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DIGITAL LEADERSHIP AND BUSINESS GROWTH: THE IMPERATIVENESS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS

BY

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ABSTRACT

Academics and business experts agree that digital leadership can give companies a competitive advantage. The qualities, methods, and proficiencies of a successful digital leader are the main focus of this study. It looks at the role that digital leaders play in implementing the business model innovation and organizational change required for a successful digital transformation. As a result, the goal of the current study was to investigate the connection between business expansion and digital leadership as a necessary component of organizational success in the industrial sector. The study data was analyzed and its hypotheses tested using structural equation modeling, or SEM. The study discovered that digital leadership has a favourable effect on the organization's performance and company expansion. Additionally, it demonstrated that the organization's performance was positively impacted by both innovation capabilities and business growth. Furthermore, the study has demonstrated that the relationship between digital leadership and an organization's performance is mediated by company growth. Therefore, in order to enhance the performance of the organization, the research helps to provide a conceptual framework backed by empirical data for the creation of transformational leadership theory supported by models based on innovation.

Keywords: Digital Leadership, Institutional Theory, Neo Institutional Theory, Business Growth, Organizational Success

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INTRODUCTION

The business climate is changing quickly as a result of enterprises going digital. Living, working, and socializing have all changed as a result of this shift, which has forced businesses to investigate newer technology in order to survive. Companies are therefore launching new goods and services based on digital solutions in order to stay competitive. Digital transformation is a crucial tool for businesses because of the competitions these quick improvements have produced, which force enterprises to modernize their internal resources and capabilities and alter their business methods.

In order to stay up with the changes in the corporate environment, organizations have been progressively moving toward implementing modern technologies in many areas of their job, particularly administration. The transition towards digital companies is being matched by the introduction of new management science concepts. One of the most prominent of these concepts is "Digital Leadership" based on an approach that integrates technological advancement and transformational leadership to achieve the organization's strategic goals in the dynamic environment.

Businesses have been drastically impacted by the digital age, and in order to stay competitive, they must adjust to these changes. A new leadership style—one that uses digitalization to prepare and grow the organization—is now required as a result of this shift. This kind of leadership is known as digital leadership (Ritter & Pedersen, 2020). Digital leadership differs from the classic types of leadership. Erhan et al. (2022) view the concept as the integration of leadership skills and digital technology, which is necessary in order to create value for organizations. Hambrick and Mason (1984) formulate that leaders play a critical role in determining the strategic direction and impacts the success factor of a company directly.

One definition of digital leadership is a notion that ensures that digitization and its effects on the ecosystem are implemented effectively (Erhan et al., 2022). According to Guzmán et al. (2020), organizational leaders need to have particular skills due to the unstable environment, including networking, agility, participation, and an open leadership model. As per Erhan et al. (2022) these competencies aid leaders in effectively navigating and adjusting to the digital milieu. According to Guzmán et al. (2020), possessing agile characteristics is crucial in handling critical situations. The notion is defined by Bach & Sulíková (2021) as a leader who, via internal and external communication, predicts technical growth based on a vision. According to Mihjardo et al. (2019), a leader's openness to networking and interacting with staff members signifies their readiness to build a network of cooperation within the company. Participation functions as a valuable characteristic for managing the expertise and insights of employees to improve organizational success. This leadership style encourages employees to take part in the decision-making process. Digital leadership thereby concentrates on the organization as a whole and not just the implementation of digital technology (Erhan et al., 2022).

For organizations to successfully undergo digital transformation, their traditional leadership approaches must change (Erhan et al., 2022). For their digital transformation, it is equally important for businesses to have a leadership team with specialized knowledge and abilities. Similar to this, changes must be made at various organizational and management levels for digital transformation to be successful. For instance, organizations must introduce new capabilities to operate in digital networks and platforms at the organizational level, and managers must develop a digital strategy and implement it on time (Hess et al., 2016, Nadkarni & Prügl, 2021).

Statement of problem

The pace of digital adaption has quickened for both businesses and organizations (Schwarzmüller et al., 2018). Due to this progress, there is now a noticeable difference in financial gain between companies (Kraus et al., 2021). Resources and cutting-edge digital technology are now indicators of competitiveness (Verhoef et al., 2021). The way we think about industrial competitiveness has altered as a result of digitalization, and incumbents without digital competencies are now falling behind (Iveroth & Hallencreutz, 2020). It may also provide new business prospects and reshape the value chain in addition to having an impact on internal operations and organizational operations (Parviainen et al., 2017). Enhancing current organizational procedures with digital technologies is the main goal of digitalization. Achieving digital differentiation necessitates operational activities that enable an organization to implement and manage its digital transformation effectively (Konopik et al., 2022). These activities, also known as support activities, are designed to support digital transformation initiatives of an organization by providing the necessary resources, tools, culture and infrastructure (Willmott, 2014).

