

# Role of Emerging Job Skills for Adjusting with Digital Work–Life Challenges

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## Abstract

There is a paradigm shift amongst the organizations post the pandemic with the emergence of digital workplaces which resonate virtual settings rather than physical settings at work which have implications on work–life balance among employees. The research in past have mostly explored the ways in which digital workplaces have changed the skills desired by employers for organizational effectiveness. However, the current research has tried to foster a holistic understanding of the challenges in digital work places and the specific job skills that enable to handle digital work–life challenges for employee effectiveness. The article provides the problem and solution under a singular umbrella, providing an anchor for human resource professionals to embrace changes in people process management with the rise of digital workplaces. The study has deployed a sequential mixed method approach to conduct the study. In the first phase an in-depth qualitative inquiry was conducted to explore digital work–life challenges through interviews conducted with practicing managers in IT industry from North India. In the second phase of the study an empirical model was developed to validate the specific job skills that impact digital work–life challenges using structural equation modelling (SEM). The empirically tested model indicated that stress tolerance and communication prowess were the two most important predictors of managing digital work–life challenges. Ability to adjust on the other hand, emerged as a mediating factor between uncertainty management and communication prowess. The model highlights the socio-technical arrangements that can be explored by practitioners in Industry for an effective digital work–life balance and effectiveness.

## Key Words

Digital Work–Life Challenges, Ability to Adjust, Communication Prowess, Stress Tolerance, Uncertainty Management, Digital Workplaces, Mixed Research Methodology

## Introduction

The global pandemic has forced many organizations particularly the Information Technology (IT) sector to adopt the digital mode of operations as an alternative towards the traditional and conventional physical operational setting. There is a paradigm shift amongst the organizations post the pandemic with the emergence of digital workplaces which resonate virtual settings rather than physical settings at work which has implications on work–life skill assessment among employees in the digital workplaces. Awareness of the digital work skill challenges faced by employees today could have an impact on the ways in which management practices and expertise need to evolve.

Some of the significant findings in the area of digital work skill sets like Segbenya et al. (2021), they explored the

impact of COVID-19 on employability skills however the study lacked an insight in to development of ‘digital’ and ‘cognitive’ acumen among employees which are an essential skills requirement to handle ‘cognitive technologies’ which have the power to emulate human thinking process through artificial intelligence, machine learning, and so on.

With organizations adopting digital technologies and work from home mode of operations post the pandemic the very dimensions of previously understood skills sets have undergone a sea change and needs evaluation from both practitioner as well as academic angles. The scope of technology with cognitive (thinking) abilities would enable job skill assessment in the emergent digital workplaces. This new age ‘digital workplaces’ embodies a workplace that is representative of a work platform irrespective of location strategized to accommodate data, information, and applications. The new work

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places have many benefits making the entire process work efficient and agile. A complete and correct implementation of these digital workplaces requires the right mindset of people and a digital job skill assessment that is not limited to only ‘technology’ know how but ‘socio-technical’ skill sets to be able to handle such progressive ‘cognitive technologies’.

The impact of cognitive technology application in organizations today empowers organizations to just not automate processes but in still social dynamics in technology which involves certain skills like employee’s ability to adjust to workplaces ,uncertainty management, stress tolerance, communication prowess identified as employee work skill to combat the digital work–life challenge.

The research has tried to develop a robust framework that is composite and incorporates the insights from past research on digital skillsets at the workplace so as to provide a holistic anchor towards human resource practice evolutions with the changing times. Research conducted by OECD (2021) indicated that the pandemic opened up opportunities for remote working and people with new skill sets especially with ability to work in a digital work environment. An example of which is Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) which has recently initiated Rebegin with #TheBigMove for experienced women professionals to reclaim a promising career after a break because nothing should stand in the way of deserving talent. In another recent research Mikołajczyk (2022), conducted a qualitative inquiry regarding how the pandemic affected employee development perspectives in organizations. These insights could be helpful for re-thinking training and development strategies in a post-COVID world.

Considering these facts, a detailed review of the literature was conducted which revealed that there is a lack of clarity, understanding, and maturity for employees as well as human resources professionals in order to adapt to the challenges in digital work–life post-COVID.

The new competencies in digital work–life needs to be understood so as to provide a menu of flexible skills to adjust to the changing workplace, which the current research has presented through identifying the ‘digital work–life challenges’. The research intends to elevate the discussions of the research to provide a holistic organizational strategy to step up integration in work–life in order to uplift the design of work in organizations.

The study has adopted a mixed research methodology so that the phenomenon can be explored and ratified through qualitative and quantitative validation. The final results of the study are based on the triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative studies. The approach is novel with respect to methodology and approach to the study.

