International Academic Institute for Science and Technology

International Academic Journal of Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management
Vol. 9, No. 2, 2022, pp. 30-36.

ISSN 2454-2210

International Academic Journal of Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management

www.iaiest.com

Reskilling Imperatives and Organizational Learning Agility in Post-Pandemic Labour Markets

Rohan Iyer [a*], Ananya Sharma [b]

[a*] *National Centre for Skills and Leadership Development, Hyderabad, Telangana, India.*
[b] *National Centre for Skills and Leadership Development, Hyderabad, Telangana, India.*

Abstract

In the wake of the pandemic, the labor market has grown more demanding, accelerating the need for organizations to continually invest in the skills of their workforce to adapt to technological changes, shifts in work practices, and occupational needs. This study explores the relationship between the reskilling opportunities, organizational learning agility, and employee adaptability. The research design was a quantitative cross-sectional design, with a structured questionnaire for the data collection, which included measures of employees' perceptions of reskilling, organizational learning, and adaptability. For the proposed relationships, descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson correlation, regression analysis, and mediation analysis were used. The results show that reskilling opportunities have a significant influence on organizational learning agility, with a beta value of 0.612 and a p value of < 0.001. Employee adaptability has a significant influence on organizational learning agility, with a beta value of 0.681 and a p value of < 0.001. The analysis also shows that reskilling opportunities and organizational learning agility are indirectly related with an indicator of 0.417 (95% CI [0.302, 0.548]). The results indicate a need for environments that encourage ongoing learning, knowledge sharing, and application of acquired skills in reskilling employees in order to improve the effectiveness of reskilling. The study helps HRM research by providing a basis to see organizational learning agility as an important mechanism to link workforce reskilling with employee adaptability. The findings have implications for how organizations should consider designing learning, developing talent, and transforming their workforces for the post-pandemic world.

Keywords: Reskilling, Organizational Learning Agility, Employee Adaptability, Post-Pandemic Labour Markets, Workforce Development, Human Resource Management.

DOI: 10.71086/IAJOBHRM/V9I2/IAJOBHRM0908
Received:26 September 2022/Revised: 14 October 2022/Accepted:09 November 2022/Published:30 December 2022

Introduction

Labor markets have undergone dramatic changes after the pandemic with respect to employment/work arrangements, technology, employment structure, and skills required to take up employment. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations have embraced new technologies and flexible working arrangements, driving digital transformation. These changes have resulted in a greater need for employees to continually upgrade their skills and ability sets and for organizations to build systems that enable their employees to quickly adapt to change. As stated by Wang et al. (2022), the global world is experiencing the evolution of professional career management due to global megatrends, the pandemic of COVID-19, and the digital economy, in particular, Asian countries. The nature of work in India has changed, thus, the upskilling of the working force becomes vital (Chakrabarti, 2022).

With the spread of Industry 4.0, companies are facing additional challenges to synchronize technology change with human resources competences. Agarwal et al. (2022) found out some challenges facing sustainable human resource management in the context of the disruptions that occurred during the Industry 4.0 era and underlined the need for capacity building along with technology. In the same manner, the use of Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies in the context of the ongoing pandemic brought forward the necessity of digital skills for the sustainability of organizational operations (Agbehadji et al., 2021). Reskilling, therefore, is an essential HRM process of equipping employees for success in the new technological and organizational landscape.

But reskilling could be one of the few instances where it might not be enough unless organizations have the capacity to continuously learn, share, and use new knowledge. Organizational learning agility is a link between individual skill development and organizational adaptation. Menon and Suresh (2022) argued that technology agility is vital to help organizations adapt to changes in technology, and Russ (2021) pointed out that knowledge management is an essential pillar in making organizations sustainable in the digital age of a rapid technological evolution. Similarly, lifelong learning is gaining importance for workers of various generations, and the nature of work continues to change in the wake of COVID-19 (Gupta & Misra, 2021).

