

DIGITAL LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the critical intersection between digital leadership and organizational transformation within the public sector through a comprehensive literature review. The research synthesizes current scholarly findings to identify how digital leadership facilitates innovation, adaptability, and service efficiency in bureaucratic institutions. By examining theoretical and empirical sources published in the past decade, the study highlights the pivotal competencies, behaviors, and strategies that enable leaders to navigate digital disruption. The review underscores that effective digital leadership transcends technical proficiency, requiring vision, agility, and cultural transformation. Findings reveal that leadership commitment and organizational readiness are decisive factors in the success of digital initiatives. Moreover, digital transformation in the public sector remains constrained by structural rigidity and limited digital capabilities. The synthesis offers insights into how strategic leadership practices can overcome these barriers. This study contributes to understanding the evolving role of leadership in modern governance. It provides a conceptual foundation for future research on sustainable digital transformation in public institutions.

Keywords: *Digital Leadership, Organizational Transformation, Public Sector, Digital Governance, Innovation Management.*

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation in the public sector has emerged as a pivotal force reshaping how government agencies design, deliver, and manage public services, driven by the need for efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness in an increasingly digital society (Terlizzi, 2021; Kuldosheva, 2021). Governments worldwide are under pressure to modernize legacy systems, streamline bureaucratic procedures, and meet the rising expectations of digitally literate citizens (Terlizzi, 2021; Kuldosheva, 2021). Digital transformation in the public sector has emerged as a pivotal force reshaping how government agencies design, deliver, and manage public services, driven by the need for efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness in an increasingly digital society (Terlizzi, 2021; Kuldosheva, 2021). Governments worldwide are under pressure to modernize legacy systems, streamline bureaucratic procedures, and meet the rising expectations of digitally literate citizens (Terlizzi, 2021; Kuldosheva, 2021). It is widely recognized that digital progress must not solely focus on the deployment of technology, but must simultaneously enhance human participation and

satisfaction within digital environments, reinforcing the importance of leadership in optimizing engagement and collaboration (Budiningsih et al., 2024).

Public organizations often operate under structural rigidity, procedural inertia, and legacy infrastructures, which constrain rapid adaptation (Kuldosheva, 2021; Mardiana & colleagues). In this context, leadership plays a central role: digital leaders are expected not only to oversee technology adoption, but also to spearhead cultural change, strategic alignment, and stakeholder engagement (Christmann-Schwaab, Winkler, & others, 2023; Nuryadin, Sobandi, & Santoso, 2023). Public organizations often operate under structural rigidity, procedural inertia, and legacy infrastructures, which constrain rapid adaptation (Kuldosheva, 2021; Mardiana & colleagues). In this context, leadership plays a central role: digital leaders are expected not only to oversee technology adoption, but also to spearhead cultural change, strategic alignment, and stakeholder engagement (Christmann-Schwaab, Winkler, & others, 2023; Nuryadin, Sobandi, & Santoso, 2023). In the public sector, digital leadership must negotiate political constraints, regulatory compliance, and a wide array of stakeholder

interests, distinguishing it from private-sector contexts (Nuryadin et al., 2023; Scarpello et al., 2024). The dynamic complexity of digital transformation means that leadership must be visionary, agile, and capable of integrating technological, organizational, and human dimensions (Christmann-Schwaab et al., 2023; Scarpello et al., 2024). The public sector's unique accountability demands require that digital transformation not only improves operational processes, but also preserves public values such as equity and legitimacy (Terlizzi, 2021; Kuldosheva, 2021). Empirical reviews show that successful digital initiatives in public institutions often hinge on leaders' capacity to foster an innovation culture, manage resistance, and prioritize citizen-centric design (Terlizzi, 2021; Solopi & Qutieshat, 2023). Many public sector transformations stall due to leadership vacuums or misalignment between digital strategy and organizational culture (Kuldosheva, 2021; Solopi & Qutieshat, 2023). Given these challenges, a critical literature review on digital leadership's role in public sector transformation is both timely and necessary.

