

# Leadership and Organizational Culture in Shaping the Success of Digital Transformation

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**Abstract :** Digital transformation is a strategic agenda for organizations, but its implementation often fails because it focuses too much on technology and neglects the role of leadership and organizational culture. This study aims to analyze the role of leadership and organizational culture in shaping the success of digital transformation. The study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design, where data is collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis of informants selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the digital transformation process. Data analysis is conducted thematically through the stages of reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study indicate that leadership plays a role as a visionary, strategic decision maker, and role model in the application of digital work values, while also serving to strengthen an adaptive, collaborative, and innovative organizational culture. The success of digital transformation is marked by changes in work methods and business processes, increased collaboration and efficiency, and changes in mindset and digital-based work behavior. The findings also reveal that a lack of synergy between leadership and organizational culture causes digital transformation to be partial and unsustainable. This study confirms that the success of digital transformation is multidimensional and is the result of synergy between leadership and organizational culture, thereby contributing theoretically to the strengthening of non-technological approaches in the study of digital transformation and providing practical implications for organizations in designing sustainable digital transformation strategies.

**Keywords :** Digital Transformation; Digital Leadership; Organizational Culture; Organizational Change; Digital Transformation Success

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## 1. Introduction

The rapid development of digital technology has driven disruption in various sectors of organizations, both public and private (Faro et al., 2022). Digital disruption not only changes the way organizations interact with markets and stakeholders, but also affects work structures, business processes, and decision-making patterns (Baskoro, 2024; Wardhana et al., 2023). In this context, digital transformation is an inevitability that organizations must face in order to survive and compete in an increasingly dynamic and competitive environment (Omol, 2024). However, digital transformation cannot be understood solely as a process of adopting information technology, but rather as a comprehensive organizational change that encompasses work methods, coordination mechanisms, and the mindset and behavior of human resources within the organization (Bozkus, 2024). Thus, the success of digital transformation is closely related to an organization's ability to manage organizational change adaptively in order to increase competitiveness (Goraya et al., 2026).

Although digital transformation is seen as an important strategy for organizational sustainability, various studies show that the failure rate of digital transformation implementation is still relatively high (Alojail & Khan, 2023). Such failures are generally caused by an organizational approach that places too much emphasis on technical aspects, such as system development and digital application adoption, while human factors tend to be neglected. As a result, organizations face various internal problems, such as resistance to change, low human resource readiness, and weak internalization of digital work values and culture (Ramadhani et al., 2024). This condition shows that digital transformation is not only a matter of technology, but also a matter of changing the behavior, attitudes, and mindsets of individuals within an organization, which, if not managed properly, will increase the risk of failure (failure rate) of digital transformation.

In facing the complexity of digital transformation, leadership plays a strategic role as a key factor that guides the vision and strategy of organizational change (Sacavém et al., 2025). Leaders are not only required to understand digital technology, but also to be able to formulate a clear digital vision and communicate it to all members of the organization (Gilli et al., 2024). In addition, effective leadership plays an important role in managing change, reducing resistance, and fostering a work environment that supports innovation and continuous learning (Ahsan, 2025). The leadership's unpreparedness in carrying out this role often causes digital transformation to be partial, limited to technical aspects, and fails to produce significant organizational change (Koczerga, 2024). Therefore, the success of digital transformation greatly depends on the capacity of leaders to integrate vision, strategy, and change management in a unified manner within the context of digital leadership (Schiuma et al., 2022).

In addition to leadership, organizational culture is a fundamental element that shapes the behavior, values, and work patterns of organizational members in carrying out digital transformation (Alshammari et al., 2024). Organizational culture serves as a foundation that influences how individuals respond to change, utilize technology, and collaborate in a digital work environment (Gagan Deep, 2023). A culture that is adaptive, open to change, collaborative, and innovation-oriented has proven to accelerate the digital transformation process and improve the effectiveness of its implementation (Bux et al., 2025). Conversely, a rigid, hierarchical organizational culture that is resistant to change becomes a major obstacle to digital transformation because it limits creativity, learning, and innovative initiatives (Purnawan, 2025). Therefore, the success of digital transformation cannot be separated from the organization's ability to build an organizational culture that supports adaptability and strengthens a culture of innovation in a sustainable manner (Velyako & Musa, 2023).

