

Middle Management's Strategic Importance in Driving Digital Transformation: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Digital transformation reshapes organizational processes and working methods, necessitating the active involvement of middle management to drive successful change. This literature review explores the evolving role of middle managers in digital transformation. This study examines the concept of digital leadership and the strategic importance of middle managers in the effective implementation of digital initiatives. This review reveals that beyond their traditional roles as mediators and translators of strategy, middle managers are increasingly expected to act as change agents, digital facilitators, and innovation promoters. However, this transition requires new digital, relational and adaptive competencies. The findings highlight the need for continuous upskilling and reconfiguration of middle management responsibilities to align with agile and technology-driven organizational models. Drawing on the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, this review emphasizes the importance of high-quality relationships between middle managers and their teams in fostering communication, innovation, and a culture conducive to digitalization. This study underscores the necessity of developing targeted training and leadership programs to enhance middle managers' digital literacy and change their management capabilities. Organizations should foster a supportive environment that empowers middle managers to experiment, innovate, and act as key transformation enablers. This review contributes to the growing body of research on digital transformation by emphasizing the central, yet underexplored role of middle management, offering a comprehensive synthesis of current knowledge, and identifying the emerging competencies required for middle managers to successfully navigate the digital age.

Keywords: Digital transformation – middle management – digital leadership – agility skills - organizational change

INTRODUCTION

The expansion of artificial intelligence tools, robotics, the Internet of Things, and various other technologies has led to the emergence of Industry 4.0 (Volberda et al., 2021), generating a digital transformation. This profound transformation has reshaped organizational and professional environments and even the entire world (Peña and Caruajulca, 2022). Digital transformation, which modifies organizational processes through task automation, has brought about radical changes in working methods (Peña and Caruajulca, 2022). A significant change is being observed (Volberda et al., 2021), impacts the organization's structure, technology, culture, and organizational behavior (Tortorella et al., 2023). However, the outcomes of the digital transformation are not guaranteed to be positive. An organization's commitment to this process of radical change can lead to success, but this is not guaranteed. Consequently, organizations must pay particular attention to the factors that ensure the success of digital transformation, notably human capital. Securing the buy-in and involvement of all staff at every level (Bagrationi and Thurner, 2023) is crucial for ensuring the successful completion of this long and uncertain process. This includes employees and executives, but above all, middle management, which is considered a strong link within the organization (Putra et al., 2023). Therefore, this category of employees receives special attention (Matyusz and Pistruj, 2023). Management science research on middle management has focused on its role in various types of change (Wooldridge et al., 2008). However, digital transformation projects have not yet received the attention they deserve (Christodoulou et al. 2022). Existing studies have

addressed the importance of middle management in the development of digital transformation projects but not the assessment of their actual involvement (Jaoua, 2018) through the different roles played by this central category of managers.

It is well established that middle managers play crucial roles within an organization under normal circumstances

because of the centrality of their positions. However, digitalization has changed the behavior of work teams (Park, 2021). As agents of change, middle managers are compelled to adapt their behaviors (Koponen et al., 2023) to respond better to these developments. This prompts us to consider the new roles and skills these managers must acquire to meet the demands of digital transformation by posing the following research question: What roles do middle managers play in ensuring the success of the digital transformation process? This study explores the involvement of middle management in formulating and implementing strategies in digital transformation projects. It also assesses the importance of middle managers' roles and strategic activities in ensuring the successful implementation of digital transformation (Christodoulou et al., 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Transformation

The COVID-19 crisis forced organizations to rethink their ways of operating and adopting digital work models (Matyusz and Pistrui, 2023) to reduce the risk of contamination. Owing to remote work and tools, such as Meet, Zoom, virtual classrooms, and e-learning (Azzam et al., 2021), it has become possible to minimize these risks while protecting the health and safety of millions. Consequently, the global pandemic has compelled the professional world to revise its traditional operational and communication methods and to urgently integrate information technologies into new economic models (Wu et al., 2021). In healthcare, transportation, banking, insurance, retail, energy, agriculture (Varbanova et al., 2023), and education, digital transformation has led to the adoption of new technologies that have improved the quality of services to meet citizens' needs. The integration of these digital technologies has not only influenced organizational behavior, but has also transformed organizational culture (Nadkarni and Prügl, 2021), encouraging organizations to challenge the status quo and view change as a constant in their operations and evolution (Peña and Caruajulca, 2022).

