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Specificity of digitalisation of HR functions at enterprises under crisis conditions

Abstract. In the current technologically accelerated environment, digitalisation is becoming a key factor in transforming business practices. Digital tools are changing traditional management approaches. Digitalisation influences decision-making processes, interaction with personnel, activity planning, task performance control, and productivity analysis. This impact has become particularly noticeable in the context of recent global challenges. The full-scale war in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic have created an even more unstable and dynamic environment. Ukrainian enterprises have an urgent need to adapt human resource management to these digital changes under extraordinary circumstances to maintain their competitiveness.

The article aims to identify and systematise the main changes in human resource management functions at domestic enterprises under crisis conditions through the prism of their digitalisation. The study includes a conceptual analysis of the concept of “digitalisation of HR functions” and distinguishes it from the concepts of “digitisation” and “digital transformation” in order to clarify the terminology. The study determines the impact of changes in HR functions on personnel management effectiveness in the context of the crisis challenges posed by the pandemic and wartime. Particular attention is given to the dynamics of changes in HR functions, such as control, communication, motivation, and performance assessment.

For empirical analysis, the article uses official statistical reports from international organisations (OECD, KPMG, European Business Association), scientific publications by leading authors, analytical reviews of business publications (Forbes Ukraine, Hurma), as well as the results of surveys and expert interviews among domestic enterprises.

The analysis includes the formation of a digitalisation index based on quantitative indicators of digital transformation. The study conducts a comparative analysis of changes in key HR functions in the periods before the pandemic, during the pandemic, and during wartime. The article applies data systematisation and visualisation to clearly reflect the features of digitalisation of human resource management functions.

The obtained results show that the digital transformation of domestic enterprises during 2019-2024 occurred mainly through the digitalisation of HR functions. Enforced digitalisation facilitated the adaptation of management processes under the crisis conditions of the pandemic and martial law.

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A significant gap in the level of digital maturity between large domestic enterprises and SMEs was also identified. This study confirms the urgent need not only to optimise digital processes but also to create integrated models of digital transformation, focused on the specificity of business scale and the SMEs digital gaps

Keywords: digital transformation, human resource management, enterprise, digitisation, human resource potential

Introduction

Studies on digitalisation and its impact on management processes indicate significant benefits of digital transformation. In particular, technological solutions increase labour productivity and communication efficiency, optimise internal processes, and reduce administrative costs. Scholars emphasise that the implementation of digital technologies allows enterprises to respond to external challenges flexibly. As a result, new work models have emerged, such as remote and hybrid formats.

The international scientific community is actively researching digital innovations in human resource management (HRM). However, scholarly publications provide insufficient analysis of the Ukrainian context of digitalisation. Domestic enterprises face not only technological innovations but also military-related challenges. These circumstances catalyse profound managerial transformation. During wartime, digitalisation has become not just an optimisation tool but a stability solution for domestic enterprises, which are forced to implement remote management models, personnel monitoring digital platforms, and automated HR systems.

“Ukrainian digitalisation” has a forced nature, which distinguishes it from the planned digital transformation in developed countries. Most studies focus on technological or economic aspects, leaving the management level insufficiently addressed. This article examines the dynamics of key changes in human resource management functions under digitalisation. Based on these premises, the challenges faced by domestic enterprises under forced digital transformation are analysed. The specificity of managerial changes within HR functions that have become a response to new threats is identified. This study contributes to the scholarly understanding of new HRM models. A conceptual distinction between the terms “digitalisation,” “digitisation,” and “digital transformation” is made.

Scientific novelty of this study lies in revealing the specificity of HR function digitalisation under a multidimensional crisis (pandemic, war, economic instability), focusing on managerial changes. Unlike existing approaches, this study provides a deeper understanding of enterprise adaptation processes to the digital environment and the development of human resource management strategies under conditions of high uncertainty and limited resources.