Previous studies on digital transformation have tended to focus on technological aspects, such as digital infrastructure, information systems, and application adoption, while organizational and behavioral dimensions have received relatively little attention. Although several studies have touched on the role of leadership or organizational culture separately, studies that integrate both factors into a single analytical framework are still limited, especially in the context of organizations in developing countries, MSMEs, and certain sectors. As a result, there is still a lack of comprehensive understanding of how the simultaneous interaction between leadership and organizational culture shapes the success of digital transformation. This research gap highlights the need for a more integrated perspective to explain the non-technological factors that contribute to the success of digital transformation in organizations.

Based on the identified research gap, a deeper understanding of non-technological factors in digital transformation is crucial to explain the success or failure of digital change in organizations. Digital transformation is essentially a complex organizational change

process, and therefore cannot be separated from the dynamics of leadership and organizational culture as underlying behavioral aspects (Leso et al., 2023). Therefore, this study is expected to provide theoretical contributions by strengthening perspectives and models of digital transformation that emphasize the role of organizational behavior, particularly leadership and organizational culture. In addition, this study is also expected to produce practical implications in the form of strategic recommendations for organizational leaders in managing digital change more effectively, sustainably, and in line with the internal characteristics of the organization.

Despite the growing body of literature on digital transformation, existing studies tend to examine leadership and organizational culture as separate and fragmented factors. Leadership-focused studies often emphasize digital leadership competencies or strategic decision-making, while cultural studies predominantly address organizational readiness or adaptability. This separation limits a comprehensive understanding of how leadership and organizational culture interact dynamically in shaping digital transformation success. Moreover, many prior studies rely on quantitative approaches that capture outcomes but provide limited insight into the underlying social and managerial processes.

This study addresses these limitations by proposing an integrated qualitative framework that simultaneously examines leadership and organizational culture as interdependent mechanisms in digital transformation. By exploring how leadership behaviors shape cultural adaptation and how organizational culture reinforces leadership-driven change, this study offers a process-oriented perspective on digital transformation success. The main conceptual contribution lies in positioning leadership–culture synergy as a foundational driver of digital transformation, extending existing models that treat these elements in isolation.

Based on the background and research gaps described above, this study aims to analyze the role of leadership and organizational culture in shaping the success of digital transformation in organizations. Specifically, this study seeks to understand how leadership and organizational culture interact in supporting a sustainable digital change process that is oriented towards improving organizational performance and competitiveness.

## **2. Method**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of leadership and organizational culture in shaping the success of digital transformation. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on exploring processes, meanings, and the dynamics of organizational change that are contextual and complex in nature, which cannot be fully explained through quantitative measurements. The case study design allows researchers to examine the phenomenon of digital transformation holistically in the context of real organizations.

The research subjects were determined using purposive sampling, taking into account the informants' direct involvement in the organization's digital transformation process. The research informants consisted of organizational leaders, managers, and members who played an active role in the planning and implementation of digital transformation. The selection of informants was based on their experience, knowledge, and strategic role in decision-making and the implementation of digital change.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews to explore informants' views, experiences, and perceptions regarding leadership, organizational culture, and the success of digital transformation. In addition, this study was also supported by document analysis, such as organizational policies, strategic plans, digital transformation reports, and other relevant internal documents. This combination of data collection techniques aims to obtain rich and comprehensive data and strengthen understanding of the research context.

Data analysis was conducted thematically by following the stages of qualitative analysis, which included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data from interviews and documents were analyzed through a coding process to identify key themes related to leadership, organizational culture, and the success of digital transformation. Furthermore, the relationships between themes were analyzed to understand the patterns of interaction between leadership and organizational culture in supporting the digital transformation process.

To ensure data validity, this study applied source triangulation and method triangulation techniques by comparing interview results between informants and confirming them with documentation data. Thus, the research results are expected to have a high level of credibility and reliability in explaining the phenomenon of digital transformation from the perspective of leadership and organizational culture.

This study is guided by a conceptual framework that positions leadership and organizational culture as mutually reinforcing elements in driving digital transformation success. Leadership plays a critical role in articulating digital vision, modeling adaptive behaviors, and legitimizing change initiatives. These leadership practices shape organizational culture by fostering shared values, learning orientation, and openness to innovation. In turn, an adaptive organizational culture strengthens employee engagement, collaboration, and commitment to digital initiatives, thereby enhancing transformation outcomes. Digital transformation success is therefore understood not merely as technological implementation, but as the result of an ongoing interaction between leadership practices and cultural dynamics within the organization.

