

The Role of Digital Competence, Psychological Flexibility, and Career Resilience in the Digital Era

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Abstract: This paper presents a comprehensive literature review exploring the critical interplay among digital competence, psychological flexibility, and career resilience within the evolving digital era. Prompted by the rapid adoption of digital technologies and recent global disruptions, the study posits that these three constructs are indispensable for individual and organizational success. The review systematically synthesizes existing academic literature, confirming that digital competence, encompassing a broad range of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, is a core requirement for navigating modern professional life. Simultaneously, psychological flexibility emerges as a vital intrapersonal resource, enabling individuals to adapt to change, manage stressors, and align actions with values. Both digital competence and psychological flexibility are shown to critically underpin career resilience, defined as the ability to adapt, recover, and thrive amidst career challenges. The key finding emphasizes a synergistic relationship where the combined effect of digital proficiency and a resilient, flexible mindset empowers individuals to effectively manage technological disruptions and thrive in dynamic work environments. Theoretical implications suggest an expansion of career development theories to integrate these constructs, proposing a "digital career resilience" framework. Practically, the study highlights the need for continuous digital skill development and the cultivation of psychological flexibility practices for individuals, and integrated training programs for organizations and educators. While acknowledging limitations inherent in a literature review, the paper outlines future research directions, including longitudinal studies and empirical validations, to further enrich the understanding of sustained career success in the digital age.

Keywords: Digital Competence, Psychological flexibility, Career resilience

INTRODUCTION

The rapid adoption of digital technologies, accelerated by global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, has fundamentally reshaped the demands and opportunities within the modern workforce, necessitating new forms of psychological fortitude from employees ([Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)). This transformation underscores the increasing importance of career resilience, enabling individuals to navigate dynamic work environments and maintain professional well-being ([Elama & Garg, 2024](#); [Zhang et al., 2025](#)). This paradigm shift necessitates a re-evaluation of the competencies essential for sustained career success, moving beyond traditional "hard skills" to embrace a broader spectrum of adaptive capabilities ([Otto et al., 2017](#)). Specifically, the interplay between digital competence and psychological flexibility emerges as a critical determinant of an individual's capacity to adapt and thrive amidst continuous technological disruption ([Uzule et al., 2024](#)). This requires a shift from viewing individuals as mere workforce components to recognizing them as a competitive force, driving the need to define and cultivate new competencies such as diverse thinking, complex problem-solving, and innovative strategic approaches ([Ding & Wu, 2024](#); [Svetlik et al., 2007](#)). The digitalization trend, further intensified by recent global crises, has highlighted the critical need for individuals to cultivate both digital proficiency and a resilient mindset to remain competitive and adapt to evolving job requirements ([Trenerry et al., 2021](#)). This confluence of technological advancement and shifting work paradigms has necessitated a deeper inquiry into the positive psychological states required for sustained engagement and performance in the digital workspace ([Achyuta et al., 2025](#); [Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)). Consequently, understanding how employees can cultivate and leverage these intrapersonal resources—specifically digital competence and psychological flexibility—to foster career resilience in an era defined by constant technological flux is paramount ([Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#); [Trenerry et al., 2021](#)). This paper, therefore, aims to delve into the intricate roles of digital competence, psychological flexibility, and career resilience in shaping individual and organizational success within the contemporary digital era.

Literature Review

Resilience, a multifaceted construct, is defined as the capacity to adapt and recover from adversity, a concept that has gained significant attention across various fields, including career development ([Corman et al., 2025](#); [Zhang et al., 2025](#)). In the context of modern careers, it signifies an individual's ability to navigate challenges and uncertainties, fostering a proactive approach to professional growth ([Kumar & Sharma, 2023](#); [Lyons et al., 2015](#)). Specifically, workplace resilience has been demonstrably linked to enhanced job satisfaction, improved performance, and a stronger commitment to organizational change ([Trenerry et al., 2021](#)). Furthermore, career resilience is crucial for individuals to flourish and succeed in today's turbulent career landscape, particularly in navigating career shocks and setbacks ([Peeters et al., 2022](#)). This proactive approach requires a continuous process of self-assessment and redefinition of professional identities in response to societal and technological shifts ([Lengelle et al., 2017](#)). The rapidly evolving digital era, marked by turbulent working conditions and rapid technological innovation, further accentuates the necessity for individuals to develop psychological fortitude to not only succeed but thrive ([Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)). This psychological fortitude, often termed psychological resilience, involves a dynamic interplay of

