Digitalization Utilization and Behavioral Dysfunctionality Contexts in Workplaces

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ABSTRACT: This paper explored the nature of behavioral dysfunctionality contexts in the utilization of digitalization in work environments. The advent of digital technology has in no small measure transformed many traditional work processes that were hitherto manually operated. The stake has also increased for firms to comply with global standards in order to survive in the highly competitive business environment forcing them to adopt many and varied novel digitalized strategies. Suffice it to say that in spite of all the laudable benefits of such strategizing, there are challenging behavioral issues of digitalization utilization in workplaces in Nigeria, a major player in the quest for dignity, justice and prosperity in Africa, that should be addressed squarely. Any attempt at digitalization must be driven by people for people and their behavioral expressions should be tuned towards enthusiastically optimizing work processes. Participant observation, as well as textual analysis, were utilized to contribute to the knowledge of the distinctive understanding of the behavioral matters relating to the practical world backdrop of digitalization utilization in workplaces. Practical ways forward were suggested in each thematic context.

I.   Introduction

Nigeria, and indeed the African continent, is replete with all sorts of initiatives and ideas on technological innovations that have driven their many varied processes and catered for their idiosyncrasies and unique eccentricities. There is an enormous penchant for the digitalization of firms and their processes not only to enhance efficiency but to comply with encouraged global best practices. Digitalization has been described as using novel and efficient technological concepts and ideas as opposed to the use of manual or analogue systems, in order to improve corporate processes (Aghimien, et al., 2022; Härting, et al., 2019,Raji, et al, 2024).

Workplaces in Nigeria, one of Africa's most populated countries, have definitely realized the need to optimize their processes for economic prosperity. Already the digitalization revolution is being used in many strategic human capital management, human resource management as well as other tactical management practices and processes.   A lot of efforts have been put into this drive in all spheres of life and digitalization has been extremely beneficial in many specialized aspects of National life such as agriculture, education, health, finance, ports services, business, utility billing systems, human capital development, manufacturing, and socialization, clean energy, to mention a few (Ayakwah, et al., 2021; Marzano, et al., 2020;Ramzan,et al.,2024).Ajah and Chigozie-Okwum (2019) have suggested that digitalization, if properly utilized, could be highly beneficial in the reduction of the present status of insecurity metrics as seen in the current rates of insurgency, vandalism, militancy, and so on. Also worthy of note is the exploration of the nature of digitalization of library data which could be stored as resources for future retrieval as information and assessable to any user through personal gadgets such as laptops and android phones with internet connectivity (Moruf, et al., 2024;Omotayo&Haliru, 2020). Digitalization has enhanced information exchange and altered how people interact, communicate and perform their tasks. Vyas-Doorgapersad (2022) particularly described the usefulness of digitalization in the achievement of sustainable development goals.Yina (2020) identified certain pros and cons of the use of such technologies in a closely-knit cultural setting. The peculiar challenges of digitalization in the global north seem obviously different from those of the global south. As observed by Schopp, et al., (2019), distinctive ethical issues of digitalization prominently feature in the global south with dignity, justice and equality concerns typical of the domiciled domain.

This paper takes a global south perspective of digitalization utilization by focusing on observed behaviors in public workplaces in Nigeria. The behaviors exhibited by the organizations leadership who initiate the digitalization process, who are hereafter referred to as service providers, and the operative employees, who are the end users, constitute the backbone of the drive towards optimization. This work believes that the behaviors of service providers and end users have a lot to do with the gross underutilization of digitalization efforts in workplaces. Salient behavioral issues and suggestions are highlighted for the optimization of digitalization utilization. The highlighted behavioral issues in this work will enable all stakeholders to generate and implement ideas that will bring forth uncommon work behaviors that produce highly beneficial results for the prosperity of everyone.

