



## Challenges of Those in Leadership in The Digitalisation of Nigeria's Government Organisations

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### Abstract

It is becoming increasingly difficult to function without using information and communication technology in all areas of human endeavour. This is because it promotes accountability and openness, which provides citizen-centred administration emphasising easier access to better delivery of government services. Digitalisation is one of the techniques available to government organisations to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of delivering services to the public. This is predicated on the notion that efficient digitalisation of the day-to-day activities of government processes will result in the provision of adequate services to citizens. However, there are various obstacles to effective digitalisation in government organisations in Nigeria. For instance, lack of information technology infrastructure, intermittent power/electricity supply, lack of trained and competent employees, a general aversion to change, etc. Of all the challenges aforementioned, the challenge of those in leadership stands out as a significant component that hinders digitalisation in government organisations in Nigeria. This paper examines the challenges of those in leadership in the digitalisation of Nigeria's government organisations, as well as proposes suggestions on how to deal with the challenges. Data was gathered from secondary sources such as relevant books, journals and the internet. This paper finds out that the attitude and reluctance to change by leaders in government organisations restrict the adoption and successful digitalisation of their day-to-day activities, which negatively impacts the delivery of high-quality services to the citizens. This paper suggested that the requisite Information Communication Technology infrastructure for digitalisation should be provided by the Federal Government, as the majority of government organisations lack the fundamental infrastructure required to properly digitalise their operations. The government should develop ICT policies that make computer literacy a requirement for hiring and promotion of public or civil servants at all levels, including the federal, state, and local governments.

**Keywords:** Digitalisation; Information and Communication Technologies; Leadership; Nigeria; Service Delivery

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) era began in the 1970s when the first personal computers were introduced, then came e-mail and the internet in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Berman & Marshal, 2014; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). Ever since, ICT has advanced and evolved to the point where, in the current era of digitalisation, technological change occurs more quickly and deeply than ever before (Kohnke, 2017). When it comes to social infrastructure, digitalisation is widely acknowledged as the use of modern technology, particularly in communications (Kumar & Dash, 2015). According to Backhaus and König (2019), it is reshaping our social lives in a variety of ways, influencing both the commercial and public sectors through new models, uses, services, players, and technological developments (Lambrou, Samson & Ota, 2018). As a result, arguing the universal significance of digitalisation is difficult (Han, 2020).

ICT has been used by the government of advanced countries for a long time. This is mostly because they have the facilities, capabilities, skills, and knowledge to drive digitalisation, and the system allows governments to be as efficient, effective, accountable, and transparent as possible when dealing with citizens or other clients (Nchuchuwe & Ojo, 2017). Governmental organisations are established to serve as vehicles for the development and implementation of public policies and programs to meet the needs of the general public (Abah & Nwokwu, 2019). At first, traditional ways of running government, like using paper to do work, were generally accepted. Because this method was slow, it couldn't keep up with the changing needs of the people. At the time, people viewed public administration as inefficient and ineffective because it took the government a long time to respond to the demands and wants of the citizens. (Abah & Nwokwu, 2019).

People were also hardly involved in the management of their affairs because there were no opportunities for direct participation of the populace in such a governance system. However, the way that people and institutions go about fulfilling their daily obligations has changed significantly as a result of the development of information and communication technology. Digitalisation is one of the tools available to government organisations to improve the effectiveness and efficiency with which they provide public services. Electronic governance (e-governance) is a digitalisation initiative that involves the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in government operations. Accountability and transparency are expected to improve as a result of this, resulting in a more citizen-centred administration that prioritises easy access to and improved delivery of government services.

Scholars have identified some challenges that impede the effective digitalisation of government organisations in Nigeria. These challenges include a lack of information technology infrastructure, intermittent power/electricity supply, a scarcity of trained and competent employees, a general aversion to change among most government employees, and leadership (Gberevbie, Ayo, Iyoha, Duruji & Abasilim, 2015; Olaopa, 2014; Hai, Van & Thi Tuyet, 2021). As D'Amato and Macchi (2019) point out, these new technologies influence both leadership styles and behaviours. A leader's role is to motivate and inspire others to strive for excellence and success (Lindblom, Kajalo & Mitronen, 2017; Sposato, 2019). Previous studies on digitalisation in Nigeria have concentrated on how it can improve service delivery (Ehiane., Adejuwon, & Goyayi, 2019, Okudolo & Ojatorotu, 2021) and the challenges encountered during the digitalisation process (Adeyanju, 2021, Akinyemi., Amaechi & Etoh, 2022).