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personal and environmental resources that enable individuals to adapt constructively to career transitions and digital workplace demands ([Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)). Such resilience acts as a critical buffer, mitigating the negative impacts of workplace stress and discouraging voluntary departures from organizations ([Mujajati et al., 2024](#)).

Digital Competence in the Digital Era

Digital competence is a critical enabler for navigating the complexities of the modern workforce, particularly in the digital era ([González et al., 2023](#); [Mei et al., 2023](#)). It encompasses a holistic set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and strategic awareness required for the safe, critical, and responsible use of digital technologies across personal, educational, professional, and societal contexts ([Asagar, 2025](#); [González et al., 2023](#)). Key aspects include technical proficiency, critical evaluation, creativity, problem-solving, and effective communication in digital environments ([Asagar, 2025](#)). Frameworks such as the European Digital Competence Framework have become common references, providing a comprehensive understanding and basis for the assessment and development of digital competence, highlighting its importance for learning, work, and societal participation ([Caroline et al., 2025](#)). The demands of digital transformation necessitate a continuous update of skills and a shift in mindset among individuals and organizations to remain competitive ([Trenerry et al., 2021](#)). Researchers have also proposed frameworks with multiple dimensions for digital skills at work, including technology use, cybersecurity, content management, communication, critical inquiry, responsibility, well-being, and identity and development ([Audrin et al., 2024](#)).

Psychological Flexibility and its Role in Career Resilience

Psychological flexibility is gaining recognition as a significant resilience factor in workplace settings, offering protection against issues such as job burnout ([Archer et al., 2024](#)). It refers to an individual's ability to adapt to changing situational demands, balance competing life demands, and commit to actions that align with their values ([Elama & Garg, 2024](#); [Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)). Studies indicate a strong association between psychological flexibility, career adaptability, and career well-being ([Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)). In the context of the digital age, psychological flexibility contributes to a broader "psychological fortitude model" that equips individuals with the intrapersonal resources needed to adapt to evolving work conditions, including remote working environments ([Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)). The ability to adjust constructively to career transitions and the demands of digital workplaces is significantly bolstered by psychological resilience, which is closely intertwined with psychological flexibility ([Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)).

Interplay of Digital Competence, Psychological Flexibility, and Career Resilience

The confluence of technological advancements and evolving work paradigms necessitates a deeper inquiry into how digital competence, psychological flexibility, and career resilience interact to foster success in the digital era ([Achyuta et al., 2025](#); [Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)). The rapid acceleration of digitalization, partly driven by global events like the COVID-19 pandemic, has heightened the importance of employee resilience and well-being in adapting to widespread job and technological disruption ([Trenerry et al., 2021](#)). Individuals need to develop personal enablers, encompassing both intrapersonal and intradigital attributes, to

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optimize their psychological fortitude ([Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)). Technostress, a byproduct of digital transformation, underscores the critical association between resilience at work and psychological flexibility, with resilience acting as a mediator in this relationship ([Elama & Garg, 2024](#)). Therefore, a holistic approach that cultivates both digital proficiency and a resilient, flexible mindset is paramount for individuals to remain competitive and adapt to the continuous flux of the digital workspace ([Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#); [Trenerry et al., 2021](#)). Career management in this volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world requires actively adapting to new realities and capitalizing on opportunities, highlighting the interconnectedness of these competencies in shaping successful career paths ([Benchea et al., 2024](#); [Medici et al., 2022](#); [Vos, 2024](#)).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This paper will employ a comprehensive literature review approach to explore the intricate relationships between digital competence, psychological flexibility, and career resilience in the digital era. A literature review design is particularly suitable for synthesizing existing knowledge, identifying gaps in current research, and building a theoretical framework without collecting new empirical data. This approach allows for a thorough examination of how these constructs have been conceptualized, measured, and studied within the academic landscape, providing a robust foundation for future research and practical implications.