Organizations must adopt a digital leadership strategy in the current digital era if they want to be competitive (Parviainen et al., 2017). According to Dutta et al. (2020), it entails a never-ending process of unlearning, relearning, and adjusting to disruptive changes through support activities. Leaders must have the necessary skills, such as knowledge and competence, to handle these support activities (Baškarada et al., 2017). As a result, leaders must adopt a different perspective on organizational development in light of digitalization. Digital leaders, specifically, are needed to launch, oversee, and direct the firm through digital transformation (Abbu et al., 2020). Nevertheless, research on the relationship between digital transformation and leadership is still lacking (Chawla & Goyal, 2022). But, because digital transformation improves businesses' performance, practitioners and scholars are especially interested in this field (Belinski et al., 2020). Hence, the aim of this study was raised.

Purpose and Research Hypothesis

This study aimed at assessing digital leadership and business growth as imperative for organizational success. This study sought to examine the relationship between digital leadership and business growth as an imperative for organizational success in the industrial sector. The following research hypotheses were proposed; 1) there is significant relationship between Digital Leadership and Organization Success; 2) there is significant relationship between Digital Leadership and Business Growth; 3) there is significant relationship between Business Growth and Organization Success; and there is significant relationship between Digital Leadership, Business Growth and Organization Success.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Leadership

It is more expansive to practice digital leadership. As stated by Avolio et al. (2014), it is distinct from other (similar and frequently confused with) terms like "e-leadership" (Eberl & Drews, 2021), which is defined as "a social influence process embedded in both proximal and distal contexts mediated by AIT that can produce a change in attitudes, feelings, thinking, behavior, and performance." A leader that practices e-leadership, then, does not alter the core principles of business; instead, technology is used to support exiting tactics. In addition, El Sawy et al. (2016) assert that digital leadership goes beyond simple change to include the business strategy for digital transformation.

The evolving demands of the digital era may be the reason behind the leadership literature's shift from traditional to digital leadership (Banks et al., 2022). Consequently, in order to thrive in this new and ever-changing landscape of digital transformation, executives need to develop new competencies (Ismail et al., 2017). While traditional leadership abilities are still used, modern technological breakthroughs need far more (Gierlich-Joas et al., 2020). The digital skills required to deal with AI, big data, cloud computing, and data-driven decision-making are beyond the capabilities of traditional leadership. Additionally, in this new period, consumer behaviors are also evolving. Similarly, the digital age has a global reach to more comprehensive customers, requiring communication and technological skills that traditional leaders generally do not possess or do not practice.

This article sets digital leadership apart from traditional leadership attributes. According to Osborn et al. (2002), formal leadership attributes place a strong emphasis on hierarchy, control, and stability. Digital leadership, on the other hand, emphasizes teamwork, communication, data-driven decision-making, and a customer-centric mindset (Erhan et al., 2022). In order to effectively traverse the intricacies of modern organizations, a leader must integrate both sets of skills given the ongoing transformation of the corporate landscape in the digital era (Erhan et al., 2022). They can integrate it by adopting digital literacy, making investments in it, becoming familiar with the fundamental ideas and patterns of digital technology, and picking up new skills (Petry, 2018). By cultivating an adaptive and open attitude towards emerging technologies, a customer-centric approach, and data-driven decision-making, leaders can create a harmonious blend of traditional and digital leadership qualities by integrating strategies and practices. However, traditional leadership qualities can still be utilized by upskilling themselves to the new technology and digital transformations skills required for the leadership in the digital era.

Digital leadership qualities can be considered a subset of general leadership. Still, it is distinguished wherein the digital leadership qualities encompass a specific set of capabilities related to the digital era and technological landscape. In contrast, traditional leadership qualities are broader, and they are applicable in various contexts and industries (Aragón-Correa et al., 2007), while digital leadership is a specialized form of leadership that has technological awareness and is adaptive to the demands of the digital age (Petry, 2018). In addition, generic leadership is more broadly applicable in a variety of settings, including small and large organizations. Success depends on possessing the classic leadership traits of motivation, strategic thinking, and decision-making. According to Erhan et al. (2022), leaders in the digital space prioritize digital technology, utilize their expertise to tackle digital obstacles, and adjust to the dynamic nature of the commercial field. Their decision-making process is based on data, and they possess a thorough understanding of artificial intelligence, data analytics, and the Internet of Things. They are creative and flexible (Petry, 2018).

