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Doctoral Thesis

Title:

Disruptive Leadership and Digital Transformation: Understanding How Technology Manufacturing Companies Implement Modern HR Practices and Exploring the Distinctive Results within the Organization

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral thesis examines the interplay between disruptive leadership and digital transformation within human resource (HR) practices, specifically within the technology manufacturing sector in Southeast Asia. As digital innovations accelerate, organizations face increased pressure to adapt their traditional operational models to remain competitive. Disruptive leadership—a modern leadership style derived from disruptive innovation theories by Christensen—encourages adaptability, risk-taking, and creativity in challenging established norms. When coupled with digital transformation, which leverages digital tools and processes, disruptive leadership has the potential to transform HR from a traditionally administrative function into a strategic organizational asset.

Utilizing a qualitative case study approach, this research explores how five technology manufacturing companies in Southeast Asia have integrated disruptive leadership and digital transformation into their HR practices. Data were gathered through interviews with HR leaders, organizational documents, and digital archives, providing insights into the unique challenges and advantages these companies experience. Findings reveal that disruptive leadership fosters a culture of digital readiness and continuous learning, empowering HR to employ data-driven decision-making and enhance employee engagement through digital tools. The study also highlights challenges in adoption, particularly regarding resistance to change and the resource demands of digital transformation.

The implications of this research are multifaceted. Practically, it offers actionable insights for HR professionals and leaders looking to implement digital transformation within disruptive leadership frameworks. Theoretically, it contributes to the literature by demonstrating how disruptive leadership principles can amplify the effectiveness of digital transformation in HR. The thesis concludes by proposing a practical model for adopting these approaches in similar organizational contexts, alongside recommendations for further research on cross-cultural and interdepartmental applications.

Key terms: Disruptive Leadership, Digital Transformation, Human Resources (HR), Technology Manufacturing, Employee Empowerment, Strategic Agility, Data-Driven Decision-Making, Digital Readiness, Employee Engagement, Change Management, Organizational Culture, Southeast Asia, Qualitative Case Study, Leadership Innovation, Workforce Optimization.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As a result of the dynamic technological developments in today's digital age, companies and organizations throughout the world are changing their practices to keep up with the ever-evolving modernization of the business landscape (Agustian et al, 2023). The advent of new tools and technologies is resulting in a rapid shift in business models, HR functions, sales and marketing strategies, operational activities, and leadership and management practices. As the world gets to know AI, machine learning, big data, blockchain, biotech, augmented reality, and the metaverse among many others, different systems and machines are being built every day to make business operations and people management more cost-effective than ever (Uzialko, 2024).

This study focused on how selected technology manufacturing companies implement disruptive leadership practices and digital transformation strategies within the Human Resources domain, examining the results of these modern approaches to propose how other companies and organizations can adapt them for more productive HR operations.

Disruptive leadership is a modern style of leadership that evolved from the concept of "disruptive innovation" introduced by Clayton Christensen and Joseph Bower, professors at Harvard Business School (Christensen & Bower, 1995). In his book "The Innovator's Dilemma," Christensen introduced the concept of disruptive innovation, which refers to the process by which a smaller company with fewer resources is able to successfully challenge established incumbent businesses by targeting overlooked segments of the market with simpler, cheaper, or more accessible products or services. This concept has paved the way to adopting a disruptive approach to leadership as a response to rapidly changing business landscapes (Kashaboina, 2019).

With disruptive leadership, the leader challenges conventional norms and utilizes innovation to drive organizational change and adapt to rapidly evolving environments. It involves a great deal of experimentation, risk-taking, creativity, passion, and emotional intelligence, aiming to shake up traditional ways of thinking to achieve better results at a faster rate (Disruptive Leadership, 2024). In the book "Disruptive Leadership: Apple and the Technology of Caring Deeply," author Rich

Karlgaard explores the leadership principles that have driven Apple's success under Steve Jobs and Tim Cook.

Through their direction, they emphasized the importance of disruptive thinking, empathy, and customer experience, encouraging their people to focus on these things rather than solely caring about traditional business practices and short-term goals. To date, several companies are already implementing disruptive leadership within their organizations, including Amazon, Netflix, Tesla, and Uber among others.

Digital transformation, on the other hand, refers to the process of utilizing and integrating digital technologies into all aspects of a business, aiming to improve and modernize the way it operates and delivers value to customers. Some common examples of digital transformation include creating a business website for a physical store, using automated marketing techniques (emails, SMS, and online ads), utilizing CRM sales tools, leveraging artificial intelligence and chatbots, communicating with customers using social media, and enabling mobile transactions and interactions among many others (Salesforce Staff, 2023). Basically, anything that involves using digital tools, data, and technology-driven strategies to streamline operations, improve efficiency, enhance customer experiences, and drive innovation is considered a form of digital transformation.

Over the years, digital transformation has reshaped how businesses operate and interact with their customers. Through the emergence of the Internet and the digital tools it brought along, companies all over the world started transforming their processes, engaging talents virtually, and driving new business models that weren’t even possible in the past to compete and keep up with the fast-paced digital world (Schwertner, 2017).

Both disruptive leadership and digital transformation are changing the game for businesses, companies, and organizations worldwide (Ly, 2023). While some show obvious results, such as in the cases of Apple, Netflix, and Tesla, the impact of these modern practices on other smaller and local companies may not be apparent to external observers. This study aimed to take a closer look at tech manufacturing companies and how disruptive leadership and digital transformation impact their HR tasks and functions.

Background of the Study

The Human Resources (HR) department is traditionally recognized as one of the most stringent departments—if not the most stringent—in a corporate organization. Being the division that oversees employee welfare, HR meticulously follows strict procedures and implements regulations and protocols throughout the organization. Their strict governance ensures that the company complies with labor laws, protects employee rights, and adheres to organizational values and integrity (Kenton, 2024). However, with the advent of technology and amid the talks about "disruption," the role of HR is evolving beyond its traditional administrative functions (Wahdaniah, 2023).

In the past, HR primarily focused on recruitment, employee training and onboarding, payroll processing, and performance management among other administrative functions. These tasks were often executed using paperwork, manual record-keeping, and face-to-face procedures (Rotich, 2015). Pre-Internet and cloud-based systems, paper-based documentation and filing cabinets were staples in the HR office for gathering, collecting, and storing data. This reliance on traditional methods not only consumed significant time and resources but also limited the department's ability to provide strategic value to the organization. Moreover, communication with employees was predominantly face-to-face or through formal memos, making it challenging to engage with dispersed or remote teams. Overall, HR operations were largely reactive and administrative, with little emphasis on data-driven decision-making or technological innovation (Pophal, n.d.).

In the context of technical manufacturing companies, which are part of a highly dynamic and innovationdriven industry, the transition to digital HR practices is not just beneficial but necessary. These companies often operate on the cutting edge of technology, requiring HR departments to not only manage but also drive technological adoption to keep pace with industry standards and expectations. As businesses enter the digital age, HR departments in these sectors are now increasingly tasked with driving cultural change, fostering innovation, and enabling digital readiness within the workforce. This shift requires HR professionals to adopt a more strategic and proactive approach, aligning talent management strategies with the organization's overarching goals and objectives (Occean & Stephan, 2017).

Instead of just focusing on traditional tasks, HR leaders in technical manufacturing companies are now leveraging digital tools and analytics to identify talent gaps, nurture employee skills, and build a futureready workforce. Furthermore, adopting a disruptive style of leadership contributes significantly to how HR engages with employees and manages the employee experience (Babbitt & Edmonds, n.d.). With the rise of remote work and digital collaboration tools, HR departments are exploring new ways to facilitate collaboration and employee engagement in virtual environments. They are also leveraging data-driven insights to personalize employee experiences, provide them with opportunities for professional growth, and enhance overall satisfaction.

In essence, while the impact of disruptive leadership and digital transformation may not be immediately apparent in smaller and local companies, HR departments in technical manufacturing firms play a crucial role in driving organizational change and ensuring that businesses remain competitive in today's rapidly evolving landscape. By embracing innovation, fostering a culture of continuous learning, and leveraging digital technologies, HR professionals can position their organizations for success in the digital age.

Statement of the Problem

Technology manufacturing companies typically employ production workers who are tasked with specific procedural duties within a structured operational environment (Coykendall, et al, 2024). Due to the nature of these roles, there may be an assumption that the HR department within such companies is not expected to follow modern trends, such as disruptive leadership and digital transformation. The perception might be that HR functions primarily as administrative support, focusing on traditional tasks like recruitment, training, and compliance, rather than actively driving organizational change and innovation.

However, this perspective overlooks the potential for HR to act as a catalyst for change and innovation within these organizations. As technology rapidly advances, there is an increasing need for HR departments not only to manage but also to drive forward-thinking strategies that integrate disruptive leadership styles and digital transformation initiatives (Occean, et al, 2017). Such practices could be pivotal in enhancing organizational agility and competitiveness in a global market that is continually being reshaped by technological advancements.

This study aimed to challenge and disprove this assumption. It sought to investigate whether tech manufacturing companies can also benefit from adopting modern HR practices, including disruptive leadership and digital transformation, and how these practices can contribute to overall organizational success and competitiveness in the rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to elucidate the roles and impacts of disruptive leadership and digital transformation within the context of HR in select technology manufacturing companies. Given the rapid evolution in technological advancements and organizational management, this study sought to provide a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of how these two pivotal elements interact and influence the HR functions in the technology sector.

There are five objectives this study aimed to achieve:

1. Define and discuss what disruptive leadership in HR.

The research began by defining the concept of disruptive leadership, identifying its key characteristics, and how it differs from traditional leadership models. It explored the practical implementation of disruptive leadership within HR departments of technology manufacturing companies, examining how such leadership styles can drive innovation and adaptability in a fast-paced industry.

2. Explore digital transformation in the context of HR.

Concurrently, the study delved into the concept of digital transformation, particularly its relevance and application in HR practices among technology firms. This involved investigating how digital tools and strategies are integrated into HR functions to enhance operational efficiency, employee engagement, and strategic decision-making.

3. Identify real-life applications in select companies.

Through a series of case studies, this research presented real-world applications of both disruptive leadership and digital transformation within selected technology manufacturing companies. It provided an in-depth look at how these companies have successfully integrated these practices into their HR operations and the outcomes of such integrations.

4. Provide a comparative analysis of practices.

The study compared and contrasted the findings from previous research with current real-life applications in selected companies. This comparative analysis aimed to identify consistent themes, discrepancies, and the evolution of practices over time, offering a rich contextual understanding of the field.

5. Develop a practical working model.

Finally, the study proposed a practical and sustainable working model for integrating disruptive leadership and digital transformation practices within HR departments. This model was designed to be adaptable for future technological and managerial advancements, providing a roadmap for technology manufacturing companies to remain competitive and innovative.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is disruptive leadership? How is it different from traditional leadership approaches? What are the key principles and characteristics of disruptive leadership, and how are they manifested within the HR context of technology manufacturing companies?

2. How does digital transformation influence HR management practices within technology companies, and what are the key drivers and challenges associated with its implementation?

3. What are the real-life applications of disruptive leadership and digital transformation practices within selected technology manufacturing companies? How do these initiatives impact organizational performance and employee outcomes?

4. What are the similarities and differences between disruptive leadership and digital transformation practices as observed in past research and as implemented in real-life settings within technology manufacturing companies?

5. How can practical working models be developed and recommended to facilitate the adoption and integration of disruptive leadership and digital transformation practices within technology manufacturing companies, both in the present and future contexts?

Assumptions

Assumptions are preconceived ideas that the researcher brings into the research without investigating further to confirm the accuracy of their perceived idea on the study. It is an initial claim based on personal beliefs, experiences, or observations, rather than empirical evidence or rigorous analysis.

In this qualitative case study, one assumption was that disruptive leadership, while often associated with positive outcomes such as innovation and organizational growth, may also have negative impacts on employees within technology manufacturing companies. These negative impacts include increased job uncertainty, changes in job roles, and heightened levels of stress or resistance to change.

Additionally, another assumption was digital transformation initiatives aimed at streamlining HR processes and procedures within these companies are generally beneficial, leading to increased efficiency, transparency, and employee satisfaction. However, it was acknowledged that the successful implementation of digital transformation may require significant investment in technology infrastructure, training, and change management efforts.

Summary of Methods

Both disruptive leadership and digital transformation encompass a wide spectrum, with different companies employing different approaches, methodologies, and processes in practicing these concepts (Joshi, et al, 2018). To be able to gather enough data and information for this study, a qualitative research approach was performed, focusing on HR practices in selected technology manufacturing companies. With a qualitative research approach, the researcher explored and provided deeper insights into real-world practices. Instead of collecting and analyzing numerical data sets, the methodology involved gathering participants' experiences, perceptions, insights, and behaviors, answering how and why questions instead of how many or how much.

Data Sources

As for the sources of qualitative data, the researcher focused on studying five technology manufacturing companies. This included surveys, questionnaires, and one-on-one interviews with relevant individuals in the organizations, including—but not limited to—HR managers, HR specialists, recruiters, administrative personnel, CEO, COO, and department heads among others.

Aside from firsthand accounts from the organizations being observed, other sources of data included archival materials that provide historical insights into HR practices, existing documentary evidence from reputable industry reports, and a wealth of online resources that offer current and relevant information, including published news, articles, researches, and online videos to name some. The combination of these sources ensured a robust foundation for understanding the evolving role of HR in technology manufacturing sectors.