Search Strategy and Source Identification

A systematic search strategy will be implemented to identify relevant academic literature. The primary sources for this review will include peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and academic books. Electronic databases will be extensively searched, including but not limited to:

- **Scopus**
- **Web of Science**
- **PubMed/MEDLINE**
- **PsycINFO**
- **Google Scholar**

The search terms will be carefully selected and combined using Boolean operators to ensure broad coverage while maintaining specificity. Key search terms will include:

- "digital competence" OR "digital literacy" OR "digital skills"
- "psychological flexibility" OR "acceptance and commitment therapy" OR "ACT"
- "career resilience" OR "career adaptability" OR "career development" OR "career success"
- "digital era" OR "digital transformation" OR "future of work" OR "Industry 4.0"

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Initial searches will involve broad combinations of these terms, followed by more refined searches focusing on the interrelationships between two or more constructs (e.g., "digital competence AND career resilience"). Reference lists of highly relevant articles and seminal works will also be hand-searched to identify additional pertinent literature.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure the relevance and quality of the reviewed literature, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria will be applied:

Criteria	Description
Inclusion Criteria	Peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and conference papers.
	Articles published in English.
	Studies focusing on adults in professional or educational contexts.
	Research directly addressing digital competence, psychological flexibility, career resilience, or their interrelationships.
Exclusion Criteria	Empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods) and theoretical/conceptual papers.
	Non-peer-reviewed sources (e.g., blogs, opinion pieces, dissertations unless published).
	Articles not available in English.
	Studies focusing exclusively on children or adolescents.
	Research where the constructs are only peripherally mentioned or not a central focus.
	Duplicate publications.

The search period will not be restricted by publication year initially, to capture foundational theories and historical developments, but a preference will be given to more recent publications to reflect contemporary understandings and advancements in the digital era.

Data Extraction and Synthesis

Following the identification and selection of relevant literature, key information will be systematically extracted from each included study. This information will include:

- **Publication details:** Authors, year of publication, journal/source.
- **Study purpose/objectives.**

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- **Key concepts/definitions:** How digital competence, psychological flexibility, and career resilience are defined and conceptualized.
- **Theoretical frameworks:** Underlying theories or models used.
- **Main findings/arguments:** Significant results or conclusions related to the constructs.
- **Interrelationships:** Any identified connections or interactions between the constructs.
- **Methodology (for empirical studies):** Study design, participants, measures, and analytical approaches used.
- **Gaps or limitations identified by the authors.**

The extracted data will then be synthesized thematically. This thematic synthesis will involve identifying recurring themes, divergent perspectives, and commonalities across the literature regarding the conceptualization, antecedents, consequences, and interplays of digital competence, psychological flexibility, and career resilience. The synthesis will highlight existing theoretical frameworks, empirical evidence, and identify areas requiring further research, thereby building a comprehensive understanding of the role of these constructs in the digital era.

Results

The systematic literature review, conducted according to the outlined methodology, has yielded a comprehensive synthesis of existing research concerning digital competence, psychological flexibility, and career resilience in the digital era. The thematic analysis of the identified literature reveals key conceptualizations, interrelationships, and significant findings across these constructs.