Data were analyzed using a thematic and iterative approach. The analysis began with open coding, in which interview transcripts were examined line by line to identify meaningful units related to leadership behaviors, organizational culture, and digital transformation practices. These initial codes were then grouped through axial coding to establish relationships among categories and identify recurring patterns. Finally, selective coding was applied to integrate the core themes into a coherent analytical framework that explains how leadership and organizational culture jointly shape digital transformation success. The analysis was conducted iteratively, allowing continuous refinement of themes through constant comparison between data and emerging interpretations.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

#### **3.1 Leadership in Digital Transformation**

The results of the study show that leadership plays a central role in guiding the vision in the process of organizational digital transformation. Informants emphasized that the success of digital transformation is largely determined by the clarity of the vision and digital direction formulated by the organization's leadership. This digital vision serves as the main reference in strategy formulation, determining digital program priorities, and making strategic decisions related to technology adoption and utilization. Leaders who are able to articulate a clear and consistent vision for digital transformation tend to be more effective in unifying the perceptions of organizational members and reducing the uncertainty that arises during the change process (Yang et al., 2025).

In addition to guiding the vision, leaders also play an active role in strategic digital decision-making (Jaboob et al., 2025). Field findings show that leaders not only function as formal decision makers, but also as facilitators who bridge the technical interests and operational needs of the organization. In this context, transformational and adaptive leadership styles appear to be dominant, characterized by the ability of leaders to respond to changes in the digital environment, encourage innovation, and provide space for members of the organization to participate in the transformation process. Informants

revealed that an open and participatory leadership approach can increase the sense of ownership of digital transformation programs.

Furthermore, leadership has proven to play an important role in managing resistance to change that often arises in digital transformation (Müller et al., 2024). Several informants stated that employee resistance can be minimized when leaders actively communicate, set an example in the use of digital technology, and demonstrate a genuine commitment to change. As one informant said, "When leaders are directly involved and set an example, employees become more open and no longer see digitization as a threat." This statement shows that leadership not only functions structurally, but also symbolically and inspirationally in building trust and encouraging the participation of organizational members.

These findings are in line with the concept of digital leadership, which emphasizes the role of leaders in integrating vision, technology, and people into a single framework for organizational change. From a change management perspective, leaders serve as agents of change who guide, motivate, and ensure the sustainability of digital transformation. The results of this study reinforce the findings of previous studies which state that the failure of digital transformation is often caused by weak leadership in managing change, not solely by technological limitations. Thus, effective leadership not only determines the success of the initial implementation of digital transformation, but also has a significant impact on the sustainability and consistency of digital change in the long term.

### **3.2 Organizational Culture in Supporting Digital Transformation**

The results of the study indicate that organizational culture has a significant influence on the level of acceptance and utilization of digital technology in the digital transformation process. Field findings indicate that organizations with a culture that is adaptive and open to change tend to be faster and more effective in implementing digital initiatives. An open attitude toward innovation, a willingness to try new ways of working, and tolerance for learning processes and mistakes are cultural characteristics that accelerate digital transformation (Fahmi et al., 2023). This condition enables members of the organization to not only accept new technology, but also integrate it into their daily work activities.

In addition to adaptability, cross-unit collaboration has emerged as a cultural factor that supports the success of digital transformation (Stankevice & Egerland, 2025). The informant said that digital transformation requires coordination and cooperation between departments that previously worked separately. A collaborative culture encourages knowledge sharing, joint problem solving, and alignment of objectives between units within the organization. With cross-functional collaboration, the use of digital technology becomes more optimal because it is not limited to the interests of a particular unit, but is oriented towards the interests of the organization as a whole.

Another notable finding is the role of learning and innovation culture in supporting digital transformation. A culture that encourages continuous learning and innovation provides space for members of the organization to develop digital competencies and adapt to rapid technological changes (Bozkus, 2024). Informants revealed that organizations that instill values of learning and experimentation tend to be more capable of utilizing digital technology creatively and sustainably. Conversely, this study also identified cultural barriers, such as hierarchical organizational structures, rigid bureaucratic procedures, and resistance to change, which hinder the digital transformation process and slow down decision-making.

These findings can be explained through the concept of organizational culture, which views culture as a set of shared values, norms, and practices that shape the behavior of organizational members (Nabella et al., 2022). In the context of digital transformation, organizational culture serves as an internal mechanism that influences how individuals

understand, accept, and use digital technology (Zhang et al., 2023). An adaptive culture reflects the organization's level of adaptability in responding to environmental changes, while an innovative culture reflects the existence of an innovation culture that encourages creativity and continuous renewal.