II. Behavioral Dysfunctionality Contexts

This work anchors on the Competing Commitment Theory (McAvoy& Butler, 2009) to give a plausible nexus on behavioral dysfunctionality as regarding the extent of digitalization utilization in work contexts. The theory surmises that behavioral dispositions of organizational stakeholders concerning work processes could be straight forward as the exhibited behavior could be linked to a threat to the person's job or increase the individuals stress level; or could be latent and multifaceted. In this latter case, individuals may openly support the novel work process but inadvertently continuously work against the process. Competing commitment theory thus presupposes that an individual may directly oppose a process due to threat or profess a commitment to a process and also work against the same process subconsciously. In both instances, the aim of the novel work processes, however beneficial, will be underachieved or totally defeated. This is perhaps akin to what happens in the utilization of digitalization efforts in many work contexts as the behavioral displays of stakeholders do not make for the optimization of the digitalization efforts. As long as such dysfunctional behavioral contexts subsist, the likely outcome of digitalization utilization will not reach the desired positive thresholds.

For conceptual clarity, behavior is an action or pattern of actions in the performance of certain functions by an individual, group or system. It depicts the prevailing display of measures taken to achieve or accomplish certain predetermined goals. In the succeeding part of this section,behavioral dysfunctionality contexts are highlighted to make manifest the plausible dysfunctional behavioral issues fostering the underutilization of digitalization in workplaces with a view to proffering workable suggestions in each of the contexts.

Improper Planning and implementation initiatives

Many Nigerian workplaces started with manual systems of doing work before the introduction of digitalization. Planning involves deliberate step-by-step attempts to achieve predetermined targets. This process will become more useful if well implemented. Implementation is the useful application of plans. The major banes of many digitalization efforts in workplaces are the exhibition of improper planning and implementation initiatives of the key stakeholders in the digitalization process. In as much as globalization-compliant firms are gravitating towards digitalization, a basic management function such as planning cannot be undermined without dire consequences. It has been observed that the planning and implementation of digitalization concerns in many public firms are fraught with unwarranted hiccups and pitfalls (Akpahou, et al., 2024; Peters, et al., 2024).The lofty intentions of digitalization endeavors end as a futile exercise as the service providers delve into introducing the digitalization process for the sake of it without necessarily taking stock of the peculiar needs of the organization or the capacity of the particular process to deliver on the required mandate. The support infrastructure such as electricity supply, broadband connections as well as the skill set of end users are many times lacking. The timing for the introduction of such policies or processes is not properly calculated to suit real-time on-ground situations. In spite of how good a developmental plan is, the system plans to fail ab initio with improper planning and implementation. It is believed that the developmental strides of Nigeria would have advanced beyond what it is today but for some impediments to the various planning initiatives such as personal aggrandizement, insincerity towards implementation as well as other self-destructive behaviors (Uche, 2019; Ugwuzor, 2021). The planning and implementation behavioral dispositions of service providers will not only affect the behaviors of the end users but also imperil the utilization of digitalization in the workplace. There is no gain in saying that without proper planning not much will be positively achieved especially in the direction of a good and noble course. The need to understudy the organizations' situations and prevailing support system situations and make sincere commitments towards implementation cannot be overstressed.

Systemic Distrust

Trust is a major undermining behavioral factor in the utilization of digitalization in firms. The desire for equity and justice in the use of any organizational process requires trust to work well. In many socio-political contexts there is a general lack of trust in the government (Abdussalam, et al., 2021;Bertsou, 2019;Winsvold, et al., 2024). For example, people could honestly believe the use of the hot stove rule will apply and accept the consequences of their misbehavior. However, when people perceive double standards in the use of workplace digitalization efforts, they reject and out rightly work against it, an extreme reaction to which people could deliberately destroy the equipment, process or facility. Sometimes and especially in government-owned establishments, people fear that the digitalization effort is to replace or victimize them at work. They also feel that the government is cheating the people and that in fact the technology is innovated to further oppress, and control them. They surmise that the high cost of procuring the willfully damaged equipment is nothing compared to the millions leaders squander for frivolities. In their minds, the system is unfair to them and thus they look for ways to beat it. As a justification for their action, they demand a digitalized system that will restore equity which will not only bring their corrupt oppressors to book but ensure that society gets the closure needed. What is needed is a digitalized technology to fight the misguided use of power and control to impoverish the people, a technology that will work on their oppressors' mindset which many see as almost impossible with currently available technologies. Abbasabadi and Soleimani (2021) hypothesized that digitalization can actually reduce unemployment. In their thinking, at the outset of a digitalization effort, obsolete jobs will be made redundant and as the new method of doing things stabilizes, new ideas are brought to bear that will create chances for new work vacancies. Employees should be made to understand that when firms' properties are damaged or undermined, everybody loses including them. Re-modelling the moral compass of the employees on the use and protection of the firm's digitalized technologically driven tools, equipment and processes is very apt.