### ***Theoretical Foundation and Research Gap Identification***

The background of the current research is emergent from the past contributions which have discussed the impact of changing technology and employee skill sets and behaviour

on organizational effectiveness, some of which have been stated by Cascio and Montealegre (2016), Kiron et al. (2016), Collard et al. (2017) and Colbert et al. (2016). Very recently the study conducted by Aguinis et al. (2020) presented an understanding of how the employees responded behaviourally during the global pandemic which could have an impact on assessments of employees’ way of handling changes. The recent report published by Accenture Amazon (Amazon, 2020) also provided a practical understanding on how these organizations are adapting to new technology and work practices during the COVID-19. Similarly, the study conducted by Chanana and Sangeeta (2020) emphasized the importance of organizations harnessing engaging work practices for helping employees adapt with their work–life during the COVID-19. These reports and studies were indicative of the growing need to re-assess employee job skill sets post the pandemic which has propelled the current research. Table 1 highlights the insights from review of literature on the impact of technology and employee skill sets from past literary contributions.

Most of the discussions and conclusions from the past literature as seen in Table 1 focused on the importance of digital skill set on organizational effectiveness. Also, the studies were either theoretical in nature or quantitatively validating the most effective digital skills prevalent in organizations impacting their performance. The studies lacked a cohesive development of the phenomenon of digital work–life places, its challenges, and the key job skills that impacted it which the current study has been able to abridge through a mixed research methodology approach from the perspective of the employee.

Further to the above discussion, the past studies evaluated employee skills for digital work–life through the mirror of ‘social/people’ skills and ‘technology’ skills as independent entities—their contribution towards enabling people becoming for effective for countering digital work–life challenges had remained a major research gap which was placed as the research agenda in the present study.

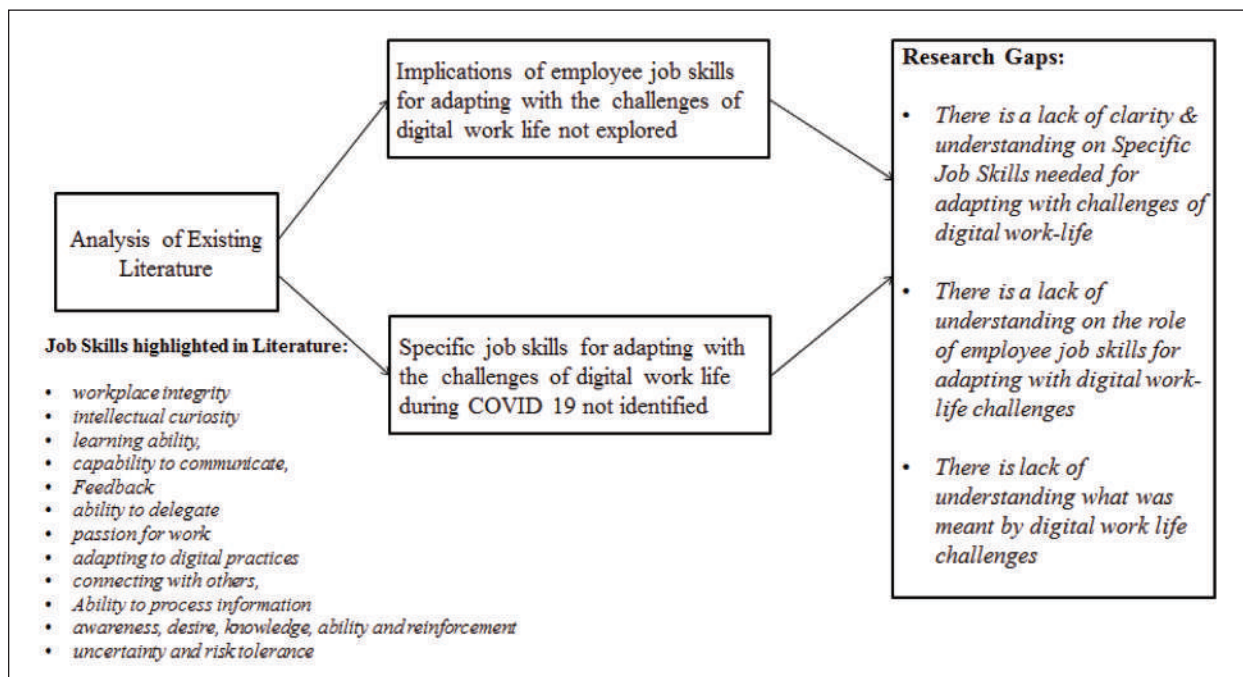
To make a detailed and in-depth theoretical understanding of the underlying social phenomena which was unclear from the existing literature, the current research put in a comprehensive exploratory inquiry for having the understanding of digital work–life challenges and the skills essential to counter the same. The research was considered more impelling considering the fact that in today’s work scenario social and technology set-ups are entangled resulting in the need for exploring socio-technical skill expertise that can accommodate the new ways of working (Orlikowski, 2008). The current study incorporated this socio-technical assimilation of employee working by orienting the trigger questions in the Phase I of the qualitative enquiry to accommodate the same (Sinha et al., 2022). This co-existence of human and technology in the study helped to interpret the results and conclusions in a more relevant and relatable manner unlike the past studies.

Based on the above discussions, the following research gaps were outlined (Figure 1).

