

Exploring the impact of digital work on work-life balance and job performance: A technology affordance perspective

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Abstract

Purpose – Digital technologies have been transforming the traditional workplace and reshaping how work is designed, performed, and managed in organizations. This makes understanding digital work and its impact on job performance critically important. This study investigates the impact of digital work on job performance in organizations from the perspective of technology affordance.

Design/methodology/approach – A comprehensive review of the related literature has been conducted, leading to the development of a conceptual model for exploring the impact of digital work on job performance from the perspective of technology affordance. Such a model is then tested and validated using structural equation modelling on the survey data collected in Australia.

Findings – The study shows that the use of digital technologies significantly improves coordination and knowledge sharing between individuals, leading to better work-life balance and improved job performance. Furthermore, the study reveals that the use of digital technologies that can enhance communication and decision making does not significantly influence work-life balance and job performance in digital work.

Originality/value - This study presents a comprehensive investigation of the impact of digital work on job performance in organizations from the perspective of technology affordance. It

explores the changing role of digital work in transforming existing working practices in organizations, and how different technology affordances in digital work can be actualized for improving work-life balance and job performance in a digitalized working environment.

Keywords – Digital work; Technology affordances; Job performance; Work-life balance; Boundary theory; Communication; Coordination; Decision making; Knowledge sharing

Article classification – Research paper

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1. Introduction

Digital technologies are dramatically transforming the traditional workplace in organizations (Richter, 2020; Farivar and Richardson, 2021; Deng et al., 2022). Such technologies, including artificial intelligence, big data, cognitive computing, internet of things, cloud computing, mobile computing, social media, and digital platforms like Microsoft Teams and Zoom, have reshaped how work is designed, performed, and managed in organizations (Ellder, 2019; De et al., 2020). This leads to the development of emerging digital work environments in which the work arrangement between organizations and individuals is becoming more contingent, flexible, and distributed (Nakrosiene et al., 2018; Ens et al., 2018; Wibowo et al., 2022).

The emerging digital work environment has created situations in which digital work has become the ‘new normal’ for individuals in organizations (Sahu et al., 2018; Wibowo et al., 2022). This is well demonstrated in the global pandemic of COVID-19 when individuals are forced to work from home every day through government-enforced lockdowns, in particular in Australia where the longest lockdown has been experienced in the world (Richter, 2020; De et al., 2020; Duan and Deng, 2021; 2022). The flexibilities that digital work provides for individuals in terms of where, how, and when to work has generated numerous benefits including higher job satisfaction, increased autonomy, improved productivity, reduced work-family conflict, and reduced commuting time and costs (Nakrosiene et al., 2018, Duan et al., 2020). The surge of pandemics like COVID-19 and the resulted nationwide lockdown further

accelerate the adoption of digital work (Duan et al., 2021; Deng et al., 2022). As a result, digital work is becoming increasingly popular across the world.

The characteristics of digital work promise better job performance for individuals in organizations (Richter, 2020). This is due to the enhancement of coordination and communication (Waizenegger et al., 2020) and the improvement of knowledge sharing and decision-making in carrying out specific activities through the application of digital technologies (Kossek et al., 2006; Strong et al., 2014). Such a promise, however, has not been fully materialized (Ali-Hassan et al., 2015; De et al., 2020). This is due to the behaviour of individuals which are afforded and constrained by digital technology use (Majchrzak and Markus, 2012; Treem and Leonardi, 2013; Wang et al., 2020) and the complex interaction between and among individuals in organizations (Argyris and Monu, 2015; Duan et al., 2020). The use of digital technologies often blurs the boundaries between work and nonwork domains and exacerbates work-life conflict, and negatively impacts job performance of individuals (Farivar and Richardson, 2021). Such inconsistency in job performance between the promise and the delivery with respect to the use of digital technologies demonstrates the need for further exploring how digital technologies affect job performance in organizations (Richter, 2020; De et al., 2020). This study aims to address this issue with the formulation of the research question as follows: *What is the perceived impact of technology affordances on work-life balance and job performance in digital work in organizations?*

To adequately answer this research question, this study investigates the impact of digital work on job performance in organizations from the perspective of technology affordance. A comprehensive review of the related literature has been conducted, leading to the development of a conceptual model for exploring the impact of digital work on job performance. Such a

model is then tested and validated with the use of structural equation modelling on the survey data collected in Australia. This leads to better understanding of how different technology affordances in digital work can be actualized for improving work-life balance and job performance in a digitalized working environment. Such understanding is significant for organizations in their active pursuit of better organizational performance using the latest digital technologies, in particular in the period of a global pandemic like COVID-19.

In what follows, a review of the related literature on digital work, technology affordance, and job performance is presented in Section 2, leading to the development of a conceptual model for exploring the impact of digital work on job performance in Section 3. This is followed by a discussion about the methodology that this study adopts in Section 4. The data analysis result and the corresponding discussion on the research findings are presented respectively in Sections 5 and 6. Section 7 discusses the contribution and implication of this study, followed by the conclusion and the limitation of this study in Section 8.