Data Collection and Analysis

To gather primary data, the research incorporated surveys and questionnaires targeted at HR professionals within the industry. These instruments were designed to capture quantitative data regarding the prevalence and perceived effectiveness of disruptive leadership and digital transformation practices. Additionally, interviews with selected HR executives and managers were conducted to obtain qualitative insights and deeper narratives about the implementation and impact of these practices. This mixed-methods approach to data collection enhanced the depth and reliability of the analysis.

Data analysis were conducted using thematic analysis for qualitative data, identifying recurring themes and patterns related to disruptive leadership and digital transformation in HR. Quantitative data from surveys were also analyzed statistically to establish trends and correlations. The integration of these methods provided a comprehensive view of how disruptive leadership and digital transformation are shaping HR practices in the technology manufacturing industry, offering valuable conclusions and recommendations for future practice and research.

Significance of the Study

As companies and organizations throughout the world gradually shift to modern and digital HR practices, this study holds substantial importance in the field of human resources management, particularly within the technology manufacturing industry—although other industries may also benefit from this research. As these industries increasingly pivot towards high-efficiency, digitally-enabled production environments, disruptive leadership and digital transformation within the HR context become even more important (Occean, et al, 2017). To bridge the gap between traditional HR management and the need for adapting technological and digital approaches, this study discussed innovative strategies that align HR functions with current technological trends to enhance organizational effectiveness and adaptability.

By dissecting how disruptive leadership and digital transformation practices are implemented in real-world settings, this study provided valuable insights into their potential impacts and benefits to both the company and employees. With positive results, the findings can encourage more technology companies, as well as other organizations with similar business models, to embrace these modern HR practices. Some potential gains from this study included enhanced productivity, operational efficiency, and competitiveness of the organizations willing to adopt the same approaches in a fast-evolving market. Moreover, by comparing theoretical constructs with practical applications, the study offered a critical analysis of current models and frameworks in HR management, suggesting areas for further research and development.

Overall, the anticipated contributions of this study to academic literature and industry practices are significant. It not only promised to expand the theoretical understanding of disruptive leadership and digital transformation in HR but also provided a practical framework that could guide future implementations. This dual focus ensured that the study's outcomes will be of interest to both academic researchers and industry practitioners, fostering a deeper understanding of how strategic HR management can drive technological adoption and organizational change.

Scope and Limitations

This study focused on disruptive leadership and digital transformation practices within the HR context of five selected technology manufacturing companies. Through qualitative research methods, including case studies and empirical analysis, it aimed to provide rich and in-depth insights into the application, effectiveness, and implications of these modern practices within the five organizations. By focusing on a specific sector—technology manufacturing—and a limited number of companies, the study offered detailed and contextually relevant findings that can be beneficial to both the academia and corporate domains.

However, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations inherent in the study design. Firstly, the findings and conclusions drawn from the analysis of the selected companies may not be conclusive to all technology manufacturing companies or other industry sectors. The specific characteristics, organizational cultures, and contextual factors of the chosen companies may influence the outcomes and do not fully represent the diversity of practices within the broader industry. Additionally, the study's reliance on qualitative research methods limited the ability to quantify and statistically analyze certain variables or relationships. While qualitative approaches

offer depth and richness in understanding complex phenomena, they may lack the statistical rigor and generalizability associated with quantitative research methods.

Another inherent limitation of the study was that disruptive leadership and digital transformation practices within the HR context alone cannot be attributed to organizational success or failure. Other relevant factors or dynamics may come into play but were not fully explored within the scope of this study, such as market conditions, competitive pressures, regulatory environments, and external shocks. Additionally, the study's reliance on publicly available information, interviews, and secondary data sources would have introduced biases or limitations in data validity and reliability. Efforts were made, however, to mitigate these limitations through rigorous data triangulation, reflexivity, and transparency in reporting the research findings.

While this study offered valuable insights into the intersection of disruptive leadership, digital transformation, and HR management within technology manufacturing companies, it is important to interpret the findings within the context of the study's scope and limitations.

Summary

This study titled "Disruptive Leadership and Digital Transformation: Understanding How Technology Manufacturing Companies Implement Modern HR Practices and Exploring the Distinctive Results within the Organization" aimed to explore the impact of new leadership styles and technological integration in HR functions within the technology manufacturing sector. As companies, organizations, and businesses throughout the world face an unprecedented pace of digital change, this study sought to evaluate how disruptive leadership and digital transformation can enhance organizational effectiveness and agility in the context of human resource management.

Driven by the premise that traditional HR functions are being transformed by modern tools and technologies, as well as disruptive leadership practices, this research was designed to explore and discuss how five particular technology manufacturing companies leverage these modern HR approaches in their daily operations and how they impact the performance of these organizations. This transformation is necessitated by the rapid evolution of the technological landscape, which influences business models and necessitates new strategies for managing and motivating the workforce. The research focused on how such transformations in HR practices can lead to improved productivity, better employee retention, and overall business growth.

In the context of technology manufacturing companies, the research examined how these firms are integrating disruptive leadership and digital transformation into their HR practices. Disruptive leadership, as discussed in the thesis, draws from Clayton Christensen's theory of disruptive innovation, where smaller firms with fewer resources manage to outcompete established players by targeting overlooked market segments with innovative solutions (Christensen & Bower, 1995). This leadership style encourages challenging the status quo and fostering a culture of innovation and risk-taking.

Digital transformation in HR, on the other hand, refers to the adopting and utilizing digital technologies to improve traditional processes. This includes the use of automated systems for recruitment and onboarding, digital platforms for employee training, and analytics tools for strategic decision-making. These advancements can help streamline HR operations and enhance the strategic contributions of the department to the broader organizational goals (Occean & Stephan, 2017).

Through qualitative research and detailed case studies, the thesis provided empirical insights into the specific practices adopted by selected technology manufacturing firms. It analyzed the outcomes of these practices and develop a comparative understanding of their efficacy in fostering organizational change and adaptability.

Ultimately, the research aimed to contribute to both academic and practical fields by offering a framework that other companies and organizations can adopt to navigate the complexities of the modern digital and competitive landscape. Towards the end, the study proposed actionable strategies for integrating disruptive leadership and digital transformation into HR practices that organizations can adapt for future success in the digital age.

Definition of Terms

Applicant Tracking System (ATS): A software used by employers, HR managers, and recruiters to track candidates and streamline the entire hiring process (Haan, 2024).

Benchmarking: A process or means of comparing performance measures of two or more teams or organizations (HR Benchmarking Toolbox, 2024).

Customer Relations Management (CRM) Software: A tool that collects and stores customer information in one place and gives businesses access to relevant data that can be used for marketing, sales, and customer service purposes (Hargrave, 2023).

Digital Transformation: The process of utilizing and integrating digital technologies into all aspects of a business, aiming to improve and modernize the way it operates and delivers value to customers. (What is digital transformation?, 2016).

Disruption: A process whereby a smaller company with fewer resources is able to successfully challenge established incumbent businesses (Christensen, 2015).

Disruptive Innovation: A term coined by Harvard Business School Professor Clayton Christensen that describes the process by which a smaller company, usually with fewer resources, moves upmarket and challenges larger, established businesses (Cote, 2020).

Disruptive Leadership: A modern style of leadership that evolved from the concept of "disruptive innovation" introduced by Clayton Christensen where the leader looks to challenge well-established norms and fosters groundbreaking ideas (Nalley, 2023).

Human Resources (HR): Could refer both to the people working for an organization and the department in a company that is responsible for managing the life cycle of each employee (Shweta, 2022).

Human Resource Management System (HRMS): A software, tool, or set of applications designed to manage human resources in an organization, as well as related HR processes involving employee needs, welfare, and lifecycle (Holliday, 2020).

Innovation: A product, service, business model, or strategy that's both novel and useful. It can be a major breakthrough or a simple upgrade from an existing product (Boyles, 2022).

Leadership: The art of motivating a group of people to act toward achieving a common goal. In a business setting, it involves directing employees and colleagues using a strategy that helps meet the company's needs (Ward, 2023).

Technology: The application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, especially in industries. It's a broad term that includes both tangible tools like machines and intangible tools such as software that are designed to enhance efficiency, capability, productivity, and innovation in various fields of human activity (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024).

Technology Manufacturing Company: A company that specializes in the production of technological equipment and devices. This includes manufacturing processes that involve advanced technologies for the production of electronic devices, computer hardware, computer parts and accessories, and other technological components that play essential roles in various industries.

Transformational Leadership: A style of leadership where leaders motivate their followers to innovate and develop new strategies to help with achieving organizational goals and success (Needle, 2021).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the theoretical foundations and contemporary perspectives surrounding disruptive leadership and digital transformation within human resources (HR), particularly in technology manufacturing companies. The literature review provides insights into how organizations adapt to digital advances, the evolving role of HR in driving innovation, and how disruptive leadership supports these transformations. This chapter will examine key concepts, models, and case studies, building a robust framework for analyzing the research findings in later chapters.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation of Disruptive Leadership

Disruptive leadership, rooted in Clayton Christensen's theory of disruptive innovation, emphasizes the capacity of smaller, emerging firms to challenge and ultimately displace established players by introducing simpler, accessible innovations that shift market dynamics. Christensen and Bower (1995) described how this phenomenon allows for "disruptors" to reshape business landscapes by appealing to previously underserved markets or creating entirely new ones. Disruptive leadership applies these principles to organizational strategy, encouraging leaders to challenge established norms, adapt quickly, and pursue transformational change.

In the context of HR, disruptive leadership requires a rethinking of conventional practices, particularly as digital transformation increasingly impacts the field. Leaders adopting disruptive approaches in HR tend to prioritize agility, creativity, and resilience, using advanced digital tools to support and drive organizational flexibility (Kashaboina, 2019). For instance, by digitizing recruitment, onboarding, and employee engagement processes, disruptive leaders can enhance the efficiency and adaptability of HR functions. This approach empowers HR departments to align more closely with strategic goals, ensuring that talent management is not only reactive but proactively shapes and supports broader business objectives.

Tech giants like Apple, Tesla, and Amazon provide prominent examples of disruptive leadership in action. Apple, under the guidance of Steve Jobs and later Tim Cook, exemplified disruptive principles not only in product innovation but also in corporate strategy and organizational culture. Karlgaard (2024) highlights how Apple's leadership prioritized a customer-centric approach, challenging traditional assumptions and emphasizing creative freedom within the company's HR practices. This disruptive approach allowed Apple to remain highly adaptive and responsive to market changes, securing its place as an industry leader.

Similarly, Tesla's CEO, Elon Musk, employs disruptive leadership by fostering a culture of innovation and risk-taking. Tesla's rapid development cycles and commitment to sustainability demonstrate how disruptive leadership can push boundaries in product development and operational processes. Musk's approach illustrates that disruptive leadership involves continuous questioning of established norms and a relentless pursuit of improvement (Wu, 2020). This approach not only drives innovation but reshapes HR practices, as HR teams are tasked with cultivating talent and structures that support rapid scaling and creative problem-solving.

Amazon's approach also illustrates the principles of disruptive leadership. Jeff Bezos's leadership emphasized customer obsession, long-term thinking, and willingness to experiment, all of which align with disruptive leadership characteristics. Ly (2023) argues that Amazon's disruptive leadership extends to its HR strategies, with an emphasis on hiring and retaining top talent who align with the company's high-performance culture. Through its HR practices, Amazon exemplifies how disruptive leadership can transform a workforce to meet the demands of a competitive, evolving market.

In summary, disruptive leadership encourages an organizational culture that embraces change, agility, and continuous improvement. Leaders who adopt this approach leverage digital tools and prioritize innovation across functions, including HR, to build resilient, adaptive organizations prepared for the digital economy. This model challenges traditional hierarchical structures, emphasizing a more flexible and responsive approach to talent management that is essential for organizations competing in today's rapidly changing landscape.

2.3 Digital Transformation in Human Resources

Digital transformation in human resources (HR) refers to the adoption of technology and digital processes aimed at streamlining HR functions, enhancing employee engagement, and expanding HR's strategic contributions to organizational goals. As digital transformation reshapes industries, HR departments are increasingly leveraging tools such as artificial intelligence (AI), data analytics, and cloud computing to modernize recruitment, training, performance management, and employee engagement processes (Occean & Stephan, 2017). This technological shift enables HR to function as a strategic partner within organizations, fostering a more efficient and adaptive workforce capable of meeting the demands of an increasingly digital economy.

In technology manufacturing, where operational efficiency and innovation are critical, digital transformation is reshaping HR's role. Traditional, administrative HR tasks are increasingly automated, allowing HR professionals to focus on more strategic functions. Salesforce (2023) notes that digital HR practices, such as automated recruitment systems and AI-based employee engagement analytics, allow HR teams to make data-driven decisions that align with business objectives. AI-powered systems can, for instance, predict turnover rates, measure employee engagement, and optimize recruitment processes by matching candidates more effectively with roles (Uzialko, 2024). These tools enable HR departments to become more responsive to organizational needs, allowing them to play a crucial role in aligning talent management with strategic priorities.

Schwertner (2017) emphasizes that digital transformation in HR not only modernizes administrative tasks but also enables HR to contribute significantly to organizational agility and competitiveness. By utilizing data-driven insights, HR departments can better understand workforce dynamics and proactively address issues like employee satisfaction, retention, and productivity. This aligns with the findings of Wahdaniah et al. (2023), who argue that digital transformation equips HR leaders with the tools to drive organizational change by streamlining processes and supporting leadership in implementing innovative strategies. Through digital tools, HR can thus shift from a transactional role to one that supports a culture of continuous improvement and innovation.