**Table 1.** Insights from Review of Literature on the Impact of Technology and Employee Skill Sets.

Sl no	Study Conducted by	Results
1	Maji & Laha (2021), Mutsuddi & Sinha (2022)	Encapsulated the rising importance of digital skills for organizational operations during the pandemic with reference to the Asia Pacific region specifically India
2	Kumar (2021)	Discussed the role of 5V skills namely value, voice, variety, virtue and vision in employee engagement perspectives during the post lockdown phase in organizations
3	Underwood (2019)	Emphasized the role of leadership abilities for job roles in the digital age
4	Bandura & Lyons (2017)	The research strongly contended the relevance of skill building for employee engagement
5	Criag (2019)	Discussed the importance of eight specific employee skills for a digital worker which are knowledge resource expert, ability to inspire others on workplace integrity, intellectual curiosity, learning ability, capability to communicate, feedback, ability to delegate and passion for work
6	Prevsly Marsh (2018)	Emphasized on the importance of four overarching job skills for digital work–life. These included factors like adapting to digital practices, connecting with and others, processing information, digital competence. Marsh (2018) used these broad factors in order to explore their contributions for establishing, protecting, optimizing and innovating in a digital workplace
8	Grissom (2019)	Emphasized on the importance of awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement (ADKAR) model for digital competence of employees
9	Siddoo et al. (2019)	Found that teamwork, dependability, IT acumen, attitude, learning were important skills for digital work–life
10	Padayachee (2002)	Discussed the importance of uncertainty and risk tolerance in the work–life of employees working in the IT sector
11	Oberländer et al. (2020)	Presented a theoretical discussion on the role of employee digital competencies on the effectiveness of digitalization process in organizations
12	Ester van Laar et al. (2020)	a theoretical discussion on the role of employee digital competencies on the effectiveness of digitalization process in organizations
13	Kozanoglu & Abedin (2020)	Presented an empirical model discussing the digital literacy of employee on organizational effectiveness
14	Hamouche (2020)	Presented the importance mental health and stress factors on employee work–life during the Global pandemic. This issue was further explored in the study conducted by Gómez et al (2020) where implications of uncertainty and stress issues on people during the COVID-19 were discussed

Source: The authors.

**Figure 1.** Identification of Research Gap from Review of Literature.

Source: The authors.

- There is a lack of clarity and understanding on Specific Job Skills needed for adapting with challenges of digital work–life
- There is a lack of understanding on the role of employee job skills for adapting with digital work–life challenges
- There is lack of understanding what was meant by digital work–life challenges at the first place.

The research gaps further led to the identification of the following research questions namely:

- RQ1: What is understood by digital work–life challenges and factors impacting it?
- RQ2: What are the specific job skills needed for adapting with challenges of digital work–life?

Based on the research gaps and research questions developed from the review of literature, the following objectives of the study were identified, namely:

- To explore the challenges of digital work–life and the significant job skills needed to adjustment to these challenges in organizations.
- To study the ways in which the employee job skills influence the course of adjustment with the various challenges of digital work–life.

## Research Methods

The study used a sequential mixed method research design (Draucker et al., 2020), in order to understand and explore the specific job skills needed for adjusting with digital work–life challenges of employees working in Information Technology companies in the NCR of Delhi during the COVID-19.

1. Phase I: The first phase of the study was based on qualitative research design where the research questions emerging from the review of literature were used to develop trigger & probing questions (Creswell, 2007) that were used to record and analyse narratives from eight industry leaders working in senior positions in reputed Information technology companies in the NCR of Delhi who were contacted on the basis of tele-conversations with prior appointment. Data collection was done using non-probability sampling method applying grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), whereby the researchers engaged into a rigorous interaction with the subject matter experts on an on-going basis until a saturated and complete pragmatic understanding (Hyvärinen, 2007) of the social phenomenon was recorded and analysed in the form of narratives. The narrative transcripts were then fed into N-Vivo 10 application (Khandkar, 2009) for the presentation and further analysis whereby the qualitative data (narratives) was analysed into broad themes and

sub-themes. The new variables (broad themes) along with the sub-themes emerging from N-Vivo analysis were used for developing the research questionnaire which was used in the Phase II of the study which was quantitative in nature.

2. Phase II: The Phase II of the study was quantitative in nature. The research questionnaire developed from the findings of the Phase I of the research was used to collect data from 235 respondents working in software development or operations positions in leading Information Technology companies in and around the NCR of Delhi Data were collected using random sampling method based on a previously coded list of respondents along with their contact numbers and emails. The questionnaire developed in Phase I was fed into Google forms for facilitating digital data collection.

### Data Collection: Qualitative Phase (Phase I)

Trigger and probing questions were used to collect qualitative data from the eight Industry leaders working in reputed Information Technology companies in the NCR. The narratives were recorded by using grounded theory method and the narrative transcripts were subsequently fed into N-Vivo 10 application whereby they were analysed into broad themes and sub-themes. Based on the predominantly observed qualitative responses (narratives) given by the industry experts, the following broad themes pertaining to the essential employee job skills were identified as new emerging variables, ability to adjust, uncertainty management, stress tolerance and communication prowess along with digital work–life challenges—where the later was defined and described on the basis of sub-themes as depicted in Table 2.