2. Related work

Digital work

Digital work originates from the concept of telework in the 1970s in response to the oil crisis (Pyoria, 2011). The idea is that telework can be a means to avoid commuting to offices, therefore helping to reduce the dependence on fossil fuel (Byrne et al., 2005). Digital work has evolved over three generations. The first generation is referred to as the Home Office. It is based on the use of personal computers and fixed telephones to replace long commuting hours between home and office. The second generation is called the Mobile Office. This includes laptop computers and mobile phone enabled wireless, portable work from locations other than

home or office, accompanied by a fast-growing dispersion of the Internet and the World Wide Web. The third generation is usually named the Virtual Office. It is based on online connections via radio links and the development of digital technologies such as smartphones and tablet computers with the use of mobile and virtual connections between workers and organizations from almost anywhere and at any time (Ellder, 2019).

Digital work is a broad and complex concept that lacks a commonly accepted definition (Richter, 2020). Different terms have been used to describe this multifaceted phenomenon including digital workplace, teleworking, telecommuting, e-working, remote working, and agile working (Pyoria, 2011; Farivar and Richardson, 2021). An examination of these definitions shows that there are several common themes in approaching digital work. These common themes include the use of digital technologies, remote locations, contractual arrangements between individuals and organizations, and flexible working time (Duan et al., 2020; Farivar and Richardson, 2021). This leads to the working definition of digital work in this study as a *'work arrangement between employees and the organization for performing job-related tasks using digital technologies from a remote location.'* In this context, digital technology includes artificial intelligence, big data, enterprise social media, and digital platforms like Microsoft Teams and Zoom, which have been increasingly used in digital work.

The use of digital technologies for work in remote locations can improve productivity, increase autonomy, and reduce commuting time and costs (Duan et al., 2020). It can reduce traffic congestion and air pollution (Nakrosiene et al., 2018). Further, the flexible contractual arrangement between individuals and organizations leads to time planning freedom, lower stress, increased job satisfaction (Majchrzak and Markus 2012; Saridakis et al., 2020), and increased employment opportunities for women with children, students, and disabled people

(Ellder, 2019). As a result, the adoption of digital work can lead to better work-life balance, therefore resulting in better job performance for individuals in organizations.

There are specific issues and challenges in the adoption of digital work in organizations (De et al., 2020). The application of digital technologies for work leads to increasingly blurred boundaries between the public and private spheres of our everyday life (Jarrahi et al., 2017). It can increase stress and burnout as individuals are separated and common social interactions between individuals are lacking (Sarker et al., 2012). The use of digital technologies in work adds pressure on individuals to engage in exhausting emotional labour and increases technocratic and peer control, leading to technostress (Ayyagari et al., 2011) and ‘zoom fatigue’ (Fosslien and Duffy, 2020). Furthermore, the need for requesting connectivity, the inability to disconnect from work, and the intrusive interruptions leading to stress (Sarker et al., 2012) directly affect the job performance of individuals in a digitalized work environment in organizations. This shows that there is a need for better understanding of such issues and challenges and their impact on job performances in the use of digital work in organizations.

Technology affordance

Affordances are the possibilities of action that animals have within their environment (Gibson, 1977; Siegert and Löwstedt, 2019). Their scopes have been broadened from nature to artifact in which “affordances are a special set of interactions” about usefulness, and “the distinguishing feature of affordances is the (potential) perception of some type of usefulness by the user” (Maier and Fadel 2003). Affordances are the entanglement between human action and technological capability in exploring the role of technologies under various circumstances (Lu and Cheng, 2013). They are usually constrained by the environment and conditions and the intention of individuals under specific circumstances. Affordances can be used to explore

the design and usage of technologies with respect to the goals of individuals (Siegert and Löwstedt, 2019; Waizenegger et al., 2020).

Technology affordances are about the action potentials that can be achieved with the use of particular technologies with respect to the goal of individuals and organizations (Leonardi et al., 2012; Strong et al., 2014; Waizenegger et al., 2020). They are often used for exploring the relationship between technologies and their users (Nelson et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2020). In information systems research, technology affordances incorporate both information technology capabilities and the way in which individuals and organizations utilize those capabilities for pursuing better job performance and competitive advantages (Treem and Leonardi, 2013; Waizenegger et al., 2020).

Technology affordances for digital work can be reflected from different perspectives including coordination, communication, knowledge sharing, and decision making (Waizenegger et al., 2020). With the use of digital technologies for digital work in organizations, individuals can better coordinate their work for better work-life balance and job performance (Ali-Hassan et al., 2015). The use of digital technologies can facilitate communications and knowledge sharing at digital work. This leads to better decisions and improves work-life balance and job performance in organizations (Johari et al., 2018; Frost and Duan, 2020). The utilization of digital technologies for digital work, however, is often constrained by technologies due to the complex relationship between these technologies and their users (Ellder, 2019).

There are various studies that utilize technology affordances for exploring the perceived role of digital technologies under various circumstances. Argyris and Monu (2015) explore the role of social media by studying the relationship between technology affordances and external

stakeholders in organizations. Cordes (2016) studies the role of collaboration and technology affordance in team decision-making in higher education. Johari et al. (2018) apply technology affordances to investigate the interaction between learners and digital technologies and its impact on the learning performance of individual learners in an education setting. Chen et al. (2019) use technology affordances to explore how enterprise social media affect social network ties and job performance. Waizenegger et al. (2020) apply technology affordances to investigate their impact on team performance for digital work during COVID-19. These studies have demonstrated that technology affordances offer a promising perspective for exploring the complex interaction between digital technologies and individual users with respect to their job performance in various settings (Strong et al., 2014).