The use of digital tools within HR extends beyond operational efficiency to impact employee experience and engagement. With cloud-based HR platforms and mobile applications, employees have real-time access to HR services, including benefits, performance feedback, and professional

development resources. This level of access fosters a more engaging and transparent work environment, as employees feel more empowered to manage their career paths and receive feedback (Rotich, 2015). In a digitally transformed HR environment, employee engagement is supported through personalized experiences, such as AI-driven learning platforms that recommend courses and resources based on individual career goals.

In addition to enhancing employee engagement, digital transformation in HR is driving the adoption of data analytics to support strategic decision-making. Big data analytics allow HR professionals to monitor workforce trends, forecast hiring needs, and evaluate the effectiveness of HR policies. This data-driven approach enables organizations to make informed decisions, adapt to market changes, and optimize resource allocation within HR. The ability to analyze and interpret HR data provides leaders with actionable insights, helping to build an agile workforce capable of meeting evolving business requirements (Schwertner, 2017).

Despite its benefits, digital transformation in HR also presents challenges, such as employee resistance to new technologies and the need for ongoing training. Wahdaniah et al. (2023) note that implementing digital solutions often requires a cultural shift within the organization, as employees and managers must embrace new tools and workflows. To address this, HR leaders must adopt effective change management strategies, fostering an environment that supports digital literacy and continuous learning.

In summary, digital transformation in HR is revolutionizing how HR departments operate, shifting from traditional administrative roles to more strategic, value-driven functions. Through the adoption of digital tools, HR professionals are better equipped to align their functions with organizational objectives, foster a more engaged workforce, and provide data-driven insights for strategic planning. As HR continues to evolve in response to technological advancements, organizations that fully integrate digital HR practices will be better positioned to succeed in an increasingly competitive, technology-driven marketplace.

2.4 Disruptive Leadership in the Context of Technology Manufacturing

In technology manufacturing, where rapid technological advancement and innovation are essential, disruptive leadership is critical for guiding HR practices toward digital readiness. This sector is characterized by high-paced changes in product development cycles, an intense focus on

efficiency, and the constant need to adapt to evolving market demands. Disruptive leaders in technology manufacturing drive HR to shift from traditional, administrative functions toward strategic roles that actively support and promote digital transformation within the organization. By adopting a disruptive leadership style, leaders encourage HR to foster a culture of agility, continuous learning, and resilience, enabling organizations to remain competitive in a fast-paced industry (Coykendall et al., 2024).

Disruptive leadership in technology manufacturing involves an experimental approach to management. Leaders often encourage teams to pilot new technologies and test innovative practices to streamline operations and improve productivity. Agustian et al. (2023) emphasize that this experimental mindset is essential in an industry where flexibility and adaptability are paramount. By encouraging teams to embrace change and accept calculated risks, disruptive leaders foster an environment where HR can support ongoing transformation initiatives, ensuring the workforce is equipped with the necessary skills and tools to handle technological advancements.

HR in technology manufacturing also plays a vital role in talent acquisition and development, especially in building a digitally skilled workforce. Given the technical nature of this sector, HR departments need to attract and retain individuals who are not only skilled in their areas but also adaptable to evolving technologies. Coykendall et al. (2024) note that disruptive leadership in HR emphasizes recruiting talent with a strong digital acumen and an openness to learning. Disruptive leaders encourage HR to establish training programs that develop digital competencies, equipping employees with the skills required for the sector's dynamic needs.

Furthermore, disruptive leaders in technology manufacturing view HR as an integral partner in driving innovation. Traditionally, HR has been seen as a supporting function, but disruptive leadership repositions HR as a strategic partner. HR departments are increasingly tasked with designing initiatives that align with organizational goals, promoting collaboration, and instilling a mindset of continuous improvement across all levels. According to Joshi et al. (2018), when HR departments take on a proactive role, they can foster a culture that encourages employee engagement, collaboration, and agility—all essential traits for sustaining a competitive advantage in technology manufacturing.

Disruptive leadership also involves creating an adaptable organizational structure that can support innovation. Traditional hierarchical structures are often replaced by more flexible, cross-functional teams that can respond quickly to technological changes and market shifts. Ly (2023) discusses how disruptive leadership emphasizes flatter organizational structures that promote faster decision making and innovation, which is essential in technology manufacturing where the ability to pivot quickly is a competitive advantage. HR, under disruptive leadership, is tasked with supporting these structural changes by implementing flexible work arrangements and promoting cross-departmental collaboration.

Additionally, technology manufacturing requires a strong emphasis on resilience, as the industry is often susceptible to external pressures, such as supply chain disruptions and regulatory changes. Disruptive leaders work with HR to build a resilient workforce that can withstand these challenges and maintain productivity. For example, by implementing digital tools for remote collaboration and employee engagement, HR can support employees in adapting to new work environments or operational disruptions (Wu, 2020). This resilience-oriented approach allows companies in the technology manufacturing sector to maintain stability even in uncertain market conditions.

In summary, disruptive leadership in technology manufacturing redefines the role of HR from a purely administrative function to a strategic, innovation-oriented partner. By adopting an experimental, agile, and resilience-focused approach, disruptive leaders enable HR to drive digital readiness, foster adaptability, and support continuous learning within the workforce. These changes empower technology manufacturing firms to navigate the complexities of a rapidly evolving industry landscape, ensuring they remain competitive and agile.

2.5 Human Resources Transformation through Digital Tools

Historically, human resources (HR) departments were primarily administrative, managing functions like recruitment, payroll, and compliance. With the onset of digital transformation, however, HR has evolved into a more strategic role, as digital tools have automated many routine tasks, enabling HR professionals to focus on initiatives that add value at an organizational level (Rotich, 2015). By automating administrative processes, digital tools have enabled HR to play a more proactive role in supporting growth, aligning HR strategies with organizational goals, and enhancing workforce productivity (Joshi et al., 2018).

The shift toward a data-driven, strategic HR function is particularly significant in technology manufacturing, where the ability to adapt quickly to market demands is essential. Uzialko (2024) notes that current trends involve HR's adoption of artificial intelligence (AI)-powered talent management systems and data analytics for workforce planning. These systems facilitate datadriven decision-making, allowing HR to predict future hiring needs, optimize recruitment processes, and monitor employee performance more effectively. By integrating AI into recruitment, for example, HR can match candidates to roles more accurately based on skill requirements and cultural fit, improving retention and reducing turnover rates. Data analytics tools, meanwhile, offer insights into workforce dynamics, enabling HR to address potential issues proactively and ensure alignment with broader business objectives.

In addition to operational efficiencies, digital tools in HR have transformed employee engagement and interaction. Cloud-based HR platforms and mobile applications provide employees with real-time access to HR services, such as benefits information, performance feedback, and learning resources. This accessibility fosters a more transparent and inclusive work environment, where employees feel empowered to manage aspects of their employment directly (Rotich, 2015). Pophal (n.d.) highlights that digital tools facilitate a more personalized employee experience, with AI-driven learning platforms recommending courses and development resources tailored to each employee's career aspirations. This personalized approach supports continuous skill development and enhances job satisfaction.

Digital transformation also enables HR to optimize resource allocation within the organization. In technology manufacturing, where competition for skilled talent is high, digital tools allow HR to identify critical skill gaps, evaluate workforce competencies, and allocate resources to address these needs efficiently. According to Schwertner (2017), digital transformation enhances HR's ability to manage talent effectively, providing a competitive edge in industries that rely on highly skilled workforces. Workforce analytics, for instance, can forecast the skills required for future projects, guiding HR in designing training programs or recruitment strategies that align with anticipated demands.

Furthermore, digital tools enable HR to measure and improve productivity. AI-powered performance management systems can track employee contributions, assess productivity trends, and identify areas for improvement. By leveraging these insights, HR can implement targeted interventions, such as coaching or upskilling initiatives, to optimize performance. Uzialko (2024)

asserts that such tools enable a more objective and data-informed approach to performance management, reducing biases and fostering a culture of accountability within the organization.

The transformation of HR through digital tools also facilitates a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. In technology manufacturing, disruptive and rapid innovation cycles require a workforce that can adapt to new processes, tools, and technologies. Digital tools equip HR with the resources needed to foster a learning-centric environment, where employees are encouraged to develop new skills and embrace change. As Rotich (2015) notes, digital transformation enables HR to support a resilient workforce, prepared to meet the challenges of a rapidly evolving industry.

In conclusion, the integration of digital tools into HR has fundamentally redefined its role within organizations, especially in technology manufacturing. By automating administrative tasks, facilitating data-driven decisions, enhancing employee engagement, and supporting strategic workforce planning, digital transformation has positioned HR as a strategic partner in achieving organizational success. These advancements are crucial for technology manufacturing firms, which must remain agile and adaptable to maintain a competitive advantage in a fast-paced, innovationdriven landscape.

2.6 Case Studies in Disruptive Leadership and Digital HR Transformation

Several case studies from both global and Southeast Asian companies illustrate the successful integration of disruptive leadership and digital HR transformation. These examples highlight how companies leverage these strategies to build agile, innovative workplaces that are adaptable to rapidly changing market demands. For technology manufacturing and other high-paced industries, these cases offer valuable insights into how digital HR practices and disruptive leadership can drive employee engagement, productivity, and retention.

One example is Tesla, where Elon Musk’s disruptive leadership style has significantly influenced HR practices, encouraging an environment focused on creativity, flexibility, and fast-paced innovation. Musk’s hands-on leadership and willingness to challenge industry norms push HR to recruit and develop employees who are resilient, adaptable, and eager to embrace change. Tesla’s HR policies prioritize agility and rapid problem-solving, which are aligned with Musk’s mission to push technological boundaries (Wu, 2020). Tesla’s cross-functional collaboration and open

communication channels empower employees to innovate, aligning HR with the company's fast-paced, disruptive objectives (Liu, 2022).

In Southeast Asia, Grab has emerged as a leader in disruptive innovation and HR transformation. Originally a ride-hailing service, Grab expanded into diverse services such as financial technology and delivery. Grab's HR practices reflect a disruptive leadership style, emphasizing adaptability and digital literacy. The company actively uses digital HR platforms to manage talent acquisition and development, integrating AI to match candidates with roles and using data analytics to assess workforce needs. Grab's leadership encourages a culture of innovation, and HR supports this by creating opportunities for employees to upskill in emerging areas like AI and fintech (Tan, 2020). This alignment between leadership and HR has enabled Grab to rapidly scale across Southeast Asia while maintaining a culture of resilience and adaptability.

Amazon serves as another notable example of disruptive leadership in HR. Jeff Bezos's customer-centric approach has fostered a high-performance culture supported by digital HR initiatives. Amazon's "Career Choice" program, for instance, provides funding for employees to pursue in-demand skills, aligning with Bezos's vision of continuous employee development and adaptability (Stone, 2013). Through data-driven talent management systems, Amazon's HR department ensures that recruitment, retention, and workforce planning align with Amazon's rapid growth objectives. This strategic integration of HR and leadership has made Amazon's workforce more resilient and capable of supporting the company's innovative culture.

In technology manufacturing, Intel in Malaysia illustrates the benefits of combining digital HR practices with disruptive leadership. Intel Malaysia's leadership has emphasized digital readiness and inclusivity, supporting a diverse workforce that aligns with the company's innovation goals (Intel Newsroom, 2018). Intel's HR has implemented digital tools for real-time performance feedback and career development, which help employees build skills that match the company's evolving needs. Intel's focus on inclusivity and digital tools reflects its commitment to fostering a culture of continuous learning, a critical component of disruptive leadership in HR.

GE (General Electric) provides an example of disruptive leadership and digital HR transformation within a traditional industrial company. Under former CEO Jeff Immelt, GE focused on digital solutions and data-driven processes, transforming its HR practices to align with its new digital strategy. GE's HR department introduced reskilling programs to prepare employees for digitally

focused roles, demonstrating how HR can support large-scale organizational transformation. The digital talent management system enabled HR to align employee skills with GE's evolving business goals, showing how even established companies can adopt disruptive leadership and digital HR to stay competitive (Immelt, 2017).

In Southeast Asia, Sea Group, the parent company of Shopee, exemplifies disruptive leadership within digital HR transformation. Sea Group's leadership emphasizes agility and digital competency, crucial for the rapidly growing e-commerce and gaming sectors. Sea Group's HR department utilizes digital platforms for workforce planning and performance management, ensuring that its HR practices align with the fast-paced nature of its industry. Digital HR tools support Sea Group's high-growth strategy, and the company's leadership encourages innovation across all levels, empowering employees to adapt quickly to new projects and technologies (Chia, 2021).

These case studies demonstrate how companies in both global and Southeast Asian markets successfully integrate disruptive leadership and digital HR transformation to create agile, innovation-oriented workplaces. Occean and Stephan (2017) emphasize that companies that adopt digital HR practices within a disruptive leadership framework experience higher employee engagement, improved productivity, and stronger retention rates, particularly in industries that require adaptability and rapid response to market changes. For technology manufacturing companies, these examples offer a roadmap for using disruptive leadership to build resilient, high-performing teams capable of sustaining growth and innovation in today's fast-paced economy.

2.7 Challenges in Implementing Disruptive Leadership and Digital Transformation in HR

While disruptive leadership and digital transformation offer significant benefits, they also present substantial challenges, particularly in the context of Southeast Asia. According to Ly (2023), obstacles such as resistance to change, technological limitations, and the need for considerable investment in digital infrastructure can hinder the successful implementation of digital transformation initiatives. HR departments must address these challenges while balancing the adoption of new digital tools with maintaining employee engagement and preventing disruptions to established workflows.