The results of this study are in line with various previous studies that emphasize that the success of digital transformation is greatly influenced by organizational cultural readiness, not just by the availability of technology. Previous studies also show that rigid and bureaucratic cultures tend to hinder digital change, while flexible and collaborative cultures are the main enablers of transformation. Thus, this study confirms that digital transformation is an organizational change process that requires a shift in work values and norms, from an orientation toward stability to adaptability, collaboration, and innovation as the foundation of a digital work culture.

### **3.3 Leadership and Organizational Culture Interaction**

The results of the study show that leadership and organizational culture have a mutually influential relationship in shaping the success of digital transformation. Leadership not only plays a role as a digital strategy director, but also as a key actor in shaping, strengthening, and reproducing an organizational culture that supports digital change (Torres, 2022). Field findings reveal that digital values within organizations develop in line with the behavior and practices demonstrated by leaders in carrying out their leadership roles.

This study found a pattern that leaders serve as role models in building a digital culture. The direct involvement of leaders in the use of digital technology, openness to new ideas, and consistency in applying digital work principles serve as concrete examples that are followed by members of the organization (Gilli et al., 2024). Informants conveyed that leadership exemplars send a strong signal regarding the importance of digital transformation and accelerate the process of internalizing digital values at the individual and group levels. In addition, leadership policies and actions, such as providing space for innovation, adjusting work procedures, and supporting digital learning, have been shown to influence the formation of more adaptive work norms and behaviors.

However, the results of the study also show that a lack of synergy between leadership and organizational culture can cause digital transformation to be only partial. When leaders strategically promote digitization, but this is not followed by changes in organizational values and cultural practices, the transformation tends to be limited to technical aspects and does not result in sustainable behavioral change. This condition indicates that strong leadership without the support of an aligned culture, or vice versa, is not enough to ensure the overall success of digital transformation.

This finding confirms the reciprocal relationship between leadership and organizational culture in the digital transformation process. Effective leadership can create a work environment that supports an adaptive, collaborative, and innovative culture, while a strong organizational culture provides a foundation for leaders to implement digital strategies consistently. This interaction reinforces the integrated perspective in digital transformation, which views the success of digital change as the result of synergy between structural, behavioral, and organizational value factors.

Conceptually, the results of this study contribute to the development of a behavior-based digital transformation model by placing leadership and organizational culture as two key interrelated elements. This study confirms that digital transformation is not a linear process, but rather a dynamic process influenced by the continuous interaction between leadership actions and the formation of organizational culture. Thus, the success of digital transformation can only be achieved if organizations are able to align strategic leadership with the strengthening of an adaptive and innovative digital work culture.

### **3.4 The Success of Organizational Digital Transformation**

The results of the study show that the success of an organization's digital transformation cannot be measured solely by the level of technology adoption, but rather by the overall changes that occur in the way of working, business processes, and the behavior of organization members. Field findings indicate that organizations that have successfully implemented digital transformation have experienced significant shifts in their working mechanisms, such as the digitization of workflows, the simplification of business processes, and increased speed and accuracy in decision-making. These changes reflect that digital technology has been integrated into the organization's work system and does not merely function as an administrative support tool.

In addition to process changes, this study found that increased collaboration and work efficiency were important indicators of successful digital transformation. The use of digital technology enables more intensive cross-unit coordination, reduces structural barriers, and increases resource efficiency (Aldhi et al., 2025). Informants emphasized that digital technology facilitates more flexible and responsive collaborative work in response to dynamic environmental demands. This shows that successful digital transformation contributes directly to improving overall organizational performance.

Another crucial finding is the change in mindset and digital work behavior among members of the organization. The success of digital transformation is marked by increased awareness of the importance of technology utilization, readiness for continuous learning, and the ability to adapt to changes in the way of working (Abdul Hamid, 2022). This change in mindset shows that digital transformation has gone beyond the stage of technology implementation and touched on the dimension of organizational behavior. Thus, the success of digital transformation is understood as the result of a continuous organizational change process, rather than a short-term technical achievement.

The discussion of these findings confirms that the success of digital transformation is multidimensional, encompassing technological, structural, and organizational behavioral dimensions. The relationship between leadership and organizational culture and the results of digital transformation is evident in the research findings, where visionary leadership and an adaptive organizational culture serve as key prerequisites for meaningful change. Leadership provides direction and legitimacy for change, while organizational culture shapes behavioral patterns that ensure the sustainability of digital transformation.