### Research Instrument

Based on the broad themes and sub-themes emerging from the Phase I (Table 2) of the study the constructs and their corresponding measures were used to develop the research instrument (Appendix 1) by applying a five point Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree), with control variables like gender, marital status, age group and educational qualifications (Undergraduate/Post Graduate) as control variables. The above questionnaire was fed into Google Forms for facilitating digital data collection.

### Initial Conceptual Model and Hypothesis

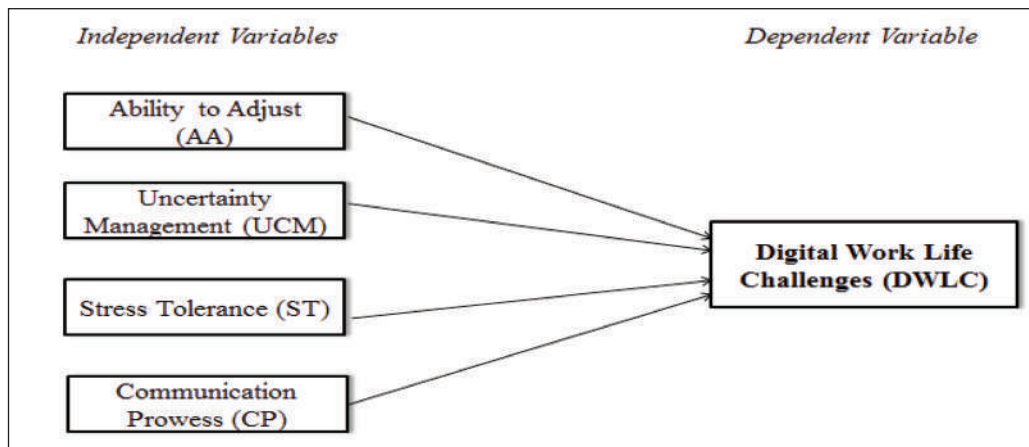
Based on the research questions and the corresponding research gaps identified after the review of literature and the emerging variables developed after the Phase I of the study the following conceptual model (Figure 2) was developed.

The research questions raised after the review of literature and the variables emerging (Table 2) from the Phase I also led to the proposal of the following hypothesis (Table 3) namely,

**Table 2.** Narrative Analysis Using Nvivo 10.

Name of the Node (Themes) Identified from Narratives	Coverage from Source (%)	Node Category (Broad Themes)	Node Category % Coverage of Source
Remaining flexible in situations	11	Ability to adjust	73
Changing with situations	21		
Mentality to adjust	12		
Adapt to changes	19		
Comfortable in new situations	10		
Working on uncertain areas	19	Uncertainty management	69
Working in ambiguity	17		
Challenging the unknown	9		
Manage crisis	16		
Take risks	8		
Resist tension	16	Stress tolerance	74
Manage stress	12		
Manage time	9		
Remain calm	12		
Cope stress	17		
Ability to share information	15	Communication prowess	75
Provide direction	19		
Have clarity	14		
Ability to network	10		
Handle conflicts	17		
Ability to take challenges of long working hours	14	Digital work–life challenges	85
Ability to solve complex problems	22		
Ability to upgrade digital acumen	23		
Digital know-hows	6		
Mindset to work in digital environment	20		

Source: The authors.

**Figure 2.** Initial Conceptual Model.

Source: The authors.

**Table 3.** Hypothesis of the Study.

Sl. No.	Research Question	Proposed Hypothesis
I	RQ2: What are the specific job skills needed for adapting with challenges of digital work–life?	<p>H<sub>a1</sub>: Ability to adjust (AA) has a role for adjusting with digital work–life challenges (DWLC)</p> <p>H<sub>a2</sub>: Uncertainty management (UCM) has a role for adjusting with digital work–life challenges (DWLC)</p> <p>H<sub>a3</sub>: Stress tolerance (ST) has a role for adjusting with digital work–life challenges (DWLC)</p> <p>H<sub>a4</sub>: Communication prowess (CP) has a role for adjusting with digital work–life challenges (DWLC)</p>

Source: The authors.

### Data Collection: Phase II (Quantitative Phase)

The data collected with the help of Google forms were downloaded as Excel spreadsheets and were subsequently coded before feeding the same in the SPSS Ver 20 application. The SPSS database was also fed into AMOS Ver 20 for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM).

### Data Analysis

Respondent Profile: Data analysis showed that 85% of the respondents were male and 15% were female. 70% of the respondents were single and 30% were married. Out of the male respondents 80% were single. Whereas for the female 90% of them were married. Majority of the respondents (95%) were in the age group of 26–30 years, 5% belonged to the age category of 21–25 years; 90% respondents were undergraduates and 10% were post graduates. The control variables namely, gender, age group, marital status and educational qualifications had no significant relationship with the dependent variable digital work–life challenges.

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The data were subsequently fed into AMOS ver 20 and a measurement model was developed for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The standardized regression and correlation estimates derived from the AMOS outputs of the measurement model were fed into the Gaskin's Statistical Tool Package (Gaskin & Lim, 2016; Gaskin, 2016) for the evaluation of construct validity scores (Table 4) in terms of average variance extracted (AVE) and maximum shared value (MSV).

