Exploring the impact of leaders' use of digital communication platforms on employees' digital flourishing: A qualitative study of organisations undergoing digital transformation

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ABSTRACT:

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to explore the impact of leaders' use of digital communication platforms on employees' digital flourishing. Leaders drive digital transformation by adopting new technologies in companies. Digital communication platforms play a crucial role in improving productivity and employee communication. The research used a qualitative method to gather data from leaders and employees in different companies. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns and themes in the data. The analysis process involved reducing the data and drawing conclusions. The findings were coded and categorized using ATLAS.ti software. The study identified three dimensions: Strategic Decision-making, Organizational Agility, and Digital Flourishing. The study highlights the importance of leaders embracing agility and effectively utilizing digital communication to enhance employee digital flourishing. It emphasizes the need for training, support, stimulation, and responsible platform usage. Practical implications include fostering a positive work environment, promoting inclusivity, addressing technological constraints, and staying updated with advancements. Leaders' use of digital communication platforms and effective integration of these platforms influences employees' digital flourishing during organizational digital transformation.

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Keywords
Digital communication, digital communication platforms, digital flourishing, digital transformation, leadership.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rise of digitalization in the world has shown the importance and the need for organisations to undergo a digital transformation (Kraus et al., 2021). The consensus on what digital transformation exactly aspires to do or what its purpose and focus is has always had slight differentiations (Herbert, 2017). But it is a general fact that its core value primarily refers to the adoption and implementation of new technologies in companies (Gomes et al., 2019). Although digital transformation changes how all organizations function, it must be noted that any digital transformation requires serious commitment and at the same time bold, occasionally risky decision-making, so it is not a game of chance (Pînzaru et al., 2019). Top management can initiate such a change in the organisation. Still, they must be convinced of the need and positive aspects of change by the leader's vision since the leader sets the vision on the thoughtful application of technology to foster long-term corporate success (Sainger, 2018). Organizations have been attempting to improve organizational structures over the past few years by slowly having a more hybrid approach with technology rather than having fully traditional organizational structures. For that, there is a need for an appropriate leadership approach (de Araujo et al., 2021). But in the end ,digital transformation is not a straightforward and easy process, it entails adopting new perspectives on workplace practices, company models, IT departments, corporate platforms, and employee mindsets and skill sets (El Sawy et al., 2020). The communication between leaders and employees is a critical aspect that significantly affects the qualities of a successful firm, and digital transformation changes the way this works. The emergence of digital technology has changed the way companies communicate (Bolte et al., 2018).

Technological innovation has pushed the boundaries of communication to become more digital and virtual. Hence, as a result of the emergence of this new digital era, organisations have englobed this ideology of gearing towards a form of communication that is more digital and virtual (Mukherji & Arora, 2017). Digital communication environments are made up of many platforms for collaboration and communication, and they have a very broad range of utilities. They allow for open and networked communication among staff, managers, and members using text, audio, video, and graphics. New technologies and tools for communication keep emerging, improving along over the years, and expanding their true potential (Sivunen & Laitinen, 2019).

A unique aspect of digital communication is digital collaboration. Collaboration is a mean for managers, executives and employees to collaborate together across divisions (Saputra et al., 2021). Information is then spontaneously exchanged, and everyone wants to be part of the whole in collaborative workplaces. The digital aspect of it emphasizes even more on team characteristics, collaboration quality, and utilization of digital technology (Easley et al., 2003). Furthermore communication in the workplace is crucial for preserving employees' wellbeing (Tsuji et al., 2019). Therefore organizations need to find a strategy to foster the success of their employees. High levels of wellbeing in terms of being in good physical and mental health are referred to as flourishing (Rautenbach, 2015). Flourishing includes all facets of well-being, both temporary and long-lasting, both experiencing and behavioural or functional (Huta & Waterman, 2014).