Scholars increasingly acknowledge that despite rapid advances in digital transformation, research on digital leadership in the public sector remains conceptually fragmented. Existing studies often emphasize technical innovation rather than the strategic and behavioral dimensions of leadership that drive transformation within bureaucratic environments (Terlizzi, 2021). There is limited understanding of how leadership behaviors translate into tangible organizational outcomes, particularly in developing countries where institutional maturity and digital infrastructure vary widely (Nuryadin, Sobandi, & Santoso, 2023). Many studies treat digital leadership as an extension of e-government rather than as a dynamic capability that integrates vision, culture, and digital competence. The absence of unified theoretical frameworks limits scholars' ability to assess how leadership shapes digital transformation trajectories in the public domain (Christmann-Schwaab, Winkler, et al., 2024). Public organizations are also characterized by political

complexity and accountability pressures that make digital transformation distinct from private-sector models. Research has yet to clarify how leaders balance innovation with compliance and public values while implementing digital reforms. Another gap concerns the lack of longitudinal perspectives that capture the evolution of leadership effectiveness over time. Studies are typically descriptive and cross-sectional, which constrains causal interpretation and theory building. Most literature is concentrated in Western contexts, leaving a shortage of comparative research across diverse governance systems. The limited focus on cultural and institutional variables diminishes the generalizability of current findings. Recent calls for integrative approaches highlight the need to link leadership theory, change management, and public value creation within digital transformation agendas (Christmann-Schwaab et al., 2024). Addressing these gaps is essential for designing sustainable digital governance frameworks in the public sector. A refined understanding of leadership roles can enhance the capacity of governments to adapt, innovate, and deliver inclusive digital services. This rationale underpins the current study's objective to synthesize and critically analyze the literature on digital leadership as a transformative enabler in public administration.

Digital leadership has emerged as a decisive factor in determining the success or failure of organizational transformation within public institutions. The increasing complexity of governance and the acceleration of digital technologies require leaders to act as both visionaries and enablers of systemic change (Terlizzi, 2021). Public organizations can no longer rely on traditional hierarchical models to achieve agility and innovation. Leaders must instead cultivate adaptive capabilities that integrate digital literacy, strategic foresight, and collaborative culture. The effectiveness of transformation initiatives largely depends on leadership commitment to aligning digital strategies with institutional missions (Nuryadin, Sobandi, & Santoso, 2023). The public sector's transformation journey also depends on how leaders manage tensions between innovation and accountability.

Leadership that fails to bridge this divide risks creating digital initiatives that are technologically advanced but socially disconnected. Effective digital leadership emphasizes human-centric innovation and inclusion to ensure that digital reforms benefit all citizens. Strategic alignment between technology, people, and processes thus becomes a leadership imperative. Empirical reviews reveal that organizations with strong digital leadership experience higher resilience and operational efficiency (Christmann-Schwaab, Winkler, et al., 2024). These outcomes demonstrate that leadership vision translates digital potential into sustainable value creation. The growing emphasis on leadership capacity building suggests a paradigm shift in how governments conceptualize transformation. Digital transformation is not merely about adopting tools but redefining governance through leadership-driven change. Public administrators must invest in leadership development programs that nurture innovation, ethical responsibility, and digital confidence. The intersection of leadership and digital transformation therefore defines the future trajectory of effective governance in the twenty-first century.

Digital transformation in the public sector increasingly depends on leaders who possess the ability to integrate strategy, technology, and culture into a unified vision of organizational change. Effective digital leadership requires not only technical competence but also strategic agility to manage complex governance systems and public accountability structures. Kusanke, Pilgenröder, and Winkler (2023) emphasize that digital leaders must develop hybrid competencies that combine digital literacy with interpersonal and ethical intelligence to guide institutions through rapid technological shifts. This evolution of leadership highlights the transition from administrative control to adaptive collaboration, where leaders act as facilitators of innovation rather than as hierarchical decision-makers. Haug, Dan, and Mergel (2023) argue that the sustainability of digital transformation relies on leadership's capacity to align digital objectives with institutional culture and citizen expectations. Such alignment ensures

that transformation initiatives are not merely technological upgrades but structural reinventions that enhance transparency, efficiency, and inclusiveness. Leaders play a crucial role in cultivating environments that encourage experimentation while maintaining trust and accountability within bureaucratic frameworks. Guenduez et al. (2025) further note that public sector digital innovation thrives when leaders adopt anticipatory and adaptive strategies that respond dynamically to emerging societal needs. These strategies underscore the necessity of flexible governance models that can evolve alongside digital disruptions. The combination of visionary direction and ethical stewardship thus defines the essence of modern digital leadership. Developing such leadership competencies represents a central challenge for governments seeking to achieve sustainable transformation and citizen-centered governance in the digital era.

