI. Besides that, they present the essential role that artificial intelligence plays in decision-making within the HRM context.

Additionally, within the systematic literature analysis, a classification of the 13 papers was also conducted based on their country of origin, with the following classifications presented (see Table no. 4):

Table no. 4. Country-based article categorization

Country Count	
Countries	Total
England	1
Estonia	1
Hungary	1
Italy	1
Norway	1
Peoples R China	3
Spain	1
Sweden	1
France	1
USA	2
Total general	13

Source: Own processing in Excel

Except for the People's Republic of China and the United States of America (USA), the remaining articles each originated from a different country. This highlights the diversity of these works, especially when considering their very limited number, which reflects a varied interest in the topic of digitalization in contemporary organizations. For example, through the paper from France „*So far and yet so near: The emerging characteristics, forms and configurations of organizational proximity in the context of digitalization*” (Peng, 2021), it is indicated that digitalization plays a role in improving the decision-making process through the concept that digital technology not only brings new tools but also reshapes the circumstances in which decisions are made. At the same time, it highlights the possibility of altering the physical proximity of interactions within organizations, thus making it so that decisions do not require direct interactions.

Also, through the research „*Reflecting on an empirical study of the digitalization initiatives for sustainability on logistics: The concept of sustainable logistics 4.0*” (Parhi et al., 2022) from USA, the mission of digitalizing the decision-making process is developed by establishing the interdependent link between decision and digital factors, specifically referring to the supportive role that digital technology provides to the decision-making process. At the same time, through the study „*Uncovering generative mechanisms of information use for project monitoring in humanitarian health management information systems*” (Huser, Bon and Anifalaje, 2021), from England,

both empirical and theoretical evidence are provided regarding the way digitalization plays an important role in improving decision-making.

Conclusions

Therefore, based on the 13 papers selected for the systematic literature review, a series of conclusions can be drawn. The first conclusion is that although 2020 forced an abrupt shift toward digitalization due to remote work, the literature reveals that strategic interest in the field only intensified significantly from 2023 onwards. Furthermore, considering the countries of origin of these studies, it can be concluded that there is a moderate diversity among them, as they come from Europe, the United States of America and Asia.

The second conclusion is that, regarding the most important themes related to the digitalization of the decision-making process, topics such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, organizational strategy, performance, HR, etc., are found, indicating that this phenomenon is often encountered in diverse organizational and practical contexts.

The third conclusion is that, regardless of the context in which digitalization was identified in these 13 papers, its importance and role in contemporary organizations have been marked by its distinct characteristics.

In conclusion, the research results make a significant contribution to the scientific literature, as they were generated and selected through a rigorous process, which also justifies the very low number of articles. Moreover, the study offers a multi-organizational perspective, not being limited to a single economic sector or a specific organization, which makes the work relevant precisely through the multiple validation of the research question. Of course, it also faced certain limitations, such as the relatively low number of articles in this area overall, only 164 works were identified after searching with the research keywords. However, precisely because of this consideration, future research is necessary, which could extend the study to a broader literary base and also include other sources, such as Scopus. At the same time, thematic studies could be carried out, specifically on areas such as human resources management or decisions in the financial department.

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