

# INVESTIGATING THE MODERATING ROLE OF AUTHORITARIAN LEADERSHIP IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND JOB STRESS

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## Abstract

This study aimed to explore the obstacle posed by Digital Transformation and Authoritarian Leadership in weakening worker performance. Therefore, the hypotheses of the study were tested in one of the important institutions in the oil sector (the petroleum products distribution company in Thi-Qar Governorate). The test was conducted on a sample of (139) managers from all managerial levels in the company. The research model and its hypotheses were tested using SmartPLS. The results of the study showed that there is an effect of Digital Transformation on job stress. Also the study discovered that the Authoritarian Leadership moderated on relationship between Digital Transformation and Job Stress. So the study made some conclusions about how to treat.

## 1. Introduction

Recently, companies operate under many factors and challenges that led these to adapt to them. The most important factor is digital transformation (Omarini,2017). Digital transformation represents by many technological applications, such as algorithms, connection and data storage, simulation systems, and other technicians that change of company's operations (Foerster-Metz et al.,2018; Alnoor et al.,2022). These companies became more transparent and fast for all stockholders. Therefore, companies today must not only try to achieve customer satisfaction, staff retention, expanding market share, automation of the industry, and other tasks. Rather, it goes beyond those jobs, to more sensitive and accurate jobs (Kane et al.,2015). In recent, the integration between innovative technology and flexible job models got more important. Thus, the company knows that it must be thinking about how to achieve strategic and organizational success. It's right the company must employ this or these technologies in its recent operation. But a company must be ready to deal with the future (Sia et al.,2021). The changes in the characteristic of the product are closely connected with technology. This reason gives technology the ability to do more development, for example, artificial intelligence and its lot transformation allow companies to go to digitization, and then they should think about how to translate the stress of digital transformation to positive behaviors. This depends on its ability to adapt to changes (Montani and Staglianò,2021). Also important to consider the effect of the leadership style adopted by the organization and its effect on the situation, because a leadership style has a significant influence on building a work approach in an organization (Zhang et al.,2020).

Based on the study's literature, a gap in this study appeared as an important point that needs to explore in its influence on business. So can try to discover the effect of digital transformation in generating job stress. As well as explore the moderative effect of authoritarian leadership in maximizing the effect of job stress. The importance of this study represents modernity and originality. Regarding modernity, this study has a modern concept of artificial intelligence, represent by digital transformation. Which impact in high percentage on companies' performance, as changes of strategic game roles. On other hand, the originality of this study appears in handling dangerous phenomena, that many companies suffer by it. Result of workers bored with change diversification in business models and technologies used. Therefore, the target of this study is to build a conceptual framework and then formulate a set of hypotheses and statistically test them. The core of this target is to discover the moderative role of authoritarian leadership, as well as the influence of digital transformation on job stress. The research is embodied in several sections, the first of which is related to the introduction of the study. The study introduction included the study gap, its importance, and its objectives. In addition a detailed presentation of the stages of developing the research steps leading to the recommendation and future direction. In another section, the study presented a theoretical review. Any study should present the theoretical aspects related to the phenomenon you are dealing with. Because it is an essential element in informing the reader of the importance of the information provided by the researcher in his field of research (Boote and Beile, 2014). Our study presented the theoretical aspects of its variables and the nature of the relationship of these variables to each other in separate section. Based on previous research experiences. It had a significant impact in eliciting the hypotheses of the study. By presenting opinions that justify the possibility of assuming hypotheses that express the influence of variables on each other. On this basis, study hypotheses were developed. There is also a section dealing with the research methodology. This section is concerned with diagnosing, analyzing, and presenting the nature of the study sample, in addition to examining the study scale and adapting it by the researcher according to the requirements of the study. As well as measuring the relationship between the variables of the study. The statistical indicators revealed the nature of that relationship. On this basis, a special section was developed to discuss the results that resulted from these statistical analyses. It shows how to study variables can affect each other and what differences they can make at the field level. Therefore, the research produced a section on the results of the study and another related to the recommendation and future direction that can be presented in the future.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Digital Transformation**