The post-pandemic transformation has also impacted the organization, business models, and business networks. The business model adaptation of organizations to the crisis situation (Chanyasak et al., 2022) and the strategic digital acceleration, enabling enterprise transformation (Payraudeau et al., 2021), are two strands of interest that are relevant to this study. Flexible organizational skills and quick adaptation of working crews have been yet further driving the need in global value chains (GVCs) (Panwar et al., 2022). The findings suggest that adaptability of the workforce is not just about the ability to learn new skills but also about the ability of the organization to translate learning into action.

The aim of the present study is to investigate the connection between reskilling opportunities, organizational learning agility, and adaptability of employees in post-pandemic labor markets in context. The study suggests that the reskilling can be enhanced by the organizational support, and organizational-supported reskilling can help to develop the learning agility, and learning agility can be helpful to the adaptability of the employees. The research therefore sets up a framework between workforce reskilling and organizational learning processes and employee adaptation.

This paper is organized in the following way: The theoretical aspects and the research backgrounds are presented in the second section. The research method followed is described in section 3. The results and analysis are presented in section 4, while the discussion and implications of HRM are in section 5. The study is summarized, and future research directions are outlined in section 6.

Theoretical Background and Research Framework

Reskilling and Post-Pandemic Workforce Development

Reskilling involves the building of new knowledge, skills, and abilities to equip employees to thrive in new and evolving work contexts. With the post-pandemic labor market, reskilling becomes more relevant as organizations are implementing digital technologies, reengineering work processes, flexible working arrangements, and new occupations. Because of shifts in professions caused by global trends, Covid-19, and digitalization, continuous development of capabilities becomes increasingly important (Wang et al., 2022). The necessity of learning new skills is also becoming an essential component of workforce readiness in India, which is related to changes in the employment situation and technology (Chakrabarti, 2022).

Workforce development efforts have also been further supported by Industry 4.0. The application of automation, digital technologies, and processes driven by data can change the roles, skill sets, and capabilities needed for newly introduced work activities, thereby creating the difficulties of sustainable HRM (Agarwal et al., 2022). Moreover,

increased use of 4IR technology during the pandemic period also brought to attention the necessity of having technological capability in order to be able to keep functioning during disruptive times (Agbehadji et al., 2021). Reskilling should not just be regarded as a solution to individual skills gaps but as an organizational approach to keep the workforce ready.

Educational reskilling initiatives also need to include opportunities for employees to put into practice new skills and knowledge. Training programs that are not linked to organizational practices can have a short-term effect on long-term adaptations of the workforce. Organizations must therefore use formal training and ongoing learning, knowledge sharing, mentoring, and experience. An approach like this can help staff make learning transfer to the workplace and help them get ready for shifting roles. For this reason, the present study takes reskilling opportunities as the organizational learning and development opportunities that provide employees with competencies that are important for the changing requirements of their work.

Organizational Learning Agility

Organizational learning agility is the power of an organization and its members to learn quickly, disseminate, analyze, and apply knowledge to adapt to environmental and technological shifts. It is not just about traditional employee training; it's about how learning is woven into organizational activities. It is only when knowledge can be shared with other employees in an organization and transformed into better ways of working that knowledge acquisition will be valuable. With technological revolutions taking place at an ever-growing speed, Russ (2021) pointed out that knowledge management will become critical for sustainable development.

Organizational agility has also become more important in view of technology-related transformations. According to Menon & Suresh (2022), technology agility is one of the key technology capabilities of any firm that allows it to adapt to technological changes. Today's work has become digitalized, and employees need to acquire new technologies and get used to working differently in a relatively short period of time after the pandemic. Organizational learning agility can help in this process by creating a learning culture where people can learn from each other, try something new, and apply new knowledge.

This concept has also been linked to the notion of lifelong learning. In addition, Gupta & Misra (2021) stressed the importance of lifelong learning in a multigenerational workforce in the era of coronavirus to demonstrate the fact that there is a need for learning to help employees at different stages in their careers. Therefore, organizational learning agility may provide a tool for turning reskilling into organizational skills through continuous learning process. The impact of reskilling will be not only on the individual when there is a chance for learning and applying it.