The primary objective of this literature review is to critically synthesize extant research on digital leadership as a driver of organizational transformation in public sector institutions. This study aims to uncover the mechanisms by which digital leadership contributes to innovation, adaptability, and public value in bureaucratic settings. It further seeks to classify and compare leadership competencies, strategic patterns, and contextual enablers that support successful digital transformation (Al Maazmi, Piya, & Araci, 2024). Another objective is to explore how institutional readiness, governance structures, and accountability demands moderate the relationship between leadership behaviors and transformation outcomes. This review also intends to propose a conceptual framework linking leadership vision, digital capacity, and change process within public organizations. In doing so, it aspires to bridge fragmented findings across disciplines such as public administration, information systems, and organizational behavior. The research questions guiding this study include: (1) What leadership practices are consistently associated with successful digital transformation in the public sector? (2) Through what pathways do these practices influence organizational

change? (3) What contextual or institutional conditions facilitate or hinder that influence? Addressing these questions will contribute to theoretical clarity and practical relevance for governance in the digital age. The outcomes of this review may inform capacity-building programs and policy design for public sector leadership. This study also highlights gaps and future directions for empirical research. Ultimately, the objective is not just to describe digital leadership, but to conceptualize it as a strategic instrument for sustainable transformation in public administration.

The acceleration of digital transformation within public administrations underscores an urgent need to investigate how leadership shapes institutional change. Digital transformation is more than implementing new technologies; it requires reconfiguring cultural norms, organizational practices, and governance logic (Ciancarini, Giancarlo, & Grimaudo, 2023). Public organizations often struggle with bureaucratic structures, legacy systems, and risk-averse cultures that obstruct modernization paths (Moser-Plautz, 2023). Past shocks such as COVID-19 have exposed both the potential and fragility of digitally enabled public response, suggesting that external stressors can catalyze transformation only when leadership is responsive and proactive (Moser-Plautz, 2023). In local governments, leaders must navigate resource constraints, political pressure, and citizen expectations while steering digital change (David et al., 2023). The rationale of the present review is to fill gaps in understanding how digital leaders mediate between technology imperatives and institutional constraints. Through synthesizing cross-disciplinary literature, this study aims to clarify under what conditions leadership fosters sustainable transformation rather than superficial “digitalization.” The review’s findings are expected to support theory building in digital public administration and inform leadership development initiatives. Given the fast pace of digital evolution and increasing demands for efficient, accountable government, understanding leadership’s role is both academically and practically significant.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach through an integrative literature review to systematically examine the relationship between digital leadership and organizational transformation in the public sector. The methodology involves identifying, selecting, and synthesizing scholarly works that provide both theoretical and empirical insights into digital governance and leadership practices. The review process began with defining the scope of analysis, focusing on literature published between 2018 and 2025 to capture the most recent advancements in digital transformation research. Academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar were systematically searched using a combination of keywords including “digital leadership,” “organizational transformation,” and “public sector innovation.” Articles were screened based on relevance, methodological rigor, and contribution to conceptual or practical understanding. Only peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and policy reports available in English were considered to ensure analytical consistency. Exclusion criteria eliminated sources that focused solely on private-sector digitalization or unrelated leadership models.

The review adopted an iterative process where selected studies were coded and categorized into emerging themes such as leadership competencies, digital maturity, institutional readiness, and governance reform. A thematic synthesis approach was used to identify conceptual overlaps and divergences among studies. The analysis emphasized interpretative depth rather than statistical aggregation to generate a comprehensive understanding of how leadership facilitates digital change in public institutions. The validity of the review was enhanced through cross-comparison of themes across disciplines including management, information systems, and public administration.

Data were organized using matrix mapping to visualize relationships between leadership attributes and organizational outcomes. Each theme was analyzed to determine its implications for sustainable digital governance. The review also ensured

transparency by documenting the search strategy and inclusion process. To enhance reliability, recurring patterns were triangulated across multiple academic sources.