It is noteworthy to state that Ethno religious and sociopolitical suspicions and interpretations of out-group motives are a contending factor in the acceptance or otherwise of a digitalization process. The behavioral exhibitions have bases in their ethical and value orientations as well as other idiosyncratic backgrounds. This has little or nothing to do with the merits of digitalization itself. However, the fact that the process could be underutilized or jeopardized due to misconstrued or misconceived conjectures and suppositions is the perturbation. Chikwado (2021) explored ethnicity in Nigeria and observed its abuse as a major conflict generator in almost every aspect of life. The unscrupulous exploitation of the emotions of persons by influential people in their various ethno religious and sociopoliticalin-group enclaves makes them arrive at fallacious conclusions. Hazzan (2022) identified propaganda, fake news, populism politics as well as other ethno religious and sociopolitical gimmicks as tools for distortions and deception. The ultimate intention of such behavioral manipulations is to frustrate and foil the progress of the good course of digitalization and its utilization. The strength of the ubiquity of ethno religious and sociopolitical connotations in all corporate decisions, no matter how mundane, cannot be disregarded. These dispositions should be taken seriously and efforts made by managers to be transparently honest and capture all views in the digitalization process to avoid skepticism.

Systemic distrust may also be linked to employees' level of commitment to the digitalization process.When employees do not understand the need for Digitalization efforts, they become nonchalant and demonstrate no commitment to the course. They are mentally disconnected and they do not buy into the policy flow of the organization. The service providers also apparently display lackadaisical attitudes that lip service commitment to digitalization processes. Adekoya, et al. (2019) identified the need for employees and employers to interface and exchange ideas in such a way that employees feel that they could make valued contributions to their organizations and thereby enhance their wellbeing. Firms' leadership should understand that their body language speaks volumes and should act what their lips speak.Although employee commitment cannot be imposed on employees, efforts could be made through training and mental reorientation as well as employee involvement in decision processes, to modify their attitudes to own organizational processes. Managers and organizational leadership should convincingly demonstrate honesty and transparency in all their policies. This action will serve as an assurance for employees who are looking up to them.

Intransigence

A major Behavioral challenge in the Utilization of Digitalization in workplaces is the unwillingness of employees to adapt to new ways of doing work. The persons are simply intransigent and resist the change of old analogue patterns. The phobia of using new methods makes them vehemently want to retain the old styles. Other researchers have also noted such phenomenon on digitalization as being commonplace in the global south (Bamgbose, et al 2024; Benjamin&Foye, 2022; Dewah&Sithole 2022;Kenku&Uzoigwe, 2024).People still put up behaviors that abet the underutilization of the digitalization process, thus, slowing down processes and counteracting productivity. This unwillingness may also be self-destructive on the part of the person who is unwilling to upgrade from undignifying

ways of how certain jobs are being done. Digitalization has a lot of prospects for boosting employee morale and dignity among other service delivery enhancers (Ugwuzor&Anichebe, 2022). Ignorance and anxiety are common courses of resistance to change. By exposing persons to the proper use and the efficiency of the digitalization process, people will not only be willing and able to accept the use of the new technology but will also want to be advocates of its use. It is worthy of note that despite the level of unwillingness to adapt to change anyone may put up with, prevailing circumstances in the workplace and the world around the performance of tasks in contemporary times would force everyone to adapt to new ways. Firms could also enact certain structural and policy adjustments that will make the acceptance and utilization of digitalization inevitable.