There appears to be very little research on the challenges of those in leadership in the digitalisation of government organisations in Nigeria. As a result, the primary goal of this study is to examine the challenges faced by those in positions of leadership in the digitalisation of Nigeria's government organisations, as well as to make recommendations on how to address those challenges.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The Concept of Leadership**

Leadership has many different meanings and is difficult to define (Mendenhall, Osland, Bird, Oddou, Stevens, Maznevski & Stahl, 2017). In many circles, leadership is defined as the act of directing others by commanding, managing and motivating them to achieve a common goal (Grossman & Valiga, 2020; Kim, Park & Miao, 2017; Simsek, Heavey & Fox, 2018; Isfahani, Teimouri & Abzari, 2019). The definitions of leadership fluctuate as a result of external factors as well as the personal traits of the leaders (Northouse, 2018). Bass and Bass (2009) and Yukl (2010) sees leadership as a socially driven process that motivates a set of individuals to cooperate in order to accomplish a common objective. Armstrong (2012) defines leadership as the ability to persuade others to change their behaviour willingly. It is the process of motivating people to do their best to achieve the desired outcome. It entails creating and communicating a vision for the future to motivate and engage people.

Leadership has been interpreted and conceptualised from several viewpoints which include the skill a leader has, the position they occupy, or their personality trait, as well as a process, an act, or a behavioural pattern (DeRue, 2011; Grint, 2010; Northouse, 2016), but according to Northouse (2016), the concept of leadership has four essential components: (1) leadership is a process; (2) leadership involves influence; (3) leadership occurs in

groups, and (4) leadership involves achieving common goals. As a result, leadership has been defined as "the process by which one individual motivates a group of people to achieve a common goal."

Nonetheless, there is no universal definition or approach to leadership, and efforts to identify what makes an effective leader continue. Effective leadership is widely acknowledged to be critical to the success of any organisation. Consequently, it has been argued that excellent leaders should possess certain moral and ethical qualities (Copeland, 2014). Based on the foregoing, leadership can be defined as an individual's ability to influence, coordinate, and motivate a set of individuals to work toward a common objective without the use of coercion.

### **The Concept of Digitalisation**

Digitalisation has not yet had a universal definition but the term is focused on the transformational nature and influence of digital technology in organisations (Bounfour, 2016). He sees digitalisation as a new trend in the use of digital artefacts, systems, and symbols within and outside of organisations. "Digitalisation is the process of implementing new technologies to generate innovations and digital tools within an organisation to influence its efficiency, internal processes, and culture, as well as its dominant leadership style" (Reetz, 2018). It is also the process of converting an analogue system to a digital system (Brennen & Kreiss, 2016). According to Imgrund, Fischer, Janiesch, and Winkelmann (2018), digitalisation involves major advancements in the use of information technology by businesses, the execution of information technology initiatives, and the information processing capabilities of organisations. In a similar vein, Legner et al. (2017) define digitalisation as the socio-technical process of adapting new technologies, as well as the process of adapting digital technologies at

the individual, organisational, social, and global levels.

In a nutshell, digitalisation is the process of converting information from analogue to digital storage. This gives rise to the broader sense, which applies to individuals, organisations, and society (Bengler & Schmauder, 2016). They went on to say that digitalisation has an impact on people's procedures and working methods not only in business but also in their personal lives. Organisations attempt to adopt digitalisation to increase efficiency and improve internal and external networking. Society is experiencing new services and networking opportunities as a result of the digitalisation process, which leads to dynamic processes of interaction and the regular exchange of information. When it comes to the impact of digitalisation on organisations, there are two sides to the coin. It is not just about digitising tools or innovating and implementing new technologies; it affects all aspects of an organisation (Krause 2016; Bouée 2015).

