
Digital Skills in Collecting and Interpreting Audit Evidence

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Abstract

The paper proposes a critical analysis of how Robotic Process Automation (RPA) technologies contribute to the performance of financial audit missions, mainly in the phases of evidence collection, classification, and interpretation. As support solutions or even viable options to replace the human factor by automating repetitive and routine tasks and by removing the risk of error specific to such operations, software "robots" have been rapidly and widely adopted in segments of operational flows where the volume of routine processes is high but also time- and money-consuming. Beyond the immediate and measurable benefits through various key performance indicators, the implementation of such systems within organizations – regardless of their nature – raises a rather thorny problem, namely, the need for "retraining" of the professional auditor in the spirit of the new technologies implemented or imperative to be included in their own working tools or in the information systems of the audited entities. The article carries out a realistic evaluation of the main aspects, including of an ethical nature, that digitization through RPA involves and, above all, of the effects that such technologies can have on an essential component of an organization's capital: the human resources.

Key words: Robotic Process Automation; artificial intelligence; digitalization; digital audit;

JEL Classification: M1, M2, M4, O3

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I. Introduction

Viewed through the prism of the economic and social impact as well as the "aggressiveness" of the technologies involved, digitalization processes have become an omnipresent reality, manifested in vast geographical areas and having complex applicability. In general, the term "digitalization" is often perceived and used as a synonym for "digitization", but the two notions require a clear dissociation: "digitization" is a technical process of converting data from analogue to digital bits, on when "digitalization" refers to an augmented use of digital and IT technologies in the workplace (Dabic et al., 2023). Simple "computerization" at the level of company, institution, region, etc. it is replaced by a complex of technologies and work procedures that lead to transformations and reconfigurations of the economy and work, at macro level.

Defining "digitalization" is not exactly an easy task due to its multiple implications and the increasingly varied fields of application. Academia defines "digitalization" through digital communication and the impact that digital media has on contemporary social life (Brennen & Kriess, 2016). Thus, the notion is synonymous with a strategy or process that goes beyond the implementation of technology to generate profound and fundamental transformations of business models and the evolution of professions. The Gartner Group sees "digitalization" as "the use of digital technologies to change a business model and provide new opportunities for revenue and value creation; is the process of transitioning to a digital business". Digital transformation is more about people and less about technology, as it is management-driven organizational change driven by radical challenges to corporate culture and the leverage of technologies that empower and assist employees. In the broad and complex context of digitization, the automation of office work derives from the need for cost reduction, operational efficiency, relinquishment of stacks of papers and superior valuation of available human resource skills.

Although digitalization facilitates access to innovation, technology and knowledge, the potential risks and threats to human resources are increasingly visible. The emergence of the computer and the Internet caused new dilemmas in the world economic landscape, which led, in 1983, the Nobel Prize laureate, Wassily Leontief, to bet on the gradual diminishing of the role of the most important factor of production, namely, the human resource in as happened with the disappearance of horses in agriculture,

being replaced by tractors (Leontief, 1983). The theory that technology is a major cause of job loss has been challenged, however, by a broad spectrum of economists who believe that automation and other forms of technological progress create more jobs than they eliminate. Apparently, the reasoning is simple: reducing production costs leads to lower prices and, implicitly, to increased demand; in a competitive market, technological changes have the effect of increasing production which requires more labor, thus compensating for the reduction of human resource expenditure per unit of product (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014).