Deliberate sensitization is an intentional effort made to rejig the minds of firms' members to accept digitalized technology that will make for easier work done, less energy expended and promote equity. In other words, everybody in the workplace should be made aware of the usefulness of digitalization irrespective of whatever diversity dimension individuals possess. It is important that in a digitalized workplace all users are sensitized enough to accept the use of the technology to the extent that the introduction of such a lofty effort does not bring crises in a hitherto peaceful work environment. Also, workplace justice is positively perceived and the use or introduction of the technology is seen as fair to the users and not perceived as a witch-hunting device that has come to favor a selected sect against others or has come to displace employees unduly. The 2023 Hanke'sannual misery index ranked Nigeriaon a disadvantaged note with an index of 56.2 %(NBS, 2023). The economic outlook and prevailing circumstances are enough to frustrate the strongest persons of valor. Without proper sensitization, employees will fight the digitalization process in an organization, as an act of desperation to survive in the midst of all the trauma they suffer in the course of the daily hassles they go through.

The white elephant project syndrome
It is not only commonsensical but also moral to ensure that expenses on projects, especially developmental projects, should be commensurate with their functionalities, efficiency and usefulness. However, the white elephant project syndrome is a phenomenon that isa complete negation of common sense and is fraught with uneconomical expenditures that have no bearing on utility. There has been a lot of expenditure in the acquisition of equipment and tools aimed at boosting pivotal grounds for the advancement of technology and economic growth in Nigeria. However, there are several cases indicating the lack of correlation between government expenditure on developmental projects and the service for which they are initiated or for economic growth (Agbazuere, 2020;Essien, 2020;Folarin, 2021; Jacob&Shofoyeke, 2021). This behavior as exhibited by some firms' leadership is totally inimical to growth and development and will not vitalize digitalization utilization. If this dispositional tide towards the white elephant project syndrome is not stemmed, the very lofty idea of digitalization utilization is likely to suffer. The adequate utilization of digitalization in firms will have positive effects on firms' productivity and cost reduction in goods and services. This will also speak well of the bottom line of firms an aggregate of which will be highly beneficial to the success of the economy of a nation. The leadership of organizations should holistically weigh the cost of projects and assess the needs for a digitalization effort in utmost good faith.

A probable reason for uneconomical investments is a lack of patriotic zeal. The evocation of patriotic behaviors by all stakeholders in the organization will be one of the best-contributing factors in the enhancement of the prospects of benefiting from digitalization in firms. The extraordinary show of zeal, devotion and loyalty to the organization, its processes and policies is singled out as a driver to the optimization of the use of the digitalization process. However, the observed scenario is that people, especially end users, seem very distant from the drive towards the digitalization of firms' processes. They do not claim ownership of firms' strides towards digitalization and their behavioral outlook does not show zeal or contributions loyal to the process.They lack the demonstration of patriotic virtues needed to successfully drive the digitalization efforts. The causes of such lackluster behaviors are many and varied but it should be noted that people's behaviors are affected by the behaviors of others. For example, an end user who perceives non-transparently supportive organizational systems on the part of the system providers or the selective reprimand for the non-utilization of a digitalization process by other colleagues will not take the process seriously. This position has also been observed by researchers who have studied the dearth of patriotic zeal in citizens (Atoi, et al., 2020; Ebekozien, et al., 2023; Oke&Offoha, 2021). Patriotic dispositions, albeit discretionary behavior enhances efficiency and a warm work climate as well as employees' chances of making useful contributions. The expression of selflessness and a great sense for the promotion of the collective goodwill of the employees in support of an organization's digitalization processes will go a long way in the actualization of its optimum utilization.

