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The Impact of Disruptive Changes on the Link between the Work Environment and Economic Performance

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Abstract. *The paper investigates the impact of disruptive changes on employee satisfaction and economic performance as well as job stability and work flexibility. The research explores organizational responses to these changes and strategies for employee adaptation to technological and economic challenges. Research evidence shows disruptive changes threaten employment stability and financial performance but simultaneously offer opportunities to boost employee motivation and organizational adaptability through managerial support and ongoing training investments. The research design uses quantitative survey methods to collect data from employees across various economic sectors. The research demonstrates that disruptive changes produce adverse work environment effects yet effective management produces superior organizational performance and job stability. The scientific evidence does not demonstrate a direct relationship between work flexibility and enhanced financial performance. The paper's primary contribution demonstrates the complex relationship between disruptive changes and economic outcomes while showing organizations must adapt and managers need to provide support to address these challenges.*

Keywords: disruptive changes, work environment, economic outcomes, economic performance, organizational adaptability, digital transformation, technological changes.

Introduction

Disruptive changes are profound and significant transformations that fundamentally disrupt existing structures within an economy, industry or organization. These transformations may have various forms: economic crises, rapid digitalization, pandemics, automation, or artificial intelligence system development (Agrawal et al., 2020).

They can profoundly affect the work environment — for better and worse — for both employees and organizations. In this situation, adaptability is an essential skill, requiring workers to acquire new competencies to adapt to shifting demands (Nikolova et al., 2022). On the other hand, digitalization and the flexibility of remote work can enhance autonomy and work-life balance, having a positive impact on employee satisfaction (Contreras et al., 2020).

The purpose of this study is to analyse the impact of disruptive changes on the relationship between the work environment and organizational economic outcomes in a global context marked by accelerated and unpredictable transformations. Digitalization, automation, artificial intelligence, economic crises, and global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic have generated fundamental changes in organizational structure and dynamics, affecting both employee well-being and corporate economic performance (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016).

Our research objectives are as follows are to analyse the impact of disruptive changes on the work environment by identifying the main types of disruptive changes (automation, digitalization, pandemics, economic crises etc.) and assessing their effects on the organizational climate (stress, satisfaction, adaptability, commitment). The study aims to establish the connection between workplace environment and economic results by analyzing how organizational climate variables affect employee productivity and efficiency since positive work environments boost

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motivation and adaptability yet negative climates with uncertainty and poor managerial support reduce performance and retention rates. The research aims to evaluate employee turnover effects on corporate economic performance and develop recommendations for organizational resilience improvement through climate enhancement strategies and employee support models for major transformations.

The article is organized into five separate chapters, each with a clearly defined part of presenting this research. In the Introduction chapter, we present the general framework of our research, the purpose of the study, and the objectives that were set. The second chapter introducing the literature review, establishes the definitions of main concepts applied in the research and formulates the research questions, which leads to the statistical hypotheses that will be tested for the confirmation or rejection, all based on the literature written previously. The section of methodology describes the research approach as well as the methods employed for data collection and analysis. Through statistical tests in the Results chapter, i will present and analyse the findings derived from the data analysis, highlighting their implications in the context of original hypotheses. Finally, in the Conclusion chapter, we summarize the important findings from our research and also suggests the new directions for the future research in this field.

Literature review

Defining the key concepts

In this chapter, we will begin by defining the key concepts used in the research: disruptive changes, work environment, organizational climate, and economic performance, based on the existing literature.

Disruptive changes is a term introduced and popularized by Clayton M. Christensen and is defined as rapid and significant transformations that modify radically the way of working in a specific industry, company, or working environment (Clayton M., 1997). These changes can be attributed to a range of developments - whether in technology, the economy or society or politics. These are, however, characterized generally as: 1. unexpected developments with profound impact, 2. requiring prompt adoption of new strategies to stay competitive, 3. capable of eliminating traditional business models, 4. states of uncertainty, and 5. able to impact employee morale, requiring companies to be flexible and adaptable.