The accelerated pace of digitalization in recent years, the regional specificity in the broad spectrum of globalization, the complexity of the implications of automation in different fields or branches of economic activity, however, call for a more careful analysis of the perspectives of work as a factor of production through the prism of aspects of a particular order, beyond the general self-regulation mechanisms. In recent years, consistent signals have been sent to analysts and policy makers regarding the adverse effects of intelligent information technologies, especially on the risk of unemployment. Such a warning comes from Frey and Osborne (2013) who, based on a machine-learning algorithm developed at Oxford University, conclude that 47% of jobs in the USA are at risk of being automated in the next 20 years (Nedelkoska & Quintini, 2018). Elon Musk warned in 2017, at a World Government Summit in Dubai, about mass unemployment that will be a real social challenge due to the sharp reduction in the number of jobs that will not be affected by robotization, and Bill Gates even proposes the taxation of automated work (Larson, 2017). The reports of the World Economic Forum (The Future of Jobs Report) indicate, in recent years, the fact that activities based on routine, which require average training, accountants, payroll clerks and auditors will be less sought after in the future. The ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) study, carried out in 2020 on the future configuration of the labor market, shows a trend of reinventing jobs in which the human factor combines traditional methods with new technologies that will have a significant impact in the next three years, giving a pronounced digital and multi-disciplinary character to positions in the field of financial-accounting processing (ACCA, 2020).

The financial audit knows its own challenges through the prism of the implementation of the automation of the processes within the specific missions but also of the flows

within the organization subject to the audit. The changes brought about by digitalization lead to resizing contribution of the human factor, by relieving repetitive and time-consuming operations, leaving room for creativity, professional reasoning or even the involvement of a specific sensitive or emotional side. From the general spectrum of digitalization, the **RPA (Robotic Process Automation)** component with the effect of automating routine, repetitive processes and in considerable volume will be considered, during this study, mainly as a tool for collecting and processing samples audit but also their generation.

1.1 Digital context

On May 3, 2023, the World Economic Forum launched the Future Jobs Report which, based on a study applied to 803 representative companies from 45 economies, brings to analysis disturbing data on the evolution of the global labor market. It is predicted that by 2027, a volume of 69 million new jobs will be created simultaneously with the loss of 83 million positions, so a net loss of 14 million jobs, equivalent to 2% of the number of current employees. These fluctuations in the labor market are caused by several positive (e.g., orientation towards renewable energy), negative (slow economic growth, high inflation) or

double-impact (Artificial Intelligence, robotization, etc.) factors. Digital technologies, on the one hand, create new jobs based on new skills and qualifications, but at the same time, displace human resources from traditional positions requiring new skills. The report warns that data entry operators, employees in the administrative area, accountants and payroll clerks will be the most affected by the prospect of unemployment. This article will analyze how the jobs focused on the processing of financial-accounting data, mainly accounting professionals and auditors, are influenced by the evolution of disruptive technologies as well as how the human resource involved can regain its essential role in the construction of financial and audit reports.

According to the mentioned study, the first three categories of jobs most threatened with disappearance (data entry clerks, administrative and executive secretaries, accounting/bookkeeping & payroll clerks) total half of the total number of jobs in this negative trend expected for the coming years. The **Table no. 1.** presents a preliminary analysis of the candidate profile for these jobs, with the aim of identifying several common elements that have turned these jobs into prime targets of global digitalization:

Table no. 1. Particular elements of jobs affected by digitalization in the period 2023 – 2027		
Tasks	Required abilities and qualifications	Common elements
<i>Data-entry clerks</i>		
Completing and updating databases. Data review, detection of redundancies and errors, making corrections. Generating specific reports, storing results in the database, and performing backups. File scanning and printing on demand.	High school diploma or equivalent. Data entry experience. Excellent written and verbal communication skills. Ability to type quickly and accurately. Knowledge of operating spreadsheets and online forms. Ability to keep company information confidential.	Significant volume of routine, repetitive and generally rule-based operations. Emphasis on preserving informational confidentiality. Generating and disseminating reports to the organizational levels concerned. The need for fast and error-free dissemination of information.
<i>Administrative and executive secretaries</i>		
Answering and directing calls. Carrying out reception formalities. Managing calendars. Making travel arrangements. Participation in meetings, preparation of minutes. Maintaining office inventory. Dissemination of memos, reports, etc. to those interested.	Time management and organization skills. Communication skills, including with all levels of employees, vendors and customers or guests. Professional writing skills, including emails, memos, letters, etc. Good computer skills, familiarity with word processors, spreadsheets, document sharing and presentation skills.	