Digital transformation refers to profound changes brought about by the adoption of technologies, such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, cloud computing, big data and social networks (Volberda et al., 2021). This transformation impacts organizations, societies, and even governments, forcing them to adapt quickly to radical upheavals (Park, 2021). Digital transformation modifies processes by automating them through the adoption of artificial intelligence and software that facilitate professional activities. Furthermore, integrating digital tools enhances the organization's internal and external communication, thereby strengthening collaboration among employees and enriching customer experience, as demonstrated by mobile applications and data analysis used to anticipate trends. Therefore, organizations are compelled to innovate and develop solutions that enable them to remain at the forefront of this radical change through digital transformation. An organizational culture that is open to change and adaptable is essential for successfully carrying out digital transformation, minimizing resistance to change, and taking advantage of the various opportunities offered by digital tools. Therefore, digital transformation is not simply the adoption of new technology. It must be accompanied by a deeper process of change that affects culture (Nadkarni and Prügl, 2021), structure, tasks, personnel, and business models (Wu et al., 2021). This ongoing process, which reinforces the digitalization of the organization (Matyusz and Pistrui, 2023), leads to several consequences such as faster transactions, greater agility in actions, increased adaptability to new requirements, higher employee productivity, and greater overall staff satisfaction (Peña and Caruajulca, 2022). There is even a change in organizational structures and strategies in response to digital transformation (Van Doorn et al., 2023), as well as better adaptability to evolving market conditions. In short, digital transformation can lead to greater innovation, strong performance, and better outcomes for an entity (Khatib and Alshawabkeh, 2022).

However, the failure of the digital transformation process can lead to numerous repercussions for organizations. Beyond financial losses and the costs associated with purchasing software and technologies, as

well as the necessary training and adjustments, several difficulties may arise (Khan and Uddin, 2023). These include the learning curve, handling of new tools, and adoption of new behaviors in response to technology. Resistant behaviors may emerge as a reaction to the frequency and intensity of required changes (Bagrationi and Thurner, 2023). Moreover, certain privacy issues may threaten an organization's leadership and pose a real risk to the adoption of these technologies. Thus, although digital transformation benefits organizations and their staff (Korsen and Ingvaldsen, 2022), it can also have several drawbacks for employees. Therefore, leaders must be actively involved in ensuring the success of their organizations' digital transformation (Li and Fei, 2023). One possible solution is to encourage staff buy-ins for digital transformation to carry out this uncertain and challenging process (Mazurchenko et al., 2022). A change in organizational culture toward openness and acceptance of radical change (Nadkarni and Prügl, 2021) may be the key to successful digital transformation (Tortorella et al., 2023). Furthermore, the manner in which organizational leaders respond to this change determines the success of the process. Among these leaders, middle managers (Xanthopoulou et al., 2023) play a central role in the success of digitalization in the hotel industry. These true change agents can lead to complex and uncertain processes (Van Doorn et al., 2023).

Digital transformation is a dynamic process. An organization's commitment to this process does not guarantee success. However, to succeed, it is essential that all staff embrace this radical change and actively participate in every stage to ensure the integration of digital technologies into all organizational processes. This is particularly true for middle management, who are genuine agents of change and act as vital links capable of driving significant transformations within the organization. However, who are the middle managers? What role do they play in the digital transformation process?

Middle Management

Several studies in the management sciences have examined the role of middle managers as key elements in organizations. Middle managers serve as a link between top management and operational staff (Gaha, 2010). This "pivot" position between leaders and employees enables the middle manager to be close to operational realities on the one hand and strategic decisions on the other. As such, they are informed of the details of how various tasks are carried out as well as feedback regarding employees, markets, and clients. Challenges and malfunctions are quickly detected by middle managers, who strive to offer solutions. Simultaneously, middle managers have access to information on strategic decisions and the future direction of the organization. This places them at the heart of the organizational structure, ensuring coordination and communication between management and employees (Besson and Mahieu, 2008). The centrality of the middle manager's position legitimizes their efforts to bridge the gap between strategic and operational levels. As intermediary agents between the top and base of the hierarchy, they seek to contribute to strategic decisions by making them more realistic while considering operational realities. Simultaneously, middle management ensures the implementation of strategic decisions issued by the top management. Using this logic, Gaha (2003) asserts that "middle managers constitute the backbone of a company. They are accountable for the success or failure of executing the plan, managing, and supporting exchanges."