The work environment, according to the existing literature, is defined as "the collection of condition and interactions, that govern how the employees perceive, modify and contribute to the organizational targets" (Grawitch & Ballard, 2016). It embraces more than just physical features (including workplace, tools and technology), psychosocial dimensions (organizational culture, rapport between workmates and leadership style) and structural elements (policies, procedures, amenities offered by the organization).

The economic performance of organizations is directly influenced by the work environment, and the correlation between the two increases with disruptive changes. Meanwhile, a conducive workplace, which encourages employees to be flexible and be able to adapt to the current reality, can help them to improve their productivity which leads to organizational effectiveness as well (Decuypere & Schaufeli, 2020). For instance, an uncertain organizational climate and lack of managerial support result in low performance and low employee retention (van den Heuvel et al., 2020). Recent studies highlight that organizations with the highest investment in employee well-being and adaptability are more likely to maintain their economic competitiveness through disruptive changes (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016).

Organizational climate is defined as employees collective perception of the work environment within an organization, including the policies, practices, procedures and interactions that shape their daily experience (Groza & Luchian-Ursachi, 2021). A positive organizational climate has been shown to have a significant influence on creative performance in the public sector. Research indicates that individual creativity mediates the relationship between organizational climate and innovative behaviour, highlighting the importance of a supportive work environment in fostering employee creativity (Mutonyi et al., 2020).

In addition, studies indicated the crucial role of a positive organizational climate in contributing to employee well-being and healthy workplace relationships while at the same time reducing decreasing behaviours negative behaviors, including workplace harassment (Janiukštis et al., 2024).

Economic performance involves how well a company or country achieves the goals that attempt to optimize its outputs, reflecting how efficient and effective it is in utilizing its available resources. It is therefore measured by economic and financial ratios, including profitability, return on equity, liquidity and solvency (Jurj, 2022).

Previous Research

Organizations must adapt their strategies quickly because of present-day disruptions including automation and digitalization and economic crises and pandemics to preserve work stability and economic market success. Research findings demonstrate that organizations need flexible organizational climates together with efficient human resource management systems to navigate uncertain conditions (Kniffin et al., 2021). The current research lacks a detailed understanding of how disruptive changes affect work environment characteristics and subsequent economic performance. Our research addresses three essential questions to understand organizational impacts from these transformations while using statistical methods to evaluate relevant hypotheses.

The first proposed research question is: *How do disruptive changes influence employee satisfaction and motivation?* The workplace has undergone fundamental changes because of disruptive elements including automation and digitalization and remote work transition. The study (Wang et al., 2021) demonstrates that disruptive changes generate conflicting outcomes because employees gain independence but experience stress and anxiety while their job satisfaction decreases because of uncertainty and forced adaptation. The research evaluates whether disruptive changes lead to decreased employee satisfaction or if they increase organizational motivation through appropriate adaptation strategies. Based on the above, we propose the first hypothesis of the study, *H1: Disruptive changes have a negative impact on employee motivation.*

The second research question is: *To what extent does the work environment influenced by disruptive changes affect the economic performance of a company?* A well-managed work environment which operates efficiently leads to better employee productivity that directly affects the economic performance of the company. Research by (Ahmed et al., 2021) shows that hostile work environments decrease employee performance which leads organizations to achieve better economic results because they retain staff better and get more work done. A work environment with psychological safety according to (Clarke et al., 2024), protects employee welfare while supporting transition processes in times of change. The research findings indicate that organizations with positive organizational climate achieve better economic performance during disruptive changes. The organization's adaptability level serves as the mediating factor which explains how disruptive changes in work environments negatively affect economic performance. Thus, we propose the second hypothesis of the study, *H2: The work environment influenced by* *disruptive changes negatively affects the economic performance of organizations, and this effect is mediated by the organization's adaptability level.*

The third research question examined in this research is: *Is there a direct relationship between work flexibility (remote/hybrid) and companies' financial performance?* Remote and hybrid work models gained widespread adoption after the COVID-19 pandemic and their effects on productivity and economic performance continue to spark ongoing debate. Research findings indicate work flexibility allows people to balance work and personal life better thus leading to higher productivity levels. (Naqshbandi et al., 2024) found flexible work arrangements lead to enhanced job performance which is influenced by employee commitment levels. Thus, we establish the final hypothesis of this research, *H3: Work flexibility positively influences companies' financial performance.*

Methodology

Research methodology represents the systematic framework of principles, methods, and techniques used to design, conduct, and evaluate a scientific investigation, with the goal of obtaining valid and reproducible knowledge (Creswell, 2018).