Tasks	Required abilities and qualifications	Common elements
<i>Accounting, bookkeeping & payroll clerks</i>		
Registering transactions. Monthly closing of registers. Completing tax forms. Management of receivables and payables accounts, payrolls. Processing purchases and refunds for customers. Preparation of financial statements and records in accordance with regulations. Supporting quarterly tax estimates and annual returns. Contribute to the establishment of the company's best practices related to accounting.	Attention to detail and record keeping skills. A good understanding of accounting and financial operations. Knowledge of accounting, invoicing software. Honesty and discretion in working with sensitive information. Ability to quickly perform calculations. Comfortable working with word processors and spreadsheets. Knowledge of standard accounting principles and best practices. Excellent written and verbal communication skills. Ability to maintain strict confidentiality of company financial information.	

Source: Own processing, based on data available in the Future of Jobs Report issued by the World Economic Forum (2023), and on www.linkedin.com, www.indeed.com

I.2 RPA Context

Disruptive technologies in the field of digitization are generally defined as intelligent data processing facilities with a direct effect on the efficiency and profitability of organizational processes. The following examples are eloquent:

- *Business Intelligence applications* – "automated systems for the dissemination of information to various sections of any organization with an industrial, scientific or governmental profile" (Heinze, 2014); "the set of notions and support techniques in the decision-making process in business" (Kemp & Dietz, 2009);
- *Data warehouses* – "set of tools for querying, analyzing and presenting information" (Kimball & Ross, 2002); "a collection of subject-oriented, integrated, historical and non-volatile data intended to support the managerial decision-making process" (Inmon, 1992);
- *Big Data Analytics* – "advanced analysis techniques applied to large data sets" (Russom, 2011);
- *Cloud Computing* – "technical support for cloud services that provide real-time solutions on the Internet" (Bohm & Krcmar, 2011); "a new technology for hosting IT resources and delivering services via the Internet" (Abbasov, 2014);

Instead, from the definitions dedicated to the RPA terminology, as well as from the analysis of the functionality of this software solution, the objective of "replacing" or "minimizing" the role of the human factor in the performance of repetitive and time-consuming operations emerges predominantly (Lawton, 2021; Hsiung & Wuang, 2022; Atencio et al., 2022; Hyun et al., 2021). Right from the conceptualization phase, relieving employees of routine tasks and who are at high risk of error leaves room for interpretation for at least two reasons:

- Is the entire human resource directly affected in terms of the duties of the RPA installation, able to take on more complex tasks or with higher creative potential?
- If the answer to the previous question is no (in whole or in part) what staffing policies could management adopt to use the workforce thus displaced and which are in accordance with the objectives of the respective organization?

Beyond the perspective pencilled in by numbers, from the point of view of the human resources directly involved or affected by the automation process, the same studies emphasize advantages such as:

- The "de-robotization" of employees – the elimination of boring and repetitive tasks, simultaneously with the development of an environment that encourages creativity.

- Making employees more flexible – creating new levers and skills to work remotely and on online platforms (as was demonstrated during the Covid pandemic) (Piroscă et al., 2021).
- Motivating employees – reconsidering job descriptions by converting them to more complex, more engaging assignments and at the actual level of the intellectual capacities of the persons concerned.

Through process automation, organizations aim to streamline operations that, by their nature, are resource-intensive (human, material, or financial) and that generate final reports of questionable accuracy and timeliness. Depending on the activity sector and the profile of the organization, the introduction of RPA mainly aimed at replacing some manual operations and eliminating the specific risk of error. To reach such a result, a series of preliminary conditions are required for this type of digitalization:

- ✓ Standardized processes – targeted operations must be based on a precise set of rules.
- ✓ Operational volume – automation brings real benefits in the case of processing a considerable informational volume.
- ✓ Operational routine – the targeted processes must be of a high frequency, having an accentuated repetitive character.

In such a context, the adoption of information technologies in the sphere of so-called "white collars" cannot bypass financial audit professionals, but it is felt differently depending on the degree of preparation and acceptance of new concepts and analysis tools. Process automation solutions (e.g., Robotic Process Automation – RPA) have the potential to suppress mid-level job description duties if no viable relocation alternatives are found within the organization or if employees are not involved in vocational retraining programs. Companies are more interested in developing a so-called "digital workforce" component in which the role of human resources is dependent on the ability to adapt to new conditions. These changes, however, depend on a training in digital technologies, a minimal understanding of automation processes, the adoption of a specific language, the adoption of some sets of information processing tools.