Digital Transformation and Leadership

As noted earlier, it is equally crucial for the successful digital transformation of organizations to have the leadership with the right expertise and characteristics (Yokoi et al., 2019). Leadership is pivotal in transforming and promoting digital culture in organizations (Guzmán et al., 2020). Since digital transformation is not only about integrating technology but also the correct usage of these technologies (Bolte et al., 2018), it requires a diverse workforce and much more from the leader (Ready et al., 2020). The role of leadership is to lead the organization, and the managers implement and align the digital strategies with the organization's core capabilities (Hansen et al., 2011). Leaders must change their leadership styles to lead competitively in the era of digitalization, as most organizational leaders today

have outdated skills and do not have the required skill set for digital transformation (Ready et al., 2020). Hence, leaders must prepare for this change and develop behaviors that create a harmonious condition for everyone in the firm. Effective digital transformation is unlikely without leaders' digital transformation in terms of upskilling; therefore, they must think about how they may grow as innovators (Schrage et al., 2021).

Research emphasizes significantly the role of a dedicated digital leadership position, such as the chief digital officer, who is generally considered to have three roles in the digital transformation process (Singh and Hess, 2017): (a) acting as an entrepreneur by using new technologies for business innovation, (b) acting as a digital evangelist through integration of digitalization at all hierarchical levels, and (c) coordinating in the whole digital transformation process from the inception of idea till its final implementation (Porfírio et al., 2021). Hence, a successful digital transformation requires a more decisive leader who coordinates and promotes the transformation at all hierarchical levels and aligns new digital business strategies with the existing ones (Benlian and Haffke, 2016).

Digital Leadership Capabilities

Digital leadership is seen as a driving force for the successful digital transformation of firms (Copeland, 2016, Du Toit et al., 2017, Phakamach et al., 2023). It involves technology and innovation elements and differs from traditional leadership (Erhan et al., 2022). The digital competency of digital leaders serves as a powerhouse for the successful digital transformation of organizations – through combining their digital skills, abilities, and characteristics with the digital technologies of the organization (Rudito and Sinaga, 2017) digital leaders add value to the firm. Digital leaders, on one end, manage the digital transformation through their digital skills while adapting to various leadership styles such as democratic, transactional, and transformational (Sow and Aborbie, 2018).

Digital leaders with technological and digital skills are advantageous; for example, leaders with digital skills can make informed decisions about technological investment and infrastructural changes. Similarly, leaders with these skills can successfully navigate the complexities of digital transformation and can make informed decisions. They can drive innovation and can successfully implement strategic changes. Their abilities enable them to adapt to the changing digital landscape.

Having said this, having these skills is not a strict requirement for driving digital transformation. Non-tech-savvy leaders can still significantly guide desired digital transformation by setting a clear vision and strategy. They opt for cultural shifts towards innovation and adaptability. Moreover, these leaders understand the importance of change management; they communicate the reasons behind changes through collaboration (Petry, 2018). Thus, leveraging the digital savvy mindset within an organization can be equally important and influential in achieving the digital transformation goals of organizations.

From the NIT perspective, leadership is a fundamental element of the organizational system, mainly when they opt for change; therefore, leadership must also adapt to the change (Biggart and Hamilton, 1987). In digital transformation, organizations are transforming their business activities and promoting the digital culture that favors such transformations (Bresciani et al., 2021, Chierici et al., 2020). This transformation is impossible without leaders responsible for creating digital transformation platforms and who are the drivers of such change (Sainger, 2018).

The role of leadership in digital transformation has been highlighted in the literature, and leaders can help organizations successfully lead this digital transformation through digital strategy, updating their skills and capabilities, and following emerging technological trends (Swift and Lange, 2018). Leaders with digital mindsets and abilities are known as digital leaders who build a collaborative network of transformation within organizations (Bresciani et al., 2021). However, non-tech-savvy leaders positioned to bring about desired digital transformation still have a significant role because they combine traditional leadership qualities by upskilling themselves to the new technology and digital transformation skills required for leadership in the digital era.

Transformational leadership has been highlighted in the literature as the closest quality of digital leaders because it engenders trust; leaders focus on themselves and their followers and transcend the need for change among their peers (Sasmoko et al., 2019). The extant literature highlights that transformational leadership facilitates the digital transformation of organizations (AlNuaimi et al., 2022).

We review these characteristics in light of the above discussion as follows:

Leadership Characteristics

Agile leadership involves a leader who can foresee uncertain situations and experiment with various ideas to get through them using multiple options (Petry, 2018). Having the ability to influence the behaviors of individuals working under their command (Buhler, 2010), agile leaders lead traditional organizations in disruptive environments, making the organization competitive for digital transformation (Parker et al., 2015). Agile leaders set the direction for change, encourage feedback, and collaborate with their teammates (Gardner et al., 2005). They continuously guide the vision to the teammates, define and promote the change, and keep the team stuck toward the organization's goals (Parker et al., 2015). An agile leader maintains a good relationship with the team members, encouraging them to adopt the change. Such agility is essential for a digital leader seeking to promote a culture of innovation in the workplace. This approach helps the organization embrace the change on time, leading to its successful digital transformation (Li et al., 2018). An agile mindset is, hence, necessary for a digital leader to deal with disruptive environments and successfully deal with the firm's digital transformation.