In the following chapter we outline the approach used to examine the impacts of disruptive changes on the work-environment/economic outcomes relationship. A quantitative research design was employed to analyze the impact of disruptive factors like automation, accelerated digitalization, and economic crises on employee satisfaction and organizational performance using a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection tool. This system was chosen because it allowed for obtaining an objective and replicable measurement, as well as the correlation and trends of the analyzed variables.

To achieve a complete perspective on the issue, we surveyed to a cross section of employees from across industries and with varied levels of experience and education to get a fuller picture of the issue. In order to secure the proper representation and equal distribution within the relevant groups, the participants were randomly selected.

The sample size was calculated to ensure a 95% confidence level and a maximum margin of error of 7.5%. Thus, based on the formula used to calculate the sample size:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \cdot \mathrm{p} \cdot (1 - \mathrm{p})}{E^2} = 170.48$$

where: n is the sample size, Z is the critical value for the confidence level (1.96 for a 95% level), p is the estimated proportion (we chose 0.5 to maximize the sample size). The calculated sample size reached 171 unique responses which exceeded the calculated minimum. The collected sample volume meets the requirements to achieve a 95% result guarantee with a maximum error of 7.5%. The obtained results demonstrate validity and relevance to the general population under study.

Data were collected by distributing an online questionnaire through survey platforms and social networks, which enabled me to reach participants from various industries. The survey protected respondent anonymity by not requesting personally identifiable information. The survey was conducted online between January 6, 2025 and February 21, 2025, and it was available online at: https://forms.gle/B3LpRHGbQDm2V2sM7. The survey method enabled the collection of numerous responses during this short period. This worked well for sampling as the data provides diversity and representativeness. The data were stored and analyzed using statistical methods to test the proposed hypotheses and the IBM SPSS software for frequency calculations, means, descriptive statistics, as well as correlation tests, linear regression and mediation analysis were applied.

The questionnaire used in the research was design to analyse the impact of disruptive changes on the work environment and the economic performance of organization. It is structured into four essential sections, demographic and professional data, perception of disruptive changes, organizational climate and perception of economic performance. The questions from first section, along with those for determine the perceived changes and the desire to leave the company, were closed questions with a single answer. In contrast the questions from the other sections were formulated on a fire-point Likert scale, ranging from ”Total Disagreement/Negative Impact” to ”Total Agreement/Positive Impact”. The structure of the questionnaire reflects the need to understand both the individual characteristics of respondents and the perceived impact of disruptive changes on the workplace and economic outcomes.

The first part of the questionnaire gathers demographic and professional information necessary for assessing the relationship between disruptive changes and employee experience. Demographic questions such as about age, gender, industry, level of experience, job title, and type of employment helps in segmenting the respondents. These variables are key to assessing variations in perceptions on the disruptive changes across experience, organizational position, and industry.

The second section examines employee perspectives regarding disruptive changes. The survey questions determine which changes employees have experienced (pandemic, AI, restructuring, economic crisis) and their assessment of these changes' impact on job security and stress levels and organizational change management. Creating this safe environment enables researchers to understand employee vulnerability and organizational success in preventing negative disruptive transformation effects.

Section three investigates the work environment alongside organizational climate that develops during periods of change. The evaluation examines the effectiveness of internal communication as well as team collaboration and managerial support and work flexibility and change impact on employee motivation. The work flexibility question stands out as crucial because the last research hypothesis demonstrates how flexibility leads to better financial performance for the company. The research investigates employee plans to depart from the organization during the following six months. The study investigates essential organizational factors which impact employee satisfaction as well as job stability when disruptive changes occur.The questionnaire's last section assesses employee perceptions about organizational performance. The assessment questions evaluate disruptive changes' effects on company performance together with productivity levels and workforce turnover and economic projections. The section examines whether organizations with better climates can reduce the adverse economic impacts from disruptive changes.