Tavana et al (2022), defined digital transformation as a fundamental factor that can affect both academic and practical fields. It includes various electronic platforms. Which is based on technological infrastructures and needed technologies (Nambisan,2019) .Sensors and devices of tracking, are considered very valuable results that express the importance of digital transformation, and at the same time tool that companies depend on to implement their tasks. Especially those tasks which reflect the strategic goals of the company. For example, sensors help the management of a company to control company stores, by providing them with

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information about temperature, light intensity, and so on. And then decrease risk (Jahkola et al.,2017) .On the other hand, digital technology enables to automation of many processes, such as scheduling, shifting, switching, etc.

Can be said that the sustainable success of a company and its ability to using a modern method in all actions return to digital transformation (Kortelainen et al.,2015). They can happen by using digital technologies to transform traditional ways of work into agile processes, then make new procedures that help employees to change. Furthermore, when the company is undergoing digital transformation, its operation is more complex, and employees must be more adaptable. Therefore when a company succeeds in applying digital technologies, it can meet dynamic customer needs on time and also it able to deal with challenges and changes (Ivanov and Dolgui,2021). Thus, digital transformation is not the choice of the company, but rather imposed by environmental change (Salloum et al.,2018). Subsequently, companies' journey to digital transformation is faced with multiple obstacles, first is the behavior of individuals (Foerster-Metz et al.,2018).

## **2.2. Authoritarian Leadership**

An authoritarian style is manifested by a leader who monopolizes power and prefers work in a central type of organization, which is usually found in Asian culture, where a lot of studies conducted in Chinese culture (Zhang et al.,2020). Therefore authoritarian leadership refers to the power that a leader appears when dealing with individuals, and through it challenges any status or situation (Alavi et al, 2016). While Muhumuza, (2015) indicated authoritarian leadership as a behavioral style by leaders to ensure control by their and the ability to achieve individual obedience. The idea of this behavior is to operate threats and at the same time put rewards to manage inferiors. Therefore, some researchers said that the authoritarian leadership style did not motivate the subordinates, because its style is based on force and direct implementation (Chukwusa, 2019). In this type of style, the leaders believe that the company achieves high incomes and implements tasks at a suitable time. Instead, usually, the authoritarian leader provides a non-innovation solution leading to the loss of some opportunities and then weakening the company's position (Mirayani, 2019). Thus, previous studies explored that authoritarian leaders have a negative affected on companies' performance (Kotzé et al., 2017). furthermore, other researchers produced some characteristics of authoritarian leaders, which may summarize as 1) it means leaders believe the individuals are not able to correctly think about how to task implementation and then unwilling to delegate authority to them. 2) leaders in this type of leadership style see that individuals are inaccurate in implementing tasks at a suitable time, therefore they focus on controlling. 3) trying to build the image that individuals must respect leaders in firms. (Kohyar et al.,2010; Lee,2018; Mboya et al.,2017).

## **2.3. Job Stress**

Lazarus (1966) and Mackay et al (1978) defined job stress as a phenomenon that is linked to perceptions of people who feel they can not implement their tasks. Researchers argued there

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is a direct relationship between feelings and job stress, both affected by internal and external organizational factors. This is due to the nature of dealing among managerial levels in a company, depending on this dealing the company can apply changes or not. Through companies' management Interpretation of the reaction of people to changes, which can be possible in the form of technological, environmental, and so on (Golparvar et al., 2012).

Lazarus and Lazarus (1991) introduced stress valuation theory, and express this theory through two levels of stress valuation: primary and secondary valuation, when the person faced an unknown situation and comments about it continuously, this means primary valuation. but when a person starts to measure and compare his actions with others, this means that secondary valuation about stress (Dewe et al., 2012). Therefore can say that stress appears when employees feel there are new needs and can't achievement. Thus there are threats to his position and consequently his well-being. Company administration must be concerned about this phenomenon, and develop the individual to deal with the stress.