A key challenge is resistance to change from employees, especially in organizations with traditional hierarchies and established processes. Many employees may feel threatened by disruptive leadership styles that emphasize rapid change, flexibility, and innovation. For instance, in Southeast Asia, where cultural norms may emphasize stability and respect for hierarchy, employees may initially struggle to adapt to a leadership style that encourages risk-taking and challenges conventional practices. Needle (2021) highlights that in such environments, HR departments need to foster a culture of empowerment and support, where employees feel secure in adopting new tools and adapting to new workflows.

An example of successfully addressing resistance can be seen in Singapore-based DBS Bank, where disruptive leadership has driven a digital transformation across all functions, including HR. DBS faced significant resistance at the start, as employees were not accustomed to the agile working methods and digital tools introduced by leadership. To address this, DBS developed an extensive change management strategy that included digital literacy training and regular workshops to encourage a culture of continuous learning and adaptability (Ghosh, 2019). DBS's HR team focused on fostering an innovative mindset within the workforce by implementing engagement programs that allowed employees to share feedback and ideas. This strategy not only improved acceptance but also fostered a more digitally adept workforce, proving essential for the bank's ongoing transformation.

Technological readiness also poses a considerable challenge in Southeast Asia, where some companies face constraints related to digital literacy and access to advanced technology. As Agustian et al. (2023) observe, a lack of digital skills among employees can delay the adoption of digital HR practices, as significant time and resources are required to ensure the workforce is adequately prepared. This is particularly relevant in Southeast Asia, where digital literacy levels can vary widely within and across countries. For example, Indonesia's GoTo Group, which includes Gojek and Tokopedia, encountered barriers related to workforce digital skills when expanding their digital services. The HR team at GoTo addressed this by establishing digital training programs that aligned with the company's goals, ensuring that employees were well-prepared to support its rapid growth and adapt to technological advancements (Pramudana, 2022).

Another significant barrier is technological infrastructure and resource investment. Implementing digital HR systems often requires extensive investment in infrastructure, such as cloud computing, data analytics, and cybersecurity systems, to ensure a secure and efficient transition to digital processes (Schwertner, 2017). For smaller organizations in Southeast Asia, where budgets for technological investments may be limited, this challenge can be particularly daunting. Even larger companies may struggle to integrate new digital tools with legacy systems, making it difficult to realize the full potential of digital HR. For example, Thailand's PTT Group, an energy company, faced integration issues when implementing new HR analytics tools to enhance employee engagement and performance management. To overcome this, PTT Group allocated resources for system upgrades and collaborated with external technology consultants to ensure seamless integration, which minimized disruptions and maximized efficiency in HR operations (Jongcheveevat, 2021).

Balancing digital transformation with employee engagement is another critical issue. While digital tools can streamline HR functions, they also risk alienating employees if not implemented thoughtfully. Uzialko (2024) notes that employees may feel disconnected or undervalued if they perceive that technology is replacing meaningful human interactions, which can impact engagement and morale. In Southeast Asia, where cultural emphasis is often placed on personal relationships within the workplace, this issue can be more pronounced. Malaysia's AirAsia faced this challenge during its digital transformation when it introduced an AI-powered performance management system. The HR team observed initial disengagement among employees who felt that automated processes were impersonal. To address this, AirAsia's HR department combined the AI system with regular check-ins and feedback sessions with managers, ensuring that digital tools complemented rather than replaced human interaction in HR processes (Lim, 2020).

In addition, the fast pace and demands of disruptive leadership can create stress and burnout, as employees and managers alike are required to adopt new methods of working quickly. Ly (2023) explains that disruptive leadership, while fostering innovation, can also lead to increased pressure for employees who are accustomed to predictable workflows and stability. In such cases, HR must implement effective change management strategies that include transparent communication, time for adjustment, and support resources to help employees navigate these changes. For example, Singapore Telecommunications Limited (Singtel) encountered initial pushback from employees during its shift towards a more agile, digitally driven work environment. Singtel's HR department responded by creating a support system that included coaching, regular updates, and open forums

for employees to voice concerns. This approach helped Singtel ease the transition, making the disruptive leadership model more sustainable for employees and enhancing overall adaptability (Choo, 2022).

Lastly, data privacy and security are critical challenges associated with digital transformation in HR. As HR departments collect and analyze large amounts of employee data, concerns about privacy, data security, and ethical use arise. This challenge is amplified in Southeast Asia, where data protection laws and regulations vary by country. According to Pophal (n.d.), employees may be concerned about how their data is used and monitored, which could affect trust and willingness to engage with digital HR systems. For instance, Grab has faced data privacy challenges as it has expanded its services across Southeast Asia. The HR department has implemented strict data governance policies and transparent communication strategies to assure employees that their data is handled securely and ethically (Tan, 2021).

In summary, while disruptive leadership and digital transformation hold the potential to drive significant improvements in HR functions, they also come with a unique set of challenges in Southeast Asia. Addressing resistance to change, preparing the workforce for digital adoption, investing in infrastructure, maintaining employee engagement, managing the pace of change, and ensuring data privacy are crucial to successful implementation. By proactively addressing these challenges, HR departments in Southeast Asia can better navigate the complexities of digital transformation and disruptive leadership, fostering a resilient and adaptable workforce.

2.8 Conclusion

The literature emphasizes that disruptive leadership and digital transformation are pivotal for the evolution of HR practices in the technology manufacturing industry, where rapid advancements, intense competition, and the need for operational efficiency demand agile and innovative approaches. Leaders who adopt a disruptive mindset and prioritize digital readiness enable their organizations to navigate the complexities of a technology-driven landscape, fostering resilience, adaptability, and sustainable growth (Ly, 2023). In this context, HR is not merely an administrative function but a strategic partner that can drive transformation, promote agility, and cultivate a workforce equipped to meet the demands of the digital age.

Disruptive leadership in technology manufacturing aligns HR with organizational goals, emphasizing continuous learning, innovation, and the strategic use of technology to optimize talent management and engagement. This leadership style encourages HR to go beyond traditional roles, actively participating in building a culture of innovation where digital tools support dynamic workforce planning, skills development, and performance management (Agustian et al., 2023). The HR function in this industry, driven by disruptive leadership, must anticipate and respond to changing business needs, promoting a culture that values adaptability, creativity, and digital literacy as foundational skills for all employees (Schwertner, 2017).

Digital transformation, particularly within HR, enables technology manufacturing companies to enhance workforce productivity, streamline operations, and improve employee engagement by leveraging data analytics, AI-powered systems, and cloud-based solutions. The automation of routine HR tasks, such as payroll and recruitment, allows HR professionals to focus on strategic initiatives that align with broader business objectives. For example, AI-based talent management systems in tech manufacturing companies facilitate data-driven decisions, ensuring that talent acquisition, development, and retention processes support organizational growth and adaptability in a rapidly changing market (Uzialko, 2024).

Moreover, the integration of digital tools in HR allows technology manufacturing firms to remain competitive by enabling more precise workforce forecasting, optimized resource allocation, and tailored employee experiences. The data-driven insights generated by these tools provide leaders with real-time information on employee performance, engagement, and skill gaps, allowing HR to proactively address workforce needs and support continuous learning initiatives (Rotich, 2015). In a sector characterized by constant technological advancements, digital transformation in HR ensures that companies can maintain a competitive edge by aligning talent strategies with the pace of industry innovation.

The challenges of implementing disruptive leadership and digital transformation in HR—such as resistance to change, technological limitations, and the need for substantial investment in digital infrastructure—are significant but not insurmountable. Successful adoption requires a strong focus on change management, workforce digital literacy, and strategic investments in technology to create an adaptable, innovative culture. Technology manufacturing companies that address these challenges effectively can cultivate a workforce that is resilient and digitally proficient, thus enhancing their capability to innovate and compete in a fast-evolving market (Pophal, n.d.).

In conclusion, disruptive leadership and digital transformation are not just advantageous but essential for HR in the technology manufacturing industry. Leaders who cultivate a disruptive mindset and prioritize digital transformation enable HR to become a catalyst for organizational agility, innovation, and growth. This chapter provides a foundation for analyzing these concepts in practice, offering insights into how technology manufacturing companies can leverage disruptive leadership and digital transformation to build resilient HR functions. As the subsequent chapters explore real-world applications, this study aims to contribute to a practical model that technology manufacturing companies can adopt to navigate the complexities of the digital age successfully.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used to explore the impact of disruptive leadership and digital transformation within human resources (HR) in technology manufacturing companies in Southeast Asia. Given the complex and dynamic nature of leadership and digital transformation, a qualitative case study approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of these phenomena within real-world contexts. This chapter covers the research design, data collection methods, data presentation, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study research design to explore how disruptive leadership and digital transformation are implemented within human resources (HR) practices in the technology manufacturing sector in Southeast Asia. A qualitative case study approach allows for an in-depth examination of these concepts within real-world organizational contexts, enabling the researcher to gather detailed insights into the complexities and nuances of corporate transformations. According to Yin (2018), case study research is particularly valuable when examining contemporary phenomena over which the researcher has limited control, as it facilitates a thorough understanding of intricate processes within their natural settings. This approach is well-suited for studying disruptive leadership and digital transformation, as these are ongoing, dynamic changes that occur within the organizational framework, influenced by various internal and external factors.

In selecting cases for this study, five technology manufacturing companies in Southeast Asia were identified, each of which has actively pursued digital transformation initiatives and adopted aspects of disruptive leadership within their HR departments. The selection criteria included companies with distinct organizational structures, ranging from traditional hierarchical models to more agile, cross-functional setups, providing a comprehensive view of how different organizational environments adapt to disruption and digitization. This diversity enables the researcher to gather

insights across a range of contexts, enhancing the transferability of findings and illuminating commonalities and differences in how technology manufacturing firms approach HR transformation. By focusing on technology manufacturing companies, the study also situates the analysis within an industry where digital transformation and adaptability are critical for competitive success, thus emphasizing the relevance of disruptive leadership in HR.

The case study design employed in this research involves multiple sources of data, including semi-structured interviews with HR leaders, organizational documents, and archival records. These data sources enable triangulation, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings by cross-verifying insights across different types of evidence (Stake, 1995). Through this multifaceted approach, the study seeks to provide a rich and holistic understanding of how disruptive leadership and digital transformation intersect within HR, contributing to a deeper understanding of the challenges, strategies, and outcomes associated with these transformations in the technology manufacturing sector.

3.3 Data Collection

Data collection for this study utilized a multi-method approach, incorporating semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and observational data. This multi-source approach ensured data triangulation, enhancing the reliability and validity of findings by cross-verifying insights across distinct sources (Patton, 2002). Each data collection method was carefully designed and implemented to capture nuanced insights into disruptive leadership and digital transformation within HR practices across the selected technology manufacturing companies in Southeast Asia.

1. Semi-Structured Interviews

• Participants: Interviews were conducted with HR managers, team leaders, and senior executives directly involved in overseeing digital transformation initiatives within HR at each company. A total of 15 participants across the five companies participated, representing diverse perspectives on digital transformation and disruptive leadership.

• Interview Guide: An interview guide was developed to facilitate a consistent yet flexible approach to data collection. Questions focused on participants' perceptions of disruptive

leadership, challenges and opportunities in implementing digital transformation, and specific HR practices associated with these concepts. Sample questions included:

- "How has disruptive leadership influenced HR practices in your organization?"

- "What are the key digital transformation strategies you've adopted in HR?"

- "What challenges have you faced in aligning HR practices with digital initiatives?" The interview guide allowed for follow-up questions and probing, enabling participants to elaborate on their experiences and provide deeper insights (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

- Duration and Recording: Each interview lasted between 45 minutes to one hour, and all were audio-recorded with the informed consent of participants. This recording process ensured accuracy in transcription and analysis and allowed for the detailed capturing of responses to support in-depth thematic analysis.

2. Document Analysis

- Sources: Document analysis was conducted to review relevant organizational documents, such as internal reports, strategic HR planning documents, digital transformation policy documents, and performance metrics. This analysis provided a contextual background and insights into each company's strategic approach to leadership and digital transformation within HR, revealing organizational priorities, goals, and metrics of success.

- Data Extraction and Coding: Documents were analyzed using a coding framework focused on themes such as digital transformation strategies, leadership initiatives, HR practices, and challenges in implementing change. The NVivo software tool was used for coding, which enabled systematic extraction and organization of data relevant to the study's objectives. This data offered a comprehensive view of each company's policies and practices, enhancing the contextual understanding of the findings (Bowen, 2009).

3. Observational Data

- Setting: Observational data was gathered through on-site visits to two of the five companies where access was granted for in-person observation. Observations focused on routine HR activities, leadership interactions, team dynamics, and the practical implementation of digital

transformation within HR practices. This direct observation provided insight into the day-to-day operationalization of disruptive leadership and digital transformation in real-time settings.

• Field Notes and Analysis: Detailed field notes were taken during observations, capturing specific leadership behaviors, interactions within HR teams, and responses to digital initiatives. Field notes were later transcribed and coded alongside interview and document data to allow for triangulation and thematic analysis. Observational data provided valuable insights into the practical, real-time aspects of digital transformation, reinforcing findings from the interviews and documents and contributing to a holistic understanding of HR practices in action (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011).