The research uses this questionnaire to establish a precise understanding of disruptive changes' effects on work environment and economic results and to identify elements which either reduce or increase these effects. The analysis of responses will enable the formulation of relevant conclusions for organizational strategies to adapt to disruptive changes.

Results and discussions

After implementing the questionnaire online and sharing it with a sample of individuals employed in firms across various sectors located in the Bucharest metropolitan area, a total of 177 conclusive, non-repeatable reactions were generated.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the measures collected through our questionnaire, Reliability Test was conducted using SPSS. The reliability for the nine Likert-scale questions was indicated by the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, calculated to be 0.788, meaning that nine Likert-type questions are highly correlated and that these questions can provide reliable data for further analysis.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.788	0.775	9

Source: Authors' own research.

The first five questions were related to profiling the respondents after conducting the questionnaire. Of the 177 unique respondents, 62.1% identified as female while the remaining 37.9% (67) identified as male.

Regarding age distribution, Respondents were classified into six age groups; most were in the 27-32 years (41.2%) and 21-26 years (29.4%) age groups. We also constructed a professional profile of the respondents, which are included in Table 2.

Table 2. Respondents' Professional Profile

Experience in the field of activity	Percentage	Job Level	Percentage
Under 1 year	3.4%	Entry-level	19.2%
1-3 years	29.4%	Specialist/Expert	67.2%
3-5 years	32.2%	Middle management	19.6%
Over 5 years	35%	Top management	14.1%
Field of activity	**Percentage**	**Type of work**	**Percentage**
IT and Technology	34.5%	Remote	10.2%
Finance and Banking	42.9%	Hybrid	72.9%
Consulting	11.9%	On-site	16.9%
Education	1.7%		
Commerce	9%		

Source: Authors' own research.

The questionnaire included a specific question to determine which major disruptive change respondents experienced during the previous three years. The survey results indicate that inflation together with rising living expenses represented the most significant change for 50.3% of respondents since it directly affected their professional and personal economic situations. The analysis shows that artificial intelligence development (13.6%) and legislative changes (12.4%) and COVID-19 pandemic effects (11.9%) represent important changes among others. The respondents identified economic crisis as a minor factor (6.8%) alongside major technological industry advances (3.4%) and geopolitical conflicts (1.7%).

By analysing the impact of legislative changes across various fields of activity, a contingency table (Crosstab) was created between the variable related to the main disruptive change perceived and the respondents' field of activity. The results indicated that the IT sector is the most affected by legislative changes, a correlation confirmed by the Pearson Chi-Square test (Pearson Chi-Square = 114.925, $p < 0.001$), which revealed a significant relationship between these variables. This result can be explained by legislative changes in Romania, which eliminated certain tax benefits that employees and companies in the IT sector previously enjoyed, thus generating uncertainty in the industry and negatively impacting employee salaries.

To better understand the impact of disruptive changes on the relationship between the work environment and economic outcomes, it is important to analyse the distribution of responses to the 9 Likert-scale questions in the questionnaire. By calculating the mean and standard deviation, we will be able to identify general trends and the degree of variation in participants' perceptions.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Întrebare	Mean	Std. Deviation
To what extent do you believe that disruptive changes have affected the stability of your job?	2.99	0.953
Have you experienced an increase in stress levels during these changes?	3.29	0.867
Do you think the organization managed the disruptive changes effectively?	3.05	0.967
How do you assess communication within the company during the changes?	3.40	0.942
Did you feel support from management during this period?	3.32	0.948
How has work flexibility changed during the disruptive changes?	3.22	0.792
Was your personal motivation affected?	3.31	0.892
Do you believe that the company's performance was impacted by disruptive changes?	1.41	0.494
Do you think that a better organizational climate could have reduced the negative impact of disruptive changes on the company's performance?	4.03	0.804
How do you assess the economic future of the company in the next 2 years?	3.86	0.877

Source: Authors' own research.