Job performance and work-life balance

Job performance reflects the effectiveness of individual that contribute to organizational goals (Ali-Hassan et al., 2015; Saridakis et al., 2020). It is often assessed with respect to the characteristics of job and workplace environment, and the expectation and requirement of individuals in specific situations. The performance of individuals on their job is related to the working environment, motivation, and the ability of individuals to do the job (Johari et al., 2018).

Work-life balance is about the ability to create a balance between work and personal life that brings satisfaction to individuals in a working environment (Leung and Zhang, 2017). It focuses on how to create a healthy and supportive work environment, which allows individuals to have a balance between work and personal responsibility, leading to improved job performance. By enabling employees to schedule their time to better balance competing demands between work and home, employees can reduce or eliminate work-life conflict. This

can lead to better job performance for individuals, therefore resulting in enhanced organizational productivity.

There are some studies that have been done for exploring the relationship between work-life balance and job performance from different perspectives (Ashforth et al., 2000; Frone, 2003; Johari et al., 2018). Ashforth et al. (2000) apply the boundary theory in investigating the relationship between work-life balance and job performance, showing that better work-life balance leads to superior job performance in organizations. Clark (2000) points out that work-life balance enables employees to balance their work and family demands, which can in turn lead to enhanced employee productivity and significant business improvements. Frone (2003) applies the segmentation theory in exploring the relationship between work and family that states these two are segmented and independent from each other. Wood and de Menezes (2008) show that work-life balance increases the effective commitment of individuals to the organization, therefore improving their job performance. Moqbel et al. (2013) claim that work-life balance has a direct positive effect on the job performance of individuals. Karlene and Daniel (2015) state that work-life balance can bring multiple benefits to organizations as employees can be more motivated, productive and less stressful. Johari et al. (2018) use the boundary theory to examine the influence of work-life balance on job performance, revealing that work-life balance is crucial in boosting the job performance of employees. All these studies above show that there is an association between work-life balance and job performance in organizations under various circumstances.

Digital work and job performance from the technology affordance perspective

Digital work is related to the utilization of digital technologies for carrying out specific job activities based on the arrangement between individuals and their organizations in a digitized

environment (De et al., 2020; Duan et al., 2020). The nature of digital work provides individuals with freedom and autonomy in where, when and how specific activities can be carried out. This can lead to better work-life balance, therefore improving the job performance of individuals in organizations (Duan et al., 2020).

There are several studies on exploring the relationship between digital work and job performance in the literature from different perspectives. Kossek et al. (2006), for example, find that the frequent use of digital technologies for digital work leads to less work-family conflict, therefore resulting in better job performance. Breugh and Frye (2008) indicate that digital work is positively related to work-family balance, therefore contributing to job performance in a positive manner. Moqbel et al. (2013) find out that the use of digital technologies for digital work can lead to increased stress and burnout, therefore resulting in poor work-life balance and poor job performance. Alsharo et al. (2017) state that the adoption of digital technologies for digital work often leads to increased technocratic and peer control, therefore adversely affecting work-life balance and job performance. Leung and Zhang (2017) show a positive influence that the use of digital technologies has on work-life balance due to the ability of technologies for creating autonomy and increasing work productivity. The discussion above shows that digital technologies can both facilitate and threaten the fulfillment of digital work, therefore affecting the work-life balance and the job performance of individuals in organizations differently dependent on the contexts involved.

There has been being recent interest in the use of technology affordances to understand the relationship between information technologies and their social contexts of use (Strong et al., 2014; Nelson et al., 2017; Siegert and Löwstedt, 2019). Strong et al. (2014), for example, state that it is important to study technology affordances in order to gain a deep understanding of

how change occurs following the introduction of digital work in organizations. Nelson et al. (2017) reveal that exploring the impact of digital work on the job performance of individuals from the technology affordances perspective presents useful guidelines for technological and organizational design in organizations, therefore offering insight how organizations can be better transformed digitally. Siegert and Löwstedt (2019) explore the relationship between the use of social media (Facebook and Twitter) and work-life balance using the affordance theory, showing how social media affordances influence the relationship and boundaries between work and non-work, therefore increasing visibility and reducing individual privacy. These studies above show that technology affordances provide a useful lens for exploring digital work and its impacts on work-life balance and job performance in organizations.

With the increasing use of digital work in organizations, the need for better understanding digital work and its impact on job performance from the technology affordance perspective is becoming critical (De et al., 2020). There are, however, no studies that exist in investigating the impact of digital work on work-life balance and job performance from the technology affordance perspective. It is therefore critical to explore the impact of digital work on an individual's job performance from a technology affordance perspective and its potential for transforming the dynamics of work in organizations for improving their competitiveness.