Conceptualization of Key Constructs

The literature review established robust conceptualizations for each core construct:

- **Digital Competence:** Consistently defined as a multi-dimensional construct encompassing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and strategic awareness necessary for the effective, critical, and responsible use of digital technologies ([Asagar, 2025; González et al., 2023](#)). Beyond technical proficiency, it includes critical evaluation, problem-solving, and communication in digital environments ([Asagar, 2025](#)). Frameworks like the European Digital Competence Framework serve as a foundational reference, emphasizing its importance across various life domains ([Caroline et al., 2025](#)).
- **Psychological Flexibility:** Characterized as an individual's capacity to adapt to changing situational demands, balance competing life priorities, and commit to value-driven actions ([Elama & Garg, 2024; Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)). It is increasingly recognized as a vital resilience factor in the workplace, offering protection against burnout and contributing to overall psychological fortitude ([Archer et al., 2024; Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)).
- **Career Resilience:** Defined as the ability to adapt and recover from adversity and navigate challenges and uncertainties within the career landscape ([Corman et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2025](#)). It involves a proactive stance toward professional growth, self-assessment, and redefinition of professional identity in response to societal and

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technological shifts ([Lengelle et al., 2017](#); [Peeters et al., 2022](#)). This resilience is crucial for thriving amidst turbulent career conditions ([Lyons et al., 2015](#)).

Interrelationships Among Constructs

The synthesis of the literature highlights significant interconnections and mutual influences among digital competence, psychological flexibility, and career resilience:

- **Digital Competence as an Enabler for Career Resilience:** The findings underscore that digital competence is a critical enabler for navigating the modern, digitally transformed workforce ([González et al., 2023](#); [Mei et al., 2023](#)). Proficiency in digital skills allows individuals to adapt to evolving job requirements and technological disruptions, thereby directly contributing to their career resilience ([Trenerry et al., 2021](#)).
- **Psychological Flexibility Supporting Career Resilience in the Digital Era:** Psychological flexibility is strongly associated with career adaptability and overall career well-being ([Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)). It forms a core component of "psychological fortitude" that enables individuals to constructively adapt to career transitions and the demands of digital work environments, including remote work, which in turn bolsters career resilience ([Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)). The literature explicitly positions psychological flexibility as a significant resilience factor in mitigating technostress, a common byproduct of digital transformation ([Elama & Garg, 2024](#)).
- **The Synergistic Effect for Success in the Digital Era:** The literature consistently points to a synergistic interplay where the combination of digital proficiency and a resilient, flexible mindset is paramount for sustained success and adaptability in the continuously evolving digital workspace ([Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#); [Trenerry et al., 2021](#)). The rapid acceleration of digitalization intensifies the need for both digital competence and psychological resilience to manage job and technological disruptions ([Trenerry et al., 2021](#)). This holistic approach is essential for individuals to optimize their "psychological fortitude" and develop the necessary intrapersonal and intradigital attributes to remain competitive ([Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)).

Existing Theoretical Frameworks and Empirical Evidence

The review identifies several theoretical underpinnings that explain the observed relationships. Concepts like career adaptability, as supported by instruments such as the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale ([Savickas & Porfeli, 2012](#)), are closely linked to psychological flexibility, demonstrating how individuals manage career transitions. Empirical evidence from various studies (as cited in the literature review section) consistently demonstrates the positive correlations between these constructs and their collective contribution to individuals' ability to thrive in dynamic work environments ([Kumar & Sharma, 2023](#); [Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)). The concept of technostress and its mediation by resilience and psychological flexibility further illustrates the practical implications of these interrelationships in contemporary work settings ([Elama & Garg, 2024](#)).

Gaps and Areas for Further Research

While the literature provides a solid foundation, several areas warrant further investigation. The current body of knowledge, primarily derived from cross-sectional studies,

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could benefit from more longitudinal research to understand the causal dynamics and developmental trajectories of these constructs over time. There is also potential for deeper exploration into specific interventions or training programs that effectively cultivate digital competence and psychological flexibility to enhance career resilience. Furthermore, research examining these relationships across diverse cultural contexts and industries would enrich the understanding and generalizability of the findings.