In light of the above, leaders in the workplace have to critically analyse the ways in which the usage of additional digital tools might be more effective than in person solutions. It is known that digital communication tools can be effective, but the question arises on which tools are the best, and is more always better, or is there a tool that can encompass multiple ones, to avoid confusion and disruption. The question also stands on how these tools influence employees (Kane et al., 2021). Therefore, this thesis aims to address the following research question:

How does the use of digital communication platforms by leaders in organizations undergoing digital transformation impact employees' digital flourishing?

By answering the above research question, the understanding of the effects of digital communication platforms on employees' digital flourishing within firms experiencing digital transformation is advanced by this thesis. First off, by examining the relationship between the two, which is a neglected area, it advances the research on workplace and digital flourishing. Secondly, it improves the field by analysing the results of various digital communication tools used by company managers. This study attempts to fill the knowledge gap on the precise impact of these platforms by examining both their advantages and disadvantages in terms of promoting employee digital flourishing, through various factors. Additionally, by providing helpful insights and suggestions on choosing and using efficient digital tools, this thesis assists leaders going through digital transformation in their decision-making.

The research helps managers during efforts to transform digitally to improve communication methods, especially with the employees they are managing. Finally, by examining the complex connections between digital transformation, leadership, and employee flourishing, this research deepens our understanding of the dynamics of digital change. The study sheds light on how digital communication platforms contribute to employees' digital flourishing, offering useful information to researchers as well as professionals in the sector.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Digital transformation

Business transformation is a difficult and time-consuming transformation process that entails fundamental and complicated organizational changes. Lack of top-level management, poor implementation, and change resistance are just a few of the issues that can arise during such a transition (Uhl & Gollenia, 2016). Technology has advanced significantly over the past few decades, becoming an integral part of our daily lives. This has surely had an impact on how living conditions and work (Rassool & Dissanayake, 2019) Emerging technologies are the driving force behind the type of business transformation known as digital transformation. The actual change in the function of technology within an organization serves as the driving force behind digital transformation. Technology can now do much more and is no longer only a tool

to support corporate operations (Tang, 2021). It must be noted that businesses that oppose digital transformation risk going out of business, while those who can shift quickly and adapt to new technologies will thrive in a competitive marketplace (Schwartz, 2002).

2.2 Digital leadership

Digital transformation necessitates that relevant leaders possess a digital mindset in addition to technical skills as a basis for interacting with and comprehending digital technologies (Hensellek, 2020). A digital leaders must above all establish the conditions for digital maturity while also articulating a vision that people can embrace (Kane et al., 2019). A Chief Digital Officer (CDO) is a rather new position that is becoming more prevalent in businesses that intend to undergo a digital transformation (Tahvanainen & Luoma, 2018). To manage projects that research and utilize new digital technology, businesses have developed more and more CDO jobs (Singh et al., 2020). The main duties of CDOs include creating, revising, and putting into practice digital strategies, this entails reorganizing a company, coming up with a vision, and putting together a detailed plan for the digital transformation of business operations. The CDO must promote cross-functional cooperation while fostering cultural change in order to successfully implement digital projects and restructure an organization (Raković et al., 2022). But in recent years any manager and leader in a company undergoing digital transformation has to bring that digital change through their leadership talents, even if they are not specialised in the digital domain (Zeike et al., 2019). Leaders must learn new strategies for thriving in an uncertain environment as a result of digital transformation (Tigre et al., 2023).