3. Theoretical background and hypothesis development

The nature of digital work facilitates the management of work-life balance which helps advance job performance for individuals in organizations (Richter, 2020). This is due to the provision of more autonomy, the enhancement of coordination and communication (Lindsjorn et al., 2016), the improvement of knowledge sharing and decision-making (Pangil and Chan, 2014;

Alsharo et al., 2017) in carrying out specific activities through the application of digital technologies. The affordance of digital technologies for digital work needs to be explored for better understanding digital work and its impact on the job performance of individuals. This study integrates the technology affordance theory (Leonardi et al., 2012; Strong et al., 2014) and the boundary theory (Clarke, 2000) for investigating the impact of digital work on the job performance of individuals in organizations.

Technology affordances are about the action that individuals or organizations with a particular purpose can do with technologies or information systems (Majchrzak and Markus, 2012; Wang et al., 2020). The technology affordance theory has been applied to better understand how the combination of technology and organizational features can create possibilities that affect organizational innovation and job performance (Chen et al., 2019; Waizenegger et al., 2020). Such a theory provides a suitable lens for exploring the affordance of digital technologies in digital work for enhancing job performance as discussed above.

The boundary theory is about how individuals seek to create and maintain physical, cognitive, and behavioural boundaries between work and personal life, in order to simplify everyday life (Clarke, 2000). Such a theory can be used to help explain why digital work presents unique challenges that are not present in traditional work settings. This is in particular relevant in the study of digital work and its impact on digital performance given that the use of digital work increasingly blurs the boundaries between work and life for individuals (De et al., 2020). The extent to which an individual manages to follow the boundaries depends on boundary management and their preferences regarding whether work and personal life are separated or intertwined (Karlene and Daniel, 2015). Digital work changes the traditional boundaries

between work and non-work (Farivar and Richardson, 2021). As a result, individuals may differ in boundary management which leads to different degrees of work-life balance.

Drawing from the technology affordance perspective and the boundary theory, a conceptual model for examining the impact of digital work on the job performance of individuals in organizations is developed as shown in Figure 1. The technology affordance theory is used for exploring the affordance of digital technologies for enhancing job performance. The boundary theory is adopted to explain how individuals manage the boundaries between work and personal life for enhancing job performance in digital work. The model h that improved coordination, communication, knowledge sharing, and decision-making using digital technologies for digital work can lead to better work-life balance, therefore improving the job performance of individuals in organizations.

Insert Figure 1 Here

Coordination affordance concerns about the use of digital technologies for improving the ability of individuals to coordinate their efforts for completing work activities (Lindsjorn et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2019). It is measured by how work activities for achieving the organizational goals are harmonized, coordinated, and supported using digital technologies between and among individuals in organizations.

The affordance of digital technologies for coordination has been explored in the existing research (Sarker et al., 2012; Argyris and Monu, 2015, Chen et al., 2019). Sarker et al. (2012), for example, discuss the positive impact of digital technologies for improving coordination among employees, leading to better work-life balance. Argyris and Monu (2015) indicate that digital technologies provide affordance in coordinating work activities, managing budgets and

financial resources, developing human capital, and making the workspace flexible in non-profit organizations. Chen et al. (2019) find that digital technologies assist organizations in administrative management and facilitate the coordination of schedules and activities. With the adoption of digital work, individuals can better organize their work and family commitment, therefore leading to better work-life balance. As a result, the following hypothesis can be formulated as:

*H1. Technology affordance for **coordination** positively influences work-life balance*

Communication affordance is related to the use of digital technologies for processing and communicating information for work between and among individuals in organizations (Belanger and Allport, 2008; Lindsjorn et al., 2016). It considers the frequency, formalization, and openness of the information exchange using digital technologies (Lindsjorn et al., 2016). Frequency is about how often communication occurs among individuals. Formalization is related to the degree of spontaneity in communication. Openness is linked with the easiness of communication and the degree of understanding gained among individuals.

Digital technologies are an enabler of communication for digital work (Olesen and Myers, 1999; Belanger and Allport, 2008; Waizenegger et al., 2020). Olesen and Myers (1999), for example, indicate that digital technologies facilitate communication among senior management teams in digital work. Belanger and Allport (2008) find that digital technologies substantially improve communication in digital work by addressing the needs and concerns of employees. Helmle et al. (2014) show that the use of digital technology enhances the flexibility for employees to communicate about their work issues which directly influences their work-life balance. Waizenegger et al. (2020) point out that digital technologies enable seamless communication in digital work. With the adoption of digital technologies for digital work,

efficient communication can be achieved at work. This helps save time for addressing the commitments and needs of individuals, leading to better work-life balance. The following hypothesis can therefore be formulated as:

*H2. Technology affordance for **communication** positively influences work-life balance*

Knowledge sharing affordance is about the provision of task information and know-how to help others and to collaborate with others for solving specific problems, developing new ideas, or implementing policies or procedures (Ahmed et al., 2019). Digital technologies have four affordances that facilitate knowledge sharing including (a) removing temporal and spatial barriers between and among employees, (b) providing access to information about knowledge, (c) improving the process of knowledge sharing, and (d) locating various elements relevant to the process of knowledge sharing (Ahmed et al., 2019). Digital work involves processes in which participants are engaged in the sharing and exchange of knowledge using digital technologies for producing better outcomes (Pangil and Chan, 2014). The knowledge sharing affordance is measured by the extent that individuals are willing to distribute their knowledge and information within their teams with the use of digital technologies (Alsharo et al., 2017).