Literature review

Scientific literature reflects terminological variation in the use of the concepts “digitisation,” “digitalisation” and “digital transformation,” which necessitates their conceptual differentiation. Digitisation means the process of converting information from a physical carrier into a digital form (Legner *et al.*, 2017, p. 301). The transition from material storage media to digital data formats is the primary feature of digitisation. Digitisation focuses on technical aspect of transforming analogue content. I. Strutynska (2019, p. 92) defines digitisation as the process of saturating the modern world with electronic and digital devices. According to this definition, digitisation aims at the establishment of a unified cyber-physical system.

Digitalisation means a more expansive and multifaceted construct, encompassing socio-cultural, organisational and individual-level changes under the pervasive integration of digital technologies (Frenzel-Piasentin *et al.*, 2021, p. 3). In scholarly discourse, digitalisation is frequently conceptualised as a derivative phenomenon emerging from the antecedent process of digitisation (Ritter & Pedersen, 2019, p. 182). Digitalisation may not inherently reconfigure an enterprise’s core business model, but significantly impacts its operational dynamics and administrative functionalities.

Conversely, digital transformation denotes a strategic, systemic and holistic reengineering of organisational architecture catalysed by digital innovation (Strutynska, 2019, p. 94). It encompasses the enterprise's structure, organisational culture and business model.

Within the conceptual framework of this study, the term “digitalisation of HR functions” is used as the most semantically precise construct to describe management changes. During the examined period of 2019-2024, domestic enterprises did not carry out a wide-scale digital transformation as a result of deliberate strategic initiatives. There has been operational-level adaptation facilitated through the integration of digital tools, which is an indicator of digitalisation. The term “digitalisation of HR functions” conceptually accurately outlines transformative trajectories of HR functions in response to external challenges.

The issue of HRM digitalisation attracts considerable attention of international and domestic researchers. Foreign authors underscore that digital transformation constitutes a multifaceted and structurally embedded phenomenon. Scholars, such as A. Butt, F. Imran, P. Helo, and J. Kantola, conceptualise digital transformation as an overarching process involving strategic reconfiguration of business models, the introduction of new technological paradigms, and organisational culture changes (Butt *et al.*, 2024, p. 1). J. W. Ross, I. M. Sebastian *et al.* conducted interviews with 70 senior executives across 27 large-scale enterprises. The authors suggest that the digital transformation efficacy depends not solely on technological integration, but also on the systematic review of management processes and the enhancement of employees' digital literacies and competencies (Ross *et al.*, 2017, p. 8).

In recent years, Ukrainian scholars have directed their analytical focus toward examining digitalisation's impact on enterprise management. O. M. Pankratova (2021, p. 1) defines digitalisation as a contemporary vector of managerial development, which is continuously intensifying and has a positive influence on the socio-economic system. The author predicts that digital technologies will become the most potent drivers of economic growth in the near future. Digitalisation is considered as a strategic investment for Ukrainian enterprises. In the work of V. V. Tomakh, T. Ye. Sigaieva and M. V. Martynenko (2023, p. 2), the digital transformation of enterprise management is interpreted as a critical precondition for ensuring the sustainable development of business in Ukraine.

Despite the considerable volume of research in the field of digital transformation in general, there remains a noticeable deficit of studies in digitalisation-driven managerial shifts in HRM. HR functions are particularly indicative of digitalisation processes in domestic enterprises. These functions are central to facilitating employee adaptation to new digital tools and organisational changes. Such transformations acquire heightened significance within the context of crisis-induced business environmental volatility.

Materials and methods

This study applies a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach that integrates both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyse the transformations of HR functions at domestic enterprises over the period 2019-2024.

Data collection

The empirical foundation of the research is constituted by the following sources:

- 1) official statistical reports and analytical studies conducted by international organisations (OECD, KPMG, European Business Association), as well as official information from governmental portals, including the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine;
- 2) scholarly publications by Ukrainian and international researchers in digital transformation and human resource management (over 10 sources, including journals such as *Business & Information Systems Engineering*, *Long Range Planning*, *MIT Sloan Management Review*);
- 3) analytical reviews published by leading Ukrainian business media outlets (*Forbes Ukraine*, *Hurma*);

4) data from surveys and expert interviews conducted among representatives of small, medium, and large enterprises in Ukraine between 2019 and 2024 (e.g., *McKinsey & Company*, *Gradus Research*).