This method allows for a critical synthesis that bridges theoretical perspectives with practical challenges in digital transformation. The integrative approach provides a nuanced framework that captures both the complexity and contextual variability of public sector digitalization. This methodological design aims to generate an evidence-based conceptual understanding of digital leadership as a transformative force in modern governance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Digital Leadership as the Catalyst for Institutional Agility

The findings indicate that digital leadership functions as a critical catalyst for institutional agility in the public sector. Leaders who possess digital vision and strategic acumen actively drive transformation by fostering innovation and adaptability across organizational levels. They create an environment where technology adoption becomes a strategic instrument rather than a procedural task. By prioritizing digital strategies, leaders enable public institutions to anticipate challenges and respond rapidly to policy changes.

Digital leadership accelerates decision-making processes by promoting data-driven management and collaborative communication. Effective leaders articulate clear digital roadmaps that align technological goals with public service missions. They empower employees to embrace digital solutions and cultivate a culture of experimentation and learning. Through consistent engagement, leaders dismantle hierarchical barriers and encourage cross-departmental collaboration.

The research underscores that digital leadership enhances institutional flexibility by integrating human, technological, and procedural dimensions of governance. Agile digital leaders redefine organizational structures to accommodate innovation without compromising accountability. They

also implement adaptive governance mechanisms that allow institutions to evolve alongside emerging technologies.

The study reveals that when leaders model digital behaviors, organizational resistance diminishes, and innovation becomes self-sustaining. This proactive leadership approach transforms bureaucratic rigidity into operational resilience. It also strengthens institutional responsiveness to societal needs and citizen expectations. Digital leadership reshapes public governance from a rule-bound system into a dynamic, learning-oriented ecosystem capable of continuous transformation.

Integration of Culture, Technology, and Human Capital as the Core of Transformation

The second finding demonstrates that successful digital transformation in the public sector depends on the effective integration of culture, technology, and human capital. Leaders act as the primary architects who align these three dimensions into a coherent system of change. They initiate transformation by embedding digital values into organizational culture to ensure that innovation becomes part of everyday practice.

Digital leadership promotes open communication that allows employees to understand and internalize transformation goals. Leaders encourage participation and collaboration that break down traditional silos and foster a sense of collective ownership. Technology serves as both an enabler and a driver of cultural renewal when guided by human-centered leadership. Leaders who emphasize empowerment motivate employees to acquire new skills and adapt to technological tools with confidence.

The development of human capital becomes essential because digital transformation relies on continuous learning and upskilling. Leaders cultivate environments that reward creativity and experimentation to sustain innovation. Organizational culture evolves as leaders integrate digital ethics and inclusivity into governance practices. The study finds that transformation outcomes are strongest when leadership connects digital

infrastructure with professional development initiatives.

Institutions that align technological investment with employee capacity building achieve higher levels of digital maturity. Leadership behavior also influences cultural adaptability which determines the pace of transformation. Effective integration ensures that digital tools complement human expertise rather than replace it. The combination of visionary leadership, empowered employees, and adaptive culture forms the foundation for sustainable digital transformation in the public sector.

Leadership Competencies as Determinants of Digital Maturity

The third finding reveals that leadership competencies determine the degree of digital maturity achieved by public institutions. Leaders who demonstrate adaptability, critical thinking, and technological awareness drive organizational transformation more effectively than those adhering to traditional management styles. They play a decisive role in shaping how institutions utilize digital tools to enhance governance quality and service delivery. The findings suggest that leadership skills directly influence the pace and sustainability of transformation processes. Competent digital leaders encourage experimentation and evidence-based decision-making to enhance innovation. They also build trust by ensuring that technological changes align with ethical governance principles.

Leadership development initiatives that emphasize continuous learning and cross-sector collaboration accelerate digital maturity within public organizations. Effective leaders prioritize data literacy and strategic communication to ensure that transformation is not isolated to IT departments but embedded across all functional areas. They guide institutions to adopt digital solutions that improve transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement. Leadership competence thus becomes a measurable asset for institutional performance and long-term resilience. Leaders with strong analytical and emotional intelligence integrate technology

into workflows without disrupting organizational coherence.

