Agile Workforce – the Proactive & Adaptive Workforce; a Strategic Need of Changing Workplaces - Potential Challenges, Risks and Remedies

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Abstract

Agile workforce means to adapt the environmental changes both internal and external of organizations proactively and quickly. This may be the strategic approach of organizations for its competiveness and sustainability. Many research studies proved agile quality is the asset of organizations. The changes in work environment make the agile workforce to get updates in goals, technology, organization structure and behavior of employees. There are a few papers discussed the characteristics of agile workforce, their challenges and risks in workplace. This papers aims to discuss the characteristics, types of agile workforce, the factors influence the agile of workforce and the challenges and risks they face. For which the study used qualitative design using literature survey and reviewing the existing literature using thematic analysis and summarized in the sections. The study explored the challenges of agile workforce like lack of facility and infrastructure, communication gaps, presenteeism, lone working, techno stress, and so on. The challenges can be met by suing strategic interventions like proper training programs, proper instructions, and counseling for mental health risks, proper work structure planning, regulating feedback mechanism and plan for agile workforce wellbeing.

Key words – Agility, Agile workforce, Health Risks of Agile Workers, Remote working, Presenteeism, Lone working

1. AGILE WORKFORCE

Agile workforce is the workforce which has unique qualities, capabilities in the workplace to respond the changes proactively, make steps consistently to get adopted to the changes, ready with resilient quality for facing the challenges. They are able to give a high level of engagement and commitment in work. They may be self determined, tasks oriented and self directional. They will have agility in work tasks completion. They have certain abilities, attitudes and a set of behaviors responding the dynamic workplace and business changes in the organization environment (Muduli & Pandya, 2018; Salmen & Festing, 2022). They are capable of responding to the unpredictable changes (Breu et al., 2002). An agile employee is able to overcome the obstacles quickly and flexible in the complex situations (Bosco, 2007). Agile workers are not only able to respond the sudden changes, but also they are able to take advantage of these changes (Chonko & Jones, 2005). They will learn and relearn their required competencies and they are assertive, persistent, collaborative and continuous skills to learn (Sya & Mangundjaya, 2020).

2. QUALITY OF AGILE WORK-FORCE

Plonka, (1997) observes that an agile workforce will have unique behavior with positive attitude towards learning and development, responding changes, problem identification and finding solutions, adapting new technology, and generating innovative ideas for survival and sustainable organization. Kidd (1994) describes the agile quality of workforce is the workforce ability to respond the changes in an appropriate and timely manner: and the workforce ability to change and exploit the change as a growing opportunity (Muduli & Pandya, 2018). Breu et al., (2002) describes the agile worker someone is able to process information quickly and ready for taking decisions for becoming adoptive rather than re-acting the turbulent situations. They are self motivated and self development oriented. Further, Plonka, (1997) states that they are open to change, proactive and make implement the changes though carrying out the various roles and responsibilities (Muduli, 2016). Breu et al., (2002) highlights the agile employee will have the quality of giving value to

collaborative work and team tasks through information sharing Fabiansyah, A., & Tanjung, O.L. (2025).

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF AGILE EMPLOYEE

Griffin & Hesketh (2003) and Dyer & Shafer (2003), Sherehiy & Karwowski (2014) framed a model with three dimensions of agile workforce namely proactive, adaptive, and resilient. a) Proactive agile workforce refers to the workforce anticipates the problems are going to happen in immediate future, taking initiative to provide solutions, doing accordance with the problem context and they will resolve the problems (Sherehiy & Karwowski, 2014). Then, the proactive behavior of agile employee initiates actively the seeking the opportunities, and improvise the methods for leading the opportunities. b) Adaptive agile workforce - Griffin & Hesketh, 2003; Sherehiy & Karwowski, 2014) observed the adaptable quality of agile workforce like interpersonal adaptability that means ability to socialize in the workplace and work with individuals from different professions and backgrounds, ability to carry out the multiple roles and responsibilities, working on different tasks, working in diverse teams and individual modifications to oneself becoming adapt to the environment, c) Resilient agile workforce- it refers the workforce with positive attitude towards changes, having innovative ideas, having tolerance in coping with environmental changes, tolerance for stressful situations (Sherehiy & Karwowski, 2014). This model is very popular among the workforce agility literature and is widely adopted in various studies (Alavi et al., 2014; Cai et al., 2018; Muduli & Pandya, 2018), Fabiansyah, A., & Tanjung, O.L. (2025).

4. CAPABILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR BEING AGILE IN WORKPLACE

The study of L'Hermitte, Bowles, Tathman, & Brooks (2015) highlighted the capabilities of agile workforce that are being multi skilled, experienced, adaptable and team-oriented. a) The proactive capability in workplace denotes being aware of surrounded changes. It includes observing the change opportunity, fixing the change oriented goals, identifying problems and make an attempt to find solutions and achieving the results (Wu & Wang, 2011). b) Self-awareness capability – it depends on the self responds and reacts to the workplace situations that makes every individual aware of surroundings and changes, understanding one's own self potential to respond the changes and knowing the weakness, developing the strength which meets the changes (Lawrence, Dunn, & Spolter, 2018). c) Resilient capability – it refers to having belief on one's own self and strong in actions,

decisions, evaluating the self and understanding the needs for development and growing (McCray, Palmer, & Chmiel, 2016). d) Adaptable capability – it refers to understand the surroundings of workplace, make attempts to learn the changes, putting oneself into the practice and facing the difficulties by learning and developing own potential and support for success of organization (Al-Ghazali, 2020). This capability leads one to the professional future opportunities. e) Business orientation capability – it refers to being innovative, opportunistic, risk taking, seeking updates and building networks for success of business functions. This refers to being pioneer of new actions (Perlines, 2018) defined it as, the capacity of the business to carry out activities related to innovation, to assume risks and to pioneer new actions.

5. FACTORS DETERMINING THE AGILITY IN WORKFORCE

5.1 Individual factors

Workforce agility may be influenced by emotional intelligence, interpersonal competence – being self aware, having control on self, self motivation, personality, personality types, psychological development, growth mindset, commitment affection trust, resistance to change engagement and so on. The study of Hosein & Yousefi (2012), states that emotional behavior and intelligence may hugely influence the agility of workforce in the workplace. As Goleman (2001) mentioned the self awareness, self motivation, self regulation may impact the agile quality of employees. Maran et al., (2022) in their study mentioned that the personality dimension of individual like preferences, values, attitudes, types and behavior may influence the agile quality of employees. Storme et al (2020) explored the psychological factors may influence the agility of workforce. They are Curiosity in Job roles, Self Efficacy in Works, Learning from mistakes, workplace learning culture (Sasmitha et al, (2025), Active Listening, Risk Taking, Having Trust in work situation, and Ambiguity Tolerance Fabiansyah, A., & Tanjung, O.L. (2025).

Curiosity in Job Roles – It refers to the quality of gaining new knowledge and experience in job roles out of interest and developing (Berlyne, 1978; Loewenstein, 1994). This plays an important supporting and motivating role for workforce agility. The previous research studies explored the curiosity may tend to drive exploratory behavior that may lead the employees to be more open to change for proactive adaptive quality. This curiosity may enable employees to be more innovative (Celik et al., 2016).

Self Efficacy in Work Tasks – It can be defined as the self individual to ability in work performance, persistence in work completion, taking constant and clear in decisions (Schaubroeck & Merritt, 1997; Sherer & Maddux, 1982).

This may lead employees to get adapt into the environmental changes and bring changes.

Learning from mistakes – it refers to the quality of learning from the occurred mistakes in the previous work performance and actions. This quality may hugely impact the workforce and make the employees agile in learning. The learning is an integral part of agile quality. Many previous studies highlighted the learning capability of agile workforce for efficient performance and need of continuous learning Sasmitha et al, (2025)

Active listening – it refers to the listening capacity of workforce to be agile in work activities. Notably, during the trainings and instructions, they have to be active in listening. This active listening quality makes them more attentive and focused on the work activities and completion of tasks (Breu et al., 2002).

Risk taking – this quality is depicted as ability in take risk in something action change. In the turbulent and complex situations to change and adapt, the workforce has to take some serious steps for actions and decisions. They may face some unknown consequences and outcomes. This quality may hugely impact the agile quality of employees.

