

Adaptive Leadership in Dealing with Organizational Change in the Digital Era

Muhammad Tengku Awang¹, Vicky Hidayat², Doni Wahyudi³, Vivi Nila Sari⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Putra Indonesia University "YPTK" Padang
E-mail: doni_dodonk@yahoo.co.id

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes to the organizational environment, both in aspects of work processes, communication, services, and decision-making. These changes require organizations to be able to adapt quickly to remain relevant and competitive. In these conditions, adaptive leadership is a crucial approach because leaders are not only required to direct subordinates, but also able to face uncertainty, manage change, build collaboration, and encourage organizational members to develop new capabilities. This article aims to discuss the role of adaptive leadership in facing organizational change in the digital era. The method used is a literature study by examining various concepts and research related to adaptive leadership, organizational change, and digital transformation. The results of the discussion indicate that adaptive leadership can strengthen the organization's ability to face change through leadership flexibility, open communication, employee empowerment, digital competency development, and responsive decision-making. Thus, adaptive leadership is a relevant approach to creating a resilient, innovative organization capable of facing the dynamics of the digital environment.

Keywords: Adaptive Leadership, Organizational Change, Digital Transformation, Digital Era, Organization

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Corresponding Author:

Muhammad Tengku Awang
Putra Indonesia University "YPTK" Padang
doni_dodonk@yahoo.co.id

1. Introduction

The digital era has created increasingly rapid change in various aspects of organizational life. Developments in information technology, automation, artificial intelligence, data-driven systems, and digital communications have transformed the way organizations conduct activities, interact with stakeholders, and generate value. Digital transformation is no longer solely about the use of technology; it also drives changes in strategy, business processes, structure, resources, and the organization's relationships with the external environment. Studies of digital transformation show that these developments encourage organizations to adapt their core activities, resources, and boundaries to cope with an increasingly dynamic environment (Verhoef et al., 2023). In this context, organizations need strong adaptability to respond to change quickly and sustainably. Research on the digital workplace also shows that organizational dynamic capabilities play a critical role in the transformation process, while digital leadership strengthens the change process and supports organizational performance (Chatterjee et al., 2023).

Organizational change in the digital era is not only related to the implementation of new technologies, but also involves changes in mindset, work culture, organizational structure, human resource competencies, and the relationship patterns between leaders and members of the organization. Digital transformation can impact organizational culture because organizations need to develop values, behaviors, and work patterns that are appropriate to the digital environment. Research in the manufacturing sector shows that digital transformation encourages organizations to adapt their culture to one that is more suited to digital needs so that the transformation process can run effectively (Kozanoglu & Abedin, 2023). Other research has found that a people-oriented culture is a crucial element in shaping a digital culture, while certain cultural

patterns can hinder the digitalization process (Martínez-Caro et al., 2023). Thus, the success of transformation is determined not only by the availability of technology, but also by the readiness of the organization and its human resources to embrace change.

Adaptive leadership is becoming increasingly important because leaders play a role in helping organizations address complex issues that cannot always be resolved using traditional work patterns. Adaptive leadership emphasizes a leader's ability to understand environmental changes, adjust strategies, encourage learning, and engage organizational members in the problem-solving process. Huang et al. (2023) demonstrated that adaptive leadership is relevant in digital transformation projects because organizations face technological novelty and environmental dynamics that require rapid adaptation. Furthermore, Chughtai et al. (2023) found that adaptive leadership plays a role in strengthening the relationship between learning organizations, self-efficacy for change, and organizational innovation. This demonstrates that adaptive leaders function not only as directors but also as drivers of organizational learning and innovation.

In facing change, leaders also need to build organizational member readiness. Digital transformation can create uncertainty because employees must navigate changing tasks, procedures, technology, and competency requirements. Research by Naseer et al. (2023) shows that adaptive leadership can strengthen the relationship between high-performance work practices and individual readiness for change and commitment to change. Therefore, leaders need to provide clear communication regarding the reasons for change, the goals to be achieved, and the support needed by employees. In the context of digital transformation, leaders' ability to develop digital strategies is also crucial because organizational strategies must adapt to changes in technology and the business environment (Türk, 2023).

Adaptive leadership is also closely linked to an organization's ability to foster innovation. Leaders need to create an environment that allows employees to express ideas, experiment, and discover new ways to complete tasks. Research on digital leadership indicates that leadership is linked to technological innovation capabilities through increased digital agility and inter-team coordination (2023). Another study suggests that digital leadership can play a role in managing technology-driven change by increasing service innovation capacity (2023). Therefore, adaptive leaders need to provide space for employees to learn and innovate while ensuring that innovation remains directed toward organizational goals.