The affordance of digital technologies for knowledge sharing with respect to work-life balance and job performance has been explored in the existing research (Kossek et al., 2006; Cordes, 2016;; Yunus et al., 2018). Kossek et al. (2006) investigate the influence of digital technologies on motivation for knowledge sharing and job performance. Cordes (2016) examines the impact of digital technologies on knowledge sharing and team performance, revealing that digital technologies play an important role in leveraging knowledge resources in organizations for better work-life balance and job performance. Yunus et al. (2018) examine the impact of using digital technologies on work-life balance finding that the use of digital technologies increases

knowledge sharing opportunities, which in turn helps to improve work-life balance and job performance. Digital technologies such as discussion boards and collaborative tools often include many of the features that support dialogic practices for facilitating knowledge sharing, leading to better work-life balance and job performance. This discussion leads to the formulation of the hypothesis as follows:

*H3. Technology affordance for **knowledge sharing** positively influences work-life balance*

Decision-making affordance is related to the use of digital technologies for facilitating data-driven decision-making in digital work (Turban et al., 2011; Strong et al., 2014). Digital technologies have created unprecedented opportunities for organizations to make fast and comprehensive decisions by providing relevant, timely, and accurate information for decision-making. The decision-making affordance is measured by the degree to which digital technologies can be used to facilitate efficient decision-making and improve communication and interactions between stakeholders for decision-making.

The affordance of digital technologies for decision-making has been investigated in the existing research (Turban et al., 2011; Cordes, 2016; Wang et al., 2020). Turban et al. (2011) find that collaboration digital technologies facilitate rapid decision-making by improving the process in group decision-making. Cordes (2016) finds that digital technologies enable efficient group decision-making via instant team interaction. Wang et al. (2020) demonstrate that digital technologies provide decision-making affordance based on business analytics which relies more on rational insights driven by data, and less on intuitions. This discussion leads to the formulation of the following hypothesis as:

*H4. Technology affordance for **decision-making** positively influences work-life balance*

Work-life balance in digital work concerns with the management of family commitments alongside working tasks (Morganson et al., 2009). The positive influence of work-life balance on job performance has been well established in the literature (Madsen 2006; Morganson et al., 2009). Madsen (2006) investigates the work-life conflict in digital work revealing that individuals in digital work have lower levels of overall work-life conflict, therefore improving their job performance. Morganson et al. (2009) examine the impact of different work arrangements and locations on employee job performance, showing that home-based employees with high levels of work-life balance support have better job satisfaction, leading to improved job performance. Campo et al. (2021) claim that work-life balance has a significant positive influence relationship with employees' attitudes and engagement, which in turn positively correlates with job performance. In general, individuals with low levels of work-life conflict tend to exhibit higher levels of job performance in digital work (Duan et al., 2020; Waizenegger et al., 2020). The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

H5. Work-life balance positively influences job performance in digital work

4. Research Methodology

This study investigates the impact of digital work on job performance of individuals in organizations from the perspective of technology affordance. To achieve this objective, a survey-based quantitative approach is adopted. The adoption of such an approach is due to the confirmatory nature of this study in which specific relationships identified through the literature review need to be tested and validated using the data collected in a real situation (Creswell and Creswell, 2017; Deng et al., 2019).

Survey is a technique for studying the cause of a phenomenon as well as the attitudes and behaviours of individuals with empirical evidence (Duan et al., 2012; Creswell and Creswell, 2017). It is an effective method for collecting data from the representative sample of a large population with respect to specific issues. The use of a survey in this study is appropriate because it is possible to test and validate the proposed model as shown in Figure 1.

To ensure that a set of valid measurements is used in the study, the paradigm for validating a measurement model proposed by Creswell and Creswell (2017) is followed. It includes the theoretical modelling of the constructs and statistical testing and refinement of the measurement model. The theoretical constructs and their measurement items are developed through a comprehensive literature review of the digital work research, followed by the pilot test and the interview of experts for ensuring content validity (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). The constructs are then tested and refined using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

The survey questionnaire consists of the demographic profile of respondents and the construct measurement items. Table 1 presents the constructs, items, and their origins. All constructs are measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Insert Table 1 Here

The survey instrument is pre-tested with seven faculty members with expertise in digital work and digital technology adoption. The improved instrument is pilot-tested with 30 individuals who have adopted digital work for assessing its clarity, readability, and understandability. The response to the pilot-tested survey is followed up with interviews with respondents for gaining better understanding of the comprehensiveness of the instrument in capturing the important issues in the adoption of digital work. A minor revision is conducted for rephrasing some

statements in the survey. These pre and pilot tests suggest a fair degree of the content validity of the survey instrument (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

Australia is selected as the sample population in this study. This is due to the wide use of digital technologies for work in the country and the growing adoption of digital work in the increasingly digitalized working environment resulted from the longest lockdown in the world from the surge of COVID-19 pandemic (De et al., 2020). A purposeful survey method (Deng, 2010) is used with the survey developed online for collecting data from respondents aged 18 years and older who are working on a full or part-time basis in Australia. This leads to the collection of 237 responses. The data screening process is conducted for addressing the missing values, outliers, normality, and multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2010). These processes lead to the deletion of 38 cases. As a result, 199 responses are retained for statistical analysis.