2.3 Digital communication

One way leaders can thrive in the uncertainty of digital transformation is through the notion of digital communication. Digital communication technologies have revolutionized workplace interactions, making it a new standard in organisations (White, 2012). There has been a rise for computer-mediated communication tools (Darics & Cristina Gatti, 2019). These digital communication tools, which are also known as online collaboration platforms, facilitate communication among team members while boosting productivity and enabling remote work. A recent example of what kind of platform can be seen introduced in the workplace is Slack. Which is a digital workplace that encourages conversation and participation in a cohesive way. One of its goals is to replace and scale back the numerous communication channels used at work, including email, texting, and instant messaging (Teckchandani, 2018). For example, email is the most popular method of communication, and over the past ten years, email archives have multiplied and inboxes have enlarged, causing "email overload" with work emails, personal emails, and junk/spam emails (Kates et al., 2020). So new and improved platforms such as Slack are being used instead, as a better alternative. Over 50 000 companies have adopted the use of this platform (Teckchandani, 2018). Another example of a digital communication tool is Microsoft Teams (MS Teams), which enables users to communicate, schedule meetings, share and edit documents, participate in audio and video conversations with the option of screen-sharing, and more. Microsoft Teams is basically a platform for connecting individuals and their everyday chores in a collaborative and transparent hub, with the main goal of making collaboration on documents more efficient and transparent (Vauhkonen, 2020). Additionally Microsoft Teams reported that calls on their software, which competes with programs like Slack Technologies and Zoom Communications, went extremely high and there was no specific number (Singh & Awasthi, 2020). Hence, there are currently numerous different tools competing to become the most used in organisations. Whilst there is a good amount of recent research available on these platforms, little is known on how they are put in place within organisations and successfully structured to allow employee digital flourishing (Paz, 2020). Most research surrounding these platforms focuses on the small differences between them, because at its core these platforms offer essentially identical services and features. There are a few notable exceptions that set them apart (Mora-Jimenez et al., 2022). Each platform may have unique capabilities or functionalities that differentiate it from the others, such as specific integrations, user interface design, or security features. These small differences between the platforms can influence users' preferences and their overall experience when engaging in digital communication and collaboration (Singh & Awasthi, 2020). There is also considerable research available around the covid crisis, where the advantages, difficulties, and disadvantages of using videoconferencing for business meetings during the COVID-19 epidemic are thoroughly examined (Karl et al., 2022) but lacking the specificity this research delved into.

2.4 Digital flourishing

A state of optimal psychological functioning is referred to as flourishing and three states integrates it, namely emotional, psychological, and social well-being (Corey, 2002). By satisfying the psychological needs of people for connections, regard, self-esteem, competence, meaning, and purpose in life, we can achieve flourishing (Diener et al., 2010). The pursuit of a fulfilled workforce is an important goal not only as an end in itself but also as a means to employers' desired productivity level, which is why job flourishing is important (Ho & Chan, 2022). Job flourishing has demonstrated significant positive effects on a variety of organizational outcomes (A'yuninnisa et al., 2023). The positive perceptions of a person's activities and experiences in digital communication are referred to as digital flourishing (Janicke-Bowles et al., 2023). Employees may experience stress if they are unable to use the newly digitalized systems for work and as a result, people may use digital systems less frequently or stop using them completely (Shamout et al., 2022). There is little research on the positive aspects, but extensive research on the negative effects of digital communication on people and therefore their impact on digital flourishing (Rosič et al., 2022). Generally, research on "flourishing-at-work" is still lacking, that is despite the advantages found (A'yuninnisa et al., 2023), so when looking specifically at research on digital flourishing in the context of work, it is even more lacklustre. The argument over the best digital communication tools to use to reach employees and engage them in the mission and strategy of the company as well as giving them the best experience has arisen as a result of the evolution of digitized communication tools (Stark Nässlin et al., 2018).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

This research used a qualitative research design. For investigating complex phenomena like organizational change and employee attitudes, as it is the case with this study, qualitative research is suitable (Steckler et al., 1992). With the gathering of extensive data from participants, it allows for a thorough examination of the research questions. The qualitative research technique is used to comprehend people's attitudes, interactions, behaviours, and beliefs and as opposed to quantitative data it produces data that is not numerical (Pathak et al., 2013). Most information is gathered utilizing interviews, which is crucial for the researcher to comprehend the phenomenon from the participant's perspective (Majid et al., 2017). Although interviews with participants are the main gathering source on other occasions researchers use observations, and documents as potential data sources (Polkinghorne, 2005). The research involved a purposive sample of leaders and employees . Instead of using a convenience sample, purposeful sampling is used to identify individuals who are most qualified to offer the data needed to address the research questions (Palinkas et al., 2015). Furthermore, it can be noted that the researcher decides what information is necessary to have and then searches for individuals who can and are willing to supply it based on their knowledge or experience. It is mainly used in qualitative research, such as in this case, to find and pick the instances with the greatest information so that the resources are used as effectively as possible (Etikan et al., 2016).