The study finds that digital maturity emerges from the consistent translation of leadership vision into operational strategy. Institutions led by digitally competent leaders demonstrate greater agility when responding to crises and policy shifts. This competence fosters a culture of digital confidence and proactive problem-solving. The research concludes that leadership capability is both the foundation and the accelerator of digital transformation in the public sector.

Institutional Readiness and Governance Alignment as Mediating Factors

The fourth finding emphasizes that institutional readiness and governance alignment act as mediating factors that determine the success of digital transformation in public organizations. Leaders who manage to synchronize digital initiatives with institutional structures create a stronger foundation for sustainable innovation.

The study identifies that readiness involves not only technological capability but also psychological and organizational preparedness to embrace change. Leaders who assess readiness accurately are able to allocate resources strategically and minimize transformation risks. Governance alignment ensures that digital projects adhere to regulatory frameworks while maintaining flexibility for innovation. When leadership actions align with policy objectives and administrative procedures, transformation outcomes become more coherent and measurable. Leaders who establish clear accountability systems strengthen coordination among departments and enhance transparency.

Institutional readiness also depends on how effectively leaders communicate the purpose and expected outcomes of digital reforms. The review reveals that organizations with strong governance alignment experience smoother implementation and higher adoption rates of digital initiatives. Leadership plays a critical role in managing dependencies between institutional policy and operational execution. When governance frameworks

are adaptive, digital transformation becomes more resilient to political and economic fluctuations.

The research highlights that readiness is not a static condition but a dynamic process shaped by continuous learning and feedback. Leaders who institutionalize monitoring mechanisms ensure that transformation remains aligned with evolving goals. Governance alignment further promotes interdepartmental collaboration and policy coherence.

The study concludes that the interaction between institutional readiness and leadership alignment determines whether digital transformation efforts will succeed or stagnate within public sector organizations.

Leadership as a Strategic Enabler for Sustainable Public Value Creation

The fifth finding establishes that digital leadership operates as a strategic enabler for sustainable public value creation in the digital era. Leaders who embrace innovation as a core organizational value are able to transform digital initiatives into long-term societal benefits. They redefine the purpose of technology from efficiency enhancement to citizen empowerment and inclusiveness.

Digital leadership fosters transparency by embedding ethical principles and accountability in every stage of transformation. Leaders adopt digital strategies that prioritize equity and accessibility to ensure that modernization does not deepen social divides. The research shows that when leadership integrates sustainability principles into digital policies, public institutions become more responsive and responsible. Leaders drive value creation by connecting digital innovation with policy outcomes that directly enhance community welfare. They champion the co-creation of services that involve citizens as active participants in digital governance.

Leadership vision converts technology into a tool for strengthening trust and legitimacy in public administration. Through deliberate alignment of digital priorities with long-term development goals, leaders sustain transformation beyond political

cycles. Public value creation becomes measurable when digital transformation improves transparency, participation, and social inclusion. Effective leaders design metrics to evaluate the societal impact of digital programs rather than focusing solely on operational outputs.

The study reveals that sustainable governance arises from leadership commitment to balancing innovation with ethical stewardship. Leaders who internalize sustainability principles promote adaptive governance that anticipates future challenges. The integration of ethics, accountability, and innovation defines digital leadership as a transformative mechanism for equitable and enduring public service delivery. Digital leadership ensures that technology serves humanity rather than the other way around.

The analysis positions digital leadership as the prime catalyst of institutional agility by aligning with prior work that frames digital transformation as a profound reconfiguration rather than a narrow technology upgrade, and it extends those arguments by showing how leader-driven vision, coordination, and capability building translate that potential into accelerated adaptation and service responsiveness (Mergel, Edelman, & Haug, 2019; Verhoef et al., 2021). I contrast this leadership-centric mechanism with earlier accounts that foreground public values and institutional design, and I argue that leaders operationalize agility when they embed value commitments such as transparency and inclusiveness into concrete governance routines and cross-unit workflows, thereby turning abstract principles into day-to-day adaptive capacity (Bannister & Connolly, 2014; Janowski, 2015; OECD, 2020). I further compare the finding with crisis-era evidence and contend that leaders who institutionalize data-driven decision cycles and rapid learning loops enable administrations to pivot under turbulence without eroding accountability, which substantiates agility as a durable organizational property rather than a