The dataset is further examined for the common method bias using Harman's one-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The results show that the common method variance is 37.07%. This is less than the 50% recommended threshold (Podsakoff et al., 2003). This shows that the common method bias does not impact the validity of the research findings in this study.

Table 2 presents an overview of the descriptive statistics of the respondents in the study. There is not much difference in the gender distribution with 51.8% male and 47.6% female respondents respectively. 31.7% of respondents are aged 35-44, followed by 24.1% from the 45-54 age group, 16.1% from the 65-64 age group, and 15.6% from the 25-34 age group. Regarding the weekly income, 32.2% of respondents have a weekly income of \$1,000 to \$1,999 with all the wages and salaries, government benefits, pensions, allowances and any other income counted, followed by 27.1% with a weekly income of \$2,000 to \$2,999, and 21.6%

with a weekly income of \$3,000 or more. Most respondents (62.3%) hold a postgraduate degree. Most respondents (61.8%) work for large organizations. 80.9% of respondents hold the role of Managers and Administrators, Professionals, Associate Professionals. The characteristics of the respondents above show that the sample is representative of the population of digital work that this study aims to investigate with respect to the use of digital work and its impact on job performance in Australia.

Insert Table 2 Here

5. Data analysis

This study adopts a two-step approach to SEM including measurement model analysis and structural model examination (Hair et al., 2010). Measurement model analysis involves conducting a CFA for assessing the contribution of each indicator variable and for measuring the adequacy of the measurement model. Structural model examination tests the hypotheses based on the validated measurement model (Duan and Deng, 2021).

Measurement model analysis

SEM is widely used for analysing multivariate data (Creswell and Creswell, 2017; Deng et al., 2019). To empirically assess the validity and reliability of the theoretical constructs in Figure 1, SEM is adopted due to its ability to include latent variables in representing unobserved concepts while accounting for the measurement error and its capability for simultaneously assessing multiple correlations and covariance between variables in the model validity test (Hair et al., 2010).

A CFA analysis is conducted using AMOS version 26 based on the survey data. The first step is the model specification, in which the multivariate normality of the data set is examined for facilitating the use of the maximum likelihood method in the estimation. The second step is an iterative model modification process for developing the best set of measurement items to represent a construct through refinement and retesting. The last step is to estimate the goodness of fit (GOF) of the overall model to test the extent to which the data support the model. The statistics used are the likelihood ratio chi-square (χ^2), the ratio of χ^2 to degrees of freedom (χ^2/df), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and comparative fit index (CFI). Table 3 shows the measurement model analysis statistics.

Insert Table 3 Here

The convergent validity and the discriminant validity are tested in the iterative model modification process. Assessing the convergent validity includes three steps (Duan et al., 2012; Byrne, 2016). The first step is to calculate the χ^2 values for each construct. If any χ^2 values reject a construct at $p < 0.05$, modification indices are used to identify the common construct among items. The last step is to drop those items that do not fit into any constructs from the subsequent analysis.

The convergent validity is examined with the use of the factor loading (FL) value and the composite reliability (CR) value. A rule of thumb is that the FL value and the CR value should be at least 0.50, and ideally 0.70 or higher with all FLs statistically significant. Following this rule, 8 items including CM1, CM5, KS4, KS5, KS6, WLB3, WLB4, and JP4 are dropped from 30 items in the original conceptual model. Other items with FLs ranged from 0.71 to 0.93 and constructs with CRs above 0.81 as shown in Table 3 indicate a high convergent validity.

The discriminant validity of the construct is assessed by comparing the AVE for each construct with the squared correlation of this construct to other constructs (Hair et al., 2010). Table 4 shows the correlation matrix between the constructs. The AVEs for six constructs ranging from 0.59 to 0.73 demonstrate high discriminant validity. The AVE of 0.73 for the job performance, for example, is higher than the correlation between job performance and other constructs ranged from 0.22 to 0.27. This means that job performance shows high discriminant validity.

Insert Table 4 Here

The construct reliability test includes the assessment of item reliability and construct reliability (Hair et al. 2010). The item reliability (IR) indicates the amount of variance in an item due to the underlying construct rather than errors. It is assessed using the squared multiple correlation value. An item is reliable if IR is greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010). IR values for all the items ranging from 0.50 to 0.86 are higher than the threshold. These items are therefore deemed to be sufficient in measuring the construct.

The construct reliability measures the degree of consistency between multiple items of a construct (Hair et al., 2010). It is examined by calculating Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient with an acceptable value of 0.70. All six constructs show high Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficients above 0.78. The construct reliability is thus considered to be strong.

The GOF statistics of the final measurement model are assessed after the validity test and the reliability test (Byrne, 2016). The insignificance of chi-square (χ^2) value normalized by the degree of freedom (χ^2/df) (1.77) within the cut-off value 3.00 indicates that the model is not significantly different from the data. The RMSEA value 0.06 less than the recommended value

0.08 and the CFI value 0.95 greater than the threshold 0.90 show a good match between the model and the data. The final measurement model is therefore suitable for hypothesis testing.