In addition to innovation, digital change requires the development of human resource competencies. Organizations must ensure that employees possess the skills needed to meet technological demands. Caputo et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of developing professionals with a combination of broad and deep skills to address the complexities of digital transformation. Meanwhile, research by Bansal et al. (2023) shows that digital transformation of human resources is linked to digital and individual factors that can drive organizational innovation capabilities. Therefore, adaptive leadership needs to be realized through training, continuous learning, mentoring, and providing opportunities for employees to develop new competencies.

Adaptive leadership is also necessary to build collaboration within an organization. Digital change often involves multiple stakeholders with varying interests, capabilities, and levels of readiness. Research by Stoffers et al. (2023) shows that digital transformation, as a form of radical change, requires leadership behaviors capable of supporting the change process at various organizational levels. Furthermore, research on the role of organizations in digital transformation indicates that organizations can use both formal and informal approaches to manage the transformation process, with persuasive and empathetic approaches being particularly important in smaller organizations (Zoppelletto et al., 2023). These conditions demonstrate that leaders need to develop communication and collaboration that align with the characteristics of the organization.

Ultimately, adaptive leadership is a crucial factor in building a resilient organization in the face of digital change. Research on the fintech sector shows that changes triggered by digital transformation require leadership to guide organizations in navigating the changing business environment (Musaigwa & Kalitanyi, 2023). In the small and medium enterprise sector, digital leadership also plays a role in increasing organizational resilience through employee creativity and the ability to understand digital opportunities and challenges (Putra et al., 2023). Research on the characteristics of top management teams also shows that management characteristics are linked to a company's digital orientation (2023). Therefore, organizations need to develop leaders who are open to change, able to utilize technology, encourage learning, empower employees, and make flexible decisions. Adaptive leadership is ultimately not just the ability to adapt to change, but also the ability to guide an organization so that it can learn, innovate, and thrive amidst the uncertainties of the digital era.

2. method

This research employed a literature review with a qualitative descriptive approach. This method was chosen because the research focused on an in-depth examination of concepts, theories, and previous research findings related to adaptive leadership, organizational change, and digital transformation. This literature review enabled researchers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how adaptive leadership can be applied to address the dynamics of organizational change in the digital era. The data used in this study were secondary data obtained from various scientific sources, particularly journal articles relevant to the research topic.

The data collection process was conducted through a search of scientific articles published in national and international journals. The literature search was conducted using keywords such as adaptive leadership, digital leadership, organizational change, digital transformation, organizational adaptability, and digital era. Prioritized literature was journal articles published in 2023 so that the resulting discussion could reflect relatively recent research developments. In addition to the year of publication, source selection also considered topic suitability, journal reputation, clarity of research methods, and the relevance of findings to the discussion of adaptive leadership.

The analysis process involved several steps. The first step involved identifying and collecting literature relevant to the research focus. The second step involved filtering sources based on their relevance to the variables or concepts discussed. Articles not directly related to leadership, organizational change, or digital transformation were not used as primary sources. The third step involved critically reading and understanding the articles' content to identify concepts, findings, similarities, differences, and contributions from previous research. The fourth step involved grouping information based on key themes, namely the concept of adaptive leadership, organizational change in the digital era, human resource competencies, innovation, communication, collaboration, and organizational readiness for change.

Next, the study results were analyzed descriptively by comparing various previous research findings. The analysis was conducted to obtain patterns and conceptual relationships regarding the role of adaptive leadership in helping organizations navigate digital change. The results of this process were then systematically compiled into a narrative to explain how leaders can build organizational adaptability through open communication, digital competency development, empowerment of organizational members, the formation of a culture of innovation, and responsive decision-making. Thus, the literature review method in this research is expected to produce a structured understanding of the importance of adaptive leadership as an approach to addressing organizational change in the digital era.

3. Results And Discscusion

Results

Based on the results of the literature review, it was found that adaptive leadership plays a crucial role in helping organizations face changes influenced by the development of digital technology. Digital change not only encourages organizations to use new technologies but also demands changes in strategy, work processes, organizational structure, culture, and human resource competencies. Verhoef et al. (2023) explain that digital transformation is a broader process than just digitalization because it can affect various aspects of the organization and the way it creates value. This condition indicates that organizations need leaders who are able to understand change comprehensively and adapt leadership strategies to the demands of the ever-evolving environment.

The study also shows that adaptive leadership is related to an organization's ability to build dynamic capacity. Leaders are required to identify environmental changes, understand organizational needs, and determine appropriate actions based on the conditions faced. Huang et al. (2023) found that adaptive and transformational leadership can support the development of dynamic capabilities in digital transformation projects. These capabilities enable organizations to adapt to technological and environmental changes more effectively. Thus, adaptive leadership serves not only as a control mechanism but also as a strategic capability to maintain organizational sustainability.