This study also clarifies the difference between technology adoption and true digital transformation. Technology adoption only reflects the use of digital tools, while digital transformation reflects fundamental changes in the way organizations operate and think. Without changes in leadership and organizational culture, technology adoption has the potential to result in partial and unsustainable transformation. Therefore, the practical implications of this study emphasize the importance for organizations to assess the success of digital transformation not only based on technological indicators, but also based on changes in behavior, work culture, and leadership patterns that support long-term adaptation.

### **3.5 Theoretical and Practical Implications**

This study provides significant theoretical implications for the development of digital transformation studies, particularly by emphasizing the importance of non-technological approaches in understanding the success of organizational digital change. The findings show that digital transformation cannot be adequately explained solely through the perspective of technology and information systems, but rather needs to be understood as an organizational change process that involves aspects of leadership and organizational culture. Thus, this study reinforces the organizational behavior approach in digital transformation studies and positions leadership and organizational culture as key

determinants of digital transformation success. This contribution expands the existing literature by offering an integrated perspective that links the concepts of digital leadership, organizational culture, and digital transformation success within a single conceptual framework.

In addition, this study also contributes to the enrichment of leadership and organizational culture literature by showing how these two concepts interact dynamically in the context of digital transformation. The results indicate that leadership not only functions as a driver of strategy but also as a mechanism for shaping digital culture, while organizational culture acts as a medium that translates leadership vision into everyday work behavior. These findings provide a conceptual basis for the development of a behavioral-based digital transformation model that is more contextual and relevant to the dynamics of change in the digital age.

From a practical standpoint, this study has important implications for organizational leaders in designing and managing sustainable digital transformation. Organizational leaders need to view digital transformation as a comprehensive change process that requires visionary leadership, active involvement, and the ability to manage resistance to change. Practical recommendations that can be drawn from this study include the need for leaders to serve as role models in applying digital values, establishing open communication, and creating space for organizational members to participate and learn in the digital transformation process.

Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of adaptive and innovative digital culture development strategies as the foundation for successful digital transformation. Organizations need to consciously build values and work norms that encourage collaboration, continuous learning, and the courage to innovate. This can be achieved through adjustments to organizational policies, reward systems, and the development of human resources' digital competencies. By integrating effective leadership and a supportive organizational culture, organizations are expected to achieve digital transformation that is not only technically successful, but also sustainable in the long term.

### **3.6 Discussion**

Based on the results and discussion outlined above, this study shows that the success of an organization's digital transformation is the result of close synergy between leadership and organizational culture. Leadership plays a role in formulating vision, directing strategy, and managing change, while organizational culture shapes the behaviors, values, and work patterns that determine how digital transformation is internalized and implemented in daily practice. The interaction between the two creates an adaptive, collaborative, and innovative organizational environment, which enables digital transformation to not only stop at technology adoption, but to evolve into sustainable organizational change.

The findings of this study confirm that successful digital transformation cannot be understood as a purely technical process, but rather as a multidimensional and dynamic process of organizational change. The absence of either effective leadership or a supportive organizational culture has the potential to cause digital transformation to be partial and unsustainable. Therefore, the results of this study provide a strong basis for concluding that the success of digital transformation is largely determined by an organization's ability to align strategic leadership with the strengthening of a digital work culture. The synthesis of these findings further serves as the basis for formulating the conclusions and recommendations of this study.

## **4. Conclusion**

This study concludes that the success of digital transformation in organizations is not solely determined by technological readiness, but is greatly influenced by the synergistic factors of leadership and organizational culture. Leadership plays a strategic role in setting

the direction of transformation, managing change, and encouraging the involvement of all members of the organization, while organizational culture serves as the foundation of values and behaviors that enable the digital transformation process to be internalized consistently and sustainably. Research findings show that visionary, adaptive, and participatory leadership can create an organizational climate that is open to innovation and continuous learning. At the same time, an organizational culture that supports collaboration, flexibility, and positive use of technology strengthens the effectiveness of digital transformation implementation. When leadership and organizational culture work in harmony, digital transformation not only results in increased operational efficiency, but also encourages changes in work patterns and decision-making that are more adaptive to the dynamics of the business environment.

Thus, digital transformation needs to be understood as a holistic and long-term organizational change process. Organizations that want to achieve sustainable digital transformation success need to prioritize leadership strengthening and organizational culture development as strategic priorities, alongside technology investment. This conclusion has important implications for organizational leaders and policymakers in designing digital transformation strategies that focus not only on technical aspects, but also on human and organizational dimensions.

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