H1: Reskilling opportunities significantly influence organizational learning agility.

Employee Adaptability

Adaptability of employees is the skill of changing their behaviors, knowledge, skills, and work habits as the organization changes. This is especially important in the era of "post-pandemic" employment, as workers can find their employment roles redefined, new technologies, hybrid working, more demanding customer requirements, and new organizational processes. Thus, adaptability is an important capability of the workforce that is needed to be effective in the changing environment.

The changes in the organization since the onset of COVID-19 have been spread over multiple facets. Chanyasak et al. (2022) pointed out that business-model adaptation is a strategic reaction to crisis situations, and Payraudeau et al. (2021) talked about strategic digital acceleration as a supporting factor for enterprise transformation. It requires the alteration of the existing competencies of the workers as well as the development of new ones. Flexibility and responsiveness have become even more important given the changes in the supply chain worldwide (Panwar et al., 2022).

Employee adaptability has the potential to be bolstered by learning agility since employees who learn and apply knowledge continuously could be better equipped to respond to a changing work requirement. Organizational learning will be a process that can help to transfer reskilling into specific skills, and adaptability will be the capacity to apply those skills in the event of changes in work conditions. Hence, learning agility is expected to directly relate to the adaptability of the employees.

H2: Organizational learning agility significantly influences employee adaptability.

Research Framework and Hypotheses

The theoretical framework brings together the three main constructs of this study: opportunities for reskilling, organizational learning agility, and adaptability of employees. Reskilling opportunities are set as independent, as they represent the initial conditions for the capability renewal process, with organizational investment in employee capability as a given. Organizational learning agility is set as a mediating mechanism, as it is a process that takes place within an organization where new knowledge can be communicated, understood, and utilized. The dependent variable, adaptability of employees, is presented as the outcome since it represents the ability of the human resources to adapt to the variability of work needs.

This proposed relationship is especially applicable in the current labor markets in the post-pandemic era, in which technological change and organizational restructuring render the need for constant capability development. While reskilling offers employees new skills, the learning environment in the organization plays an important role in the effective incorporation of the new skills in daily work. This argument aligns with the upskilling literature, technology agility, knowledge management, and lifelong learning literature (Chakrabarti, 2022; Menon & Suresh, 2022; Russ, 2021; Gupta & Misra, 2021).

The framework further proposes a mediating relationship. The impact of reskilling can be direct, since it is aimed at building the necessary skills, but also indirect by gaining the ability to learn as an organization. People can transfer new skills more easily into adaptive behaviors at work when it is encouraged and is available for them to practice. The post-pandemic research findings of the changing business models, digitally accelerated enterprises, and flexible business operational structure further support the relevance of this mechanism (Chanyasak et al., 2022; Payraudeau et al., 2021; Panwar et al., 2022).

H3: Organizational learning agility significantly mediates the relationship between reskilling opportunities and employee adaptability.

Research Methodology

The study is designed as a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to explore the relationships between the factors of reskilling opportunities, organizational learning agility, and adaptability of employees in post-pandemic workplaces. Data is suggested to be gathered utilizing a structured question by five-point Likert scales from strongly disagree (rating 1) to strongly agree (rating 5). The respondents are employees in organizations who have had technological, operational, and/or work-practice changes since the pandemic. The convenience and purposive sampling method can be employed to get relevant respondents.

The questionnaire includes items that assess three constructs: opportunities for reskilling, organizational learning agility, and employee adaptability. Descriptive statistics are used to summarize the respondent characteristics and make up the responses, and Cronbach's alpha, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis are used to test the reliability and correlation between the variables. Using mediation analysis, the relationship between the two variables of reskilling opportunities and employee adaptability is considered from the point of view of organizational learning agility. This analytical framework generally aligns with recent empirical studies that have quantitatively investigated reskilling, learning agility, and adaptability of the workforce in a survey-based approach.