In summary, middle managers work with senior executives to participate in strategic decision making while cooperating with operational staff to facilitate the implementation of these strategies and relay information related to their implementation (Do Vale et al., 2021). This challenge requires a strong commitment from middle managers to overcome resistance to change and foster changes in employees' attitudes and behaviors (Putra et al., 2023). Thus, it can be considered that the roles assumed by middle managers are complex, as they must simultaneously meet the demands of both senior management and operational staff. Expectations are high, and responsibilities are considerable. Middle managers must possess the strong skills to assume these responsibilities in the face of current demands. Consequently, middle managers represent a true "talent pool for the organization" (Gaha, 2006), and should benefit from the attention and support of top management. They play a crucial role in the present and are generally prepared to assume leadership roles in future. Therefore, they deserve particular attention from organizations and senior managers (Koponen et al., 2023).

In addition to the hierarchical position of middle managers, numerous researchers have examined their roles. The focus is on efforts to coordinate the daily reality of operational staff and strategic activities of top management (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1994; Nonaka, 1994; Balogun, 2003). The centrality of middle

managers' positions highlights the importance of their role within an organization. The synthesis work carried out as part of this research enabled us to group the various roles of middle management into an initial communicative role, where this central actor shares information, coordinates, and negotiates to bring perspectives closer together and foster synergies around organizational projects. Their second role concerns the task of a strategist, a true agent of change, who is capable of making decisions and actively contributing to the strategic direction of the organization.

A strategic player ...

The technical and scientific knowledge acquired by middle managers through their education, combined with the interpersonal and communication skills developed through their professional experience, provides this central figure with the necessary expertise to become a competent strategist to make appropriate decisions at the right time. The middle manager thus transforms into an "ordinary strategist" (Besson and Mahieu, 2008), capable of detecting and understanding information coming from the market and making decisions accordingly. Over time, middle managers learn to identify crucial information, understand the decision-making process, and determine the organization's strategic direction. Proximity to senior management facilitates the integration of middle managers into the decision-making process and the strategic aspects of their roles (Mercuri, 2013). Consequently, middle managers' involvement in strategic decisions has a positive impact on performance, both at the level of their teams or departments and on the results of the entire entity (Van Doorn et al., 2023). Moreover, the dual proximity of middle managers to both senior management and operational staff provides them with a deep understanding of how an entity functions. This enables them to grasp the behaviors of the various people around them (Putra et al., 2023). This understanding allows them to identify each individual's strengths and areas of improvement and provides them with the techniques required to initiate change. This phenomenon illustrates the role of middle managers in leading change (Balogun, 2003).

Endowed with communication skills

Middle managers occupy a strategic position between senior management and other organizational hierarchies (Putra et al., 2023). This position gives them proximity to both the hierarchy and operational staff. Thus, middle managers are informed of strategic decisions, which are generally centralized at the management level, and become responsible for disseminating this information to employees (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Wooldridge and Floyd, 1990). However, information sharing is not one-sided, as this key actor also gathers feedback from operational staff and coordinates best practices to adopt. Information exchange requires advanced interpersonal and communication skills to negotiate with team members, manage conflicts, foster synergies, and gain support from the entire team. Furthermore, the proximity of middle managers to operational staff gives them an advantage in terms of receiving feedback on the market reality. The information gathered allows for reassessment and, if necessary, realignment of strategic decisions. Thus, by occupying a central position within the organizational structure, the middle manager acts as a transmitter of both strategic and operational information. Strategic information originating from management is shared with employees (downward communication) (Do Vale et al. 2021). Practical and operational information is relayed from employees to managers (upward communication) (Wooldridge and Floyd, 1990; Huy, 2002; Balogun and Johnson, 2004).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To explore the roles of middle management in the face of digital transformation, we chose the "leader-member exchange (LMX) theory. This theory, developed from the pioneering work of Graen and Uhl-Bien (1991), is based on the quality of exchanges between the leader and team members. The specificity and uniqueness of each human relationship between a leader and their collaborator is generally built on trust and mutual respect. However, the quality and strength of these relationships and the resulting exchanges influence motivation and performance. Consequently, leaders are interested in understanding the quality of their relationships and exchanges with each member of their team. Negotiating differences, strengthening agreements, and uniting synergies around the team's objectives only to consolidate the team's work around organizational goals.

