Digitalisation of organisations and COVID-19

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The COVID-19 pandemic caused profound shifts in the functioning of organisations, with the increased mobilisation of the implementation of digitalisation processes in the activities of the members of these coordinated collective units. In this perspective, based on our academic experience and recent literature, this paper offers some dimensions that seem to us relevant to ponder with special urgency, and that will shape both organisations in the near future and an organisational culture that is, in many cases, renewed.

Digitalization of organizations   Society 5.0   COVID-19   Coronavirus   Pandemic

Sustainable development

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona-virus 2) at the end of 2019, affected both the representations and the social practices of the vast majority of the world population[1][2]. The protection measures implemented by most people worldwide, such as the physical distance between individuals (wrongly called "social distance") and the promotion of digital work carried out from home, whenever possible, have had profound influences on all dimensions of human life, namely in the social, economic, personal and collective spheres. This situation affects, albeit unevenly, all social classes and also entails the attainment of digital skills[1][3][4][5] (Billy, 2020; Sá & Serpa, 2020; Santos & Serpa, 2017, 2020).

All these and other protection measures have caused profound shifts in the functioning of organisations [6][7] (Anggraini, 2020; Putrivi, 2020), with the increased mobilisation of the implementation of digitalisation processes in the activities of the members of these coordinated collective units. This prospective short communication, based on our academic experience and recent literature, puts forth some dimensions that seem to us relevant to ponder with special urgency, and that will shape organisations in the near future[8](Serpa, Ferreira, & Santos, 2020).

2. COVID-19 and the promotion of digitalisation of organisations

The context described above shaped the development of digitalisation processes in the functioning of organisations[9] (Putrivi, 2020), viewed as coordinated collective units that, being open to the external environment, fulfil the most diverse purposes. Thus, in social, healthcare, educational, economic, industrial, business, financial, tourist, military and other organisations, the interaction established between its members in the structuring processes of the required procedures is, in several situations, different than it was in the pre- COVID-19 pandemic.

The mobilisation of digital instruments communicated to other members of the organisation, notably the use of email, videoconferences, digital signature, the use of the most diverse software adequate to the accomplishment of a given task, has experienced exponential growth.

This unexpected situation has created, then, the opportunity to accelerate the process of digitalisation of societies, which could seem somewhat utopian. An example is the promotion of Society 5.0 as a possible future result of the mobilisation of digitalisation in the most varied dimensions of the social, creating a Smart Society through the materialisation of the potential of the individual-technology[10][11] (Gladden, 2019; Ferreira & Serpa, 2018). This process should always be aware that organisations, in addition to the inherent diversities, are disparate in their potential to shape a digital transformation in their functioning[12] (Jasmine, 2020). The author sustains that

Virtual teams are a new type of task-performing group that is emerging in the time of the dynamic organization. Virtual teams – teams composed of individuals who are located in different places, different time zones, and sometimes, different organizations for the explicit purpose of bringing together people who might not otherwise be able to collaborate[12] (Jasmine, 2020, p. 4).

Hence, organisations are unavoidable as one of the critical elements in this social and economic digitalisation, which poses profound challenges. In a specific example on the creative field, Putrivi (2020)[7] argues that "the creative industries really should keep operating and working while adapting to the dynamic organization working style and demand their employees or workers to learn how to adapt quickly and turn their mindset to be more agile. By doing that, the creative industries will likely to survive this 2020 global pandemic".

The digitalisation of organisations is vital to their success in this new context. As Billy (2020)[1] advocates, "today's dynamic organization must be a fast and flexible problem solver, able to diagnose problems, process data, produce effective solutions, and gather the resources needed to implement these solutions quickly and efficiently" (p. 2). This will tend to increase interdisciplinarity between different scientific areas, such as organisational culture, communications, organisational behaviour, human resources, and conflict[1][8] (Billy, 2020; Serpa, & Ferreira, 2019).

Any prospective analysis has its limits, but it seems crucial to us to study the impact of the implementation of digital technology on organisations [1](Billy, 2020), to reach the heuristic apprehension of the intended sustainable development[7] (Serpa, & Ferreira, 2020). This adds to the reduction of indeterminacy and uncertainty of this process in the promotion of social, economic e environmental sustainability in a digital society[12](Serpa & Ferreira, 2019), also via the digitalisation of organisations.

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