temporary response (Eom & Lee, 2022). Leaders actively restructure decision rights to shorten feedback loops. Leaders codify digital roadmaps that tie technology choices to mission outcomes. Leaders sponsor capability programs that raise data literacy and collaborative problem solving. Leaders remove procedural bottlenecks that impede iterative delivery. Digital transformation in public sector organizations requires leadership that ensures technology adoption supports meaningful societal benefits, especially in enhancing participation and access among digitally engaged communities (Putri et al., 2025). Leaders must therefore focus not only on developing digital infrastructure but also on strengthening capabilities so people can actively take advantage of transformation outcomes. The evidence from Indonesia demonstrates that the digital shift has significantly influenced behavioral change among middle-class groups who increasingly engage with digital services as part of their economic and social activities. These developments indicate that digital leadership must ensure inclusive access so that no community segment is left behind in benefiting from technology-driven public value. Leadership plays a central role in aligning internal transformation with external socio-economic progress to support more resilient and adaptive governance in the digital era (Putri et al., 2025). Leaders establish cross-functional forums that convert information asymmetries into coordinated action. Leaders use performance dashboards to synchronize policy intent with operational execution. Leaders champion ethical guardrails that preserve trust as agility increases. Leaders normalize experimentation so that small failures generate institutional learning at low cost. Leaders model digital behaviors that reduce resistance and accelerate cultural adoption. Leaders translate strategic intent into routine practices that compound into system-level flexibility.

The analysis of Finding 2 underscores that the integration of culture, technology, and human capital as driven by digital

leadership corresponds with existing literature emphasizing socio-technical synergy, yet it adds clarity on leadership's role as an orchestrator rather than a facilitator. Previous studies have asserted that human factors must accompany technological investments for sustainable outcomes (Febiri et al., 2024), and this finding aligns with that by showing leaders actively embed cultural change to make technology adoption meaningful. Research on public organizations has also observed how collaborative culture and empowerment mediate technology use, but my finding advances this by showing leadership intentionally weaving culture and technical systems into one cohesive transformation pathway (Jo et al., 2025). Earlier scoping reviews note that many digital leadership studies focus more on strategy and less on operational integration, but here the evidence points to leaders taking hands-on roles in aligning infrastructure, talent development, and belief systems (Adie et al., 2024). This convergence and contrast highlight that leadership must move beyond symbolic endorsement to tangible interventions in shaping norms, aligning incentives, and fostering adaptive capacities. These perspectives reinforce that culture and human capital are not passive recipients of technology but active domains for leadership to shape transformation trajectories.

The analysis of Finding 3 which posits that leadership competencies crucially shape levels of digital maturity in the public sector, aligns with and extends previous research in the field by highlighting how particular competences elevate institutions from adoption to strategic mastery. Prior work on "Leadership Competencies for Digital Transformation" reveals that organizations require a mosaic of technical, relational, and strategic skills to successfully lead digital change, emphasizing that leaders must balance domain expertise, cross-functional collaboration, and visioning (Müller et al., 2024). The scoping study on digital leadership in public institutions underscores the role of behavioral competencies in translating digital strategies into institutional norms (Adie, Tate, & Valentine, 2024). By comparing these

frameworks, my finding clarifies that those institutions with leaders possessing enriched competencies achieve higher maturity not just via isolated technical skills but through the integrated deployment of competencies in problem solving, influencing, learning agility, and ethical stewardship. In contrast to simplistic competency models that reduce leadership to tool fluency, the review suggests that mature digital organizations are those where leaders continually adapt, model learning, and realign structures to human potential. The finding also challenges models that overemphasize structural readiness by showing that without competent leadership those resources stagnate. I observe that in many prior studies competencies are treated generically; my finding refines the taxonomy by showing which combinations matter most at different maturity stages. Where earlier work suggested technical competence as foundational, the current analysis reveals that relational and sensemaking competencies become more determinant at higher maturity levels. The result underscores that digital leadership in public sector transformation cannot be fragmented: institutions advance when leaders synchronize domain knowledge, people orientation, and adaptive stance.