Table 4 indicated that, all the constructs were having acceptable AVE scores above 0.5 showing that they had

acceptable scores establishing adequate convergent validity. On the other hand, as all the MSV score were well below the respective AVE scores for each constructs, they had adequate MSV—which indicated desirable discriminant validity estimates for the constructs. The AMOS outputs derived from the above measurement model pertaining to model fit analysis also revealed satisfactory scores (Byrne, 1994, 2001; Hair et al., 1998) as depicted in Table 7.

### Testing of Hypothesis

In order to undergo path analysis, the data were fed in AMOS ver 20 for structural equation modelling (SEM) with digital work–life challenges (DWLC) as the dependent variable and the ability to adjust (AA), uncertainty management (UCM), stress tolerance (ST) and communication prowess (CP) as independent variables. Regression estimates (Table 5) of the measurement model were used for testing the proposed hypothesis. It is clear that stress tolerance (ST) had significant relationship with digital work–life challenges (DWLC) leading to the acceptance of the hypothesis  $H_{a3}$  ( $\text{Std}\beta = .412, p < .05$ ). On the other hand, the variable communication prowess (CP) was also found to have significant implications ( $\text{Std}\beta = .212, p < .05$ ) on digital work–life challenges (DWLC) indicating the acceptance of the hypothesis  $H_{a4}$ .

The other variables, namely, ability to adjust (AA) ( $\text{Std}\beta = -.035, p > .05$ ) and uncertainty management (UCM) ( $\text{Std}\beta = .117, p > .05$ ) had no significant relationship with the dependent variable digital work–life challenges (DWLC) leading to the rejection of the hypothesis  $H_{a1}$  and  $H_{a2}$  respectively.

### First Order Measurement Model

The first order measurement model was developed based on the relationships of the dependent and independent variables

**Table 4.** Descriptive, Reliability and Validity Statistics.

Variables	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE	MSV
UCM	3.69	.749	.878	.886	.612	.208
AA	3.93	.562	.881	.873	.632	.283
CP	2.74	.382	.813	.819	.518	.283
ST	2.21	.484	.872	.874	.588	.312
DWLC	1.5491	.38501	.861	.861	.564	.312

Source: The authors.

**Table 5.** Regression Estimates and Testing of Hypothesis.

	Est	Std. $\beta$	S.E.	C.R.	$p$	Inference
DWL ← AA	-.024	-.035	.056	-.428	.669	$H_{a1}$ is rejected; $p > .05$
DWL ← UCM	.060	.117	.039	1.514	.130	$H_{a2}$ is rejected; $p > .05$
DWL ← ST	.329	.412	.079	4.168	–	$H_{a3}$ is accepted; $p < .05$
DWL ← CP	.206	.212	.092	2.235	.025	$H_{a4}$ is accepted; $p < .05$

Source: Primary data.

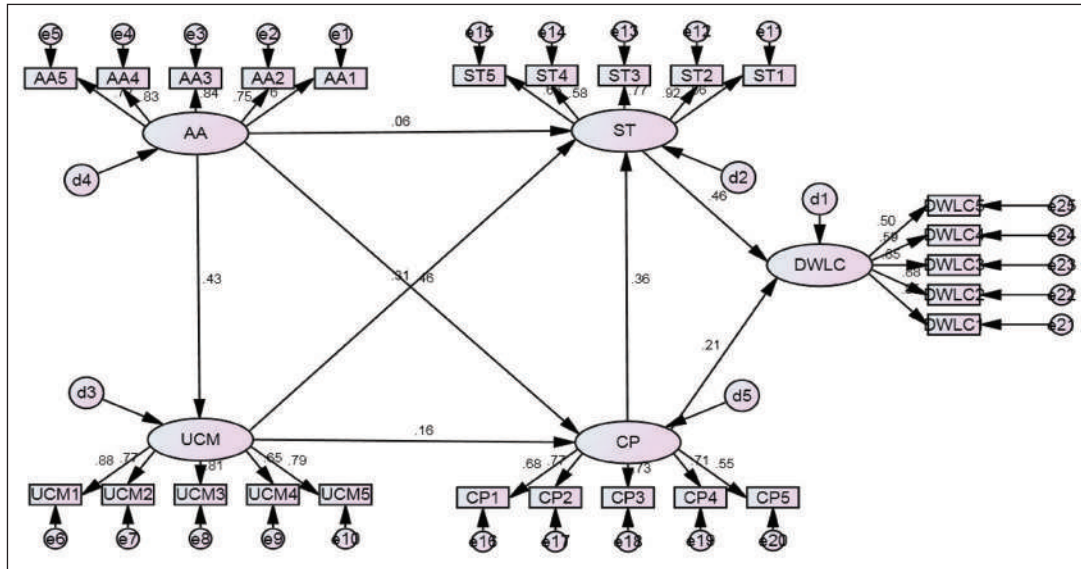


Figure 3. First Order Measurement Model.

Source: Primary data.

Table 6. Regression Estimates for the First Oder Measurement Model.