As shown, most of the respondents believe that a fair better organizational climate can reduce the adverse effect of disruptive changes on the performance of the company, as indicated by the mean score of 4.03, with over 67% of respondents selecting positive options (4 or 5). However, the variety of the opinions is present, with a group of respondents (around 25%) being rather indifferent, which means to them the effect of enhanced organizational climate is not obvious.

To test the first hypothesis of the research, *H1: Disruptive changes have a negative impact on employee motivation,* we will use a linear regression analysis using SPSS. In this case, the dependent variable is the level of employee motivation, and the independent variables will include the impact of disruptive changes on job stability, the stress level experienced as a result of these changes, and the extent to which the disruptive changes were managed by companies. The analysis demonstrates that organizational management of disruptive changes ($\beta = 0.583$, $p = 0.000$) produces a significant positive effect on employee motivation. The analysis shows that job stability ($\beta = -0.37$, $p = 0.553$) and stress levels caused by changes ($\beta = 0.055$, $p = 0.423$) do not produce significant effects on motivation. The model explains 33.3% of the variance in motivation ($R^2 = 0.333$), while the F-test confirms the overall model significance ($F = 28.817$, $p = 0.000$). The regression analysis findings partially reject the first hypothesis. The study findings do not support the notion that disruptive changes create negative effects on employee motivation. The research findings demonstrate that effective management of these changes produces positive effects. The results demonstrate that organizational response to changes matters because inadequate change management produces negative effects. The hypothesis now states that proper management of disruptive changes leads to positive employee motivation outcomes.

For the second hypothesis *H2: The work environment affected by disruptive changes negatively influences the economic performance of organizations, and this effect is mediated by the level of organizational adaptability,* we will conduct a mediation analysis using the SPSS

PROCESS Macro plugin developed by Andrew F. Hayes. For this analysis, we shall consider as dependent variable (Y) as the level to which the company's economic performance was affected, the independent variable (X) as the level to which the work environment was affected by disruptive changes, and the mediator variable (M) as the adaptability of the organization.

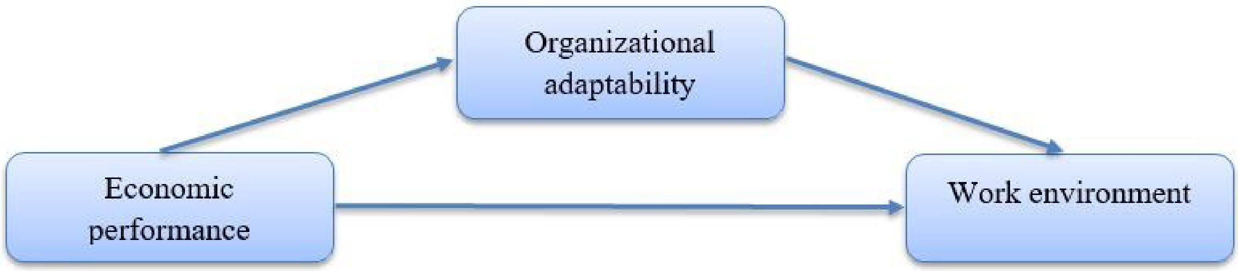

Figure 1. Description of Mediation Analysis

Source: Authors' own research.

For the beginning, we analyzed the relationship between the work environment and the company's adaptability through regression and observed a significant relationship ($\beta = 0.7065$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that a stable organizational climate and efficient communication significantly contribute to the organization's ability to adapt.

The following step involves conducting regression analysis to study the connection between adaptability and economic performance which shows a substantial relationship ($\beta = 0.4563$, $p < 0.044$). Organizations that excel at handling disruptive changes tend to maintain or enhance their economic performance.