Methods

This study summarises quantitative indicators of digital transformation by developing a digitalisation index based on the proliferation of digital tools, development of IT infrastructure, digital literacy level, and governmental support. A comparative analysis of the dynamics of changes in specific HR functions was conducted. Namely, the changes in control, communication, performance assessment and motivation during the pre-pandemic period, the pandemic phase, and the wartime context were analysed. Data systematisation and visualisation techniques were applied to clearly demonstrate the specificity of HR function digitalisation. Using methods of analysis and synthesis, a conceptual demarcation of the terms of “digitisation”, “digitalisation” and “digital transformation” was made. In this context, digitalisation of HR functions reflects the operational adaptation of domestic enterprises under crisis conditions in the absence of large-scale strategic transformation.

Results and discussion

The COVID-2019 pandemic has become a significant challenge for domestic enterprises. As a result of quarantine restrictions, a considerable number of them were compelled to rapidly adapt to new working conditions. On the one hand, many enterprises were compelled to either temporarily cease operations or substantially reduce capital investment. On the other hand, predominant shifts included the implementation of hybrid work models at 82% of enterprises and the digitalisation of work processes at 63% of enterprises (Skopenko & Yevsieieva-Severyna, 2021, p. 51).

The imperative for effective management of organisational processes intensified after the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022. At the onset of hostilities, 64% of small and medium-sized enterprises either suspended or temporarily curtailed their operations. However, within the first six months, 84% of these enterprises successfully resumed their activities (OECD, 2024, p. 21). This disparity reflects the heterogeneity of domestic digitalisation, which directly impacts the effectiveness of management functions (Table 1). According to the 2024 KPMG study in Ukraine, large enterprises exhibit a higher average digital index of 59, medium-sized enterprises score 55, while small enterprises register only 41 (KPMG, 2024). These results confirm the uneven pace of digitalisation across Ukrainian enterprises and underscore the critical role of organisational scale in the implementation of digital solutions.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of digitalisation trends worldwide and in Ukraine (2019-2024)

Year	Global digitalisation trends (worldwide)	Specificity of digitalisation in Ukraine	Digitalisation index* (0-10)
2019	Gradual but steady growth in business digital transformation; focus on automation and cloud technologies	Relatively low digital readiness among SMEs; active development of the IT sector	Worldwide: 6/10 Ukraine: 4/10
2022	COVID-19 pandemic accelerated remote work and e-commerce; hybrid models became mainstream	Forced shift to hybrid/remote work; 64% of SMEs temporarily suspended, but 84% resumed quickly; active operational digitalisation	Worldwide: 8/10 Ukraine: 6/10
2024	Advanced remote management systems, digital HR automation, intelligent analytics tools	Persistent gap between large enterprises (70% have websites) and SMEs (30%); intensification of HR digitalisation due to war and economic pressure	Worldwide: 9/10 Ukraine: 7/10

**Note. Digitalization index was constructed by the authors based on aggregated quantitative and qualitative indicators, including the penetration of digital tools, the development of IT infrastructure, government support measures, and digital literacy level. The scale ranges from 0 (no digital processes) to 10 (high digital maturity). This index is an interpretive analytical construct and does not represent an official statistical metric.*

Control, as one of the fundamental HR functions in domestic enterprises, entails systematic monitoring, measurement and employee activity adjustment. In 2019, the majority of domestic enterprises conducted personnel control primarily through managerial physical presence, paper-based reporting or verbal supervision. This approach did not require digital tools. In the same year, an active phase of implementing integrated human resource management information systems (HRMIS) commenced, alongside the development of state-driven digitalisation initiatives (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2019; Liakh, 2025). During the COVID-19 pandemic period (2020-2021), the potential for digitalising control systems via advanced technologies remained constrained. The main reason was the low level of employees' digital competencies (Pchelynska & Vasylieva, 2021, p. 57).