Participative leadership is a characteristic that facilitates team workers and employees in the main-stream strategic and operational decision-making process Blanchard & Broadwell, 2018). Participative leaders take input from the employees before making decisions and also give opportunities to the individuals to discuss their issues and try to resolve them through their suggestions (Emery, 1995, Stanton, 1993). As leaders do not necessarily know everything, it is wise to involve team members in the decision-making process, especially in those volatile environments of digital disruption, which require digital transformation (Petry, 2018). As digital leadership is a cross-hierarchical and team-oriented process with a strong focus on innovation (Blanchard & Broadwell, 2018), a team-oriented approach involving individuals in the decision-making process encourages integration. It increases the chances of successful digital transformation.

Innovative Leadership is a leadership characteristic in which the leader brings change and solves organizational problems through technology and innovation (Şen and Eren, 2012). Thus, a leader who brings organizational change through innovation is an innovative leader. In digital transformation, the leader can work with a mixture of humans and machines (both teams of employees, gig workers, and artificial intelligence) for successful digital

transformation. Innovative leaders can predict the future and set the vision based on the organization's historical background – they bring change through technological advancement (Şen & Eren, 2012). They take risky and courageous steps for radical organizational change and can turn those complex steps into successful outcomes.

Additionally, they create a shared vision, aligning the values of the workers with those of the organization (Blanchard & Broadwell, 2018,). Such leaders are revolutionary as they can transform existing strategies into digital ones (Şen & Eren, 2012). Innovative leadership is, hence, an essential driver for triggering successful digital transformation (Ratnasari, 2020). Digital leaders educate themselves on new technology, making themselves capable of successfully transforming the organization. Their innovative mindset is highly relevant for bringing change (Shaari et al., 2015) and success in volatile conditions (Kremer et al., 2019, Li et al., 2016, Ratnasari, 2020).

Open Leadership is defined as the leadership characteristic in which the leaders are open to communication and access to information (Petry, 2018). Digital leaders are also open to change and tackle problems with an open mind, enabling successful digital transformation. Bringing change and innovation at the strategic level requires digital leaders to communicate their innovative ideas across all levels. Furthermore, a digital leader must be responsive, open to innovation, learning to create a digital transformation culture (Sivathanu and Pillai, 2018), and adaptive to change (Kelly, 2018).

Leadership Styles

While effective leadership in the fourth industrial revolution requires elements of both the traditional and the newer styles of leadership (Guzmán et al., 2020), an essential leadership requirement for thriving in the era of the fourth industrial revolution is leadership flexibility, lesser control over followers (Erhan et al., 2022) as well as inclusiveness. Leaders today need to learn the appropriate leadership styles for effective digital transformation in their organization (Haddud and McAllen, 2018) and develop leadership styles that match the requirements of highly volatile environments (Guzmán et al., 2020). It is argued that digital leadership requires transformational capabilities and a democratic environment (Prince, 2018) through which their organization may develop a strategic competitive advantage over other firms (Sow and Aborbie, 2018). We elaborate on these elements as follows.

A ***democratic leadership*** style involves assigning responsibility among followers, empowering them, and enabling group decision-making (Gastil, 1994). It is, therefore, a leadership style that takes followers on board in decisions (Oberer and Erkollar, 2018), and an appropriate one for the decentralized digital work environment that requires individuals to be creative and innovative (Oberer and Erkollar, 2018). Hence, a democratic leader with digital skills will more likely be able to transform the organization digitally.

Similarly, a ***transformational leadership*** style, which is relationship-based (Raziq et al., 2018) involves leader inspiration as well as motivating the employees toward achieving organizational goals and objectives (Forester and Clegg, 1991). It involves four I’s: idealized influence, individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation (Bass and Avolio, 1994), which are critical requirements of digital leadership through which leaders encourage a decentralized working environment, creativity, collaboration, and sharing (Erhan et al., 2022). Collaborative leaders are focused on followers, efficiently promoting organizational change and enhancing employee performance (House and Shamir, 1993, Jung and Avolio, 2000). Furthermore, research links transformational leaders' digital skills and capabilities with a higher information-sharing and problem-solving orientation(Jansen et al.,

2009, Jung et al., 2003). Thus, a transformational leadership style is ideal for successful digital transformation.