Environmental stimuli are one of the reasons that affect employees to feel job stress and then try to learn more about their function or want to change tasks (Parker and DeCotiis, 1983). there is another option by Alblihed and Alzghaibi (2022). individuals face several factors that make job stress such as lack of interest, low income, technical changes, and competition between firms. In fact when individuals feel stressed can have cons as well as pros at the same time (Golparvar et al., 2012; Syed et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Occasionally, job stress may prove to be fecund for the individual as it may have a positive influence on employee innovation (Van Dyne et al., 2002; Abbas and Raja, 2015; Bani-Melhem et al., 2018; Teng et al., 2020). Otherwise, it also has the potential to harm individual performance (Alblihed and Alzghaibi,2022). But whatever the results, it is necessary to examine some of the factors that lead to job stress.

### **3. Hypothesis Development**

#### **3.1. The Relationship Between Digital Transformation and Job Stress**

Digital transformation imposed firms to deal with a multidimensional and multifaceted environment. This transformation considers by some firms a threat but it opportunity (Berman, 2012). Here companies that were concerned it the threat started to any new techniques as an undesirable thing (Panichkina and Shestova, 2019). Because digital transformation required changes in the strategy, the culture of the company, and other things. On other hand, many leaders do not believe in the new event and do not want to seriously deal with it (Purwanto et al.,2021). Therefore some researchers indicated cultural transformation as a result of digital transformation based on this perspective they said there is a strong challenge HRM faced because they concluded digital transformation needs a learning revolution and not all firms are ready to learn and change (Selmer et al., 2004; Marler et al., 2016; Branca et al., 2020). For example, a study by Winasis et al (2020) found that digital transformation affects the engagement and motivation of individuals, this study offered the danger of digital transformation which all firms must deal with it in importance. Thus can assume:

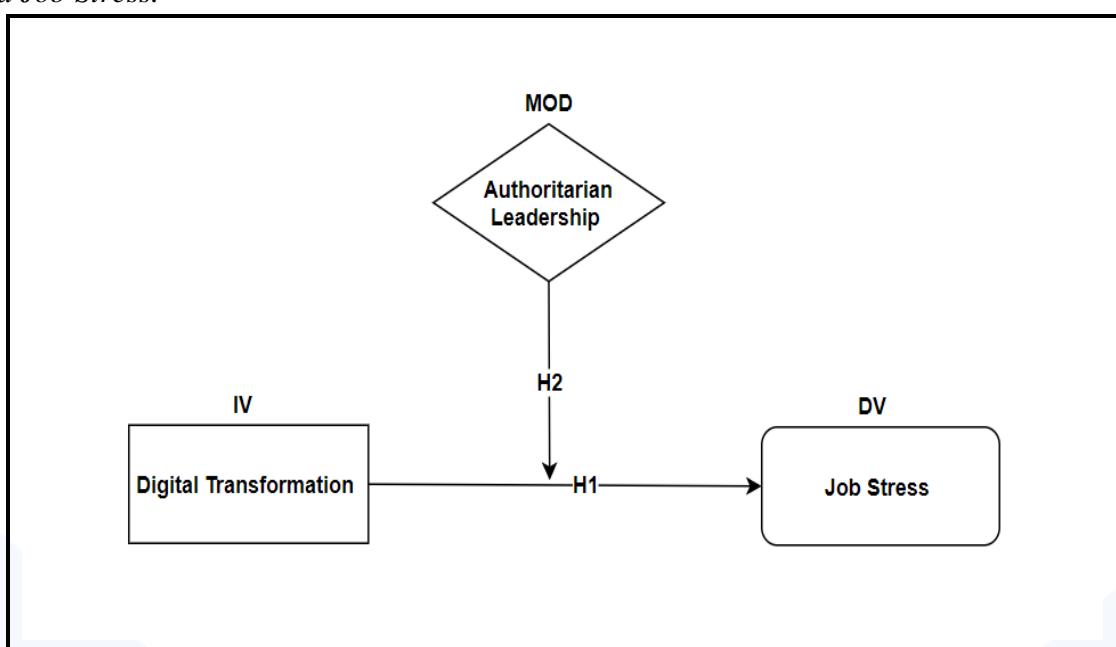
*H1: There is a significant effect of Digital Transformation on Job Stress.*