The COVID-19 pandemic and the onset of the full-scale armed conflict in 2022 catalysed rapid changes in domestic enterprises. The enforced transition to remote work modalities accelerated the adoption of remote monitoring systems, partial implementation of KPIs and manual reporting. These control systems remained insufficiently automated and lacked full integration during this initial phase. According to the 2025 study by Forbes Ukraine and KPMG, 60% of domestic enterprises intensified their digitalisation efforts following the onset of the full-scale invasion (Forbes Ukraine, 2025). Most large and considerable share of medium-sized enterprises implemented automated task tracking systems (CRM, ERP and HRM platforms). By 2024, a significant portion of large domestic enterprises had transitioned to the comprehensive application of KPIs, digital reporting frameworks and automated control mechanisms. This compelled digitalisation of the HR control function enhanced personnel management efficiency under wartime conditions.

Communication, as one of the key HR functions, ensures efficient and continuous information exchange within the enterprise. It is important for coordination of actions, cultivation of a cohesive corporate culture and high staff involvement. In 2019, the majority of domestic enterprises used traditional, offline methods for internal communication. Utilisation of digital communication platforms was largely episodic and supplementary. External communication took place mainly via corporate email or the company website. In general, most organisations used a hybrid communication model. Due to quarantine restrictions in 2019, 54% of domestic enterprises switched to fully or partially remote work arrangements, while 46% continued operating in the traditional format (Fakty ICTV, 2020). Consequently, HR departments in domestic enterprises were compelled to rapidly adapt communication processes to a fully remote environment.

According to a 2024 wartime study by KPMG Ukraine, 63% of domestic enterprises intensified their digital transformation efforts by prioritising advanced technological solutions, while 31% undertook strategic adjustments to their management frameworks (KPMG, 2024). This transformation marked a shift toward the institutionalisation of digital platforms as the principal means of internal communication. Remote work conditions and business relocation have stimulated the use of online communication services. During this phase, domestic enterprises integrated CRM systems (such as Microsoft Teams, Trello and Asana) and auxiliary communication tools (including Slack, Zoom and Telegram).

By 2024, the hybrid communication model had become the new organisational norm in domestic enterprises. Asynchronous communication (corporate chats integrated into digital project management platforms) is a dominant modality (Melnyk, 2023). The role of regular video meetings, structured weekly online check-ins and the introduction of automated bots for streamlined coordination has increased.

Performance assessment within HR functions ensures the measurement of employee productivity and effectiveness. The digitalisation of HR functions in Ukraine has progressively transformed traditional performance assessment approaches. In 2019, enterprises predominantly used conventional assessment methods, such as certification processes, managerial reports, and 360-degree feedback. Due to the need for online personnel management during the pandemic, the implementation of HRIS systems begins.

According to the European Business Association's 2021 study, business investment in digital technologies increasingly prioritises employee relationship management (core HR, talent

management and digital workplace solutions), with 48% of domestic enterprises identifying this area as a strategic focus (European Business Association, 2021). Several barriers impede digital transformation efforts, notably insufficient digital literacy among employees (41% of respondents rated it as moderate, while 13% assessed it as low), as well as regulatory constraints and inadequate funding (European Business Association, 2021).

After a full-scale invasion, Ukrainian enterprises are actively using adopted performance management software to monitor and enhance workforce efficiency. By 2024, the use of digital tools based on Lean and Six Sigma methodologies for performance assessment has become standard practice across medium and large domestic businesses (Gridin, 2024, p. 5). Performance assessment occurs in real time using dashboards, business intelligence (BI) systems, and AI-driven analytics.