Starting from the defining elements that determined these jobs to be affected by the new conditions of current

excessive digitalization, the present study motivates its research starting from three pillars or working hypotheses:

H1. The staff involved in financial audit missions (in collection and analysis of audit evidence) is directly affected by the trend of reducing jobs.

H2. Process automation has already changed the tools and working procedures of auditors at different levels of expertise in terms of collecting, processing audit evidence or generating reports, but also how audit evidence is generated within the client entity.

H3. Disruptive technologies have caused displacement of human resources (especially medium-skilled) by saving a considerable number of working hours within organizations.

Methodology

The study used, as the main working tool, beyond the exhaustive treatment of the specialized literature, the analysis of the effects of digitalization on the future of financial-accounting audit practice from several points of view:

- *Dedicated digital technologies* – offers, news, developments, market volatility of suppliers of such products.
- *Case studies, practical examples* – automation solutions successfully applied in the field of financial reporting, simultaneously with the highlighting of shortcomings and risks in the automation of financial-accounting data management processes.
- *The current social and economic context* – organizational culture, the need for professional retraining of human resources, constraints, and legislative changes.

The main objective of the research is to identify the perspectives of the auditor profession in the current context generated by the accelerated digitization of specific processes, this approach precisely answering the following questions:

Q1: What is the current state of involvement of digital technologies in the scope of audit evidence collection?

Q2: What are the main risks determined by digitalization for the auditing profession?

Q3: How can the identified risks be managed so that the auditor profession has a certain course in the digitalized future?

The answers obtained were treated to provide a complete picture of the contextual situation, to identify opportunities or realistic perspectives for the auditor profession and to suggest future research directions in the field of automation in the collection and processing of financial-accounting data.

II. Current digitalization in audit missions

Large audit companies, especially those from the Big Four, have adopted RPA technologies in their own procedures as they carry out operations specific to the human factor with a much higher efficiency (Rozario et al., 2019). Worksheet digitization techniques or profile IT applications (e.g., IDEA, ACL) are already widely known and applied, these tools being involved in separate stages of a mission. Through RPA, the premises of an intelligent approach to the entire process are created if a series of preparatory operations are carried out (Moffit, Rozario and Vasarhelyi, 2018):

- creation of a mixed work team composed of representatives of the audit firm, of the RPA supplier to which consultants or representatives of the academic environment can be added.
- identification of audit stages/processes – repetitive tasks, well-defined, time-consuming, and carried out by significant human resources.
- revision of audit procedures identified in modules/sub activities.
- identification of modules/sub-activities that lend themselves to automation (they must be structured, available or digitally transformable).
- standardization of data from different sources and with different attributes.
- the selection of modules for which RPA automation is considered feasible.
- designing a prototype (an RPA tool/combination) and testing it in concrete work scenarios.
- final evaluation and centralization of feedback from the system – analysis of 3 main indicators: speed (comparison of automated vs. manual process), quality (percentage of errors), degree of automation (number of human interventions).

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In a similar vision, Griffiths and Pretorius (2021) emphasize the prior preparation of data and processes but bring to the fore the importance of sizing the desired results as accurately as possible through RPA. A clear picture of the purpose, objectives, and role of automation in the future configuration of work procedures is essential for the success of such a project. In addition to the required external expertise, the training of own staff is a critical factor in the proper management of RPA tools through professional training in the field of audit and IT. At the same time, the realistic evaluation of possible weak points or risk generators of automation must be considered from the design stage to come up with alternative solutions that ensure the continuity of the audit mission.