Structural model examination

To test the hypothesis in the proposed model as shown in Figure 1, the overall fitness of the structural model is examined using various GOF statistics. Table 5 presents a summary of the overall fitness assessment results. The chi-square (χ^2) value normalized by the degree of freedom (χ^2/df) is 1.759 which is smaller than the recommended cut-off value of 3. The GFI (0.864) and the AGFI (0.822) exceed the recommended cut-off value of 0.8. The TLI (0.940) and the CFI (0.950) are higher than the recommended cut-off value of 0.90. The RMSEA (0.062) is less than the recommended cut-off value of 0.08. An examination of the combination of these results suggests that the measurement model fits very well with the data (Byrne, 2016).

Insert Table 5 Here

Table 6 presents the results of the hypothesis testing in the structural model. The path coefficients (β) along with their significant levels (p -value) confirm the statistical support of three hypotheses including hypotheses H1, H3, and H5. There are, however, insufficient evidence to support hypotheses H2 and H4.

Insert Table 6 Here

6. Discussion

This study investigates the impact of digital work on job performance in organizations from the perspective of technology affordance. The results show that the use of digital technologies

for digital work significantly improves coordination and knowledge sharing between and among individuals. This leads to better work-life balance, therefore contributing to the improvement of job performance and the enhancement of organizational effectiveness. The use of digital technologies for communication and decision-making in digital work, however, has insignificant influence on work-life balance.

The finding of the significant impact of using digital technologies for coordination and knowledge sharing on work-life balance is in line with the findings of previous studies (Ou et al., 2010; Lindsjorn et al., 2016; Laitinen and Sivunen, 2020). The rationale of positive effects of digital technologies for coordination and knowledge sharing in digital work is that digital technologies can help solve time and coordination problems effectively, increase the sense of autonomy, flexibility and control, support collaboration, and improve mobility and interactivity. This leads to well-balanced work and non-work activities, resulting in improved job performance.

This study finds an insignificant influence of communication affordance of digital technologies on work-life balance in digital work. One possible reason for the insignificant impact of communication affordance is the existence of various communication and social technologies for facilitating both formal and informal communications among individuals. This weakens the need of using formal digital technologies for digital work (Benson et al., 2015; Waizenegger et al., 2020). This explains the insignificant influence that communication affordance of digital technologies has on work-life balance in a digitalized working environment.

Furthermore, the use of digital technologies for communication has generated mixed results on work-life balance and job performance in existing studies. While some studies find the positive

influence of the communication affordance of digital technologies on work-life balance (Belanger and Allport, 2008), there are also a few studies which report a negative influence of the use of digital technologies for communication in digital work on work-life balance (Chesley, 2005; Sarker et al., 2012). Chesley (2005), for example, finds that the use of digital technologies for communication is linked to a negative work-life spillover which leads to increased distress and decreased family satisfaction. Sarker et al. (2012) report an undesirable impact of digital technologies for communication on the work-life balance due to the raised expectations of availability for work, blurred work-life boundaries, the decrease of efficiency, and enhanced work-related stress. Along this line, the positive influence of communication affordance of digital technologies on work-life balance is not supported.

There is an insignificant influence of decision-making affordance of digital technologies on work-life balance in digital work. Decision-making affordance in digital work is related to the use of digital technologies for providing relevant, timely, and accurate information for decision-making. The possible reason for the insignificance effect of digital technologies on work-life balance can be due to the significant influence of other factors including culture, social presence, trust, and decision-making styles on the effective decision-making process (Lowry et al. 2010). Lowry et al. (2010), for example, emphasise the importance of social presence in building trust among decision makers for achieving consensus in group decision-making. As a result, digital technologies are less significant in supporting decision-making in digital work for facilitating work-life balance.

Work-life balance has a significant impact on job performance in digital work. This finding is supported by various studies (Madsen 2006; Morganson et al., 2009; Johari et al., 2018). One important aspect of work-life balance is the frequency of work-life conflict (Johari et al., 2018).

Digital work serves as a means to reduce work-life conflict as employees are able to plan, schedule and reconcile their professional and private lives, especially employees with caregiving responsibilities like parents and other caregivers (De et al., 2020; Waizenegger et al., 2020). In general, family demands can be met more easily via digital work as one can more easily attend to family commitments and spends less time commuting. Fulfilled family obligations have a positive impact on the stress level of employees, therefore contributing to improved job performance for individuals and increased productivity for organizations.

7. Contribution and implication

This study contributes to existing research from both theoretical and practical perspectives. The theoretical contribution of this study is mainly from three folds. First, this study provides a validated research model for exploring the impact of digital work on job performance of individuals from the perspective of digital technology affordance. Such a model addresses an existing research gap in current studies that focus on exploring the critical factors influencing job performance in organizations from different perspectives such as leadership, motivation, and job satisfaction (Nakrosiene et al., 2018; Duan et al., 2020). With the investigation of how digital technology affordances affect job performance of individuals in Australian organizations, this study advances the knowledge by providing a foundation for capturing the role of digital technologies in facilitating digital work from the perspective of technology affordance using empirical evidence from Australia.