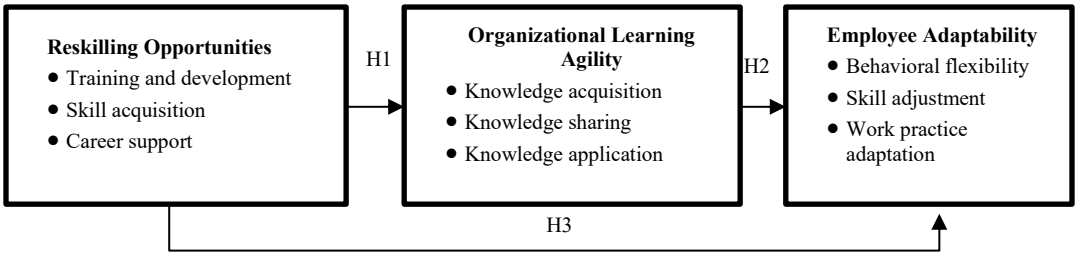


Fig. 1: Proposed Research Framework for Reskilling, Organizational Learning Agility, and Employee Adaptability

The relationship between the study variables is summarized in Fig. 1, which shows the proposed independent, mediating, and dependent variables, reskilling opportunities, organizational learning agility, and employee adaptability, respectively. The three hypotheses that were put forward in the study are implemented in the framework,

which will serve as the foundation for further analysis of the data collected from the study. More recent studies also make learning agility a link between organizational learning practices and employee abilities and adaptation.

Results and Analysis

The analysis looked at the relationships between reskilling opportunities, organizational learning agility, and adaptability of the employees. The descriptive results show a more favorable perception of the 3 constructs compared to each other. Organizational learning agility scored the highest mean score (M = 3.87), reskilling opportunities (M = 3.79), and employee adaptability (M = 3.84). The reliability coefficients were greater than the commonly accepted criterion of 0.70, which is adequate for internal consistency of the measurement scales.

Positive relationships were found between the three study variables as indicated by the Pearson correlation results. Organizational learning agility showed a positive relationship with reskilling opportunities ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.001$), and there was a positive relationship between organizational learning agility and adaptability of employees ($r = 0.681$, $p < 0.001$). The employee adaptability was also positively correlated with reskilling opportunities ($r = 0.574$, $p < 0.001$). This makes these results preliminary evidence of the proposed relationships.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, Correlation and Hypothesis Testing

Variable	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α	1	2	3
Reskilling Opportunities	3.79	0.68	0.884	1.000		
Organizational Learning Agility	3.87	0.64	0.901	0.612***	1.000	
Employee Adaptability	3.84	0.63	0.892	0.574***	0.681***	1.000

Note: ***$p < 0.001$.

The results of regression analysis also showed that the reskilling opportunities had a significant influence on organizational learning agility ($\beta = 0.612$, $t = 9.214$, $p < 0.001$) to support H1. In addition, organizational learning agility proved to have a significant relationship with employee adaptability ($\beta = 0.681$, $t = 11.083$, $p < 0.001$), validating the second hypothesis (H2). The mediation analysis showed that there was an indirect effect of reskilling opportunities on employee adaptability via organizational learning agility ($\beta = 0.417$, 95% CI [0.302, 0.548]). The confidence interval didn't contain zero, so H3 was accepted. The results suggest that organizational learning agility is a significant mechanism by which reskilling opportunities can aid employees in their adaptability.

Fig 2 shows the general trend of all the three variables, and from this, it is observed that whereas the mean value of learning agility and employee adaptability was slightly above the mean value of reskilling opportunities, the general trend remained the same.



Fig. 2: Mean Scores of Reskilling Opportunities, Organizational Learning Agility, and Employee Adaptability

Figure 2 shows a general trend of positive scores for the three constructs. Given that the score was higher in organizational learning agility, learning-oriented organizational practices could be an important pathway to translate reskilling initiatives to adaptability at the level of the employee. This is also in line with the recent findings on the relationship between learning agility and employee competencies and processes in organizational learning.