According to a report issued in 2020 by the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB) – the United States' statutory audit oversight body – large firms are experienced in the area of smart audit applications and are signalling the start of the inclusion of emerging technologies – e.g. : KPMG uses IBM Watson to analyze bank credit files within commercial loan portfolios, and Ernst & Young engages machine-learning technologies to detect billing anomalies and identify fraud with 97% accuracy (www.pcaobus.org). Deloitte points to RPA as a core tool in sample testing by connecting documents and incorporating the data obtained into their own analyses. Automation is extended to performing calculations, extracting structured data from documents, filling out specific forms or preparing basic materials for reports (www2.deloitte.com). Analyzing the RPA approach by audit companies in the Big Four structure, three directions of action can be observed:

- ✓ *RPA auditing within client entities* – there is the necessary expertise to analyze data or reports obtained through automation as well as the appropriate own tools to control the audited procedures.

- ✓ *auditing through RPA* – the Big Four companies have their own technologies for the automation of mission-specific tasks and invest in perfecting these tools.
- ✓ *consultancy in RPA* – addresses companies interested in automation in relation to the evaluation of processes that lend themselves to such a transformation and recommends solutions.

At the same time, it should not be neglected that, within the audited companies, the applicability of digital technologies in the processing of financial-accounting data works based on the new principles of openness and information sharing and has a strong impact on the way companies consolidate their strategic plans (Gulin et al., 2019). The role of the accounting professional is moving from simple data entry, transaction recording or simple analysis to strategic business consulting. Thus, simple, routine, repetitive operations or processes that do not require additional human expertise are automated (e.g., Robotic Process Automation – RPA), management requesting predictive analyses, consulting, strategic information in real time. In these changed technological and procedural conditions, the audit is faced with a series of data in digital format that requires skilled collection, classification and interpretation, thus sampling being replaced by complete information, generated in real time.

III. Risks in digitalizing audit evidence collection

Digitalization has potential to free the auditor from a significant amount of redundant and routine tasks, allowing them to engage in more creative activities, e.g., consulting or financial analysis (Herbert et al., 2016). Strictly from the point of view of human resources, this transformation of work tools is perceived differently and provokes reactions depending on the position or role held within an organization:

- ✓ *human operators replaced* in the performance of routine and repetitive processes that require average training – they may show an attitude of resistance, skepticism, fears related to the prospect of unemployment or the need for professional retraining.
- ✓ *management/shareholders* – concerned with the return on investment in digital technologies, can allocate budget for the expansion of digitalization to other sectors as well.

- ✓ *Financial controllers and CFOs* – start using structured data, unstructured data, and predictive analytics to access large base of customer information, financial trends and industry information to make insightful forecasts.
- ✓ *highly qualified staff* – they are relieved of redundant, time-consuming tasks and are more involved in professional reasoning, consulting, etc., but need new skills in data analysis or the use of new IT tools.

The risks of digitalization can be classified, therefore, from the point of view of the level of impact, as follows: *risks perceived at a personal level* – by each individual, directly affected by the introduction of new technologies, and *risks perceived at an organizational level* – by management, departments involved, shareholding, etc.

The risks perceived personally are determined by the training level of the human resource. Thus, the auditors with an average qualification and who carry out activities that do not involve a high level of expertise or analytical thinking skills, they may face the risk of job loss or professional non-compliance determined by a substantial change in the required duties and skills through the job description. Routine, rule-based and repetitive tasks are perfect for an automation process (e.g., RPA) that aims to save a significant number of FTEs (Full Time Equivalent) across the company. The staff displaced in this way needs professional reorientation, reintegration into the organizational chart of the organization in the version in which it is maintained in the payroll.

Personnel with a higher qualification may face the *risk of losing professional skills*; according to Al-Htaybat and von Alberti-Alhtaybat (2017), the new predictive capabilities of data analytics are useful for internal decision-making, but auditors need additional skills to analyze and interpret new types of information. Requalification has the gift of familiarizing the human resource involved with the new tools of digitalization, but it also has the potential to divert the focus on some key aspects such as professional reasoning regarding particular situations/exceptions or the application of legislative or procedural regulations.