Leadership Skills

Digital transformation requires unique skills for leaders (Santo et al., 2019) to support the innovation process of organizations (Ciarli et al., 2021). Digital transformation and the leadership skills required for this transformation coevolve together. However, besides understanding digital leadership characteristics and styles, digital leaders must also understand the necessary skills in digital transformation. Furthermore, the skills of the workforce also need to be updated. An MIT Sloan and Deloitte survey showed that 90% of the respondents (executives, managers, and analyst) emphasized workforce upskilling for survival in the digital era (Kane et al., 2018). According to Mumford et al. (2007), leaders require *cognitive skills* for creative thinking and decision-making, *interpersonal skills* for achieving the desired aim, *business skills* for managing the resources of business, and *strategic skills* for alignment of strategies with the mission and vision of the organization. According to Guzmán et al. (2020), for digital leaders, cognitive skills, social skills, and digital and technological skills are critical for successful digital transformation. We elaborate on these as follows.

Cognitive and Social Skills are basic skills involving the ability to receive, process, and disseminate information (Lau and Pavett, 1980, Mintzberg, 1975, Zaccaro, 2001). They are fundamental skills that leaders require for effective communication in the organization (Carroll and Gillen, 1987). Digital leaders require three skills: (a) *speaking*, which is needed to effectively communicate information in the digital environment and promote higher participation among peers; (b) *active listening*, which encourages collaboration and helps in getting feedback; and (c) *active learning* for the leaders as well as the followers (Guzmán et al., 2020). Digital leadership is a social phenomenon (Larjovuori et al., 2018) requiring an amalgam of humans and machines. These are soft skills, and organizations may bring technology, but success will only be ensured if they get a human touch with it. Digital transformation requires a balance between human resources and technology.

Technological and Digital Skills generally involve specific knowledge of computers, ICT, and the internet (Hatlevik et al., 2015) and are key drivers of digital change. A digital leader must possess advanced technological knowledge and skills to exploit the full benefits of digital transformation (Van Laar et al., 2017). Furthermore, for digital leaders, digital skills for content creation, technical and media aspects, strategic skills, and information and communication (Van Deursen et al., 2016) are vital as they enable the digital leader to effectively and efficiently apply digital tools and technologies for digital transformation (Mitrovic, 2010). Leaders need to have technological and digital skills to deal with the different advanced data sets, data analytics, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and blockchain technology. A digital leader equipped with those skills can profoundly impact the successful digital transformation.

Digital Leadership, Business Model, and Digital Transformation

A business model tells a story of how the firm will earn profit. It involves a *value proposition* of a product offering to a specific target market at a particular price and a *value architecture* that includes the business's value capture and value distribution strategies (Hagel et al., 1999, Li, 2007). A business model has five dimensions: (a) customer dimension (provision of services while maintaining the customer's relationship), (b) benefit dimension (value creation by advancement of products), (c) value-added dimension (the use of resources and skills), (d)

partner dimension (relationship with the business partners), and (e) financial dimension (revenue earned, and cost incurred in the provision of services) (Schallmo, 2013). A business model requires managers to make critical decisions to keep their firms updated and fit for market competitiveness (Zott and Amit, 2010). It is designed to create value for the business and consequently provides growth opportunities (Zott and Amit, 2010). Business models are holistic, multi-dimensional, complex phenomena (Li, 2020). The success of the business model depends upon a good fit between the product and its successful implementation.

Different economic and business conditions require firms to upgrade and revise their business models per the market demands and successfully provide services to customers (Bohnsack et al., 2021). Likewise, the emerging market disruption toward digital transformation creates new value-creation opportunities for firms (Hacklin et al., 2018, Lanzolla et al., 2021). Digital transformation of business models involves using automation techniques such as big data, artificial intelligence, blockchain technology, etc., for value creation and provision of services to customers (Queiroz et al., 2021, Schallmo and Daniel, 2018). The objective of digitalization of business models is timely delivery of products and services, cost reduction, product quality, and building better customer relationships. In doing so, a crucial role has to be played by the digital leader.

Digital leaders must update business models for digital transformation. To do this, the digital leader should transform their roles, skills, and styles, develop a culture of digitalization, vision, values, and structures, and develop individuals, knowledge, and collaboration in the organization (Eberl and Drews, 2021). Thus, a digital leader may create a business model by updating their skills, characteristics, and styles; at the same time, at the organizational level, change the organizational culture and strategies and collaborate and communicate digital change at the individual level. Hence, digital leadership can influence innovation and business model innovation (Kreutzer et al., 2017, Wasono and Furinto, 2018).