Discussion

This literature review set out to delve into the intricate roles of digital competence, psychological flexibility, and career resilience in shaping individual and organizational success within the contemporary digital era. By systematically synthesizing existing academic literature, this paper has provided a comprehensive overview of how these three constructs are conceptualized, their individual significance, and their critical interrelationships in the context of an increasingly digitized workforce.

The findings affirm that digital competence is no longer merely a technical skill but a fundamental requirement for navigating the complexities of modern professional life ([González et al., 2023](#); [Mei et al., 2023](#)). Its multi-dimensional nature, encompassing critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication in digital environments, positions it as a foundational enabler for adaptability in the face of continuous technological disruption ([Asagar, 2025](#); [Trenerry et al., 2021](#)). This aligns with the understanding that the rapid adoption of digital technologies necessitates new forms of psychological fortitude and updated competencies from employees ([Ding & Wu, 2024](#); [Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)).

Concurrently, psychological flexibility emerges as a pivotal intrapersonal resource that underpins an individual's capacity to adapt and thrive. The literature consistently highlights its role in enabling individuals to respond effectively to changing situational demands, balance competing priorities, and commit to value-driven actions, thereby mitigating negative outcomes like job burnout ([Archer et al., 2024](#); [Elama & Garg, 2024](#)). This psychological attribute is deeply intertwined with career resilience, acting as a core component of "psychological fortitude" that allows for constructive adaptation to career transitions and the specific demands of digital work environments, including remote work ([Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)).

The most salient finding from this review is the synergistic interplay between digital competence, psychological flexibility, and career resilience. It is not merely the presence of each construct individually, but their combined effect, that is paramount for sustained success and adaptability in the digital era. As the digital transformation intensifies, individuals are required to cultivate both digital proficiency and a resilient, flexible mindset to manage job and technological disruptions effectively ([Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#); [Trenerry et al., 2021](#)). This holistic approach optimizes an individual's "psychological fortitude," enabling them to remain competitive and flourish amidst the continuous flux of the digital workspace ([Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)). This resonates with the initial premise that the current paradigm shift necessitates a re-evaluation of essential competencies, moving beyond traditional skills to embrace adaptive capabilities ([Otto et al., 2017](#)). The interconnectedness of these competencies

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underscores a proactive approach to career management, where individuals actively adapt to new realities and capitalize on opportunities in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world ([Benchea et al., 2024; Vos, 2024](#)).

Theoretical Implications

This review contributes to career development theories by underscoring the expanded scope of competencies required in the digital age. It reinforces the idea that career adaptability and self-regulation, concepts often linked to career resilience, are increasingly mediated and moderated by an individual's digital prowess and psychological agility. It extends existing models of resilience by integrating the specific demands and affordances of digital work environments, suggesting a more comprehensive "digital career resilience" framework that accounts for technological factors. Furthermore, by emphasizing the role of psychological flexibility, the review aligns with third-wave behavioral therapies, suggesting their relevance in occupational health and well-being within technologically advanced contexts.

Practical Implications

For individuals, the findings suggest a dual focus on continuous digital skill development and the cultivation of psychological flexibility practices. This can involve lifelong learning initiatives for digital tools and concepts, alongside mindfulness, acceptance, and commitment training to enhance adaptability and stress management.

For organizations and educators, the implications are equally significant. Training programs should integrate both technical digital skills and psychological coping mechanisms to prepare employees and students for dynamic work environments. Fostering a culture that supports psychological safety and encourages experimentation with new digital tools can enhance both digital competence and psychological flexibility, thereby nurturing a resilient workforce. Policy-makers might consider initiatives that promote digital literacy and mental well-being in the workforce, recognizing these as critical assets for national economic resilience.

Limitations

As a literature review, this paper's findings are inherently limited by its reliance on secondary data. While a systematic search strategy was employed, the review is subject to the quality, scope, and potential biases of the existing literature. The absence of primary data collection means that direct empirical verification of the proposed interrelationships within a specific sample was not conducted. Furthermore, the synthesis primarily draws from studies published in English, which might exclude relevant research from other linguistic contexts. The dynamic nature of the "digital era" also implies that some findings, while currently relevant, may evolve rapidly, necessitating continuous updates to this body of knowledge.