This triangulated approach to data collection provided a comprehensive foundation for analyzing disruptive leadership and digital transformation within HR in the technology manufacturing sector in Southeast Asia, supporting the development of grounded, well-rounded findings.

3.4 Data Presentation

The collected data are presented in a structured, case-by-case format to provide a comprehensive analysis of findings from each of the five companies. This format allows for detailed examination of how each organization uniquely navigates digital transformation within HR, influenced by disruptive leadership styles. Each case summary includes the following sections:

1. Background Information

This section provides a brief yet informative overview of each company, detailing its size, industry sector, and organizational structure, which are critical for understanding the context of digital transformation within HR. The section highlights each company's specific digital transformation objectives, including the expected outcomes and the motivations driving their investment in digital HR solutions. For example, Company A, a medium-sized technology manufacturer, aims to enhance recruitment efficiency through AI, while Company D, a larger enterprise, focuses on data analytics to improve workforce planning. By summarizing these aspects, readers gain insight into each company's unique context and priorities, shaping how digital strategies are implemented in HR.

2. Leadership and Digital Transformation Practices in HR

This section explores the role of disruptive leadership in driving digital HR transformation in each company, focusing on the specific behaviors and strategies employed by leaders to advance digital initiatives. It captures details of innovative practices, such as Company B's implementation of a cloud-based HR system that supports remote work and fosters transparency, and Company C's development of a mobile HR app for employee engagement. This section highlights leaders' approach to encouraging digital adoption, including how they set expectations, model digital competencies, and cultivate a culture of continuous learning and adaptability. By examining these practices, the data illustrate how disruptive leadership not only drives but also sustains digital transformation in HR by embedding a mindset open to change and innovation.

3. Challenges and Opportunities

This section identifies both the obstacles faced and the benefits realized by each company in implementing digital HR practices. Challenges include resistance to change, digital literacy gaps, and financial constraints, which often require careful management by leaders. For example, Company E encountered initial resistance among employees wary of AI integration due to concerns about job displacement, necessitating extensive communication and training initiatives. Additionally, Company D had to address data literacy limitations within the HR team to fully leverage big data analytics for workforce optimization. Despite these challenges, the data reveal considerable opportunities created through disruptive leadership, such as enhanced employee engagement, operational efficiency, and strategic agility in HR. Company C's mobile HR app empowered employees by providing easier access to career development resources, aligning with the company's goals of improving retention and satisfaction. In Company B, the cloud system allowed for flexible work arrangements, fostering a more adaptable workforce that can respond to dynamic business needs. This section illustrates how disruptive leadership not only mitigates challenges but also capitalizes on digital transformation to create a forward-thinking HR environment.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method allowed for a structured examination of the data, facilitating a deeper understanding of the impact of disruptive leadership and digital transformation in HR. The

thematic analysis process consisted of three main stages: coding, theme development, and synthesis across cases. Each step was conducted systematically to ensure coherence, relevance, and validity of the findings.

1. Coding Process

The coding process began with detailed examination of interview transcripts, document analysis, and field observation notes. Initial codes were generated by identifying recurring phrases, concepts, and patterns in the data, which were then systematically categorized into broader themes. For instance, codes related to technological advancement and employee empowerment were grouped under the theme "Innovation in HR," while challenges related to resource limitations and resistance to change were categorized as "Leadership Challenges." Additionally, codes that highlighted organizational efforts to adapt to new technologies were placed within the theme of "Digital Readiness" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This coding allowed the researcher to capture nuanced insights into how disruptive leadership fosters or constrains digital HR transformation across different contexts. Data from each company were coded independently to maintain the distinctiveness of each case, then cross-referenced to identify commonalities and differences across cases. This approach ensured that both unique company-specific insights and broader trends could be captured, allowing a balanced view of the similarities and variations in leadership styles and digital strategies across the sample (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). For example, while Company A's codes revealed a strong focus on AI integration in recruitment, Company B's coding emphasized cloud systems to enhance remote work capabilities, reflecting diverse approaches to achieving digital readiness in HR.

2. Theme Development

Themes were developed iteratively, involving multiple rounds of code refinement to ensure that each theme was coherent, distinct, and relevant to the research questions. Central themes, such as "Agility in HR Operations" and "Strategic Digital Adoption," emerged as pivotal for understanding how disruptive leadership shapes HR transformation. For instance, the theme "Agility in HR Operations" encapsulated HR practices that allowed companies to rapidly adapt to technological advancements and changing business demands, while "Strategic Digital Adoption" highlighted the purposeful integration of digital tools to achieve long-term HR goals. Throughout the iterative theme development process, data were continuously revisited to validate theme relevance and ensure alignment with Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines for thematic analysis.

This recursive process also allowed for the refinement of sub-themes, such as "Employee Empowerment" under "Innovation in HR," capturing the detailed ways in which digital tools facilitated greater autonomy and engagement among employees. Such theme refinement was essential for accurately reflecting the complexities of disruptive leadership in digital transformation contexts.

3. Synthesis Across Cases

To develop a holistic understanding, findings from each case were compared and contrasted to identify unique and overlapping patterns in leadership practices and digital transformation strategies. This cross-case synthesis enabled the development of a comprehensive model illustrating the dynamic interactions between disruptive leadership and digital HR strategies. For example, themes like "Agility in HR Operations" and "Leadership Challenges" were found to intersect across all companies, albeit with varying manifestations based on organizational size, industry context, and leadership styles. Through this synthesis, insights were gained into how digital strategies under disruptive leadership not only shape HR practices but also support broader organizational objectives. For instance, while both Company C and Company D employed mobile applications to improve employee engagement, their differing leadership approaches—one emphasizing autonomy and the other promoting a fail-fast culture—highlighted distinct paths to achieving HR transformation goals. This synthesis also allowed for the identification of overarching challenges, such as resistance to digital tools, and opportunities, such as enhanced data-driven decision-making, which disruptive leadership brought to the forefront in HR settings (Bowen, 2009; Needle, 2021).

This analytical approach provided a structured and rich interpretation of how disruptive leadership interacts with digital transformation in HR, ultimately generating a robust model that could inform future studies in technology manufacturing contexts and beyond.

3.6 Case Studies in Southeast Asia

This study examines five Southeast Asian technology manufacturing companies that have embraced digital HR transformation and disruptive leadership practices. These case studies illustrate how each organization approached digitalization in HR, shaped by distinct leadership

styles. Each case study provides insights into the strategies, challenges, and benefits associated with implementing disruptive leadership in a digital HR context.

1. Company A: Singapore

Company A's digitalization strategy focused primarily on automating recruitment and performance evaluations, which allowed the HR department to streamline operations and reduce manual workload. Under a disruptive leadership framework, the company fostered an environment of continuous learning and adaptability. This leadership approach encouraged employees to embrace new digital tools with minimal resistance, and ongoing training programs were implemented to enhance digital skills. The leadership style at Company A emphasized innovation and agility, enabling the HR department to quickly adapt to industry changes and maintain a competitive edge in talent acquisition. By focusing on continuous learning, the organization ensured that employees were prepared to leverage evolving HR technologies effectively (Document Analysis Raw Data, 2023).

2. Company B: Malaysia

At Company B, digital HR transformation was driven by the adoption of AI-enhanced recruitment and training systems, which helped automate key processes and optimize resource allocation within HR. Led by a disruptive CEO, who emphasized transparency and agility, the organization adopted a leadership style that encouraged open communication and quick decision-making. This approach enabled HR to respond rapidly to changes in workforce needs and supported a more decentralized and agile HR structure. For example, the AI-driven recruitment system facilitated faster candidate screening, while AI-enhanced training allowed for personalized learning paths tailored to employee needs. Company B's approach not only improved efficiency but also fostered a culture of innovation and accountability within HR, aligning with the CEO's vision of a dynamic, responsive organization (Field Notes from Observations, 2023).

3. Company C: Thailand

Digital HR practices at Company C were centered around enhancing employee engagement through a custom mobile application. This app allowed employees to access HR resources, training modules, and career development tools, which improved accessibility and engagement. Disruptive leadership within HR promoted employee autonomy, empowering team members to take control of their professional growth and interact more dynamically with HR functions. This emphasis on

autonomy also allowed the HR department to pivot quickly in response to market demands and internal innovations, reflecting the adaptability and resilience encouraged by disruptive leadership. Additionally, the leadership's support for this digital tool fostered a culture where innovation was rewarded, thereby reinforcing HR's role in driving organizational transformation and enhancing employee satisfaction (Raw Data from Semi-Structured Interviews, 2023).

4. Company D: Vietnam

Company D's HR strategy focused on leveraging big data analytics to optimize workforce planning and decision-making processes. The organization's disruptive leadership approach promoted a "fail-fast" culture, empowering HR teams to experiment with new methods and technologies without fear of repercussions if initial attempts were unsuccessful. This culture of experimentation allowed HR to test data-driven insights in real-time, improving resource allocation, retention, and overall workforce effectiveness. The "fail-fast" approach enabled HR professionals to learn from mistakes and continuously refine their strategies, fostering an environment that encouraged resilience and agility. This leadership approach supported a high level of adaptability within HR, enabling the organization to respond effectively to changing workforce trends and operational demands (Chapter 4 Findings, 2023).

5. Company E: Philippines

At Company E, HR transformation was anchored in the integration of cloud-based HR systems, which facilitated remote work, data storage, and seamless communication within the organization. The leader, who prioritized resilience and flexibility, adopted a disruptive approach by promoting a data-driven decision-making culture. This emphasis on data allowed HR to align its practices with broader organizational goals, leading to increased productivity and a streamlined workflow. Employees were encouraged to develop digital competencies, and training sessions focused on cloud technology and data analytics were regularly held to enhance digital skills. Through this cloud-based infrastructure, Company E's HR was able to support a flexible workforce that could respond to organizational needs and external changes more effectively, showcasing how disruptive leadership can build a sustainable, adaptable HR structure (Document Analysis Raw Data, 2023).

Each case study illustrates unique approaches to digital transformation within HR, highlighting how disruptive leadership fosters innovation, resilience, and agility in adapting to technological advancements. By examining these cases, this study provides a comparative understanding of the

various strategies and outcomes associated with digital HR transformation across Southeast Asian technology manufacturing companies, offering valuable insights into how disruptive leadership can shape and support successful digital integration in HR.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ensuring ethical rigor was paramount in conducting this study, given the sensitive nature of the data related to leadership practices and digital HR transformations. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they were fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. This process involved providing participants with a clear, written description of the study's aims, data collection methods, and confidentiality safeguards, aligning with ethical standards in qualitative research (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Confidentiality was carefully maintained to protect the identities of both individuals and companies involved. Company names were anonymized and replaced with generic identifiers (e.g., Company A, B, etc.), and specific participant roles or quotes were generalized to avoid unintended identification. This approach was particularly important in cases where participants shared sensitive information about internal HR practices, challenges, or personal reflections on leadership, as confidentiality helped mitigate any potential risks to their professional reputations or organizational standing.

Data security was another critical consideration. All collected data, including interview transcripts, observation notes, and document analysis files, were stored on a secure, password-protected system accessible only to the researcher. To further safeguard confidentiality, physical copies of any sensitive documents were securely stored and destroyed following data analysis. Digital data were encrypted, and backup files were regularly updated to prevent unauthorized access or data loss. These steps ensured compliance with data protection standards and reinforced participant trust in the confidentiality of the research process (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011).

Additionally, the study adhered to ethical guidelines for handling researcher bias and ensuring respectful interactions. Recognizing that the researcher's presence could influence participant responses, efforts were made to maintain an objective stance and ask neutral, open-ended questions. Reflexivity was practiced throughout the research process, with the researcher actively

reflecting on personal biases and adjusting interactions as necessary to preserve data integrity and authenticity.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter detailed the methodological framework utilized to investigate the interplay between disruptive leadership and digital transformation within HR departments across five technology manufacturing companies in Southeast Asia. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the study collected comprehensive data through semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and field observations, enabling a thorough exploration of HR transformations driven by disruptive leadership and digital strategies.

The data collection and analysis methods applied—guided by thematic analysis—allowed for a rich interpretation of the nuances of digital HR transformation in response to innovative leadership practices. Each step of the methodology, from data coding to theme development, was meticulously designed to capture both individual and cross-case insights, offering a robust foundation for understanding how leadership and digital initiatives intersect to shape HR practices in this dynamic region. The ethical considerations implemented further strengthened the study's integrity, ensuring that participant confidentiality and data security were upheld throughout the research process.

The following chapter will discuss the key findings derived from this analysis, presenting a synthesis of themes and offering insights into the implications of disruptive leadership and digital transformation in HR for technology manufacturing firms in Southeast Asia.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the qualitative data collected across five Southeast Asian technology manufacturing companies. The data were analyzed to identify key themes, patterns, and insights related to the role of disruptive leadership and digital transformation in HR. The findings are organized by case study, followed by a cross-case thematic analysis that highlights common themes and unique variations. These results provide valuable insights into how disruptive leadership styles and digital transformation strategies impact HR practices in technology manufacturing firms.

4.2 Data Analysis and Findings

This section presents detailed case studies from five Southeast Asian technology manufacturing companies, highlighting the role of disruptive leadership and digital transformation in shaping HR practices. Through semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and field observations, each case illustrates the unique strategies, benefits, and challenges encountered by these companies.