This theoretical framework is relevant because middle managers must establish high-quality relationships with all members of their team, particularly with the organization, in general. Due to the centrality of their position within the organization, this manager must truly be a leader in taking on the various roles assigned to them. Positioned between an organization's leadership and its operational staff, middle managers benefit from maintaining fair and high-quality relationships with all their counterparts to ensure genuine involvement in organizational goals. By fostering a culture of trust and kindness, middle managers can acknowledge the efforts of their team members and improve their work environment (Van Dam et al., 2021). Thus, they actively contribute to facilitating collective performance, especially when they can identify the talent of their team members and provide them with access to training and skill development opportunities. Thus, through the leader member exchange theory, it becomes clear that by maintaining high-quality relationships with their employees, middle managers can promote communication, encourage innovation, and cultivate a culture conducive to digitalization and collaboration (Fein and Tziner, 2021). Therefore, it is legitimate to discuss the leadership of these actors as a key factor in their success in their new roles. This individualized leadership, based on the specific nature of the relationship between the middle manager and each employee, helps highlight and recognize their skills. Furthermore, identifying their needs allows them to be addressed as required with specific solutions, such as training, coaching, or mentoring, particularly in the context of digital transformation (Hwang et al., 2021).

DISCUSSION

Digital transformation brings about a significant change in how organizations operate as well as employee behavior (Benitez et al., 2022; Zulu, 2023). Middle managers are assigned new roles to meet the demands of digitalization (Matyusz and Pistruj, 2023). Owing to their central position within the organization, these managers perform several roles simultaneously. However, digital transformation imposes new constraints on organizational and professional contexts (Khatib and Alshawabkeh, 2022). Therefore, in addition to the roles traditionally assumed by middle management, digitalization requires this group of employees to acquire new skills to better meet current demands, which are characterized by unpredictability, accelerated changes, and integration of new technologies at all levels (Koponen et al., 2023). Moreover, middle managers have unique personalities, distinct educational backgrounds, and professional experiences that shape their current identities. Thus, each manager has a leadership style that distinguishes them from the others and contributes to their uniqueness as leaders. Therefore, leadership styles vary depending on the individual, culture, and the environment. Although there is no consensus on changes in leadership roles within the context of digital transformation (El Sawy et al., 2016), it is possible to consider what unites middle managers operating in such a context is their digital leadership, which represents a genuine challenge for this category of managers and for the organization as a whole (Putra et al., 2023).

Agility skills

In the context of digital transformation, organizations require competent middle managers to guide them toward achieving their goals (Do Vale et al., 2021). During the digitalization process, managers must acquire new skills to adapt to unprecedented situations, demanding increased agility and adaptability compared to the past (Park, 2021). Consequently, they are required to address emerging issues related to the digitalization process and manage new work team configurations (Koponen et al., 2023). Thus, middle managers develop various skills that enable them to quickly find solutions to problems encountered (Bagrationi and Thurner, 2023). For example, middle managers' agility is an essential skill in digital transformation (Khan and Uddin, 2023). Agility is demonstrated by the ability to respond promptly to various unforeseen internal and external events. This may include allocating new resources (Pradeep et al., 2021), revising the current strategy, or increasing the focus on specific organizational goals (Peña and Caruajulca, 2022). It is crucial to understand the implications and limitations of new technologies to maximize their benefits to the organization as a whole. Furthermore, digital leaders must demonstrate enthusiasm and vision regarding digitalization (Henderikx and Stoffers, 2023). In other words, they must be able to anticipate the concrete outcomes of this process and understand its future directions (Park, 2021). They must also surround themselves with talented colleagues who share the same interests in technological advances and applications (Klein, 2020).