Moreover, from the NIT and INT perspective, digital leadership is significant in steering changes to business models and digital strategy (AlNuaimi et al., 2022, Brown and Brown, 2019). They profoundly impact business models by fostering an innovative culture, agile organizations, and a customer-centric approach. Digital leaders continuously adapt to market trends and adhere to market demands by evolving their business models to stay competitive in the digital era(Colovic, 2022). These leaders are responsible for formulating digital strategy, which involves exploring new market segments, revenue streams, and value propositions by leveraging digital technologies (Mihardjo et al., 2019).

Moreover, they understand customer behaviors through data analytics; this customer-centric approach of digital leadership leads to changes in business models such as customized offerings, subscription-based services, and digital marketing, which cater to the specific segment of customer needs. Similarly, these leaders streamline organizational operations and reduce costs by introducing new automated tools (Yopan et al., 2022).

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Institutional Theory (INT) and Neo Institutional Theory (NIT)

Institutional theory is prominently used in organizational research. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) have defined INT as the study of institutional norms and practices in organizations and how these established norms affect the decisions of organizations and individuals. There are three critical components of INT. First, isomorphism is a process in which institutions become similar over time due to coercion (external pressure), normative (to gain legitimacy), or mimetic isomorphism. The second is legitimacy, in which organizations seek to be viewed

as legitimate by following institutional norms and practices. Third, institutional change explores the change process of organizations over time.

Neo-institutional theory (NIT) expands its focus on the role of cognitive factors in already established norms and practices. This theory emphasizes the role of cognitive factors and cultural beliefs in shaping organizational norms (Powell & DiMaggio, 2012). While the Neo-Institutional theory and INT is widely used in the literature (Centobelli et al., 2020, Dubey et al., 2019, Dubey et al., 2018, Verhoef et al., 2021). However, there is limited work with regard to how the neo-institutional theory explains the links among digital transformation, digital leadership, business model innovation, and organizational culture. NIT explains the process of an organization's interaction with the environment and the challenges it faces to survive and gain a competitive advantage. Three fundamental processes shape organizations. The first is coercive pressure from powerful and resourceful bodies/organizations. The second is imitative pressure, which comes from the dependence on other organizations' behaviors that guide their organization. The third is normative pressure, which comes from societal expectations about adopting certain practices (Dubey et al., 2018). NIT is commonly used to understand the organizational changes related to the implementation and adoption of advanced technologies and investigates the pressure of external factors on organizational culture (Adebanjo et al., 2018, Dubey et al., 2018). This study opted to use the NIT and INT approach to explore digital transformation as a radical and coercive change in organizations, emphasizing changing the leadership practices, business model, and, more importantly, organizational culture.

Theoretical Implications

The advancements and the cross-disciplinary applicability of the institutional theory has gained an increased attention of the scholars over the years (Glynn & D'aunno, 2023). Motivated by these advancements, our study draws on the institutional theory and offers some theoretical implications. Our key implication is that digital leaders who embrace such specific characteristics as innovativeness, agility, and openness, are in a better position to navigate institutional changes in turbulent environments such as digital transformation. Moreover, digital skills such as technological, social, and cognitive, are critical for successful digital transformation. These skills function as institutional resources that leverage these skills to adapt to changes caused by transformations.

We respond to the calls to utilize INT and NIT to investigate digital transformation, business model innovation, and organizational culture (AlNuaimi et al., 2022, Dubey et al., 2018). We also add to the scarce literature on digital leadership and transformation (Porfírio et al., 2021) on INT and NIT theory. The extant literature on digital transformation has been exploratory and has focused on IT capabilities (Irfan et al., 2019, Pattij et al., 2020), creativity, and organizational behavior (Ravichandran, 2018). However, the literature on the role of digital leadership in digital transformation from an INT perspective is still emerging and nascent (Schildt, 2022). This research bridges the gap between institutional theory and digital leadership by shedding light on how digital leadership acts as institutional entrepreneurs and how the digital competencies are shaped by institutional pressures to respond toward firms' digital transformation. By offering propositions and a conceptual framework that integrates digital leadership, business model innovation, organization, and transformation with the INT and NIT theory, this research provides foundations for future studies.

For practice, the information provided on the role of digital leadership in driving business model innovation and organizational change can guide corporate leaders in their digital

transformation efforts (AlNuaimi et al., 2022). Policymakers may consider initiatives that promote digital literacy and leadership in the business sector to enhance competitiveness. Moreover, successful digital transformation driven by effective digital leadership can lead to economic growth, job creation, efficient performance, and improved societal life.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

To find out how leadership, organizational culture, and structure affect digital transformation, Leso et al. (2023) carried out research. In order for digital transformation to be successful, the study suggested that leadership has an impact on corporate culture. In addition to finding the importance of leadership and culture in digital transformation, this study produced a six-construct model.