			Estimate	Std. $\beta$	S.E.	C.R.	P	Inference
UCM	←	AA	.568	.429	.103	5.525	–	Significant relation
CP	←	UCM	.082	.156	.042	1.977	.068	No significant relation
CP	←	AA	.324	.465	.068	4.793	–	Significant relation
ST	←	CP	.443	.363	.116	3.816	–	Significant relation
ST	←	UCM	.198	.308	.050	3.988	–	Significant relation
ST	←	AA	.048	.056	.070	.684	.494	No significant relation
DWL	←	CP	.209	.215	.083	2.526	.012	Significant relation
DWL	←	ST	.364	.456	.079	4.606	–	Significant relation

Source: Primary data.

established during hypotheses testing and significant covariance estimates among the independent variables (Figure 3).

Regression estimates (Table 6) for the first order measurement model revealed that, the variable uncertainty management (UCM) had no significant relationship (Std $\beta$  = .156,  $p > .05$ ). with communication prowess (CP). The other independent variables like ability to adjust had significant relations with uncertainty management (Std $\beta$  = .429,  $p < .05$ ), and communication prowess (Std $\beta$  = .465,  $p < .05$ ). Ability to adjust on the other hand had no significant implications on stress tolerance (Std $\beta$  = .056,  $p > .05$ ). Communication prowess had significant relations with stress tolerance (Std $\beta$  = .363,  $p < .05$ ). Similarly uncertainty management had significant relationship with stress tolerance (Std $\beta$  = .308,  $p < .05$ ).

### Development of the Empirically Tested Model

Based on the relations established in the first order measurement model (Table 8), followed by subsequent data

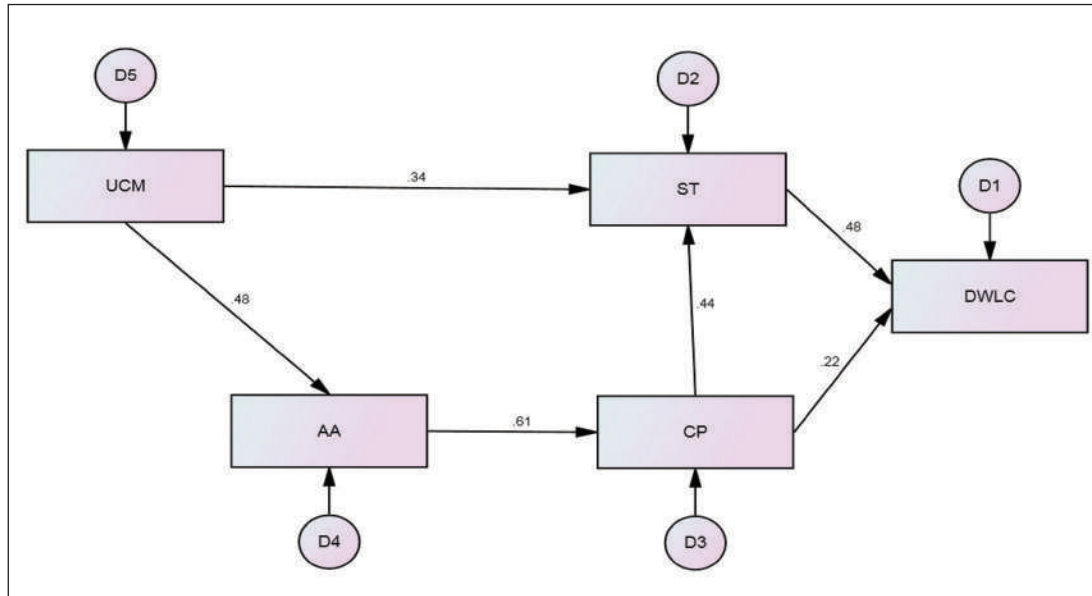
imputation the empirically tested model was developed (Figure 4).

Model fit indices (Table 7) for the empirically tested model computed after data imputation showed that, the model had acceptable scores (Byrne, 1994, 2001; Hair et al., 1998) for RMR (.009), GFI (.992), CFI (.999) and RMSEA (.023).

### Emerging Relationships

Regression estimates of the empirically tested model (Figure 4) revealed the mediating effects of the following variables.

**Mediating Effects of Stress Tolerance and Communication Prowess.** Stress tolerance (ST) was found to be the most important mediating factor influencing digital work–life challenges (DWLC) among the respondents. It mediated the influence of uncertainty management (UCM) and communication prowess (CP) on digital work–life challenges (DWLC). The mediating link between uncertainty management (UCM) and digital work–life challenges (DWLC) was



**Figure 4.** Empirically Tested Model.

Source: The authors.

**Table 7.** Comparison of Measurement Models.

Fit Indices	Normed $\lambda^2$	RMR	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Baseline model	2.686	0.066	0.79	0.864	0.077
Empirically tested model	1.122	0.009	0.992	0.999	0.023

Source: Primary data.