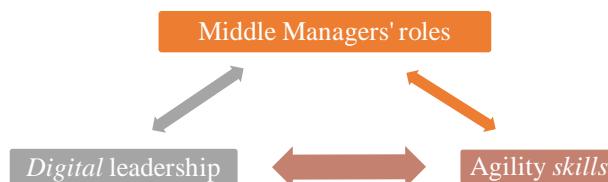
Digital leadership

Early studies on leadership were primarily associated with the notion of “commanding and controlling employee performance.” Subsequently, the concept of leadership evolved to include dimensions such as change, relationships, communication, coaching, advising, learning, growth, awakening, and development (Wu et al., 2021), in response to transformations in the professional context. The term “leadership” has come to refer to the adoption of certain behaviors by individuals occupying leadership roles within an organization, such as middle managers. These leaders are tasked with managing practices and guiding the staff. According to Christodoulou et al. (2022), leadership is defined as a manager’s ability to ensure the viability of an organization. At this stage, the question arises as to what the concept of digital leadership means. How can this contribute to the digital transformation? In what ways does digitalization influence leadership? Klein (2020) conceptualized digital leadership as encompassing behaviors that enable managers to drive digital transformation or manage the organization in a digitalized environment, taking into account the organization’s level of digital maturity. This type of leadership plays a crucial role in formulating and executing the most appropriate strategy for an organization during digitalization (Christodoulou et al., 2022). Digital leadership involves the use of an organization’s digital resources to achieve both organizational and individual objectives (Matyusz and Pistru, 2023). This is particularly relevant in dynamic contexts characterized by a high degree of ambiguity (Luu, 2023). This form of leadership fosters creativity and innovation within the organization, making work teams more effective and enabling them to achieve organizational objectives (Li and Fei, 2023), while also meeting the demands of digitalization. The focus is on changing working methods and encouraging collaboration and complementarity among teams. Digital leadership calls for new ways of working involving high-performance teams (Klein, 2020).

Kane et al. (2019) defined digital leadership as the fusion of traditional leadership with new skills, enabling leaders to address the challenges posed by digital transformation. These challenges include cultural changes and increased expectations of productivity. Benitez et al. (2022) consider that digital leadership encompasses a set of managerial, digital, and strategic skills that are essential for leading and managing interdisciplinary teams to successfully achieve an organization’s digital transformation (Luu, 2023). Furthermore, Sagbas and Erdogan (2022) associated digital leadership with a leadership style focused on implementing digital transformation within an organization. Due to its complexity, digital transformation requires the involvement of a true digital leader to facilitate this transition (Klein, 2020). Based on these definitions, middle managers operating in the context of digital transformation can no longer be content with their traditional roles they previously held (Xanthopoulou et al., 2023). They must acquire new skills to fully assume their responsibilities and actively contribute to the success of the organization’s digitalization (Henderikx and Stoffers, 2023).

Research has intensified the identification of the additional tasks assumed by middle managers (Figure 1). These include holding employees accountable for a strategic vision (Van Doorn et al., 2023), leading a process of digital integration related to IT infrastructure, business processes, and data (Matyusz and Pistru, 2023), actively seeking self-transformation to reshape the organization (Volberda et al., 2021), viewing failures as learning opportunities, seeking new collaborations (Wu et al., 2021), inspiring employees, coaching them, and strengthening networking and team building (Park, 2021). These new roles for middle managers require self-questioning and deep personal development (Bagrationi and Thurner, 2023). By challenging old practices, it becomes possible to adopt a critical perspective that allows for the acquisition of new skills to improve the performance of middle managers and to become a better version of oneself (Henderikx and Stoffers, 2023).

Figure 1 : Middle managers’ roles during Digital Transformation



Source : Authors’ own work

In this context, digital skills are not limited to a simple technological change but involve a necessary mental transformation to better adapt to the digitalization process while adding value (Mazurchenko et al., 2022). This is reflected in digital intelligence, which refers to the ability to convert digital data into accurate knowledge (Nadkarni and Prügl, 2021). It also includes the use of artificial intelligence and advanced technologies, as well as the development of digital skills related to digital technologies and culture (Tortorella et al. 2023). Thus, it is clear that digital transformation is more about managing the transition (Bagrationi and Thurner, 2023) than the technical aspects of digitalization (Xanthopoulou et al., 2023). Therefore, leaders, managers, and employees acquire the appropriate skills to integrate organizations with new digital technologies (Mazurchenko et al., 2022). This can only be achieved through deep introspective work, enabling various team members to be motivated to increase their confidence and enhance their digital intelligence (Do Vale et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