Case Study Summaries

Case Study 1: Company A (Singapore)

Company A's HR digitalization strategy is rooted in agility, focusing primarily on AI-driven recruitment and real-time employee engagement. Led by a CEO committed to innovation, the company implemented an AI platform that automated candidate selection, reducing hiring time by 30% and increasing employee adaptability (Document Analysis Raw Data, 2023). Field observations noted initial employee caution toward AI technology, which gradually shifted as the CEO fostered open communication and actively engaged with employees to ease concerns (Field Notes from Observations, 2023). This approach created a culture of continuous learning, enabling

employees to quickly adapt to new processes and aligning with the organization's agility-focused objectives.

Case Study 2: Company B (Malaysia)

Company B embraced cloud-based HR systems under disruptive leadership that emphasized transparency and operational efficiency. The HR Director conducted training sessions addressing security concerns and promoting collaboration between remote and on-site employees (Field Notes from Observations, 2023). Employees valued the flexibility afforded by the system, which allowed seamless remote work and access to resources, contributing to increased satisfaction and productivity. The leadership's focus on open communication helped secure employee buy-in and fostered a decentralized, digitally engaged workforce. Document analysis confirmed that the shift to cloud technology improved workflow and employee satisfaction, aligning with the CEO's vision for a resilient HR structure adaptable to evolving organizational needs (Document Analysis Raw Data, 2023).

Case Study 3: Company C (Thailand)

Company C's digital HR transformation centers on a custom mobile application, aimed at enhancing employee engagement. The leadership's disruptive approach promoted autonomy and innovation, encouraging HR teams to explore new digital solutions. The app enabled employees to manage HR functions independently, access development resources, and receive performance feedback, resulting in higher satisfaction and lower attrition (Raw Data from Semi-Structured Interviews, 2023). Field notes showed enthusiastic employee engagement with the app, facilitated by HR's commitment to continuous feedback and improvement (Field Notes from Observations, 2023).

Case Study 4: Company D (Vietnam)

Company D utilized big data analytics for workforce planning, enabling data-driven HR decisions that optimized resource allocation. A "fail-fast" culture promoted by the HR head allowed teams to experiment with analytics tools, learn from mistakes, and refine their approaches, leading to a 20% improvement in resource efficiency (Document Analysis Raw Data, 2023). Field observations recorded initial employee hesitation with data analytics, which dissipated over time as continuous training fostered a resilient, adaptable culture (Field Notes from Observations, 2023).

Case Study 5: Company E (Philippines)

Company E integrated AI-driven analytics and cloud-based solutions, with a focus on data-driven decision-making and workforce flexibility. Disruptive leadership emphasized resilience, promoting digital upskilling to align HR practices with organizational goals (Findings Summary, 2023). Initially, employees expressed concerns over job security related to AI, but targeted skills development programs and transparent communication alleviated these fears and improved morale (Raw Data from Semi-Structured Interviews, 2023). This strategy has enhanced productivity and talent retention, strengthening HR's role as a strategic partner in the organization.

Cross-Case Thematic Analysis

1. Digital Readiness and Skill Development

Disruptive leadership across the companies fostered digital readiness through continuous skill development. For instance, Company A's leadership prioritized AI training, equipping employees to use new technology confidently (Findings Summary, 2023). Similarly, Company E's workshops on AI and data analytics aligned HR skills with the company's long-term digital goals, underscoring the critical role leaders play in establishing a culture of proactive learning essential for digital transformation.

2. Employee Empowerment through Technology

Digital tools empowered employees by providing autonomy and control over their development. For example, Company C's mobile app allowed employees to access HR resources independently, promoting engagement and satisfaction (Document Analysis Raw Data, 2023). Company A's AI-driven recruitment system further empowered hiring managers to streamline candidate selection, reflecting how disruptive leadership encourages employee autonomy through innovative HR solutions.

3. Strategic Agility in HR

Disruptive leadership in these companies fostered an agile HR strategy, enabling swift adaptation to dynamic business needs. Company B's cloud-based platform supported flexible work arrangements, essential for an agile, decentralized workforce. Company D's "fail-fast" culture reinforced this adaptability by encouraging HR teams to experiment with data-driven strategies

without fear of failure (Field Notes from Observations, 2023). This agile approach exemplifies how disruptive leadership aligns HR with the responsiveness required in fast-paced industries.

4. Enhanced Data-Driven Decision-Making

Data analytics and AI played key roles in data-driven HR decision-making. Company D utilized workforce analytics for strategic resource planning, while Company E's AI-enabled talent management improved real-time decision-making. Disruptive leaders in these cases fostered environments where data-informed practices are highly valued, reinforcing HR's strategic contribution to organizational objectives (Raw Data from Semi-Structured Interviews, 2023).

5. Challenges of Disruptive Leadership and Digital Transformation

While beneficial, companies faced challenges like resistance to change, digital literacy gaps, and financial constraints. Company E encountered initial resistance due to job security concerns related to AI, necessitating change management and skills development initiatives (Field Notes from Observations, 2023) . At Company B, financial limitations impacted the scope of digital transformation, highlighting the importance of strategic resource allocation in achieving sustainable digital HR initiatives (Document Analysis Raw Data, 2023).

These findings highlight the complexities of aligning digital transformation with disruptive leadership values. By examining these themes, the study demonstrates both the opportunities and challenges of implementing digital strategies to enhance HR practices across Southeast Asian technology manufacturing firms.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The findings from the case studies reveal that disruptive leadership plays a crucial role in driving digital transformation within HR practices in Southeast Asian technology manufacturing companies. This discussion explores these results in relation to current literature, focusing on the themes of digital readiness, employee empowerment, strategic agility, data-driven decision-making, and the challenges of implementing disruptive leadership.

Digital Readiness as a Prerequisite for Transformation

Digital readiness emerged as an essential component across all case studies, as leaders promoted digital skill development to support HR transformation strategies. For instance, Company A's structured AI training ensured employees were not only comfortable but also proficient in new technologies, facilitating smoother adoption and minimizing resistance (Field Notes from Observations, 2023). This finding supports Schwertner's (2017) assertion that organizations with a proactive approach to digital readiness are better prepared to manage and implement transformative changes. Schwertner emphasizes that digital readiness enables organizations to be agile and adaptable in the face of technological advancements, which is evident in the case studies, as companies like Company E implemented continuous digital upskilling to align with evolving HR demands.

Employee Empowerment and Engagement

The empowerment of employees through digital solutions aligns with the principles of disruptive leadership, which emphasizes innovation and autonomy. Babbitt and Edmonds (n.d.) discuss how leaders who prioritize empowerment foster a more engaged workforce, ultimately boosting productivity and satisfaction. The case studies demonstrate how employee empowerment through digital tools, such as Company C's mobile HR app, enabled greater control over professional development, improving morale and retention (Raw Data from Semi-Structured Interviews, 2023). This approach allowed employees to interact with HR functions independently, enhancing engagement and contributing to a stronger sense of ownership. These findings are consistent with the literature, as employee empowerment is often associated with improved work environments, leading to higher satisfaction and retention (Babbitt & Edmonds, n.d.).

Strategic Agility and Adaptability

Disruptive leadership fostered strategic agility within the HR departments of the companies studied, allowing HR teams to adapt to shifting organizational needs and market conditions. This theme aligns with Ly's (2023) research, which highlights digital transformation as a driver of organizational flexibility. For example, Company B's adoption of cloud-based HR systems enabled flexible work arrangements, an agile practice that empowered HR to respond quickly to evolving workforce needs (Document Analysis Raw Data, 2023). Similarly, Company D's "fail-fast" culture encouraged experimentation, fostering a resilient HR team capable of adapting swiftly to new technologies (Field Notes from Observations, 2023). This flexibility is crucial in fast-paced

industries, as it enables HR to remain aligned with organizational goals while accommodating workforce dynamics.

Data-Driven Decision-Making in HR

The integration of data analytics into HR practices, particularly in Company D's use of big data for workforce planning, underscores the importance of data-driven decision-making. Joshi et al. (2018) argue that data analytics is essential for optimizing HR functions, allowing organizations to make informed staffing and resource allocation decisions. Disruptive leadership encourages data-informed practices, as evidenced in Company E, where leaders emphasized evidence-based decision-making to guide talent management and other critical HR functions (Findings Summary, 2023). By fostering an environment that values data-driven insights, disruptive leaders enhance the strategic role of HR within the organization, contributing to improved planning and operational efficiency.

Challenges and Limitations of Disruptive Leadership

While disruptive leadership facilitated digital transformation, the case studies also revealed challenges, particularly resistance to change and digital literacy gaps. Company E faced initial employee resistance to AI integration, driven by concerns over job security and technological unfamiliarity (Field Notes from Observations, 2023). Needle (2021) discusses similar obstacles, highlighting the need for effective change management to address potential resistance. Leaders in the case studies employed strategies such as transparent communication and targeted training programs to ease the transition, reflecting Needle's assertion that continuous leadership support is essential for fostering digital adoption. Additionally, financial limitations were cited in Company B as a barrier, underscoring the need for careful planning and resource allocation to sustain digital transformation initiatives (Document Analysis Raw Data, 2023).

4.4 Summary

The findings underscore the significant impact of disruptive leadership and digital transformation on HR practices in Southeast Asian technology manufacturing companies. Digital readiness, employee empowerment, strategic agility, and data-driven decision-making emerged as central themes, contributing to successful HR transformation. However, challenges such as resistance to change, digital literacy, and financial constraints remain critical barriers that organizations must

address. These findings form a foundation for the recommendations presented in the concluding chapter, which will explore strategies for integrating disruptive leadership and digital transformation to optimize HR practices and align with organizational goals.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter synthesizes the key findings from previous chapters, addressing the research questions and providing a comprehensive conclusion on the role of disruptive leadership and digital transformation in HR practices for technology manufacturing companies in Southeast Asia. This chapter contextualizes the findings within existing literature and practical implications, discusses limitations, and suggests future research directions.

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

The analysis of Southeast Asian technology manufacturing companies highlighted several significant themes that underscore the critical role of disruptive leadership in driving digital HR transformation. These key findings provide insight into the factors influencing HR's ability to adapt to a digital environment and the challenges that accompany this transition.

1. Digital Readiness and Skill Development

Leaders across the companies emphasized continuous digital skill development, recognizing that digital readiness is foundational to effective HR transformation. This aligns with Schwertner (2017), who argues that digital readiness is essential for organizations undergoing transformation. In practice, digital readiness involved structured digital upskilling programs and workshops aimed at preparing employees for evolving technological requirements. For instance, Company A's focus on AI training prepared employees for advanced recruitment platforms, enabling smoother integration of digital tools within HR processes. Such readiness not only equipped employees with the technical skills necessary but also fostered a mindset receptive to continuous learning and technological adaptation.

2. Employee Empowerment and Engagement through Digital Tools

Digital transformation within HR enabled employees to engage more proactively with HR functions, as digital tools provided greater autonomy and accessibility. This empowerment aligns with Babbitt and Edmonds' (n.d.) findings on the role of employee-centered digital tools in enhancing engagement. For example, Company C's mobile HR application allowed employees to access training modules and HR services directly, resulting in higher engagement and satisfaction. Employee empowerment was also evident in Company A's AI-driven recruitment platform, which provided hiring managers with autonomy in candidate selection. These cases illustrate how digital tools not only streamline HR operations but also foster a sense of ownership and agency among employees, leading to higher morale and retention.

3. Strategic Agility

Disruptive leadership across the companies fostered strategic agility within HR, enabling teams to adapt quickly to changing business demands. This supports Ly's (2023) assertion that agility is essential in competitive digital landscapes. Leaders promoted agile practices by encouraging flexible work arrangements and a culture of rapid adaptation to new tools and processes. For example, Company B's cloud-based HR system allowed for seamless remote collaboration, empowering HR to pivot in response to dynamic workforce needs. Similarly, Company D's "fail-fast" approach to big data analytics encouraged teams to experiment and iterate without fear of failure. This agility not only enhanced HR's responsiveness but also positioned it as a strategic partner capable of supporting broader organizational goals.

4. Data-Driven Decision-Making

The integration of data analytics within HR practices enabled companies to make informed, evidence-based decisions, reflecting Joshi et al.'s (2018) findings on the efficiency benefits of data in HR. For instance, Company D utilized big data analytics to optimize workforce planning, resulting in better resource allocation and talent management. Similarly, Company E's AI-driven analytics for talent management allowed HR to identify high-potential employees and streamline development pathways. By fostering a data-driven culture, disruptive leadership ensured that HR functions were aligned with strategic objectives, leading to more accurate and objective decision-making processes. This theme underscores the transformative potential of data analytics in HR, supporting the department's role as a key contributor to organizational strategy.

5. Challenges with Resistance to Change

Despite the benefits of digital transformation, leaders faced considerable challenges with employee resistance to change, particularly among those uncomfortable with digital tools. This reinforces Needle's (2021) view on the importance of managing organizational culture during digital transformation. For example, employees at Company E initially expressed concerns about AI integration, fearing it could lead to job displacement. Leaders addressed this resistance through targeted change management strategies, including transparent communication and skills development programs. Financial constraints, as noted in Company B, also posed challenges, necessitating careful resource planning to sustain digital initiatives. These challenges highlight the need for strong change management practices to foster employee buy-in and ensure a smooth digital transition within HR.

This summary illustrates that disruptive leadership, when aligned with a strategic digital vision, can effectively drive HR transformation in technology manufacturing companies. However, achieving this transformation requires attention to both technological readiness and the human factors that support or hinder change. The findings provide a foundation for the recommendations outlined in the next chapter, which will explore strategies to further optimize the integration of disruptive leadership and digital transformation in HR practices.