The transformation of auditors into data analysts in the context of excessive technology can generate an accumulation of financial reports obtained automatically, but with the *risk of distortion of reality or error*. Thus, a new category of risks is identified, namely, those *perceived at organizational level*, of which the first mentioned, of obtaining an information system in which the lack of involvement of specifically human critical thinking can generate errors in data analysis or incomplete reports. Scanning data from paper format can prove to be of low efficiency (for example, reading materials from matrix printers) and the information thus taken into the system is incomplete (Januszkeski et al., 2021).

At organizational level, *risks regarding security and protection of personal data* are accentuated as information circulates quickly and over extended areas through the prism of new technologies. It is about awareness of aspects related to intellectual property rights, the risk of theft or loss of financial information, sabotage or disclosure of confidential and sensitive data at the company level (Timea Fulop et al., 2022). Decision makers need to be aware of the risks of over-reliance on information based solely on algorithmic interpretation of data or visual representations.

The risks of underestimating the costs of digitalization are often neglected, especially when discussing the benefits of digitization in terms of budget savings (e.g., savings in manual labor hours) or increased productivity and operational efficiency. There is little or no discussion of the less visible or hidden costs of monitoring, professional retraining, information security, etc. specific to the post-implementation period of digitalization solutions. At the same time, finding new assignments for the human resource displaced by digitalization can become a real challenge that, if not managed correctly, can become a cost. Basically, the economy of labor hours is only a gain on paper in the conditions that the company has the same number of employees who are not capitalized by other tasks or attributions (Eulerich et al., 2022).

In a different approach, Deloitte's report on the impact of automation through RPA (Robotic Process

Automation) on organizations draws attention to the inherent risks which it classifies as follows (Szalony et al., 2018):

- ✓ operational risks – replacement of several operators by a single software robot, lack of control mechanisms in case of changes.
- ✓ financial risks – non-compliant implementation of technologies, incorrectly or incompletely designed algorithms.
- ✓ regulatory risks – implementation of solutions that do not comply with legislation or internal rules, lack of clear regulations regarding automation.
- ✓ organizational risks – producing a negative impact on the human resource displaced from specific tasks, incorrect or incomplete presentation of digitalization solutions.
- ✓ technological risks – affecting current IT platforms, introducing powerful algorithms with a negative impact on critical IT infrastructure.

The report believes that these risks ultimately lead to financial losses and suggests control procedures at different organizational levels in all phases of the implementation of automation solutions. The solutions thus suggested are intended for organizational policies regarding accounting processes and contain a series of tools and measures depending on the degree of maturity and involvement of automation

IV. Digitalization risks management

The categories of risks identified have the potential to transform a digitalization process from a benefit to a direct threat to the accuracy of audit evidence and even the final reports on the analyzed financial statements. Awareness of these risks is an important first step towards finding and applying the most suitable approaches both from the individual directly affected by digitalization and from the company that must keep up with the current technological momentum. The literature as well as specialized practice identify a series of solutions of a technical or procedural nature, according to **Table no. 2**.

Table no. 2. Audit process automation risk management solutions

Risks categories	Solutions	Documentation source
Job loss Professional non-conformity	Development of a new set of technical skills (user of digital tools, developer, programmer, etc.) Development of analytical, creative thinking skills, etc.	World Economic Forum Report
Loss of professional skills	Implementation of introductory programs/courses in digital technologies Organizational culture policies aimed at inducing the idea of complementary working tools regarding digital solutions, and encouraging creative thinking and professional reasoning regarding financial-accounting reports Involvement of all staff from the financial-accounting department in implementation, orientation towards motivating activities – monitoring, error intervention, supervision of the final form of financial report, etc.	(Kokina & Blanchette, 2019) www.deloitte.com
Errors in financial and accounting processing and reporting	Correct identification of operational flows within the organization Establishing a central procedural framework across the organization with clear work procedures and rules for managing and monitoring RPA Use of appropriate technologies – e.g., the use of powerful scanners/reading programs – e.g., OCR (Optical Character Recognition) The use of standardized digital solutions in the issuance and exchange of documents between the organization and third parties	(Moreira et al., 2023) (Kokina & Blanchette, 2019) (Januszewski et al., 2021) (Eulerich et al., 2022) (Szalony et al., 2018)
Security risks	Strict inventory of implemented technologies, clear access procedures for employees of financial and accounting departments Periodic checks and controls, external auditing	(Eulerich et al., 2022)
Underestimating digitalization costs	Identifying all accounting operational flows, maintaining a procedural stability that avoids further changes in the implemented systems. Use of proof of concept (POF) Involvement of accounting professionals from the design phase of digitalization solutions.	www.uipath.com