### **3.2. The moderative role of Authoritarian Leadership on the relationship between Digital Transformation and Job Stress.**

As known in leadership style, authoritarian leaders usually desire to continue to control work and personal affairs (Cheng et al., 2004). This trend some organizations adopt this type of leadership because they consider a kind of independent leadership (Yan and Xie, 2017). Also, leaders with an authoritarian focus on commands and want to implement tasks without condition. Therefore individuals feel that they are out of boundaries of importance, specifically when worker feel that the leader deliberately ignore their suggestions and contributions. This behavior aims to keep authority and decision unit, and direct guidance to the workers with poor performance (Zhang et al., 2020).

Concern with digitizing and information systems, previous studies explain that individuals who can do decision-making will more able to achieve innovation, motivation, and loyalty. Instead, if the climate of autonomy doesn't available, they will feel stress when they task to implement and don't interact with change (Ahuja and Thatcher, 2005; Durcikova et al., 2011; Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008; Chen et al., 2011; Cheng et al., 2004). Further, if the nature of the change required new skills and learning, the individuals become don't ready and nondesire to learn more about new technology or method of the job. Therefore they will work under stress (Chen et al., 2011). Therefore Klaus and Blanton, (2010), indicated that authoritarian leadership decreases the activity of laborers because they in all time working under stress. thus we assume:

*H2: Authoritarian Leadership moderates the relationship between Digital Transformation and Job Stress.*



**Figure 1 Conceptual framework**

As shown in fig. 1, the framework of this study reflects a relationship between variables, and impactive relationship of digital transformation (interpretive variable) on job stress (responsive variable). And moderative effect of authoritarian leadership (moderative variable). This framework was constructed based on (Sekaran&Bougie, 2016:75).

#### 4. Research Methodology

##### 4.1. Sample selection and data collection

This study used a positivist paradigm with a survey method. More specifically, primary data obtained directly from respondents was collected using a questionnaire technique. The study's sample was drawn randomly from managers at the Thi-Qar oil company. Eligibility criteria required respondents to have achieved the following: (1) they are managers at a high, mid- or low-level; (2) their organizational tenure is more than five years; and (3) they have at least three years of experience. Because the original survey items are in English, questions and scales have been translated into Arabic based on the procedure put by Brislin (1970). A back-translation technique was applied by an academic competent in both English and Arabic to ensure its validity. Moreover, items in the translated questionnaire have been checked by managers and academics to ensure their relevancy and comprehension. The researcher distributed 167 questionnaires. The number of questionnaires received was only 153. Because of incomplete questionnaires, 14 of them have been excluded. Thus, 139 were used in the final set of data. Table 1 shows the demographics of the participants. The final sample comprised 0.10 percent high-level, 0.29 percent mid-level managers, and 0.61 percent low-level managers. 0.74 percent of respondents had an undergraduate degree, and 0.26 percent had a master's degree or above. The average respondent's tenure was about 9 years. Age, most of the participants had 40-49 years.