3.2 Sampling and sample description

The companies targeted were mainly large companies. Large companies typically exhibit less flexibility and agility than smaller companies. The corporate-wide digitisation may therefore be more challenging for large enterprises, so it is more interesting to research larger firms for this case (Zhu et al., 2006). For small companies, the value creation process is distinctive, initially concentrating on basics of digital channels like engaging, selling, and delivering, compared to large firms the digital transformation process is less complex and there is less information to gather (Mandviwalla & Flanagan, 2021). Firms are considered large when they have more than 500 employees (Oi & Idson, 1999). A small company was still targeted in this research because in comparison to the large firm, it was able to give a different viewpoint, because even though digital transformation is not as complex as a large firm, there are still obstacles that, if overcome, can also present opportunities such as including using numerous platforms, digitally addressing fulfilment, and digitalizing engagement to complement physical space (Mandviwalla & Flanagan, 2021).There is a total of 4 companies, 3 of them being large and 1 of them being a small company. They all come from different industry sectors, which can give us different perspectives on the research. . 2 companies targeted are software developer companies. Digital transformation alters the process of developing software from the viewpoint of software engineering. Current patterns include the creation applications as well as mobile application development. To effectively complete software projects in a digital era, there are new obstacles for software developing companies. If software firms wish to succeed in the market, they must find ways to adapt to this digital transformation (Gebhart et al., 2016). Another company is in the retail sector and the competitive landscape is constantly changing there, as a result of large improvements in digital technology. Retail is becoming more digital as online and offline markets are combined by multi-sided marketplaces to improve consumer buying experiences. Especially with the rise of e-commerce. Retail firms are heavily reliant on technology and digital communication platforms nowadays (Ferreira et al., 2020). The 4th company is a workspace provider, that belongs to the real estate industry. Currently, the real estate industry is going through a digital transformation that alters not only the fundamentals but also the

A	Leader	Co-founder / App designer	App/software developer firm	<25 employees	France
A	Employee	App designer	App/software developer firm	<25 employees	France
B	Leader	Commercial Leader	Workspace provider firm	>10 000 employees	Switzerland
B	Employee	Sales	Workspace provider firm	>10 000 employees	Switzerland
C	Leader	Product development project lead	Software developer company	~100 000 employees	Germany
D	Leader	Chief Technology Officer (CFO)	Software developer company	>130 000 employees	France
D	Employee	Product owner	large hypermarket chain	>130 000 employees	France

Table 1. List of participants with company information

markets and working conditions (Siniak et al., 2020) .This makes them an ideal setting for investigating the impact of digital transformation on employees' attitudes and behaviour.

In total four companies were targeted, for three of the companies there was a leader and an employee who were interviewed, for the fourth company only a leader. There have been a total of 7 interviews conducted to have enough data for the research. Having employee's and leaders perspectives is perfect to observe a possible difference within leaders in a company, and furthermore having the view of the employees also gives an even wider range of information that allows for an even more thorough analysis.

Four different companies were targeted as shown in Table 1. Coded as A, B, C and D. The table shows if the participant was either a leader or any employee in the company, then his specific job. The third column shows the industry the firm specializes in, followed by the size in term of employees and the location of their headquarters.