**Table 8.** Regression Estimates of the Empirically Tested Model.

			Estimate	Std. $\beta$	S.E.	C.R.	P
AA	←	UCM	.362	.482	.044	8.243	–
CP	←	AA	.414	.609	.036	11.477	–
ST	←	UCM	.220	.345	.035	6.358	–
ST	←	CP	.548	.438	.068	8.081	–
DWLC	←	ST	.386	.483	.049	7.868	–
DWLC	←	CP	.215	.225	.061	3.661	–

Source: Primary data.

established by uncertainty management (UCM) having significant relations Stress Tolerance on Digital Work–Life with stress tolerance (ST), while the later having significant relation (Std $\beta$  = .483,  $p < .05$ ) with digital work–life challenges (DWLC).

On the other hand the mediating effect of communication prowess (CP) was established by the fact that this variable had significant relations (Std $\beta$  = .438,  $p < .05$ ) with stress tolerance (ST). The impact of factors like ability to adjust (AA) were mediated by communication prowess (CP).

**Mediating Effect of Ability to Adjust (AA).** The variable ability to adjust (AA) emerged as the most important

mediating factor after stress tolerance (ST) and communication prowess (CP). Ability to adjust (AA) mediated the impact of uncertainty management (UCM) on communication prowess (CP). This is established by uncertainty management (UCM) having significant relationship (Std $\beta$  = .482,  $p < .05$ ) with ability to adjust (AA) and the later having significant influence (Std $\beta$  = .609,  $p < .05$ ) on communication prowess (CP).

**Role of Uncertainty Management.** The variable uncertainty management (UCM) emerged as a crucial influencer of stress tolerance (Std $\beta$  = .345,  $p < .05$ ) and ability to adjust (Std $\beta$  = .482,  $p < .05$ ). The model (Figure 4) had thereby established the importance of uncertainty management



through stress tolerance and ability to adjust and communication prowess resulting in the fruitful adjustment of digital work–life challenges.

## Discussions

*Research Objective: To explore the challenges of digital work–life and the significant job skills needed to adjust to these challenges in organizations.*

The qualitative phase or the Phase I of the study provided a practical and phenomenological explanation and understanding of industry (respondents) regarding the digital work–life challenges. Although several job skill sets were identified from the review of literature, the qualitative phase based on narrative analysis narrowed down on four essential job skills namely ability to adjust, uncertainty management, stress tolerance and communication prowess which were identified by the industry leaders (respondents) as essential for adjusting with the challenges of digital work–life. The Phase I provided the detailed understanding of these variables in terms of the measures or items which defined each of them. The Phase I of the study thereby presented a complete and practical understanding of the research questions, namely,

*RQ1: What is understood by digital work–life challenges and factors impacting it?*

*Research Objective: To study influence of job skills for adjusting with the challenges of digital work–life*

The Phase II or the quantitative phase of the research presented an in-depth understanding on the influence of job skills for adjusting with the challenges of digital work–life. This was possible by the establishment and presentation of the empirically tested model depicting the relationship between job skills identified from Phase I (namely ability to adjust, uncertainty management, stress tolerance & communication prowess) and digital work–life challenges. The empirical model also explained the research question.

*RQ2: What are the Specific Job Skills needed for adapting with challenges of digital work–life?*

### **Role of Stress Tolerance on Digital Work–Life Challenges.**

The present study had indicated significant relationship ( $\text{Std}\beta = .483, p < .05$ ) between stress tolerance and digital work–life challenges. The study conducted by Müller-Thur et al. (2018) had come up with similar discussions indicating the implications of the use of digital technologies on stress and health perspectives of employees. Earlier authors like Carayon (2007) discussed how employees working on computers were affected by stress. Other scholars like O’Driscoll et al. (2010) discussed the implications on health and mental well-being of employees work with information and communication technology (ICT). On the other hand Wang et al. (2008) discussed

the implications of techno-stress on employees. Similarly the study conducted by Berg-Beckhoff et al. (2017) showed the impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on employee stress in occupational work settings. As all the previously conducted studies were mostly conducted in organizational settings, the findings of the present study could be considered unique in terms of the fact that the employees studied in this research were mostly using work from home mode of operations during the Global pandemic away from their organizational work settings.

### **Role of Communication Prowess on Digital Work–Life Challenges.**

The findings of the study indicated that communication prowess had significant influence ( $\text{Std}\beta = .225, p < .05$ ) on digital work–life challenges. Authors like Wayne (2013) indicated the importance of communication in organizational work systems. Similarly Ahmad et al. (2015) discussed the role of communication and emotional intelligence for harnessing effective information technology skills in employees. The findings of the present research regarding the importance of communication prowess for adjusting with the challenges of digital work–life is important as the same had mostly been studied in organizational work systems—hardly any evidence had been earlier discussed in virtual work settings.

### **Impact of Communication Prowess on Stress Tolerance.**

In the study communication prowess had been found to have significant relation ( $\text{Std}\beta = .438, p < .05$ ) with stress tolerance among the respondents. Authors like Darban et al. (2016), Ahmadi et al. (2013) and Shimizu et al. (2003) had earlier indicated that communication skill training helped employees to improve their tolerance towards job stress and burnout. A recent study conducted by Penberthy et al. (2018) showed the importance of communication skills for managing stress and burnout. The study conducted by Glazer et al. (2012) discussed similar perspectives in the light of Global virtual teams. These evidences indicated that the relationship of communication prowess and stress tolerance established in this study was in line with similar studies conducted by other authors.