In the study conducted by Heubeck (2023), the paper is based on dynamic managerial capabilities theory and argues that organizational skills are critical for business model innovation and firm performance. The study covers the overarching area of business model innovation and digital transformation. Findings depicted a positive relationship between managerial capabilities and business model innovation.

In order to investigate the impact of digital leadership competencies on handling technologically induced change, Brunner et al. (2023) conducted a research study. Digital leadership skills have been shown to have a favorable impact on organizational culture, digital transformation, and the creation of business models. Digital leadership human capabilities are what generate strategic change in digital transformation, according to the research.

The relationship between innovative work behavior and the digitalization of leadership was examined by Erhan et al. in 2022. In addition, they looked at the connection between digital transformation and digital leadership and put forth a conceptual framework. The results showed that employees' opinions of digital leadership had a favorable influence on creative work practices.

Organizational innovation is positively impacted by digital transformational leadership, according to Ardi et al. (2020). According to their analysis, transformational leadership styles and digital competences are combined to develop digital leadership. Therefore, to successfully manage a digital transformation within a company, a leader must possess a combination of many leadership attributes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An electronic instrument was developed based on Google Forms to test the impact of digital leadership on the organization's performance through the mediating role of innovation capability.

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to test the validity and reliability of the measurement instrument, as it is widely used in management research to determine the belonging of the items to their latent construct (Brown, 2015). The convergent validity was measured based on the results of factor loadings and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Moreover, the discriminate validity was determined by comparing the values of AVE with the Maximum Shared Variance values (MSV) and the values of the square root of AVE with the correlation coefficients among the rest of the latent constructs. As for reliability, it was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficients and McDonald's Omega coefficients, which express Composite Reliability (CR).

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to analyze the research data and test its hypotheses.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were relied on determine the trends towards adopting its variables within the study population and to ensure that the data is free from the problem of multi collinearity. The results presented in Table 2 showed that the levels of adoption of digital leadership dimensions ranged between moderate and high, where global vision ranked first (M= 3.75, SD= 0.953) at a high level, while collaboration ranked last (M= 3.51, SD= 0.915) at a moderate level.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

MEAN, STANDARD DEVIATION, AND MULTI COLLINEARITY TEST				
Constructs	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Variance Inflation Factor**	**Tolerance**
CR	3.64	0.715	1.579	0.633
DK	3.73	0.837	2.097	0.477
CO	3.51	0.915	1.846	0.542
IN	3.58	0.870	1.337	0.748
GV	3.75	0.953	0.953	2.164
PD	3.78	0.947	2.608	0.383
PC	3.71	0.898	1.937	0.516
MA	3.69	0.906	1.735	0.576
OR	3.65	0.982	1.283	0.779
OP	3.48	0.95	-	-
Note: CR: Creativity, DK: Deep Knowledge, CO: Collaboration, IN: Inquisitiveness, GV: Global Vision, PD: Product Innovation, PC: Process Innovation, MA: Marketing Innovation, OR: Organizational Innovation, OP: Organization's Performance				

The same applies to the dimensions of innovation capability, where product innovation was ranked first (M= 3.78, SD= 0.947) at a high level, while organizational innovation was in the last rank (M= 3.65, SD= 0.982) with a moderate level. Furthermore, the organization's performance (M= 3.48, SD= 0.951) was at a moderate level. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and the tolerance were used to test multi collinearity between the dimensions of the independent variables. The results determined that the values of VIF were in the domain (1.283-2.608) which is less than the recognized upper limit of 3 (Senaviratna & Cooray, 2019), and the values of tolerance were greater than 0.1 the minimum acceptable value (Park, 2017). Therefore, the study data does not contain the problem of multi collinearity. The values of the correlation coefficients between the independent variables that did not exceed the maximum value of 0.80 that suggested by Hair, et al., (2019) confirm that the data is free from multi collinearity problem.

Table 2: Hypotheses Testing

SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESIS TESTS					
Relations	**Unstandardized coefficients**		**Standardized coefficients**	**C.R**	**P-value**
	B	**S.E**	**(Beta)**		
Digital Leadership and Organization Success	0.785	0.032	0.662	17.60	***
Digital Leadership and Business Growth	0.493	0.028	0.417	24.53	**
Business Growth and Organization Success	0.526	0.026	0.483	20.23	**
Digital Leadership, Business Growth and Organization Success	0.912	0.035	0.861	26.05	***
Note: * sig<0.05, ** sig<0.01, *** sig<0.001					

Table 2 showed the detailed results of hypothesis testing. The first hypothesis indicated that digital leadership has an impact on organization's success. The results showed that this hypothesis was supported (β= 0.662, C.R= 17.60, P<0.001). The second hypothesis argued that digital leadership impact on Business growth. The results of the statistical analysis supported this hypothesis (β= 0.417, C.R= 24.53, P<0.01). The third hypothesis was referring to the impact of business growth on organization's success. The results obtained showed that this hypothesis was supported (β= 0.483, C.R= 20.23, P<0.01). Regarding the fourth hypothesis, which argued that the digital leadership has an impact on organization's success through the mediating role of business growth, it was supported by the results, where the direct impact was (β= 0.662, P<0.001) and the indirect impact was (β= 0.199, P<0.001).