3.3 Research Instrument

Interviews that are semi-structured were be used to gather data. Semi-structured interviews enable participants, such as the leaders and employees, to share their viewpoints and experiences while also allowing for exploration of the study subject. This makes it possible to ask more in-depth, open-ended questions in the future (Schmidt, 2004). Additionally, this will allow us to get some information that might be missed if semi-structured questions were not used, as these types of questions are very flexible, reliable and also allowed the presence for follow up questions. To ensure uniformity throughout interviews and to make it simpler to compare responses, semi-structured interviews make sure that each participant is asked the same set of questions, although the set of questions will vary slightly for employees and leaders so that we can adapt to their respective role. The core of the questions will stay the same. Unstructured interviews, on the other hand, do not have a predetermined list of questions, thus the interviewer must rely on their own judgment and the flow of the conversation to drive the topic. Furthermore structured interviews may not capture the richness and complexity of participants' experiences in the same way as a semi-structured interviews does (Easwaramoorthy & Zarinpoush, 2006). The interviews took place virtually. All of the interviews conducted during the qualitative study were transcribed verbatim by hand and using the tool "otter.ai", which turns voice conversations into smart notes that can be easily searched and shared. The interviews were audio recorded for improved information retention. 7 interviews were conducted, more specifically 4 different leader perspectives and 3 employees from 4 different companies, as to observe differences within the companies themselves as well as differences from each company. It must be noted that the interviews in company D, which is a firm based in France, were conducted in French. The question set was carefully translated in French to adjust for the participants. Furthermore, otter.ai does not support French transcription, so for this exception, "Descript" was used. Descript is another transcription tool that supports French, but it can only transcribe up to a certain amount of minutes so it could not be used for all the interviews. It comfortably allowed us to use it for the 2 interviews that were in French. Throughout the research process, several confidentiality precautions will be used. The objective of the study and the participants' rights to confidentiality and anonymity will be explained to them. No identities or confidential information were disclosed; instead, participants and confidential information are represented by coded letters and numbers. For further ethical regulation, a request was sent to the BMS Ethical review and approved.

As discussed previously, one set of questions was prepared for the interviews, with slight adjustments for the role of either leader or employee. A total of 12 questions were asked; they were divided into themes. The first 3 questions were introductory questions and were mainly used as an ice-breaker and also to introduce the subject of this interview so that both the interviewer and participant understood the themes that were discussed. The next 3 questions regarded the digital tools used in the company and how they are implemented. The next 2 questions gave us information on the effects of these tools, and how they impact the people in the workplace. The 3 following questions were more specific and regarded the security and risks aspects of these tools as well as the difference in usage in various departments and finally how the participant envisioned the future of the workplace. For a final closure question, the participant was asked if there were any personal experiences they wanted to share or if they had anything to add.

3.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to examine the data that has been gathered. Thematic analysis involves finding patterns and themes in the data that have been gathered; when evaluating interview data, we may find similarities among the many participants (Terry et al., 2017). It consists of three "streams" or link stages in it: data reduction, data display, and data conclusion-drawing/verification. For the reduction it entails the steps involved in choosing, streamlining, and changing the data.. Tables, figures, and theme maps are just a few examples of the various ways that might present the data to provide more opportunity to grasp it thoroughly, in the data display part. Finally for the conclusion, developing conceptual coherence and consistency, which should be used in the study's conclusion to examine the findings' validity and fit within the study's theoretical framework (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To examine the different themes that resurfaced when conducting the interviews and after transcribing them, it was wise to find common patterns in the answers. To find potential clusters of data that are similar or focus on a specific theme. Certain predictions were then made, in terms of groups of data, such as differentiating between employee and leader answers (Alhojailan & Ibrahim, 2012). ATLAS.ti was used for the data analysis. It is an effective tool for analysing qualitative data, especially for sizable amounts of text and audio data. This program provides assistance to the researcher throughout the data analysis process, which involves coding and annotating the various tasks for analysing and interpreting data. The interviews were first of all polished, checking for any mistakes or errors that the AI transcribing tool otter.ai did. Making sure everything is coherent, and if any insecurity arises, double check what is transcribed with the audio recording to make sure

everything is perfectly understandable. The same process was applied meticulously with the Descript AI tool, for the French interviews. Only then were the text documents imported to ATLAS.ti.

Using ATLAS.ti, a thematic analysis strategy was used to code the interviews. To first capture every aspect of the data, a fairly big amount of codes were created. However, these initial codes were reduced into smaller, related clusters or themes in order to create more cohesive and comprehensible groupings (Hwang, 2008). This procedure required thoroughly going over the codes to find links and points of commonality. The various codes were grouped into important thematic areas through an iterative comparison and consolidation procedure, enabling a thorough examination of the interview data (Zakaria & Zakaria, 2016).