Traditional tools such as financial incentives, bonuses, social benefits and non-financial motivators (recognition, career growth) remained the basis of the motivational function in Ukrainian enterprises. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a massive transition to remote work. This transition diminished the effectiveness of those conventional motivation strategies. The importance of non-material motivation, including flexible schedules, work-life balance and psychological safety, has increased. In response to crisis conditions, domestic enterprises began to prioritise flexibility, employee support and internal communication for sustaining motivation and ensuring workforce adaptation (Herasymchuk, 2022; Plaksiuk *et al.*, 2023; Kravchenko *et al.*, 2023; Havryliuk *et al.*, 2023).

After the full-scale invasion, approximately 90% of domestic enterprises that sustained physical damage remained operational or swiftly resumed their activities. Employee motivation in these extreme conditions extended beyond conventional financial incentives. Individuals who perceived their work as socially meaningful one exhibited a higher propensity to remain engaged despite elevated risk levels. This factor helped most Ukrainian businesses to retain their employees. Over 60% of domestic enterprises retained more than 90% of their staff even one year after the onset of the full-scale war (Plaksiuk *et al.*, 2023a; Plaksiuk *et al.*, 2023b; Yakushev *et al.*, 2024).

By 2024, the psychological strain experienced by employees across Ukrainian enterprises had reached a critical inflection point. According to Gradus Research (2024), 78% of respondents exhibited elevated stress levels, markedly surpassing the average European indicator of 56%. This situation highlights the role of the HR motivation function not only as a means of increasing productivity but also as an emotional support mechanism. Domestic enterprises have initiated mental health support programmes (psychological assistance, stress management training and the creation of psychologically safe and supportive work environments). Nowadays, Ukrainian enterprises are progressively integrating sophisticated digital platforms and advanced HR analytics. These technologies are used for continuous, real-time assessment of employee sentiment, engagement indices and the efficacy of motivation programmes (Table 2).

Table 2. Crisis-driven HR digitalisation trajectories in Ukrainian enterprises (2019-2024)

HR function	2019	2022 (Post-pandemic and onset of full-scale invasion)	2024 (Sustained adaptation to wartime realities)
Control	Predominantly physical supervision; minimal use of digital tools	Forced transition to remote monitoring; partial KPI adoption; manual performance reporting	Broad implementation of KPIs and digital reporting; automated control systems in large enterprises
Communication	In-person meetings; limited use of online channels	Rapid proliferation of Zoom, Telegram, Viber, Slack; increased asynchronous chatbot-based exchanges	Consolidation of the hybrid model: a combination of video meetings and cloud-based communicators
Performance assessment	Subjective and attendance-focused assessments	Temporary breakdown of evaluation systems; gradual shift toward results-oriented assessment	Expanded application of KPI and OKR systems; increased use of digital productivity analytics

Continued Table 2.

HR function	2019	2022 (Post-pandemic and onset of full-scale invasion)	2024 (Sustained adaptation to wartime realities)
Motivation	Bonuses, team-building activities and corporate culture fostered offline	Primary motivation: job retention; emotional exhaustion; emergence of flexible schedules	Emphasis on autonomy, flexible work arrangements, support for work-life balance and psychological resilience

Conclusions

This study examines the specifics of HR function digitalisation in Ukrainian enterprises under crisis conditions. Special attention is given to the transformative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing armed conflict. It evaluates how the accelerated adoption of digital tools has influenced the effectiveness of human resource management in these challenging contexts. This study has conducted a clear conceptual distinction between the terms “digitisation”, “digitalisation” and “digital transformation” for precise systematisation of managerial change processes.

The digitalisation of HR functions and management processes in Ukraine is of a crisis, forced and adaptive nature. These specificities fundamentally distinguish it from the gradual digital transformations typical of most developed countries. Between 2019 and 2024, the HR functions of domestic enterprises transformed under the influence of global and domestic crisis factors, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic and the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation. These events have stimulated the managerial processes’ digitalisation, leading to the rapid integration of digital tools into key HR domains (control, communication, performance assessment and employee motivation).

The control function has gradually shifted away from traditional supervisory and reporting mechanisms to automated monitoring systems based on KPI frameworks, CRM, and HRM platforms. Simultaneously, internal communication in domestic enterprises uses a hybrid model anchored in the use of digital platforms. Performance assessment is carried out through the integration of business intelligence (BI) systems, dashboards and real-time analytical tools.