Having Trust – this quality of having trust in work environment and with co workers may lead to supportive and motivational work performance. This quality may hugely impact the persistent and adaptive quality of agile workforce. This is notably a motivational factor from both sides individual and organizational (Breu et al., 2002).

Ambiguity tolerance – it is the ability to comfortably navigate the situations that makes employees ease with individuals in certainty and uncertainty work environment. The high level of ambiguity tolerance associates with flexibility in workplace, creativity in performance and willingness to adapt in the changing workplace environment Fabiansyah, A., & Tanjung, O.L. (2025).

5.2 Organization factors

There are organizational factors may determine and influence the agility of workforce. These are the factors will be motivational and support factors for agile workforce for further development. Under the systematic review, this, found the organizational factors like talent management, leadership, technology adoption and development, organizational culture and organizational system Fabiansyah, A., & Tanjung, O.L. (2025).

Organization structure and design – it refers to the hierarchical structure of organization may need the unique abilities of agile workplace to carry out the roles and responsibilities of the structural positions. Many research studies evidenced the relationship of potentiality of

employees and roles and responsibility of employees (Martin, 2015). The job designs, work designs, work tasks and responsibilities may influence the agile quality of employees in which way they have to complete the tasks and target achievements.

Talent management practice – focusing on application of talent management practice will have an influence on how to manage and develop the ability as well as potency of agile workforce. It may focus on developing employees with higher potential to face the changes and challenges in work environment. It has a positive correlation with workforce agility (Lawler III & Worley, 2015) and strengthening employee productivity to respond the changes.

Leadership - Hernawaty & Syahrani (2022) in their study identified the influence of leadership quality and bureaucratic leadership style may influence the agility of workforce. Leadership types and style may trigger the potential qualities of agile workforce for adoptive behavior in the workplace. This will make employees to get update, continuous learning, supportive in team works towards goal oriented and achievement.

Technology Development - this is as one of the possible factors influence workforce agility. The digital work environment with recent technology updates across the functional levels may significantly influence the efforts of Individuals. The information system, information technology, social media platforms may significantly influence the agile quality of workforce (Bala et al., 2019; Lai et al., 2021; Maran et al., 2022; Nadzim & Halim, 2022).

Organization culture and system – it refers to where the agile workforce may exhibit the work performance and may execute the roles and responsibilities. The culture and system hugely impact their work behavior, adaptive behaviors. The values, beliefs, customs, work pattern what is followed in the culture and system may influence the agile quality of employees Fabiansyah, A., & Tanjung, O.L. (2025).

6. CHALLENGES & RISKS OF AGILE WORKFORCE AND REMEDIES

At present modern digital era, the work environment requires the agile way of working that includes remote working, work from home, highly focused and task oriented work doings and so on. The organizations make many steps to maximize the flexibility for remote working, minimizing the constraints and challenges of agile workforce. The agile workforce is a strategic approach to the competitive advantage. Most of the organizations started to realize the benefits and advantages of agile way of working and made arrangements for flexible work schedule planning for tasks completion and achievements. Though there are many benefits for employees and employers, there are many

potential challenges for employees Abou-AL-Ross & Shatali (2022)

Facility provision – whether remote working or hybrid mode working, there is a requirement of facility provisions that include the equipments, proper workstations, proper seating arrangements, computer enabled network systems, rest rooms and so on. This facility provision is to be done in agile workforce environment. Health risk - Due to lack of facility provision, the agile workers face the health risks of being stressed, eye sight problems due to long hours work in computer screen, head ache and back pain. This can be rectified by following the legal provisions and arrangements to be followed in the workplace for the well being of agile workforce. Frequent breaks between the work hours may lead to some sort of relaxation among the workers. The refreshments may be made and encouraged in the workspace whether remote or hybrid mode of work Rietze, S., Zacher, H, (2023).