Successful digitalisation has an impact on the culture, mindset, and leadership of the organisation (Krause 2016; Bouée 2015). A new culture like this should encourage and create opportunities for digitalisation on all levels (Krause 2016). It alters how, when, and with whom information is shared, as well as the interaction and relationship building between employees at all hierarchical levels and the workplace design (Bouée 2015). According to Khan (2016), one of the characteristics of digitalisation is that it facilitates interconnectedness. As a result of digitalisation, the interconnection and integration of businesses, tools, communication, social interaction, and organisations have greatly increased. According to Nachira, Nicolai, Dini, Le Louarn and León (2007), collaboration across disciplines and the modeling of micro- and macroeconomic contexts will promote productivity, sustainability,

quality, and effectiveness in structured environments while fostering innovation, creativity, dynamic networking, and participation in unstructured settings.

Second, digitalisation aids in reducing time lag and information overload. Reduced time lag and a lot of information means that it takes less time to make decisions (Rogers, 2016), information moves faster (Westerman, Bonnet, & McAfee, 2017), organisations can be managed in real time (Collin, Hiekkänen, Korhonen, Halén, Itala, & Helenius, 2015), and there are more ways for people to interact with each other (Bounfour, 2016). According to Bergman, Hajikhani, Ritala, Blomqvist, and Ahonen (2012), cellphones, tablets, and social media all play a role in the facilitation of this attribute. However, in order to effectively utilise the information and make sense of it, solid business analytics are required. Third, in order to successfully manage organisational transformation in the face of rising levels of organisational complexity, increased transparency is essential (Andervin and Jansson, 2016). (Kakabadse, Abdulla, Abouchakra & Jawad, 2011; Rogers, 2016). According to Collin et al. (2015), digitalisation necessitates the need for openness in any organisation. Sheninger (2014) noted how the increasing complexity of technology shifts and challenges how education will be handled in the digital age while discussing the topic of digital leadership in the educational sector.

Finally, digitalisation has a humanising impact. According to Rogers (2016), as digitalisation reshapes the five core domains of consumers, competition, data, innovation, and value, it also allows humans to engage, communicate, and interlink more authentically and intuitively through the use of virtual platforms and tools. Berman and Marshall (2014) predict that as humans and computers become more intertwined (Vogelsang, 2010), the future of interactivity will be "symbiotic," a system in which essentially everyone and

everything is mutually interconnected. From all the above definitions of digitalisation, we can say it encompasses much more than the creation and use of websites. It includes everything from the use of the internet at the most basic level for the dissemination of plain web-based information to the provision of services and the completion of online transactions on the other hand, as well as the integration of information technology into the democratic process itself. The ultimate goal of digitalising government organisations is to simplify and improve governance while also allowing citizens to participate in governance.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study utilises qualitative research techniques to examine the challenges of those in leadership in the digitalisation of Nigeria's government organisations, as well as to propose suggestions on how to deal with the challenges. The research is solely based on findings gleaned from an examination of existing literature from various studies. To determine the challenges of those in leadership in the digitalisation of Nigeria's government organisations, as well as proposes suggestions on how to deal with the challenges data were gathered from secondary sources such as relevant books, journals, and internet resources. The study is intended to aid in the acquisition of useful information or knowledge about the subject matter. The investigation began with a search for articles on leadership and digitalisation. This was accomplished by creating a relevant set of keywords and phrases, such as 'leadership,' 'digitalisation,' 'digitalisation challenges,' and 'leadership challenges for digitalisation,' and conducting a corresponding search through the Google Scholar database. With the initial search of 'leadership challenges for digitalisation' in Google Scholar, the result of the search brought out 31,400 journals and

conferences article. Using a custom range search for articles between 2018 and 2022, brought the search result down to 17,400 and they were further examined for their accessibility and relevance to the study. The inclusion and exclusion criteria used are articles that are published between the years 2018 and 2022 and also articles that have either leadership or digitalisation in their title or a combination of both.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Challenges of Those in Leadership in The Digitalisation of Nigeria's Government Organisations**

Digitalisation has spread well beyond the professional sphere, and today, it has a significant impact on all aspects of social life as a result of its advancements (Han, 2020). The use of digital tools has increased citizens' ability to express themselves. The web, particularly social networking sites, allows its users to express themselves more broadly and easily than they could previously (Lindqvist & Pettersson, 2019). It is impossible to overstate the importance of digitalisation in Nigeria's development. In Nigeria, some successes have been recorded when it comes to digitalisation as some agencies of the federal government have tried to fully integrate the digitalisation initiative in the provision of certain services. For example, the Nigerian Immigration Service's E-passport programme, the Abuja Geographical Information System (AGIS), online land registration, the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC online), the West African Examination Council (WAEC), the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), Electronic Voters Registrations, online payment of fees in most tertiary institutions, The National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), E-Naira digital by the Central Bank of Nigeria and so on.

