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How digital change and innovation in the workplace affect front-line employee retention: a cross-sectional study based on the aged care industry

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1. INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Retaining front-line service professionals is an indispensable task. Digitalization has now been recognized as an effective solution to address the aging population and overcome the shortage of front-line employees. More and more scholars are proposing to use the advantages of emerging technology to attract and retain talent (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2020). In recent years, despite the continued digital change and innovation in the service industry, we know very little about the association between technology quality factors and front-line employee retention, especially in the post-use phase of digital technology (i.e., sustained use of digital technology). Some scholars have proposed that digital workplaces can help attract and retain elderly care talents (Wang *et al.* 2022). Some scholars have found that employee trust is particularly important in digital work environments (Rudolph *et al.*, 2021). Continuous trust helps to promote work engagement (Nicolaou, Ibrahim, & Van Heck, 2013). We also found that digital technology acts as a double-edged sword and that the quality of the technology may lead to distrust of the technology through employees. According to research, distrust can cause anxiety and job burnout among individuals (Fujimoto, Ferdous, Sekiguchi, & Sugianto, 2016). Distrust in the work environment can determine employee performance and turnover.

Currently, there is a gap in the literature regarding the combination between digital technology changes in the workplace and innovation and front-line employees' retention intention in the workplace. Based on this, the main objective of this study is to understand how digital technology quality, continuous trust and distrust affect front-line employees' work engagement, job burnout, and retention intentions, focusing primarily on the post-use phase of digital technology.

2. THEORY AND RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Based on the Information system continuance theory, the hypotheses and research framework are proposed herein (Figure 1).

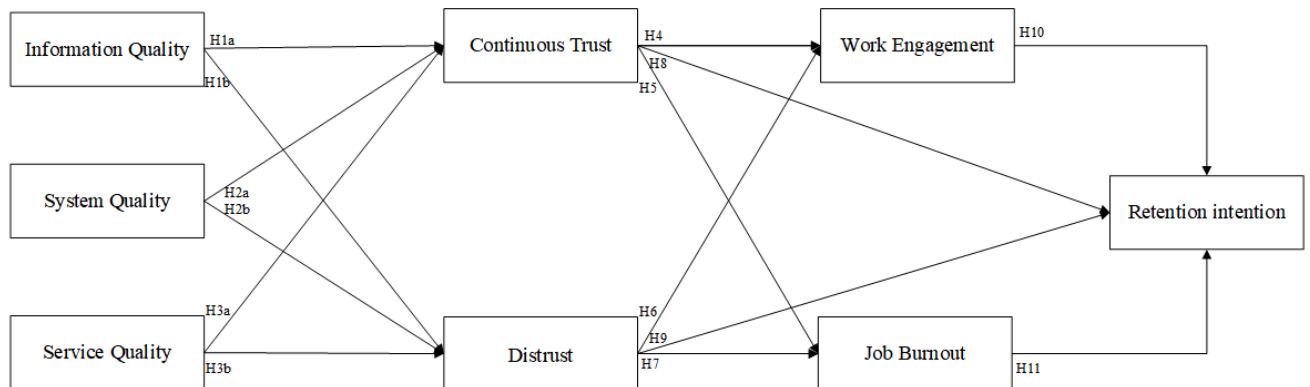


Figure 1. Research framework

580 questionnaires were collected from 13 elderly institutions. This study uses the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. Next, SPSS was used to come in for descriptive statistical analysis.

3. RESULTS AND MAJOR FINDINGS

This study observed some valuable and interesting findings: (1) The results showed that information quality, system quality, and service quality positively influenced the continuous trust of front-line employees. Given this we argue that technology quality is an important factor throughout the developmental stages of employee trust, both in the first interaction with the technology and in the post-use phase. (2) Among other things, we also found that service quality had the great-est impact on continuous trust, which may be due to the fact that in the post-use phase of digital technology, employees are more concerned about the positive impact that service quality brings to their work. (3) In terms of retention intention, our results suggest that continuous trust has a direct and positive effect on retention intention and that continuous trust is a key determinant of retention intention. (4) In terms of distrust, although it has been discussed earlier that service quality is the most important factor in continuous trust, our study did not confirm the effect of service quality on distrust.

4. CONTRIBUTIONS

Our results shows that continuous trust in digital technology is the strongest predictor of retention intentions. Job burnout and distrust were not important for retention intentions. Findings also suggest that qualitative factors of digital technology are important antecedents of continuous trust and distrust. To our knowledge, this study is the first to examine the impact of digital change and innovation in the workplace on front-line employee retention. The focus points are on the relationship between qualitative factors on front-line employees' continuous trust, distrust, work engagement, job burnout, and retention intention in the workplace in the post-use phase of digital technology. This study provides a starting point for researchers to further investigate the study of digital technology change and innovation on retention intention.

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