Communication and collaborative work - The quality of agile workforce is itself being communicative and collaborative in nature that requires proper communication channels and methods. For which the recent modern workplaces mostly adopting video conferencing, work calls, video conferencing seminars and interactions. This would be grateful for sharing of collaborative work. Many organizations follow this way of video conferencing & work calls. Due to changes and workplace demands, the work is overloaded for video calls, video conferencing and communication among agile workers Fabiansyah, A., & Tanjung, O.L. (2025). This work overloaded situation consequences the health risks among employees like feeling fatigue, lack of concentration in work activities, frustrated and stressed. Being overloaded video calls, client attempts the agile employee may be discouraged resulting low agile working morale. There are a range of basic steps that can be taken to reduce video call fatigue, however this issues can be managed by the leadership and managers. This may be including such steps avoiding back to back calls, limiting the length of meetings, assigning part(s) of the day to video calls, rather than having calls scheduled all day, and taking regular breaks away from the work environment.

Continuous Long Hours of Work – being agile worker, they are capable of working for long hours in many work situations to complete the fixed tasks and targets, due to changes in technology, structure, & work pattern and so on. If they opt the remote mode work or hybrid mode work, they may or may not get breaks between their personal life time and work time. This leads to feeing work burden resulting mental health risks like depression and fatigue, physical health risks like cardiovascular diseases and lifestyle disorder. This kind of risks may be handled by both remote workers and regular office routine workers they may utilize different types of activities to help get them through the

working day, from listening to music to going out at lunchtime or exercising when they feel they need to. Different work choices in their teams, encouraging the workers to complete their work using natural breaks and changes of activity throughout the day may be done Rietze, S., Zacher, H, (2023).

Relationship – the agile workers opting the remote working mode or hybrid mode they face the relationship challenges, they are engaged in continuous work hours, work assignments, getting connected with meetings, they miss their family and friend relationship. The health of family members will greatly affect the health of agile workers. They could often face mental health and stress. This may be solved through the proper trainings for the improvement of mental health and to maintain relationship with family members and with workplace friends.

'Always on' Culture – the flexibility and remote working makes the agile workers feeling 'always on' that means the feel of always thinking about work, work completion rather than the switch off mind set. They feel always on day and nights, some other situations out of workplace, This concept called as 'Leaveism' the term is used to describe situations in which employees feel unable to 'switch off' from work and can lead to an 'always on' culture'. This occurs when people choose not to take allocated time off or undertake work outside normal working hours, such as weekends and evenings. To reduce the risk of leaveism, employees should be encouraged to work in the allotted time and to switch off the works in holiday, vacation. They should be encouraged to work at the required time of work Rietze, S., Zacher, H, (2023).

Presenteeism – At the workplace, employees will be present though they feel ill and sick. There is a relationship between presenteeism and absence from work. This occurs due to work overloaded, compulsion of completion of works. The agile employee will be present in the workplace and mentally withdrawn or disengaged from work. This further leads to work stress and depression. This should be eradicated by encouraging employees to take leaves when they are in sick and ill health. The sickness absence can be encouraged further to avoid the negative effects of presenteeism.

Techno- stress – Due to the development and technological advancement in workplaces, Due to the digital transformation of workplace, the agile workers have to get updated and adapted to the technological advancements. Many employees may struggle to get adapt to the techno environment. This would lead to stress and burnout. This will affect the mental health and well being of employees. This may be met though proper arrangement of training programs, encouraging continuous learning,

Isolation and lone working – due to the work nature, due to the personality types, due to the need of task completion and

achievement, due to remote working mode, the agile employees may isolate themselves or they may be isolated from the workplace. They may have potential visits for work completion out of workplace. They may feel isolated that resulting mental health risks. This may be addressed though proper communication, proper training, relationship and network Rietze, S., Zacher, H, (2023).

7. CONCLUSION

Agile workforce is a strategic approach for efficient functioning of organizations while changes happenings like technological, structural, political, cultural changes happening. The agile employees are unique in nature in carrying out the work tasks and completion. They show the tremendous effort in their work activities and they contribute a lot for success and survival of the organizations. This paper highlighted the characteristics and types of agile workers, factors influencing the agility of workers and challenges they face in the work place. The agile workers should be encouraged for continuous learning, developing, active in self realization. The organization should really understand the different perspectives of agile workers in terms of the risks and challenges they face in the workplace – relationship issues, harassments, workplace bullying, dominance, & health challenges and so on. When their needs and requirements are fulfilled by the organizations, the wellbeing of agile workers will be assured in the workplace.

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