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The main objective of the research was to examine the relationship between digital leadership and business growth as an imperative for organizational success in the industrial sector. The study concluded that the level of digital leadership was moderate, which corresponds with (Mihardjo et al., 2019; Sultan & Suhail, 2019). Therefore, the leadership of industrial organizations in Nigeria are familiar with the conditions of the business environment and the competitive context and seek to employ their knowledge and available technological capabilities to achieve their strategic goals. Similarly, the level of performance of industrial organizations was moderate that is consistent with the result of (Khan et al., 2018; Migdadi, 2019). Therefore, these organizations define clear criteria through which they can know the results of their work and periodic developments in their strategic plans in order to quickly deal with deviations. As for the business growth, the results indicated that it was at a high level, which corresponds with (Freije et al., 2021; Lei et al., 2019). Hence, industrial organizations in Nigeria focus on achieving competitive advantage and growth by adopting innovative business models that enable them to deal with the fluctuation in customer desires.

The results showed that digital leadership positively impacts an organization's performance, this result is consistent with (Dijkstra, 2020; Freitas Junior et al., 2020; Mardiana, 2020). Therefore, the synergy between leadership capabilities and technological capabilities in the field of the organizations' leadership through global vision, constructive collaboration, and deep knowledge leads the organization towards achieving successive successes. Moreover, it leads to improving organizational effectiveness and efficiency by exploiting technological development and digital platforms to motivate followers and optimally invest resources. Besides, it was found that digital leadership positively impacts business growth, which is commensurate with (Sasmoko et al., 2019; Wasono & Furinto, 2018). Thus, the

vision of leaders of organizations seeking digital transformation helps in developing strategic and organizational frameworks based on innovative business models that in turn stimulate the capabilities of employees to discover customer needs and meet them with pioneering products and services. It also enables determining the current and future organization's status based on digital information about changes in the business environment and fluctuations in customer desires that create opportunities that can be exploited with new offers.

The results showed that business growth have a positive impact on organization performance, which is consistent with (Al-kalouti et al., 2020; Ferreira et al., 2020; Migdadi, 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Therefore, managers of organizations have to make improvements to their products and services by synchronizing the innovation culture in the overall strategy of the organization with the aim of achieving the highest level of growth. In addition, innovation capabilities stimulate knowledge sharing among the organization's employees and contribute to supporting management decisions regarding the developed offers, which are allowing access to organizational effectiveness and building core competencies that improve the organization's strategic performance. In the long run, these procedures are reflected in the organization's growth, profitability, and commercial reputation, as it is a pioneer in integrating digital orientation with leadership methods to improve the organization's flexibility in providing products and services that meet the changing needs of customers.

Research Implications

The current research provides a series of implications that should be taken into consideration, especially in developing economies. Theoretical implications focus on the development of transformational leadership theory based mainly on the view of dynamic capabilities to keep pace with the fluctuations of the business environment. The research combines an application of transformational leadership towards investing technological development in the digitization of organizations and innovation capability as critical factors in improving the organization's performance and achieving its strategic goals effectively and efficiently.

As for the practical implications directed to decision-makers, they were urged to be more open towards adopting digital strategies and business models in order to improve the competitive position of the organization. The research advises decision-makers to integrate the culture of innovation at all administrative levels of the organization by listening to the opinions and suggestions of employees and customers about the products and services under development, which increases their acceptance rate when they are offered in the market and improves their quality to reach the largest segment of current and prospective customers.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study, is subject to some limitations that can be used in future studies. The first limitation is related to the study methodology, as the current study relies on the cross-section approach in collecting data to discover the impact relationship between digital leadership and each of the organization performance and business growth. Therefore, it is possible to rely on the longitudinal approach in collecting data extensively in future studies to discover the impact relationship between the previous variables. The second limitation is related to the research constraints, as a sample of senior managers was resorted to in order to reduce the research time and cost. Therefore, future studies can follow a

complete census method in order to ensure more accurate results and can be more generalized to the rest of the sectors. As for the last limitation, it is related to the study's variables, where the current study took the business growth and innovation ability as mediating variable in the relationship between digital leadership and organization performance. Thus, future studies can investigate the moderating role of strategic agility or study the impact of digital leadership on competitive performance.

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