Middle managers are vital assets for organizations. Intermediaries between upper management and frontline employees are at the heart of the actions and decisions crucial to the smooth running of operations (Peña and Caruajulca, 2022). Moreover, the integration of artificial intelligence tools into employees' daily tasks has transformed the way work teams operate (Park, 2021), particularly in the digital era. This has automatically redefined the responsibilities of middle managers, who must now supervise, advise, and train their teams, resulting in the evolution of the roles and responsibilities of middle management toward their teams (Park, 2021). Thus, middle managers are key players in the success of digital transformation, and ensure the efficiency and sustainability of this radical change. They gain agility and resilience as catalysts for the adaptation and implementation of digital strategies (Pradeep et al., 2021). Their ability to adapt to constant technological, organizational, and marketing changes enables successful digitization (Xanthopoulou et al., 2023). Agility refers to persevering in the face of difficulties and learning from mistakes; this is the resilience that middle managers must demonstrate to succeed in their new roles (Van Doorn et al., 2023). Due to their agility, middle managers can react quickly to market fluctuations, the emergence of new technologies, and changes in consumer demand during the digital transformation process (Khan and Uddin, 2023). This group of managers develops solid resilience, enabling them to inspire their teams to handle setbacks and bounce back from failures (Pradeep et al., 2021). It is no longer just about successfully carrying out digital transformation. Organizations can then excel when faced with the real challenge of digitalization, continuing to evolve and acquire new competitive advantages (Wu et al., 2021). Thus, the support of agile middle managers, capable of guiding teams toward a new mindset, is a key asset for organizations wishing to succeed in digital transformation (Henderikx and Stoffers, 2023).

Research contributions

Through this research, we aim to expand the knowledge related to the concepts of digital transformation and middle managers. Our objective is to reconsider the various roles of middle managers during the digital transformation process, which requires skills beyond those traditionally possessed by strategic actors. Thus, we invite reflection on the leadership of these intermediaries, the skills acquired, and the performance of this category of managers in the context of digital transformation, which changes the organization at multiple levels (Pradeep et al., 2021).

Research implications

This study clarifies that selecting and training middle managers according to the demands of digital transformation is essential (Henderikx and Stoffers, 2023). Therefore, HR managers must choose future middle managers who are capable of embracing digital transformation and readily engage in a process of profound change, enabling them to bring the entire work team into this digitalization process (Wu et al., 2021). Moreover, emphasizing the new roles that middle managers must assume in the digital age can help organizations by providing avenues for reflection and encouraging them to see middle management as an ally, a facilitator of digital transition (Xanthopoulou et al., 2023). Thus, they have become a central element in the success of digital transformation (Matyusz and Pistrui, 2023). Specifically, this research allows business leaders, researchers, trainers, educators, and human resource professionals to encourage middle managers by

providing them with the advice, training, and learning necessary to become pillars of digital transformation within their organizations (Wu et al., 2021). Digital transformation requires reassessment of traditional management and leadership practices (Matyusz and Pistrui, 2023). This reassessment can only take place through deep personal introspection to accept this major change, and must begin with the managers themselves (Wu et al., 2021). Implementing support and development programs for middle managers to help them initiate this personal work and better adapt to digital transformation is a true driver of progress for this group of managers. Finally, organizations must take the necessary steps to provide middle managers with the time, support, and assistance required to let go of old practices (Bagrationi and Thurner, 2023) and fully engage in a reassessment that will allow them to excel in these new roles (Wu et al., 2021).

Limitations and future research directions

Similar to other studies, our study has certain limitations. This study reviews the literature on middle management, digital transformation, and digital leadership. Although our research is purely theoretical, it can serve as a foundation for future studies exploring the new roles of middle managers in the current Tunisian context through systematic literature reviews. Certain areas of application or investigation can be specified, such as the health sector, higher education, public administration (Xanthopoulou et al., 2023), and the financial sector (Mazurchenko et al., 2022). Each of these fields has specific characteristics that enrich scientific research on digital transformation and the role of middle management (Van Doorn et al., 2023). Future research could also explore the sources of middle managers' resistance or reluctance toward digital transformation (Khan and Uddin, 2023). Indeed, within this category of managers, there is variation in perceptions and behaviors concerning the adoption of digital transformation. Many studies have focused on the resistance to this transformation (Bagrationi and Thurner, 2023; Khan and Uddin, 2023). This line of research is particularly relevant in the Tunisian context, which is characterized by strong cultural resistance to change. Exploring this avenue would be highly useful in helping leaders, HR managers, trainers, and consultants to support this strategically important category of employees.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest. There are no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interests in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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