Anti-progressive professional behaviors: Digitalization has many prospects for developing economies. For example, the large expanse of land Nigeria covers makes digitalization imperative for adequate coverage of the myriads of challenging issues which militate against her progress. In workplaces, professionalism in various areas that directly or indirectly affect the lives of employees is highly needed and paramount in calming the nerves of people at work. The ability to adequately deliver on the professional mandate requires an honest assessment of the workplace situations as well as a show of knowledge and progressive behavioral capacity to deliver. An anti-progressive professional behavior is exhibited when a professional in a specialized area of endeavor uses his/her acquired expertise unlawfully or in ways contrary to their professional codes and ethics; or lacks or does not show an adequate capacity to utilize the expertise for the common good of the generality of the people. While digitalization is a good avenue through which the hydra-headed monster of corruption could be fought to a standstill, it has been observed that digitalization opens novel vistas of corruption for office–holders knowledgeable and tech-savvy enough to distort systems (Ouedraogo&Sy, 2022). Professionals should build and show capacity as well as sincerity in their specialized areas of endeavors in the handling of digitalized facilities, for visible progress to occur. The call for national development is a call on everyone. Underutilization of the prospects of digitalization will definitely occur if the behavioral exhibitions of persons saddled with the responsibility of the use of technology are devoid of the necessary capacity to deliver.

Intrapreneurial Sub-optimization
The growth and demand for all sorts of digitalized options in workplaces have tremendously been of service in the management of organizations' processes. For example, the large population of Nigeria and high unemployment levels would have made the challenge of carrying out basic human resource management functions a bigger one. Also, many people are getting interested in the Information and communication technology sector. In spite of the foregoing, it is worthy of note that most of the hard- and software components of the digitalized equipment are imported and the overall cost of procurement, maintenance and sustained use of digitalized facilities are very expensive for many firms, especially those in the public sector. Myovella, et al. (2021) identified a gap in the accessibility of people to digitalized interfaces and Boluwaji, et al. (2024) have opined that as a strategy, firms should engage in sustainable practices that impact positively on their going concern drive. Intrapreneurship is a major mechanism for growth and revenue-boosting which, if sustained, will accumulate to economic prosperity but has not be maximally optimized.Digitally knowledgeable professionals could use their wealth of knowledge by considering intrapreneurial actions towards the progress of their firms. By adding the prospects of digitalization to intrapreneurial behaviors, firms and the economy will stand to gain a lot. However, the cost and access to necessary components have hindered the level of intrapreneurial behavior towards the acquisition of the relevant competencies. Home-grown digitalized technology in the country is still at the budding stage and a lot has to be done to spur the intrapreneurial behavioral drive of concerned individuals in this direction. Until the digitalization knowledge gap is filled by local indigenous ingenuity and the quest for homegrown solutions materializes, digitalization utilization will not be at the optimum.

III. Methodology

Participant observation as well as textual analysis, using secondary research, were applied in this paper to model thematic assertions. This is to aid concerned and interested research stakeholders in generating further tenable hypotheses in investigating and analyzing behavioral dysfunctionality in terms of the utilization of digitalization. The geographical scope was limited to public workplaces in Nigeria and the study elements included all stakeholders in the digitalization process in workplaces which included organizations leadership who initiate the digitalization process (service providers) as well as the operative employees (end users).

IV. Conclusion

The adequate utilization of digitalization in workplaces is a very veritable driving tool for processes of change, equity, justice and the prosperity of individuals, their firms and society at large. However, this ultimate desire for the nexus of digitalization utilization and these desirable outcomes is made possible only if employers and employees put up behaviors that will not jeopardize the system. A mental re-orientation to dispel the fears and anxiety of the use of technology as well as employees' mind transformation processes are absolutely necessary such that ideas are manifested in work behaviors that produce highly beneficial results to the firms and individuals. All stakeholders should realize that digitalization is not to witch hunt but for the good of all and to enhance chances of arriving at the firms' goals. This paper posits that for the enhancement of dignity, justice and prosperity in Nigeria, a lot has to be done in the

propagation of behaviors that will foster unique digitalized services and processes in workplaces. This goes beyond the adaptation of digitalization.

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