Scholars have identified some challenges that are affecting the successful

digitalisation of government organisations in Nigeria. These challenges include a lack of information technology infrastructure, insufficient funds allocated to digitalisation projects, intermittent power/electricity supply, a scarcity of trained and competent employees, a general aversion to change among most public servants, and leadership (Gberevbie, Ayo, Iyoha, Duruji & Abasilim, 2015; Olaopa, 2014; Hai, Van & Thi Tuyet, 2021). The challenges of those in leadership in the digitalisation of Nigeria's government organisations appear to be underappreciated; the leaders of the respective government organisations in Nigeria are the critical drivers of the digitalisation process's success or failure. It was observed that one of the major challenges of those in leadership in the implementation of digitalisation in government organisations in Nigeria is that they have not been able to successfully address the infrastructural challenges that hinder digitalisation to take place (Abasilim, Durojaiye & Gberevbie, 2022).

Furthermore, a lack of required digital skills among leaders slows development, blindsides innovation, and poses a real risk of being left behind while competitors grow and steam ahead in many aspects. The implication of this is that these challenges will continue to exist thus affecting the success of the digitalisation process. Another challenge faced by leaders in government organisations in Nigeria relates to the lack of a clear vision for digitalisation and this speaks to the change in leaders' minds and perceptions about the importance of digitalisation. That is to say, the majority of officials in Nigerian government organisations have exhibited a lack of a clear vision for the country's digitalisation project manifested in their long-standing exposure to the old-fashioned manner in which their functions are carried out, they are resistant to the change that the digitalisation process comes along with.

In addition, the majority of government leaders are more egocentric than allocentric, which means they are less concerned with the desires of the individuals with whom they work. As an implication, the digitalisation process will be more difficult to implement without collaboration, cooperation and teamwork. The fact that some government workers lack computer literacy and have had little to no training in the setup, upkeep, design, and application of ICT infrastructure is another factor. This also has an implication for those in leadership in that its low paste the digitalisation of government organisations' reality in Nigeria. The key to successful digitalisation has to do with the digital capabilities of the workforce. When the workforce lacks the skills and necessary knowledge in the use of the technological infrastructures made available to them, this poses a challenge for the leaders of these organisations and they will continue to receive a bad ranking for their digitalisation efforts.

## **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the challenges faced by those in positions of leadership in the digitalisation of Nigeria's government organisations, as well as to make recommendations for how to address those challenges. Some of the challenges identified include the lack of attention paid to the challenges militating against the digitalisation of government organisations in Nigeria, particularly infrastructural challenges, a lack of requisite digital skills among leaders, a lack of a clear vision for digitalisation, the egocentric nature of the leaders, some government workers lack computer literacy and have had little to no training in the setup, upkeep, design, and application of technology. To address these challenges faced by those in leadership, the federal government must make a concerted effort to address the challenges aforementioned by conducting training to ensure that those

working in government organisations have the necessary skills to adopt and adapt to the digitalisation of their day-to-day activities.

In addition, the requisite ICT infrastructure for digitalisation should be provided, as the majority of government organisations lack the fundamental infrastructure required to properly digitalise their operations. The government should develop ICT policies that make computer literacy a requirement for hiring and promotion of public or civil servants at all levels, including the federal, state, and local governments. The organisation's leaders must have a clear vision and strategy for fully digitising day-to-day operations, as this is expected to inspire teamwork among those who report to them. This can be accomplished if the federal government appoints leaders in government organisations not only on merit but also on their ability to present their goals and plans for improving the government's digital operations.

Leaders in public organisations in Nigeria need to be more collaborative with those who they work with. They should be more allocentric rather than egocentric and this can be achieved by caring more for the people they work with. It is also necessary for the federal government to develop a strategic joint project to ensure that the implementation of digitalisation in government organisations is well coordinated, connected and effectively shared throughout all of the government organisations. This is to ensure that no government organisation is left behind in the digitalisation process. The federal government should also conduct a yearly assessment of government organisations' progress in digitalising their operations. This can be accomplished by requiring the agency charged with this responsibility to live up to its obligations.

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