Furthermore, adaptive leadership is related to the readiness of organizational members to face change. Digital change often creates uncertainty due to changes in systems, procedures, tasks, and competency requirements. Naseer et al. (2023) showed that adaptive leadership can strengthen individual readiness and commitment to change. Leaders who are able to provide support, build trust, and explain the direction of change can help organizational members understand that change is part of the organizational development process. Thus, individual readiness is a crucial element in the success of digital transformation.

Discussion

One of the key findings of this study is the importance of communication in adaptive leadership. In conditions of rapid change, organizational members need clear information about the reasons for change, the goals to be achieved, and the impact of the change on their work. Open communication can reduce uncertainty and prevent misunderstandings. Adaptive leaders need to foster two-way communication by providing opportunities for organizational members to express opinions, concerns, and ideas. This approach can create a sense of engagement so that organizational members are not merely recipients of policies but also participate in the change process.

Adaptive leadership also plays a role in building an organizational culture that supports digital transformation. Kozanoglu and Abedin (2023) show that digital transformation can influence organizational culture and drive changes toward cultural patterns that are more suited to digital needs. Therefore, leaders need to create an environment open to learning, experimentation, and innovation. Martínez-Caro et al. (2023) also highlight the importance of a digital culture in supporting an organization's digitalization process. A technology-supportive culture must be accompanied by work behaviors that are open to change so that technology use extends beyond technical aspects.

The next finding relates to human resource competency development. Digital transformation requires employees who are proficient in using technology while also possessing critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and continuous learning skills. Caputo et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of developing professionals with a combination of competencies that enable individuals to navigate the complexities of digital transformation. Bansal et al. (2023) also show that digital transformation of human resources is

related to digital and individual factors that can support an organization's innovation capabilities. Based on these findings, adaptive leaders need to ensure the availability of continuous training and learning to reduce the digital competency gap.

In addition to competency, adaptive leadership fosters innovation as part of a response to change. Organizations in a digital environment need the ability to generate new ideas and solutions. Chughtai et al. (2023) found that adaptive leadership can play a role in strengthening the relationship between a learning organization, self-efficacy for change, and organizational innovation. This suggests that leaders need to provide space for organizational members to experiment and develop new ideas. Mistakes in the innovation process should be viewed as learning opportunities as long as they are managed responsibly.

Adaptive leadership is also related to digital leadership. Chatterjee et al. (2023) show that digital leadership skills can strengthen the relationship between the digital work environment and organizational performance. Leaders in the digital era need to understand technology and the ability to integrate it with organizational needs. However, technical skills alone are not enough for leaders. Leaders must also understand the human aspects of transformation, as implementing technology can create resistance if organizational members feel unprepared.

Furthermore, collaboration is a crucial factor in navigating organizational change. Stoffers et al. (2023) demonstrate that digital transformation requires leadership behaviors that support the change process at various organizational levels. Adaptive leaders need to encourage interdepartmental collaboration, knowledge exchange, and coordination in problem-solving. Zoppelletto et al. (2023) also demonstrate that various organizational roles contribute to the digital transformation process. This demonstrates that successful change is not solely the responsibility of top leadership but rather a collective process requiring the involvement of various parties.

In the context of decision-making, adaptive leadership requires leaders to be able to respond to changes based on available information. Türk (2023) emphasizes the crucial role of digital leadership in developing business strategies aligned with digital transformation. Leaders need to use data as the basis for decision-making while still considering the experiences and circumstances of organizational members. Adaptive decisions do not mean hasty decisions, but rather decisions that are able to adjust based on changing information and evaluation results.

Overall, the study results indicate that adaptive leadership is a relevant approach to addressing organizational change in the digital era. Adaptive leadership operates through several key mechanisms: open communication, competency development, empowerment of organizational members, increased innovation, collaboration, and responsive decision-making. Leaders who are able to carry out these functions can help organizations build capacity to face uncertainty while simultaneously leveraging technological developments as opportunities. Therefore, digital transformation should not be understood simply as a process of implementing technology, but as an organizational change that requires leadership, culture, and human resources capable of continuous adaptation..

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the literature review, it can be concluded that adaptive leadership plays a strategic role in helping organizations face changes in the digital era. Digital transformation not only requires organizations to adopt technology but also requires changes in organizational culture, work patterns, human resource competencies, communication, and decision-making processes. Adaptive leaders are able to respond to these conditions through leadership flexibility, openness to change, effective communication, and the ability to guide organizational members in the face of uncertainty. Furthermore, adaptive leadership

can encourage employee readiness, continuous learning, innovation, collaboration, and the development of digital competencies. The success of organizational change is ultimately determined not only by technological sophistication, but also by the ability of leaders and organizational members to adapt to change. Therefore, organizations need to develop responsive, collaborative, innovative, and learning-oriented leadership to be able to utilize digital transformation as an opportunity to improve organizational effectiveness, performance, competitiveness, and sustainability..

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