**Role of Ability to Adjust.** The study has established the role of ability to adjust as a mediating factor between uncertainty management communication prowess. The study conducted by Johansen et al. (2014) discussed the implications of uncertainty management in project management perspectives. However, these authors could not establish any relationship between uncertainty management and ability to adjust. Other recent authors like Martinuzzi (2020) presented a theoretical justification in an article on the importance of ability to adjust for uncertainty management in organizations which have been empirically established in this study. However as the role of ability to adjust on communication prowess had not been empirically established by other scholars this empirical finding in the present research is a value addition in the existing literature.

**Role of Uncertainty Management.** The empirical model presented in this study had indicated that uncertainty management had significant implications ( $\text{Std}\beta = .345$ ,  $p < .05$ ) on stress tolerance of the respondents. The study conducted by Peters et al. (2017) indicated the association of uncertainty on stress. However the authors had emphasized and discussed the neurological implications of this relationship and ignored the behavioural implications which had been presented in this research. Very recently another study conducted by Wu et al. (2020) showed the impact of uncertainty on stress levels in students. Hence the present study in this context bridges the gap in existing literature by presenting the empirical evidence behind the relationship between uncertainty management and stress tolerance in the context of digital work–life challenges during the global pandemic.

### *Implications of the Study*

The present research has certain academic and practical implications. From the academic perspective, the study has come up with a standardized research instrument that explored the relationship between job skills on adjusting to the challenges of digital work–life. The study has emerged with a pragmatic and theoretical understanding of the challenges of digital work–life which has been tested in the empirical model presented in the study. The sequential mixed method research design used in this study is a novel approach pertaining to studies in the past in this domain. From a practical point of view, the empirical model presented in this research could be used by human resources professionals and policymakers for designing approaches that could enable employees to better cope with the challenges faced in digital work–life spaces.

### *Limitations and Scope of Further Research*

The study has been conducted with limited sample size and geographical constraints. The research could be extended cross-culturally in order to have a greater insight in to more parameters that could impact the digital work–life challenges. The current study has been conducted in IT domain specifically, which could be extended to other domains of business to accommodate greater extent and depth of research.

### **Conclusion**

In a paper titled ‘Managing Work–Life Boundaries in the Digital Age’, by Ellen Kossek (2016) expresses certain novelties of thoughts regarding the transforming work–life

boundaries. According to the research it presented competing perspectives between work–life and resultant balance between them. The paper presented two perspectives—first, the integrative perspective which provided a blend using technology between work and personal settings and the other which was an extremist view, ascertained work and personal settings as separatist. However, with the pandemic debacle the ‘combined’ perspective of work and personal erupted as a third view of work–life balance. Thus, the boundary management strategies for leaders and organizations got redefined with this third perspective view of work–life which required a new set of skills. Keeping this view in mind current research has tried to elevate the discussions on digital work–life challenges and ways to adapt to it so that an effective work–life balance for employees can be conceptualized. Also, the research has approached technology as a socio-technical assemblage rather than an individual entity giving the discussions more ‘flesh to the bones’. Lastly, cognitive technology which empowers employees thinking abilities through the use of technology has been given focus to understand and explore the respondents views which enabled socio-technical skill sets to be considered in tandem while identifying the specific job skills that help adapt to digital work–life challenges making the study more relevant to current times

The research has highlighted an empirical model which showcased the importance of stress tolerance and communication prowess as the most important predictors for adjusting with the challenges of ‘Digital Work–life’ for employees working in technology firms. The study revealed the importance of ‘ability to adjust’ as a mediating factor for eliciting communication prowess which could influence employee’s adjustment towards their digital work–life challenges. Uncertainty management was also found to be an important aspect which influenced stress tolerance and being one of the reasons for challenges in digital work places. Awareness of these skill sets could help redefine the rules of the game post the pandemic for organizations.

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**Appendix I.** Constructs and Their Corresponding Measures Developed from Phase I.

SI No.	Name of the Construct	Measures
1	Ability to adjust	People in this organization remain flexible in situations We change according to situations People in this organization have the mentality to adjust We are adaptable to changes
2	Uncertainty management	People in this organization are comfortable to work in different situations We are good at working on uncertain areas People in this organization can work in ambiguity People in this organization are good at challenging the unknown We are good at managing crisis We are good at taking risks
3	Stress tolerance	We are good at resisting tensions People in this organization are good at managing stress We are good at managing time We are good at keeping our calm
4	Communication prowess	People in our organization are good at coping stress People in this organization are good at sharing information We are good at providing direction We have clarity in our communication People in this organization are good at networking We are good at handling conflicts
5	Digital work–life challenges	People in this organization have the ability to take challenges of long working hours We have the ability to solve complex problems People in this organization are good at upgrading their digital acumen We are good with our digital know-hows People in this organization have the mindset to work in digital environments

**Source:** The authors.

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