5.3 Interpretation of Findings

The findings reveal how disruptive leadership influences digital transformation within HR departments, particularly in technology manufacturing companies in Southeast Asia. Each theme sheds light on the specific ways in which digital readiness, employee empowerment, strategic agility, data-driven decision-making, and cultural challenges intersect to shape HR's adaptation to new technologies.

5.3.1 Digital Readiness and Transformation

Digital readiness emerged as a fundamental requirement for successful HR transformation. Leaders facilitated various skill development initiatives, from workshops on AI-driven recruitment systems to cloud technology training sessions, to enhance digital competence across their workforces.

These efforts align with Agustian et al. (2023), who argue that digital transformation demands a robust foundation in digital literacy to support organizational change. By prioritizing continuous learning and adaptability, leaders set the stage for a smooth transition to digital tools, creating a workforce capable of responding effectively to technological advancements. This approach underscores the importance of proactive digital skill-building as a means to ensure HR departments can seamlessly integrate digital tools, contributing to the overall readiness and resilience of the organization.

5.3.2 Empowering Employees Through Digital Engagement

The adoption of digital solutions in HR empowered employees to access HR services independently, fostering increased engagement and autonomy. Digital tools such as Company C's mobile app for employee engagement allowed individuals to manage aspects of their professional development and access HR resources without intermediary support. This empowerment reflects Uzialko's (2024) findings that digital HR tools enhance employee satisfaction by enabling more personalized and accessible experiences. Disruptive leadership in this context promoted an environment of autonomy, allowing employees to take control of their engagement with HR services, which in turn boosted morale and productivity. This shift toward digital engagement highlights how empowering employees through technology can lead to improved job satisfaction and reduce attrition, aligning with the principles of disruptive leadership that emphasize innovation and self-direction.

5.3.3 Strategic Agility and Adaptability in HR

The findings show that disruptive leadership fosters strategic agility within HR, enabling it to respond swiftly to changing market conditions and organizational demands. In the fast-paced environment of technology manufacturing, this agility is essential for maintaining competitiveness and relevance. The cases illustrate how leaders promoted flexibility by encouraging cloud-based HR platforms and a fail-fast culture that allowed experimentation with new tools and approaches. This finding aligns with Occean and Stephan's (2017) view that digital transformation enhances HR's ability to align with broader business strategies, reinforcing HR's role as a strategic partner in organizational growth. Strategic agility allows HR teams to implement flexible work

arrangements, manage a remote workforce, and quickly adjust to shifting business needs, highlighting the value of adaptability in industries where technological change is constant.

5.3.4 Data-Driven Decision-Making in HR

Data analytics emerged as a cornerstone of HR's transformation, with companies using workforce data to optimize planning, hiring, and retention strategies. Company D's use of big data analytics for workforce planning is a clear example of how data-driven insights can enhance HR effectiveness. This approach supports Joshi et al. (2018), who emphasize that data enables HR to make informed, evidence-based decisions that are critical to achieving strategic objectives. By embedding data-driven practices within HR, leaders not only increased operational efficiency but also created a culture where evidence-based decision-making is valued. This approach aligns with the disruptive leadership emphasis on informed decision-making, where leaders rely on data insights to guide HR strategy, ensuring that decisions are timely, objective, and impactful.

5.3.5 Challenges and Cultural Resistance

Despite the positive outcomes associated with digital transformation, a recurring challenge was resistance to disruptive leadership and digital adoption among employees. This hesitancy, observed across the case studies, often stemmed from concerns about job displacement, data security, and unfamiliarity with digital tools. Company E, for example, faced initial resistance from employees uncomfortable with AI-driven talent management, fearing potential job losses. This resistance aligns with Needle's (2021) research on the cultural obstacles inherent in adopting new practices, where managing resistance requires careful attention to organizational culture. Leaders addressed these challenges through strategic change management, focusing on transparent communication, skills training, and active involvement of employees in the transition process. These strategies helped mitigate resistance, allowing employees to feel supported as they navigated the digital shift. This theme underscores the need for thoughtful change management practices to foster an open and adaptive culture, which is essential for the success of digital transformation initiatives.

5.4 Practical Implications

The findings from this study present several practical implications for HR departments in technology manufacturing companies and beyond, particularly those seeking to integrate disruptive leadership and digital transformation into their practices. These implications underscore the need for strategic investments in digital literacy, employee empowerment, agility, and change management within HR functions.

5.4.1 Fostering Digital Literacy and Readiness

Digital literacy and readiness must be central to HR strategy. As digital transformation accelerates, HR departments should actively promote digital competence as a core skill across the workforce. This includes implementing regular training programs on emerging technologies and fostering a culture where continuous learning is valued. By equipping employees with the skills needed to navigate new digital tools, HR can create a workforce that is not only adaptable but also capable of driving transformation. Moreover, digital readiness strengthens HR's role in supporting disruptive leadership, enabling leaders to implement innovative solutions without facing significant digital knowledge gaps.

5.4.2 Enabling Employee Empowerment and Engagement

Empowering employees through digital HR tools can significantly boost engagement and satisfaction. By implementing solutions that allow employees to independently access and manage HR functions, companies can enhance the employee experience and foster autonomy. Personalized digital tools—such as mobile applications for managing benefits, career development, or feedback—enable employees to interact with HR services on their own terms, promoting engagement and alignment with personal career goals. This empowerment aligns with the principles of disruptive leadership, which values employee autonomy and innovation, allowing HR to function as a more engaging and employee-centered department. Furthermore, empowered employees tend to exhibit higher morale and productivity, contributing to a more dynamic and resilient organizational culture.

5.4.3 Enhancing Strategic Agility for Resilience

Strategic agility within HR is crucial in today's rapidly changing business environment. HR departments should adopt flexible processes that allow them to respond swiftly to shifting workforce demands and market conditions. This agility not only enables HR to manage unforeseen disruptions but also enhances its role as a proactive partner capable of anticipating organizational needs. By fostering agility, HR can support a more resilient organizational structure, helping the company navigate changes such as talent shortages, new regulatory requirements, or technological disruptions. Agile HR departments can adjust hiring strategies, implement remote work solutions, and reorganize workforce structures quickly, thus supporting a sustained competitive advantage.

5.4.4 Addressing Resistance with Effective Change Management

As digital transformation progresses, resistance to change remains a persistent challenge. HR leaders should implement robust change management strategies that involve open communication, comprehensive training, and ongoing support to facilitate smoother transitions. Proactive engagement with employees, transparent explanations of the benefits of digital tools, and addressing concerns directly can mitigate resistance. Additionally, continuous support and feedback loops can help maintain momentum in digital adoption, ensuring that employees feel supported throughout the transformation. Effective change management fosters a culture of adaptability, making it easier for the organization to implement future innovations without significant resistance.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

This study offers valuable insights but has several limitations that should be addressed in future research.

1. Regional Focus:

This study focused exclusively on companies in Southeast Asia, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Differences in cultural, economic, and regulatory contexts could influence how disruptive leadership and digital transformation are implemented in HR. Future

studies should consider exploring companies in diverse geographic and cultural settings to broaden the applicability of these findings.

2. Qualitative Methodology:

The qualitative case study approach provided detailed insights into the experiences and perspectives of the companies studied but lacks the statistical generalizability of quantitative research. Future studies could incorporate quantitative methods, such as surveys or large-scale data analysis, to validate and expand on these findings.

3. Scope of Disruptive Leadership:

This study focused on the impact of disruptive leadership within HR departments. While this scope provides valuable insights into HR practices, it limits understanding of how disruptive leadership affects other departments, such as R&D, marketing, or production. Future research could examine the influence of disruptive leadership across multiple functions to develop a holistic view of its impact on organizational performance.

5.6 Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the limitations and findings, the following recommendations for future research are proposed:

1. Exploring Disruptive Leadership in Other Functions:

Future research should explore the impact of disruptive leadership on other organizational functions, such as R&D, marketing, and production. This broader approach would provide a more comprehensive view of how disruptive leadership influences overall organizational effectiveness and innovation.

2. Cross-Cultural Comparison:

Conducting similar studies in regions outside Southeast Asia would offer insights into how cultural factors affect the adoption and effectiveness of disruptive leadership and digital transformation in HR. A cross-cultural perspective could reveal unique challenges and opportunities, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of these practices.

3. Employee Perspectives on Disruptive Leadership:

Further research could focus on employees' experiences with disruptive leadership, exploring their perceptions, challenges, and the impact on engagement and job satisfaction. Understanding how employees respond to disruptive leadership could help organizations refine their strategies to improve alignment and reduce resistance.

5.7 Conclusion

This study examined the impact of disruptive leadership and digital transformation on HR practices within technology manufacturing companies in Southeast Asia. The findings indicate that disruptive leadership, supported by a foundation of digital readiness and strategic agility, enables HR departments to serve as proactive partners in organizational transformation. Digital tools that enhance employee engagement, promote data-driven decision-making, and foster adaptability play a critical role in modern HR functions.

The research contributes to the growing literature on contemporary HR practices, offering a framework for companies navigating digital transformation. By prioritizing digital literacy, empowering employees, enhancing agility, and implementing effective change management, HR leaders can harness the potential of disruptive leadership to drive sustainable success. This study concludes by underscoring the need for a balanced approach to disruptive leadership, where a focus on innovation is complemented by a strong commitment to digital readiness and employee support, allowing organizations to remain competitive and resilient in an increasingly digital business landscape.

Findings Summary

1. Digital Readiness and Skill Development

Leaders across all five companies emphasized the critical importance of digital readiness, promoting continuous digital skill development to align HR capabilities with organizational transformation goals. Disruptive leadership played a key role in fostering a culture of adaptability and proactive learning among employees. For instance, Company A's leadership prioritized AI-focused upskilling, which was integral to the HR team's readiness to effectively leverage AI in recruitment processes. Company A's internal HR Strategy Report further highlights the role of AI

in enhancing hiring efficiency and decision-making accuracy (Document Analysis Raw Data, 2023). Observational data from Company E supports this, noting how the organization prioritized digital skills, especially within AI-driven talent management workshops, to ensure alignment with the company's broader goals for a digitally competent workforce (Field Notes from Observations, 2023). Schwertner (2017) also asserts that digital readiness is foundational for transformation, facilitating smoother adoption of new technologies across organizations.

2. Employee Empowerment through Technology

Disruptive leadership strategies promoted employee empowerment through digital solutions, granting employees greater autonomy in managing their career development and HR interactions. For instance, Company C's mobile HR application, detailed in both the Mobile Application Development Report and interview responses, enabled employees to access training resources and manage development activities on their devices, significantly enhancing engagement and satisfaction (Document Analysis Raw Data, 2023; Raw Data from Semi-Structured Interviews, 2023). Observational data also showed that employees at Company C responded positively to this application, with engagement rates reportedly high during its launch phase (Field Notes from Observations, 2023). Similarly, Company B's cloud-based HR system facilitated remote access to HR resources, which interviewees highlighted as particularly beneficial for fostering a transparent and flexible workplace culture (Chapter 4 Findings, 2023). This aligns with Babbitt and Edmonds (n.d.), who discuss how digital tools that empower employees can drive engagement and foster autonomy within a workforce.

3. Strategic Agility in HR

Disruptive leadership in these companies fostered a more agile HR strategy, allowing HR departments to respond quickly to business demands. Company B's cloud-based HR platform, for instance, supported flexible work arrangements and enhanced the HR team's ability to adapt to shifting workforce needs. This approach was strongly evident in the Document Analysis data, which indicated a close alignment between HR practices and the company's broader strategic goals (Document Analysis Raw Data, 2023). In Company D, the "fail-fast" approach to big data analytics encouraged experimentation and resilience, fostering a culture that embraced calculated risk-taking to drive innovation (Field Notes from Observations, 2023). This reflects Ly's (2023) findings that digital transformation can enhance organizational flexibility, with disruptive leadership acting as a catalyst for continuous adaptation within HR departments.

4. Enhanced Data-Driven Decision-Making

Data analytics emerged as a crucial element in HR transformation, with leaders advocating for evidence-based decision-making. In Company D, big data analytics enabled HR to optimize workforce planning, making informed staffing and resource allocation decisions. This approach, as described in the Workforce Optimization Report and corroborated by interview findings, helped align HR objectives with strategic business outcomes (Document Analysis Raw Data, 2023; Raw Data from Semi-Structured Interviews, 2023). Company E's integration of AI-driven analytics in talent management further underscores this trend, enabling HR to identify high-potential employees and streamline talent development. Participants noted that real-time data availability facilitated objective and rapid decision-making processes, critical in disruptive leadership settings where data-informed actions drive organizational success (Chapter 4 Findings, 2023). This aligns with Joshi et al. (2018), who emphasize data's role in optimizing HR functions and strategic decision-making.

5. Challenges of Disruptive Leadership and Digital Transformation

While these advancements were beneficial, several challenges emerged during implementation. Resistance to change was common, especially among employees unaccustomed to digital tools. In Company E, employees initially expressed discomfort with AI-driven talent management, fearing potential job redundancies. Leaders responded by implementing incremental training programs to build digital confidence (Field Notes from Observations, 2023; Raw Data from Semi -Structured Interviews, 2023). Financial constraints were also noted in Company B, where cloud infrastructure maintenance posed budgetary challenges. Disruptive leadership's focus on digital transformation demands careful resource allocation to ensure sustainable implementation (Document Analysis Raw Data, 2023). These findings align with Needle (2021), who notes that financial and cultural obstacles are common in disruptive leadership, underscoring the need for effective change management strategies.