Considering the heightened psycho-emotional burden on employees, domestic enterprises experience the evolution of motivational mechanisms toward non-material incentives. Flexible working hours and mental health support have gained prominence among Ukrainian businesses. This progression reflects a forced adjustment within HR functions to overcome the intensified psychosocial strain experienced by employees in wartime realities.

Thus, the digital transformation of HR functions is a strategic resource that ensures not only operational productivity, but also psychological resilience and social adaptability of human resources under extreme external conditions. At the same time, the digital transformation of the HR functions within domestic enterprises exhibits marked heterogeneity. This study shows that there are significant asymmetries in the level of digital maturity between large enterprises, which demonstrate a high degree of technological integration and innovation, and small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), which experience limitations due to insufficient financial resources, technological platforms and qualified personnel. This study confirms the urgent need not only to optimise digital processes but also to create integrated models of digital transformation, focused on the specificity of business scale, digital gaps of SMEs and the requirements of crisis management. In the future, this will contribute to the formation of sustainable competitiveness of domestic enterprises at national and international levels.

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Conflict of interest

None.

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Специфіка діджиталізації HR-функцій на підприємствах у кризових умовах

Анотація. У сучасних умовах стрімкого розвитку інформаційних технологій діджиталізація набуває ключового значення в бізнес-середовищі. Цифрові інструменти змінюють традиційні управлінські підходи. Діджиталізація впливає на способи прийняття рішень, взаємодії з персоналом, планування діяльності, контролю за виконанням завдань і аналізу продуктивності. Особливо помітним цей вплив став у контексті новітніх глобальних викликів. Повномасштабна війна в Україні та пандемія COVID-19 створили ще більш нестабільне та динамічне середовище. Вітчизняні підприємства мають нагальну потребу в адаптації управління людськими ресурсами до цифрових змін в умовах надзвичайних обставин, аби зберегти свою конкурентоспроможність.

Метою статті є виявлення та систематизація ключових змін у функціях управління людськими ресурсами на вітчизняних підприємствах в кризових умовах крізь призму їх діджиталізації; проведення концептуального аналізу поняття “діджиталізація HR-функцій” та його розмежування з поняттями “цифровізація” та “цифрова трансформація” з метою уточнення термінології; визначення впливу змін у HR-функціях на ефективність управління персоналом в умовах кризових викликів

пандемії та воєнного часу. Особливу увагу варто приділити динаміці змін у таких HR-функціях, як контроль, комунікація, мотивація і оцінка ефективності.

Для емпіричного аналізу використано офіційні статистичні звіти міжнародних організацій (OECD, KPMG, European Business Association), наукові публікації провідних авторів, аналітичні огляди бізнес-видань (Forbes Ukraine, Hurma), а також результати опитувань і експертних інтерв'ю серед вітчизняних підприємств. Аналіз включає формування індексу діджиталізації на основі кількісних показників цифрової трансформації. В дослідженні проведено порівняльний аналіз змін у ключових HR-функціях у періоди до пандемії, під час пандемії, у воєнний час. Застосовано систематизацію та візуалізацію даних для чіткого відображення особливостей цифровізації функцій управління людськими ресурсами.

Результати цього дослідження доводять, що цифрова трансформація вітчизняних підприємств у 2019–2024 рр. відбувалася переважно через діджиталізацію HR-функцій. Саме цей фактор сприяв адаптації управлінських процесів у кризових умовах пандемії та воєнного стану. Встановлено значний розрив у рівні цифрової зрілості між великими вітчизняними підприємствами та МСП. Дослідження підтверджує нагальну потребу не лише в оптимізації цифрових процесів, а й у створенні інтегрованих моделей цифрової трансформації, орієнтованих на особливості масштабів бізнесу

Ключові слова: цифрова трансформація, управління людськими ресурсами, підприємство, цифровізація, HR-менеджмент, кадровий потенціал