**Table 1 Demographics of the participations**

Demographics	Frequency (n=139)	Percent %
<b>Gender</b>		
<i>Male</i>	99	.71
<i>Female</i>	40	.29
<b>Job position</b>		
<i>High level</i>	14	.10
<i>Mid-level</i>	40	.29
<i>managers</i>		
<i>Low-level</i>	85	.61
<i>managers</i>		
<b>Age</b>		
<i>30-39</i>	25	.18
<i>40-49</i>	58	.42
<i>50-59</i>	33	.24
<i>≥60</i>	23	.16
<b>Academic qualifications</b>		
<i>Undergraduate</i>	105	.74
<i>Post-graduate</i>	34	.26
<b>Organizational tenure</b>		
<i>3-6</i>	29	.21
<i>7-10</i>	46	.33
<i>≥11</i>	64	.46

##### 4.2. Measurement of variables

The three primary variables in the present study include digital transformation as independent variable, authoritarian leadership is a moderative variable, while job stress is the dependent variable. This study adopts well-established scales from the existing literature to measure the

variables in the research model. The current research operationalizes digital transformation as a one-dimensional construct using 14 items adapted from (Oubrahim et al.,2023). as well as, used 3 items for authoritarian leadership, adopted from (Jiang et al.,2017). In contrast, job stress was measured with 15 items adapted from (Parker and Decotiis, 1983). A 7 point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) was utilized to operationalize all the concepts.

#### 4.3. Assessment of measurement model

The measurement model aims to assess the reliability and validity of the constructed measures (Hair et al., 2010). The average variance extracted and composite reliability should be assessed to confirm the convergent validity. In the case of this study, the average variance extracted (AVE) values of all latent variables were between 0.671 and 0.799, which was acceptable because they were higher than 0.50, as recommended by Hair et al. (2010). Also, the results presented in table 2 show that the outer loadings of all latent variables for all of the main constructs ranged between 0.724 and 0. 943, which was higher than the desired value of 0.70, as recommended by Hair et al. (2017). In addition, the composite reliabilities of the latent variables ranged between 0.922 and 0. 972. These results indicate a high level of reliability of the measurement scales used in the model (Hair et al., 2010).

**Table 2 Result of measurement model**

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Construct	Items	FL	CR	AVE
Digital Transformation (Oubrahim et al.,2023)	DT1	0.805		
	DT2	0.724		
	DT3	0.778		
	DT4	0.817		
	DT5	0.880		
	DT6	0.750		
	DT7	0.779		
	DT8	0.893	0.966	0.671
	DT9	0.795		
	DT10	0.845		
	DT11	0.880		
	DT12	0.857		
	DT13	0.807		
	DT14	0.837		
Authoritarian Leadership (Jiang et al.,2017)	AL1	0.840		
	AL2	0.927	0.922	0.799
	AL3	0.911		
	JS1	0.733		
	JS2	0.869		
	JS3	0.825		
	JS4	0.943		
	JS5	0.880		
	JS6	0.883		
	JS7	0.884		
	JS8	0.814	0.972	0.696
	JS9	0.820		
Job Stress (Parker and Decotiis, 1983)	JS10	0.798		
	JS11	0.793		
	JS12	0.808		
	JS13	0.800		
	JS14	0.838		
	JS15	0.801		

Table 3 depicts the assessment of discriminant validity using the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion. As illustrated, the square root of the AVE of each construct is larger than the correlation estimates of the constructs. This indicates that all the constructs are distinctly different from one another, implying that each construct is unique and

captures phenomena not represented by other constructs in the model (Hair et al., 2010).

**Table 3. Discriminant validity**

Variables	Authoritaria n Leadership	Digital Transformatio n	Job Stres s
Authoritarian Leadership	0.894		
Digital Transformation	0.720	0.819	
Job Stress	0.753	0.858	0.834

#### 4.4. Assessment of structure model

In this study, 2 hypotheses were assumed to answer the study questions. For the testing of hypotheses, parameter estimates for statistical significance and coefficient values were evaluated using a bootstrapping method based on PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2017). The bootstrapping method with 5000 bootstrap re-sampling and bias-corrected confidence intervals was utilized to examine the significance of the path coefficients. Table 4. shows the results of the structural model assessment.