Appendix: Raw Data from Semi-Structured Interviews

1. Participants:

- Roles: HR managers, team leaders, and senior executives involved in digital transformation.
- Companies: 5 Southeast Asian technology manufacturing firms.

- Total Participants: 15, with representation across multiple leadership and management levels.

2. Interview Guide:

- Focus Areas:
  - Disruptive leadership's influence on HR practices.
  - Digital transformation strategies adopted in HR.
  - Challenges in aligning HR with digital initiatives.
- Sample Questions:
  - "How has disruptive leadership influenced HR practices in your organization?"
  - "What are the key digital transformation strategies you've adopted in HR?"
  - "What challenges have you faced in aligning HR practices with digital initiatives?"
- Methodology: Questions were open-ended, allowing for probing to gain deeper insights (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

3. Duration and Recording:

- Interview Length: 45 minutes to 1 hour per interview.
- Recording: All interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent to ensure accuracy in transcription and thematic analysis.

4. Findings Summary (for cross-reference with main analysis):

Digital Readiness and Skill Development

- Across all five companies, digital readiness emerged as a crucial foundation for HR transformation. Leaders emphasized the need for continuous digital skill development among employees to keep pace with technological advancements and to foster an adaptable, forward-thinking workforce. Companies A and E, for example, implemented structured digital upskilling programs designed to prepare employees for a tech-driven HR environment. Participants noted that disruptive leadership encouraged a proactive approach to learning, ensuring employees were not

only comfortable with digital tools but also confident in their ability to adopt new technologies as they emerge.

• Moreover, interviewees highlighted that developing digital skills was not limited to technical knowledge alone; soft skills such as adaptability, problem-solving, and digital communication were also integral. Company C, specifically, combined traditional training with hands-on digital projects, allowing employees to directly experience the tools and platforms essential to the company's HR functions.

Employee Empowerment through Technology

• Each company implemented digital solutions aimed at enhancing employee engagement and empowerment, aligning with disruptive leadership values that encourage autonomy and innovation. For instance, Company C's development of a custom mobile application transformed how employees interacted with HR, providing a self-service tool for accessing HR resources, training materials, and career development paths. Interviewees from Company A emphasized that the AI-driven recruitment platform empowered hiring managers by streamlining candidate selection, giving them more control over recruitment decisions.

• Participants reported that these technological solutions not only made HR processes more accessible but also fostered a greater sense of ownership among employees regarding their career progression and skills development. In Company B, interviewees cited that cloud-based systems improved transparency and communication, allowing remote employees to stay connected and feel part of a cohesive workforce despite physical distances.

Strategic Agility in HR

• Disruptive leadership contributed to a more agile HR strategy across all companies, enabling the HR departments to swiftly adapt to changes in business needs and industry demands. Company B's implementation of a cloud-based HR platform provided a flexible infrastructure that supported varied work arrangements, which became especially valuable in response to shifting work patterns. Leaders in Company D encouraged HR teams to adopt an agile mindset, allowing them to experiment with different technologies and quickly discard those that proved ineffective. This "fail-fast" culture promoted by disruptive leadership was instrumental in accelerating HR's responsiveness and adaptability.

• Participants also noted that strategic agility within HR allowed the department to play a more active role in guiding organizational change. Company E's senior executives highlighted that the agility fostered by disruptive leadership enabled HR to align its practices with broader business strategies, thereby enhancing HR's role as a strategic partner in the organization.

Enhanced Data-Driven Decision-Making

• Data analytics became a cornerstone of HR's digital transformation, with leaders across companies advocating for evidence-based decision-making as a standard practice. Company D stood out in its use of big data analytics for workforce planning, allowing HR to anticipate staffing needs, allocate resources efficiently, and make more informed hiring and promotion decisions. Interviewees described how this data-centric approach helped the organization optimize its workforce and improve long-term planning.

• Similarly, Company E adopted AI-driven analytics in talent management, which enabled HR to analyze employee performance data and identify high-potential talent for leadership roles. Participants from several companies noted that the availability of accurate, real-time data enabled faster and more objective decision-making, which was particularly valuable in high-stakes HR scenarios such as recruitment, retention, and succession planning.

Challenges of Disruptive Leadership and Digital Transformation

• While the positive impacts of disruptive leadership on HR digital transformation were evident, interviewees reported several challenges. One of the most common issues was resistance to change, particularly among employees who were either unfamiliar or uncomfortable with digital tools. Company E faced significant initial pushback when implementing new digital platforms, with employees expressing concerns about data privacy and job security. To address this, leaders prioritized change management efforts, including transparent communication and incremental training programs to ease the transition.

• Another challenge mentioned by participants was the financial investment required to implement and sustain digital HR initiatives. Company B, for instance, found that maintaining cloud infrastructure demanded ongoing resources, which occasionally strained the budget allocated to HR. Leaders acknowledged the need for careful financial planning and resource allocation to support these transformations sustainably.

Appendix: Document Analysis Raw Data

Company A (Singapore)

- Documents Analyzed:

  - Internal HR Strategy Report 2022: Focused on agility and digital readiness, highlighting the adoption of an AI-driven recruitment platform to streamline hiring processes.

  - Digital Transformation Policy 2021: Emphasized continuous learning and digital literacy as central goals for workforce development.

  - Performance Metrics Report 2023: Demonstrated a reduction in hiring time by 30% since adopting AI tools, and noted increased employee adaptability ratings.

- Key Themes Identified:

  - Digital Transformation Strategies: Emphasis on AI and data analytics for recruitment.

  - Leadership Initiatives: Top leadership encouraged open innovation and skill-building in AI, framing digital transformation as an organizational imperative.

  - Challenges: Concerns regarding AI's impact on traditional HR roles, as noted in quarterly review discussions.

Company B (Malaysia)

- Documents Analyzed:

  - Cloud-Based HR Implementation Document 2022: Detailed the adoption of a cloud platform for remote collaboration and decentralized HR operations.

  - Employee Feedback Summary 2023: Showed positive reception toward flexible work arrangements enabled by cloud tools.

  - HR Strategy and Operations Manual 2021: Outlined a disruptive leadership framework emphasizing transparency and adaptability.

- Key Themes Identified:

• HR Practices and Digital Agility: Shifted to cloud systems to enhance operational efficiency and remote access.

• Leadership Focus: Promoted open communication to address employee concerns about transitioning to digital systems.

• Challenges: Initial challenges with data security and digital literacy addressed through continuous training programs.

Company C (Thailand)

• Documents Analyzed:

• Mobile Application Development Report 2022: Focused on creating a mobile HR app for employee engagement and professional development.

• Employee Satisfaction Survey 2023: Highlighted an increase in employee satisfaction due to easy access to HR resources and development tools.

• HR Digital Transformation Plan 2021: Emphasized a mobile-first approach to streamline HR accessibility and empower employees.

• Key Themes Identified:

• Digital Transformation Strategies: Mobile app to improve HR accessibility and employee engagement.

• Leadership Initiatives: Disruptive leadership promoted autonomy and encouraged employees to engage directly with HR services.

• Challenges: Encountered initial resistance from employees hesitant about mobile integration; addressed through introductory workshops.

Company D (Vietnam)

• Documents Analyzed:

• Big Data Analytics Implementation Guide 2021: Discussed using big data for workforce planning, focusing on predictive analytics to optimize HR resources.

• “Fail-Fast” Culture Report 2022: Encouraged experimentation within HR processes to adapt quickly to market shifts.

• Workforce Optimization Report 2023: Detailed how data-driven decision-making led to a 20% improvement in resource allocation efficiency.

• Key Themes Identified:

• Data-Driven Decision-Making: Emphasis on big data analytics for strategic workforce planning.

• Leadership Initiatives: Disruptive leadership introduced a fail-fast culture, supporting innovation and adaptability.

• Challenges: Limited initial data literacy within HR required additional training for effective big data use.

Company E (Philippines)

• Documents Analyzed:

• AI-Driven Talent Management Strategy 2021: Focused on leveraging AI to improve talent acquisition and employee retention.

• Digital Skills Development Program Outline 2022: Described initiatives to upskill employees in digital competencies aligned with transformation goals.

• Employee Retention Analysis 2023: Reported improved retention rates attributed to AI-driven engagement and professional development support.

• Key Themes Identified:

• Digital Skills Development: AI integration to foster a digitally adept workforce.

• Leadership and Flexibility: Disruptive leadership prioritized flexible work arrangements and upskilling.

• Challenges: Initial resistance to AI integration in HR was mitigated through comprehensive digital skills training.

This appendix data shows a cross-sectional view of each company's approach to digital transformation, capturing specific strategies, leadership initiatives, and challenges. These details enhance the contextual understanding of how disruptive leadership and digital transformation impact HR practices across various organizational settings.

Field Notes from Observations: Companies A to E

Company A (Singapore)

Observation Date: 03/12/2023

Location: HR Department, Headquarters

Activities Observed: AI-driven Recruitment Platform Demonstration, Leadership Interaction with HR Team

- Leadership Interaction: The CEO introduced an AI-driven recruitment system, promoting it as a tool to enhance HR efficiency. Observing the CEO's interaction, they encouraged team members to view the system as a resource to streamline processes. This open approach reflects disruptive leadership, as the CEO invited feedback and actively addressed concerns.

- Employee Engagement: Team members were initially cautious, expressing uncertainty over how the AI would affect hiring decisions. The CEO's emphasis on transparency helped ease tension, and HR managers noted the AI's potential to improve talent acquisition speed and precision.

- Practical Aspects: Field note: Observed growing engagement as team members recognized the tool's efficiency in candidate screening. The CEO's encouragement and open-door policy to discuss technology facilitated a collaborative, adaptive atmosphere.

Company B (Malaysia)

Observation Date: 05/12/2023

Location: Remote and Cloud-Based HR Platform Training Session

Activities Observed: Training on Cloud-Based HR Systems, Team Collaboration

• Leadership Engagement: The HR Director led a training session on a new cloud-based HR system designed to enhance remote collaboration. They framed the session as a strategic step toward digital transformation, highlighting its role in enabling flexible work arrangements, which was well received.

• Team Dynamics: Newer employees were eager to adopt the platform, but long-tenured employees voiced concerns over data security and privacy. Leadership responded by detailing robust security protocols, creating trust and demonstrating an understanding of digital transformation's risks.

• Observed Outcome: Field note: Noted increased collaboration between newer and experienced team members as they navigated system features. Leadership's assurance on data security was key in gaining buy-in from the team.

Company C (Thailand)

Observation Date: 07/12/2023

Location: Demonstration of Mobile HR Application for Employee Engagement

Activities Observed: Mobile App Launch, HR Team Engagement, Employee Feedback Collection

• Introduction of Digital Tools: The HR Director introduced a mobile HR application aimed at improving employee engagement and development. This app allowed employees to access HR services, training modules, and feedback systems directly from their devices.

• Team Reaction: Employees expressed enthusiasm for the app, citing ease of access to HR resources and development opportunities as positives. The disruptive leadership approach was evident as HR leaders encouraged employees to explore the app's features, empowering them to take control of their career growth.

• Observed Behavior: Field note: Team members engaged actively, sharing immediate feedback. The HR Director's support for ongoing feedback reinforced a culture of innovation, and early metrics showed increased usage rates.

Company D (Vietnam)

Observation Date: 10/12/2023

Location: Big Data Analytics Session for Workforce Planning

Activities Observed: Training on Big Data Tools, Strategic HR Planning, Open Discussion on Fail-Fast Culture

• Leadership Approach: The HR head conducted a session on big data analytics for workforce planning, framing the tool as essential for data-driven decision-making. Emphasizing a "fail-fast" approach, they encouraged experimentation with big data, which allowed team members to learn through trial and error.

• Employee Response: There was initial hesitation due to the unfamiliarity with big data applications in HR. However, the leadership's emphasis on learning from mistakes and support for a fail-fast culture motivated the team to experiment and share insights.

• Key Observation: Field note: The fail-fast encouragement led to visible team engagement, with employees openly discussing data-driven insights. This approach seemed to empower employees, and the leadership's openness fostered resilience and adaptability.

Company E (Philippines)

Observation Date: 13/12/2023

Location: Workshop on AI-Driven Talent Management and Cloud Solutions

Activities Observed: Training on AI and Cloud Solutions, Interactive Q&A, Skills Development Emphasis

• Leadership in Digital Skills Development: The CEO introduced AI-driven analytics for talent management, positioning it as part of a broader digital transformation strategy to enhance efficiency. They also encouraged employees to develop digital skills aligned with future HR goals.

• Employee Engagement and Reaction: Initially, some employees expressed reservations about the increased reliance on AI, fearing potential job redundancy. However, the CEO's framing of AI as a support tool, combined with encouragement for upskilling, gradually reassured the team.

• Observed Behavioral Shift: Field note: Over the course of the session, a positive shift in attitudes was observed, particularly as employees engaged in interactive Q&A. The leadership's

focus on upskilling created a forward-looking perspective among employees, improving morale and buy-in.

Summary of Key Observational Themes Across Companies:

1. Transparency and Encouragement: Leaders in all companies actively promoted transparency, inviting feedback on digital initiatives, which built trust and engagement.

2. Adaptation and Buy-In: Initial hesitation toward digital tools was common; however, leaders who emphasized skill development and demonstrated supportive attitudes facilitated employee buy-in.

3. Empowerment and Flexibility: Observed leaders fostered a culture of empowerment, with employees encouraged to take ownership of digital tools and experiment, reflecting the principles of disruptive leadership.

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