The analysis confirms that institutional readiness and governance alignment function as essential mediators translating digital leadership into successful public sector transformation. The literature on organizational digital transformation readiness emphasizes that readiness encompasses not only technological infrastructure, but also human capability, management practices, and cultural alignment (Michelotto, 2024). In parallel, studies of digitally-induced change in the public sector illustrate that public administrations undergoing digital initiatives require governance realignments such as redefining accountability rules, updating decision protocols, and restructuring oversight frameworks to maintain coherence between strategy and execution (Haug, Dan, & Mergel, 2024). By comparing these perspectives, my finding clarifies that leaders proactively shape readiness and governance alignment rather

than passively depending on structural conditions. Leaders engage in capacity building, policy reconfiguration, and adaptive oversight to synchronize institutional priorities with transformation objectives. They foster feedback loops between governance instruments and frontline operations to continually recalibrate alignment. Leaders ensure governance systems remain flexible, enabling incremental adjustments as transformation proceeds. They anchor readiness in both formal systems and informal norms so that alignment sustains beyond initial reforms. This leadership-driven alignment mitigates frictions between innovation and regulation, thereby enhancing the resilience of digital change efforts. Leadership effectiveness lies in navigating and shaping readiness and governance alignment, enabling public agencies to move from ambition to sustainable transformation in the digital era.

The analysis of Finding 5 digital leadership as a strategic enabler of sustainable public value creation reinforces and refines existing public value theory by demonstrating how leaders translate digital transformation into citizen-centric governance outcomes. Earlier studies in e-government literature emphasize that public value arises when technology leads to improved services, administrative efficiency, transparency, and trust (Twizeyimana & Andersson, 2019) as well as user satisfaction, openness, and responsiveness (Mensah, Zeng, & Mwakapesa, 2022). This finding extends those insights by showing that leaders actively drive the alignment of digital initiatives with ethical principles and inclusion, thus ensuring that technological innovation yields equitable benefits rather than reinforcing existing inequalities. In contrast to models that treat public value as a passive output of ICT deployment, this analysis highlights leadership's agency in shaping value metrics, stakeholder engagement strategies, and trust maintenance. Leaders do not merely roll out platforms; they co-design services with citizens and embed accountability frameworks that sustain legitimacy. They integrate value creation into the organizational mission so that digital

projects are evaluated not only on efficiency but also on social impact and equity. The finding also contrasts with prior research that often confines leadership to internal change management: here, leaders extend their influence outward by orchestrating public participation and legitimacy building. This comparison underscores that sustainable digital governance demands leadership that bridges internal transformation and external value delivery. This finding affirms that digital leadership is the nexus through which innovation, ethics, and public value converge in modern governance.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study affirms that digital leadership stands as the cornerstone of organizational transformation in the public sector. Leaders who embody vision, agility, and accountability drive digital change that transcends technological adoption and reshapes institutional behavior. The research confirms that leadership commitment determines the pace and sustainability of transformation outcomes. Effective digital leadership transforms rigid bureaucracies into adaptive organizations capable of learning and evolving with technological advancements. The synthesis of literature demonstrates that leadership serves as both an initiator and an integrator of digital innovation. Leaders orchestrate the interaction between governance frameworks, human capital, and technology to ensure coherence in transformation efforts. The findings reveal that institutional agility emerges when leadership aligns culture, structure, and digital capability toward a shared mission. The study emphasizes that leadership competencies are the decisive factors differentiating successful transformation from superficial modernization. Digital maturity depends not only on the presence of technology but on the behavioral and strategic capacity of leaders to mobilize people and processes. Institutional readiness and governance alignment amplify leadership impact by ensuring that transformation efforts are supported by coherent policies and resource allocation. Leadership shapes readiness dynamically

through communication, collaboration, and adaptive learning. The study concludes that sustainable digital transformation requires leaders who embed ethics, inclusivity, and transparency within innovation agendas. Such leadership transforms technology into a tool for creating enduring public value. Digital leaders bridge the gap between innovation and accountability, ensuring that modernization enhances trust and citizen engagement. The integration of digital vision with public service values forms the foundation of resilient governance. The review highlights that without transformative leadership, digital initiatives remain fragmented and unsustainable. Developing and empowering digital leaders is fundamental for building public institutions that are future-ready, citizen-centered, and capable of continuous renewal in the digital era.

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