Discussion and HRM Implications

The results show that the reskilling opportunities are significantly positively associated with organizational learning agility, supporting H1. This indicates that providing employees with chances to learn new skills is likely to encourage them to engage in ongoing learning and skill utilization. The results are consistent with those found by Chakrabarti (2022) and Agarwal et al. (2022) who stressed the increasing importance of upskilling in the changing labor market in India, and the requirement for labor capacity building in the transformation of India's labor market to Industry 4.0, respectively.

Learning agility at an organizational level was also found to be positively correlated with the adaptability of employees. The hypothesis H2 thus got proved. If the organization supports employees' learning process, facilitates the transfer of knowledge and uses that knowledge in order to address the demands of the job then one can expect a positive effect on its ability to cope up with the changing demands of the job. This is consistent with the emphasis on the concept of being technology agile and organizationally responsive, as discussed by Menon & Suresh (2022).

The mediation effect proves the hypothesis H3, meaning that organizational learning agility works as a mediator between reskilling chances and adaptability of the employees. Thus, the research develops the concept of reskilling by adding the dimension of the context of implementation of the acquired competencies in form of organizational learning context. The significance of the findings is even higher considering the post-pandemic labor market where there is a constant need to adjust the work force to new business models and organization practices (Chanyasak et al., 2022; Payraudeau et al., 2021). Additionally, the findings confirm the importance of the concept of lifelong learning in the context of changes within the multi-generational workforce highlighted by Gupta and Misra (2021).

HRM Implications

The results have several implications for practice for HR managers. Reskilling should be done through ongoing workforce-development processes and not as a one-off training intervention. Second, organizations are able to build learning agility by promoting knowledge sharing processes, digital learning platforms, mentoring, peer learning, and learning by doing. Thirdly, HR departments can periodically review the new competency requirements and design learning programs accordingly to meet the job roles that change over time. Such methods can be useful for facilitating change and technological disruption in the workforce, which is especially relevant in the post-Covid-19 era and with the emergence of new 4th Industrial Revolution technologies (Agbehadji et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022). Overall, HR policies should correspond to lifelong learning and adaptability of different categories of workers and, therefore, connect the personal growth and transformation of the organization.

Conclusion and Future Research

In this study, the connection between reskilling opportunities, learning agility in organizations, and adaptability of employees in the post-pandemic labor market has been studied. According to the results, it has been found that there exists a positive relationship between reskilling opportunities and organizational learning agility ($\beta = 0.612$, $p < 0.001$) and also, organizational learning agility has a positive relationship with adaptability of employees ($\beta = 0.681$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, the mediation analysis has indicated that reskilling opportunities have an indirect effect on the adaptability of employees through organizational learning agility ($\beta = 0.417$, 95% CI [0.302, 0.548]). Such evidence clearly demonstrates that reskilling becomes much more efficient when the process is complemented by structures that ensure continuous learning and application of knowledge. The above-mentioned facts confirm the necessity of creation of learning-oriented HR practices alongside with changes in technology and organization. From the perspective of HRM, it becomes essential to make sure that HRM practices cover such elements of reskilling as continuous learning, knowledge sharing, mentoring, digital learning, and practice of skills. Such an approach can help employees to cope with emerging technologies and demands for changes in work. Due to the conducted study, there is a relationship between reskilling practices and organizational learning agility and adaptability of employees, which is also relevant to post-pandemic HRM research.

These relationships might be examined in other industries, other occupational categories, other sizes of companies, and even other geographic locations. Longitudinal studies could also examine the process of reskilling and learning agility in a longitudinal sense. Other studies in the future can also explore other variables as moderators or mediators,

such as leadership support, digital learning capability, employee engagement, organizational culture, and career development. In addition, research across the three types of employment, remote, hybrid, and conventional, could further help to define the relationship between the shift to these work arrangements and organizational learning and adaptability.

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