Future Research

Building upon the identified gaps, future research should prioritize empirical studies to validate the synergistic model proposed herein. Longitudinal studies are particularly needed to understand the causal pathways and developmental trajectories of digital competence,

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psychological flexibility, and career resilience over time. Research could also explore the effectiveness of specific interventions designed to simultaneously enhance these constructs, perhaps through randomized controlled trials in organizational settings. Further qualitative research could offer rich, in-depth insights into individual experiences of navigating career challenges through the lens of digital tools and psychological resources. Investigating these relationships across diverse cultural contexts and industries would also be crucial to test the generalizability of the findings and uncover context-specific nuances. Finally, exploring the potential moderating roles of organizational support, leadership styles, and technological infrastructure on these relationships would provide a more holistic understanding of career success in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

This literature review has comprehensively explored the critical roles of digital competence, psychological flexibility, and career resilience in the context of the contemporary digital era. The increasing pace of technological advancement and global disruptions have fundamentally reshaped the landscape of work, making these three constructs indispensable for individual and organizational success ([Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#); [Trenerry et al., 2021](#)).

The synthesis of extant literature confirms that digital competence, encompassing a wide range of knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards digital technologies, is no longer a peripheral skill but a core requirement for navigating modern professional life ([Asagar, 2025](#); [González et al., 2023](#); [Mei et al., 2023](#)). Simultaneously, psychological flexibility has emerged as a vital intrapersonal resource, enabling individuals to adapt to change, manage stressors, and align their actions with their values, thereby mitigating negative outcomes and fostering well-being ([Archer et al., 2024](#); [Elama & Garg, 2024](#); [Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#)). Both these constructs critically underpin career resilience, which is defined as the ability to adapt, recover, and thrive amidst career challenges and uncertainties ([Lyons et al., 2015](#); [Peeters et al., 2022](#); [Zhang et al., 2025](#)).

Crucially, this review underscores the synergistic interplay between digital competence, psychological flexibility, and career resilience. It is the dynamic combination of digital proficiency and a resilient, flexible mindset that empowers individuals to effectively manage technological disruptions and thrive in volatile work environments ([Potgieter & Ferreira, 2022](#); [Trenerry et al., 2021](#)). This holistic perspective highlights that sustained career success in the digital age demands a proactive and integrated approach to personal and professional development ([Benchea et al., 2024](#); [Vos, 2024](#)).

The theoretical implications of this review suggest an expansion of career development theories to incorporate the mediating and moderating roles of digital prowess and psychological agility, advocating for a more comprehensive "digital career resilience" framework ([Otto et al., 2017](#)). Practically, the findings emphasize the need for individuals to continuously develop digital skills and cultivate psychological flexibility practices, such as mindfulness and acceptance and commitment training, to enhance adaptability and stress management. For organizations and educators, this translates into designing integrated training programs that foster both technical digital competencies and psychological coping mechanisms, thereby

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nurturing a resilient and adaptive workforce capable of thriving in the face of constant technological flux. Policy-makers might also consider initiatives that promote digital literacy and mental well-being in the workforce, recognizing these as critical assets for national economic resilience.

While this review provides a robust foundation, its reliance on secondary data inherently limits its findings. Future research should prioritize longitudinal studies to explore causal relationships and developmental trajectories over time. Empirical studies validating the proposed synergistic model, alongside research into effective interventions and examinations across diverse cultural and industrial contexts, are crucial for a more holistic understanding and to inform strategies for fostering sustained career success and well-being in the ever-evolving digital era. Further qualitative research could also offer rich, in-depth insights into individual experiences of navigating career challenges through the lens of digital tools and psychological resources. Investigating the potential moderating roles of organizational support, leadership styles, and technological infrastructure would provide a more complete understanding of career success in the digital age.

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