Table 4. Direct and indirect effects

Direct effect of X on Y					
Effect	**se**	**Z**	**p**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**
-0.1246	0.2258	-0.5517	0.5811	-0.5671	0.3180
Indirect effect of X on Y					
Effect	**BootSE**	**BootLLCI**	**BootULCI**		
0.3224	0.1787	0.0254	0.7278		

Source: Authors' own research.

The last step involves studying both direct and indirect relationships between work environment and economic performance. The direct effect shows how the work environment affects economic performance independently from the mediation variable while the indirect effect demonstrates how the work environment affects economic performance through the mediation variable organizational adaptability. Our analysis shows that the direct relationship between these variables lacks statistical significance ($\beta = -0.1246$, $p < 0.5811$), which means the work environment does not directly impact economic performance at a statistically significant level. The results show that adaptability acts as a significant indirect effect because the confidence interval does not contain zero (BootLLCI = 0.0254, BootULCI = 0.7272). The results show complete mediation because the direct effect is not significant but the indirect effect is.

In conclusion, *hypothesis H2 is partially confirmed*, as no direct link was found between the work environment affected by disruptive changes and economic performance. However, the analysis demonstrated that the negative effect of an unstable organizational climate can be influenced by a high level of organizational adaptability. Following this analysis, the second hypothesis is reformulated as follows: *The work environment affected by disruptive changes does* *not directly influence the economic performance of organizations, but the negative effect of an unstable organizational climate can be mitigated through a high level of organizational adaptability.*

To test the final hypothesis of the research H3*: Flexibility of work positively influences the financial performance of companies,* the Pearson correlation test where the two variables used are work flexibility and economic performance.

Table 5. Results of the correlation test for H3

		Work flexibility	Economic performance
Work flexibility	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.045
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.554
	N	177	177
Economic performance	Pearson Correlation	-0.045	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.554	
	N	177	177

Source: Authors' own research.

The research findings indicate that there is no significant correlation between work flexibility and financial performance. The correlation value (-0.045) is significantly low, and the p-value is more than 0.05. The final hypothesis requires modification: Work flexibility does not significantly influence the financial performance of companies.

Conclusion

The study's initial objectives were fulfilled according to my research results which also validated specific aspects of the proposed hypotheses. The research examined the work environment and economic performance of organizations when disruptive changes occur.

The questionnaire results combined with descriptive statistics of essential variables demonstrate that disruptive changes substantially affected employees through stress levels and personal motivation and job stability. Multiple employees reported that better organizational climate management would have decreased the negative effects of these changes on the company performance. The assessment of communication and work flexibility was relatively positive yet employees rated leadership support as insufficient. The employees maintain their confidence about the company's economic growth despite facing these challenges.

Research aimed to investigate how disruptive changes affect work environments in relation to organizational economic outcomes thus three research hypotheses were developed. The research showed disruptive changes do not reduce employee motivation but proper management of these disruptions leads to positive outcomes. The study confirmed that organizations must respond effectively to change because unstable organizational climates reduce economic performance but organizations that adapt well can minimize these negative effects. The research did not validate the hypothesis about work flexibility improving financial performance because the variables showed no significant and minimal relationship.

There are limitations to the study which should be considered when interpreting the results. The research methods use employee surveys from organizations so participants may introduce personal interpretations when describing disruptive changes and their effects on work environments. The research depends on employee self-reported data which introduces potential errors because people might either be dishonest or their perceptions differ from their actual feelings about disruptive change and its relation to organizational economic value.

Statistical tests and results allow us to make several recommendations for improving the relationship between disruptive changes and work environment and economic performance: Improve organizational climate; Leadership should actively support employees; Work-life balance and flexibility should be enhanced; Organizational adaptability strategies should be explained to stakeholders; Change management should be performed effectively; Employees should feel more confident about the company's future direction.

The research can be enhanced by expanding the participant organizations across multiple sectors and geographical areas to obtain broader insights about disruptive change effects on work environments and economic outcomes. The study would benefit from additional research on how disruptive changes evolve across time to assess their lasting effects. Organizations should determine which disruptive changes (technological, economic, social) affect their work environment differently from their economic performance to receive appropriate adaptation strategies for their specific change types.

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