**Table 4. Hypotheses test**

Direct	O	M	S. D	T Statistic s	P- Values	Result	R <sup>2</sup>
Digital Transformation -> Job Stress	0.745	0.743	0.066	11.377	0.000	Supported	
				<b>Moderator</b>			0.785
Moderating Effect -> job stress	0.148	0.145	0.066	2.25	0.040	Supported	

The first hypothesis presumes that a Digital Transformation positively affects a Job Stress. This hypothesis is supported based on the analysis result ( $\beta = 0.745$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). That means there is a significant and positive relationship between Digital Transformation and Job Stress. The other hypothesis (H2) predicts that authoreterian ledearship has a positive effect on the relationship between Digital Transformation and Job Stress. This hypothesis is supported based on the analysis result ( $\beta = 0.148$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

#### 5. Discussion

The results of the study indicate that there is a vital effect of Digital Transformation on Job Stress. This supports the first hypothesis (H1), which assumed the aforementioned effect. This result coincides with the options that have been put forward about the importance of the Digital Transformation effect. Thus, these results agreed with the findings of (Foerster-Metz et al., 2018), which put a framework for the effect of digitization on individuals' behaviors. Then consider how to treat this issue with the continuous development of technology. Therefore,

companies must seriously be thinking about decreasing employee stress. This issue needs many steps that regard both company and the employee, the company should prepare an program to develop all, especially people who deal with technology. On the other hand, the individual must accept the change and be ready to self-development. Regard with the second hypothesis, the results show that there is a moderative role for authoritarian leadership between digital transformation and job stress. This result agreed with (H2). And can say that radical authority raises the problem of the job. Thus, generating behavior that aims to only implement with lower level and poor performance (Zhang et al., 2020). Furthermore, the literature mentioned that individuals feel stress when the company deals with them based on implementing tasks without any care about their feelings (Ahuja and Thatcher, 2005; Durcikova et al., 2011; Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008; Chen et al., 2011; Cheng et al., 2004).

## 6. Conclusion and future direction

In the age of digital transformation, digital techniques can highly affect a company's performance. This effect represents by information technology, information systems, business operation, and the changes in structure and organizational work models. Thus, digital transformation has become a strategic issue for the company. This study discovered that digital transformation influences the position of workers and the results of their work, due to what brings digital transformation changes like tasks and mechanism of implementation. Furthermore, this study appears a moderative effect of authoritarian leadership by bush the worker toward implementing tasks without thinking. A worker is a key factor in the company. Despite the development of technological ability, the emergence of high-precision applications. However, the natural worker is the main in work. Because tacit knowledge is without boundaries. Also, the study revealed the fact digital transformation barriers that affect the behaviors of workers. Therefore the company must decrease stress on workers through the set of procedures. At the forefront of these procedures, the company that intends to adopt digital transformation must move away from authoritarianism in their leadership of the organization, and focus on flexibility as an organizational method in work, as well as the leaders of the company must introduce themselves as a role model. On the other hand, the company should put a program that is suitable for the nature of change in the future, thus must prepare an individual in a good way to use modern technology.

In this context, future research directions recommended by the researcher emphasize the study of contextual factors, such as, (technology, organization size, organizational structure, organizational culture, organizational climate, etc.) that may affect employee motivation and performance. With a focus on human resource practices and their relationships within the human resource system (Jiang, 2012). Therefore, it is possible to study these elements in centralized or decentralized systems to implement a strategic decision. Also, to expand this study there is a need to investigate the role of organizational health as a moderative variable. It is also important to conduct a systematic review of the literature related to job stress, as there is a clear confusion of concepts with the possibility of adopting research subjects to solid scientific journals. Finally, we propose to expand our study by adopting two approaches to studying two organizations that differ in their organizational structures (centralized or decentralized) and then conducting a comparison investigation between the two methods by

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adopting advanced analytical techniques, such as a dual-stage multi-group SEM and ANN analysis.

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