Source: Own processing, based documentation sources

At the same time, excessive digitalization can outline an information system lacking typical human reasoning, thus generating errors in the interpretation of audit evidence and even in terms of formulating professional opinion. If the data digitalization is apparently sufficient for takeover in the automation process, the risks generated by the incomplete reading of some .pdfs or the intrinsic modification of the targeted processes can lead to the cancellation of the desired effects and, more than that, to the reintroduction of manual work (Kokina & Blanchette, 2019). The management of companies that have gone through the RPA experience recognize several difficulties

in implementing such a project due to several considerations (Szalony, 2018):

- Insufficient preparation of the data involved.
- Incomplete knowledge of information flows.
- Failure to make necessary corrections in the standardization of the processes targeted by automation.
- Implementation of poorly designed algorithms, robots with errors.
- Failure to prepare or neglect the human factor displaced from specific tasks.

- Lack of clear rules or standards from regulatory bodies regarding automation.

Identification and standardization of the processes targeted by digitalization together with the subsequent process monitoring and awareness of digital technologies way of acting are considered essential measures in combating the risks of process automation. These measures are intended to ensure the functionality of such a computerized audit evidence collection system, to bring added value in the effort to structure the final reports. Implementing clear procedures and strict policies on how these virtual "workers" are managed in terms of access to data, algorithm updates, sensitive databases, contributes to the desired scalability of the project and ensures information security.

V. Conclusions

The World Economic Forum report for the next 5 years (2023 – 2027) presents a dynamic on the jobs threatened by the digitization process and, more than that, reveals a series of forecasts regarding the skills needed for current jobs to find a place in the near time horizon. Comparing this data to other studies on the trend of involving various intelligent accounting processing or analysis tools shows that the financial-accounting field is the perfect "target" for automation. In such a context, the auditor is faced with the insertion of new technologies into the working tools and is faced with a professional dilemma as the entire process of collecting audit evidence changes through the lens of the new tools for collection and generation of them within the client entity.

Thus, RPA systems connected to applications in an organization's information system can move and transmit files, folders or other types of data, read and interpret emails, fill in forms and manipulate more or less structured data from documents, Internet or other sources. This non-intrusive interaction with other digital systems allows a complete or at least partial automation of specifically

human processes or activities with a beneficial effect in the level of operational efficiency or productivity (Vasarhelyi and Rozario, 2018).

Computerization of accounting processes is not a new topic, digitalization in this field being a process in full swing; the novelty, however, is generated by the automation capabilities that displace the human resource from the sphere of routine tasks and which, if also supported by artificial intelligence, can generate complex and real-time financial accounting analyzes and reports. The present study, after a brief analysis of the stage of digital transformation in the field, shows that it comes as a response to the need for efficiency in the sphere of information processing, to accelerate work speed, to adapt the audit to contextual challenges. The manual preparation of information desired by the audit is a long-term operation, exposed to errors and re-verification, which determines the need for profitability, for increased productivity of employees who are thus seen as norms or total working hours having a direct impact on budget. Including the preparation of financial reports is a task that can be automated especially in the conditions where the retrieval of data from internal applications or other reports in digital format is carried out based on precise rules, from digitalized internal sources, in a structured way.

Given that we are already witnessing the insertion of artificial intelligence components in financial accounting analysis, we believe that it is necessary to expand research efforts to anticipate the impact of these tools on the way of collecting and interpreting audit evidence. The human factor still has the final say in the completion of reports, but it is a fragile position as RPA tools will acquire cognitive capabilities through the integration of artificial intelligence components. As the World Economic Forum report shows, the foreshadowed transformations are for a short time horizon, with the auditor having to abandon traditional patterns, be self-taught, flexible and willing to change at an increasingly alert pace.

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