Second, this study comprehensively explores the role of digital technology affordances in digital work by decomposing the technology affordance into coordination affordance, communication affordance, knowledge sharing affordance, and decision making affordance.

This leads to better understanding of how the combination of technology and organizational features can create possibilities that affect job performance. Such understanding can help organizations enhance their competitiveness and improve their effectiveness through better formulated strategies and policies in adequately utilizing such technology affordances (Majchrzak and Markus, 2012; Waizenegger et al., 2020). This study provides empirical evidence to show how different technology affordances in digital work can be actualised for improving job performance, leading to better organizational performance. It shows that the use of digital technologies for digital work significantly improves coordination and knowledge sharing between and among individuals. This leads to better work-life balance, therefore contributing to the improvement of job performance and the enhancement of organizational effectiveness.

Third, this study has extended the usefulness of the boundary theory into the digital work context. The boundary theory has been widely used in traditional work settings for understanding how individuals manage work and non-work activities (Karlene and Daniel, 2015). The increasing blurring of the boundaries between work and non-work through the use of digital work (Farivar and Richardson, 2021) facilitates the extension of the boundary theory into exploring boundary management in digital work which is highly required, in particular in the period of COVID-19 when digital work has been widely adopted due to often the undesirable national lockdown like that in Australia (De et al., 2020; Richter, 2020; Duan et al., 2021). This study therefore contributes to existing research by providing a timely perspective to explore how the use of digital technologies in digital work has affected the work-life balance and job performance of individuals in Australian organizations.

Practically, this research provides a study of the impact of digital work on work-life balance and job performance of individuals in organizations with the use of the Australian sample. This leads to better understanding of digital work and its role in designing and transforming existing working practices using the latest digital technologies. Such understanding can help organizations formulate effective strategies and policies for facilitating the use of digital work and improving work-life balance. Better coordinated organization support, for example, can be provided so that individuals can overcome the frustration of dealing with various technical challenges in digital work (Sarker et al., 2012). Specific procedures and measures can be implemented to help individuals to set up appropriate digital work environments and tackle the issue of isolation and lack of face-face interactions in digital work (Sarker et al., 2012; Deng et al., 2022). Adequate human resources management strategies and policies can be developed in recognizing the flexibilities that digital work provides and the challenges that individuals face (Fosslien and Duffy, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a unique context in which individuals are involuntarily required to adopt digital work intensively, thus questioning the applicability of the research findings of existing studies on digital work and its impact on job performance (Wang et al., 2021). Better understanding the affordances of digital technologies in digital work and their impacts on work-life balance and job performance is therefore not only timely but also necessary. Such understanding is significant for organizations in their active pursuit of better organizational performance using the latest digital technologies, in particular in the period of post COVID-19 when digital work has become a new form of work (Richter, 2020).

Specifically, this study finds that digital technologies support collaboration and knowledge sharing in digital work, leading to increased job performance and improved organizational

effectiveness in Australia. This finding of the study can help Australian organizations to think more in how to adopt the right digital technologies and what support can be provided for improving collaboration and knowledge sharing in digitalized working environments. It also provides technology developers with useful insights on the need for designing and developing next generation of digital technologies for pursuing better collaboration and knowledge sharing.

The research findings of the study can help individuals and organizations, especially those in Australia to better manage the work-life balance in digital work. This can be achieved through properly setting adequate boundary regulations and realistic performance expectations (Wang et al., 2021) while acknowledging the increasingly blurring of the boundaries between work and personal responsibility. Furthermore, the research findings of the study can facilitate balancing work and life even if individuals have to work long hours (Leung and Zhang, 2017). These findings can form the basis for Australian organizations to formulate adequate human resources management strategies and policies so that better work-life balance can be achieved in digital work. This can lead to better job performance, therefore resulting in enhanced organizational productivity in digital work.

8. Conclusion

This study investigates the impact of digital work on the job performance of individuals in organizations from the perspective of technology affordance. A research model is developed based on the technology affordance theory and the boundary theory. The digital technology affordance for digital work is reflected in four dimensions including coordination, communication, knowledge sharing, and decision-making. Such a model is then tested and

validated with the use of SEM on the survey data collected in Australia. The study shows that the use of digital technologies for digital work significantly improves the coordination and knowledge sharing between and among individuals. This leads to better work-life balance, therefore contributing to the improvement of job performance of individuals. The use of digital technologies for communication and decision-making in digital work, however, has insignificant influence on work-life balance.

There are certain limitations for this study which suggest future research. First, this study collects data in Australia. The findings of this study may be highly relevant to countries with a similar culture. Considering national culture as one of the main factors that affect the digital work environment (Lowry et al. 2010), more empirical evidence in other countries or cross-culture comparisons are necessary to generalise the research findings. Second, this study has not considered the impact of job characteristics when investigating the impact of digital work on job performance. Different jobs have unique job characteristics and requirements which may influence the digital technology affordance in digital work. It is therefore important to explore the effects of job characteristics and digital work conditions on job performance in future studies. Further, there is a need to investigate the impact of other factors including gender, leadership style, organization policy, and experience of individuals in digital work (Waizenegger et al., 2020) on the changing pattern of digital technology affordance to complement and enrich the findings of this study for the development of appropriate strategies and policies toward the building of digital work in organizations.

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