For the first round of coding, paragraphs and sentences with useful information were highlighted and coded. Using this technique around 100 codes were initially created from the interview responses received from the 7 interviews. The first task was to condense these codes, so that the ones who were similar were merged together using ATLAS.ti tools. Such as " risk" and " risk-taking", these codes with extreme similarities in nature were merged together. Using this merging polishing, the total codes count lowered down to around 50. From these codes several themes could be noted adown and perceived.

4. RESULTS

Following the analysis of the interviews, and the creation of themes, the data is then organised using a hierarchical coding system.

When starting off the interviews with each participant, the notion of digital communication was the first notion to be touched upon, it was a clear consensus among all the participants that digital communication is an ever-evolving landscape managed by tools that empowers us to communicate, connect, and collaborate in virtual ways. The participants had various reason to be using digital communication, from geographical barriers, to efficiency reasons, or even employee preferences.

Figure 1 showcases the data structure. When conducting interviews it was made clear **inspiring productivity** was a key component and skill that leaders should work upon. This mainly means enabling everybody to say that what they want to say and enabling everybody to participate during meetings per example. Leaders can execute this through various techniques that they learn. *"reading the room is when you're in a conference, you can see what level of understanding people have and you can accommodate and slow down and accommodate for what you were saying."(B-Leader)*. But again there is also the importance of strong communication, leaders need to be careful and confident, as anything they say will influence the employees, *"if you are not very used to it, if you are not confident it's difficult to keep the same level of body communication and human interaction.."(C-Leader)*. It was also seen that sometimes technology can induce frustration for employees and also its usage needs to be used with care as there can be negative repercussions from it. **Technological frustration and security** was the theme found from it. During digital meetings, especially from leaders there is a need for whoever is leading it, to have control over it, *"The other thing is that you might get a couple of people that if they're not disciplined, talk over each other"(B-Leader)*. Unfortunately this depends widely on the amount of people in a meeting and from person to person, but as a general rule a leader needs to be able to get control of a situation such as that. Furthermore it is important to not get distracted as well, if multiple questions are being asked at and at the same and you are struggling to focus on the presentation because of it. *"I need to change my passwords regularly. They train me how to build the secure password and so on."(C-Leader)*, these are precautions that everyone in the company needs to take and apply personally but also on a managerial level, the choice of what platforms to use is important from a security standpoint as well *"We used free software at first. But well, it's free, and that's a bit of a limitation, because firstly, there were security problems that came."(D-Leader)*. The concern of security is also a responsibility of the employees *"However, we are mindful of the sensitivity of the information we share and always use secure channels for confidential discussions"(A-Employee)* . These two themes construct the aggregate dimension titled Strategic Decision-making as can be seen in figure 1.

Having a **thriving work environment** should be one of the top priorities for employees to succeed. *"having an equal balance of opportunities in digital communication, of respecting both the employees and employers on their choices." (B-Leader)* Creating a healthy environment where people are treated fairly and equally is important as it creates a good image of the company for employees to look upon. *"I think it's also the company's responsibility to adapt to employees as much as the employees should adapt to company policy and find a way to balance all that."(A-Leader)* Creating a dynamic workplace comes from what the company aspires to, their branding and their culture is important, as this sends the message to what kind of company they want to be and workplace they want to have. **Adaptability and change** refers to how individuals adjust and respond to the evolving nature of digital technologies, online services, and communication channel. A company is ever changing and employees need to be able to follow the rhythm to keep up with this uncertain environment. This can be done through training and thinking differently than what we are used to *"Then they trained me on how to use my voice, it has to change in order to have your attention always on me" (C-Leader)* Participants, both employees and leaders, noted that there is a lot to learn from digital platforms, as they are evolving every year, so there is a need to adapt to new functionalities so they are not left out. *"My colleagues are mostly in Germany and there, they were meeting physically. I was in Rome, and sometimes they forget that I was online so they forgot to speak in the microphone." (C-Leader)* There are many other ways this can have a negative impact, people can forget to change slides in a presentation as they are too focused with the persons in the physical meeting and forget to adapt to the people online per

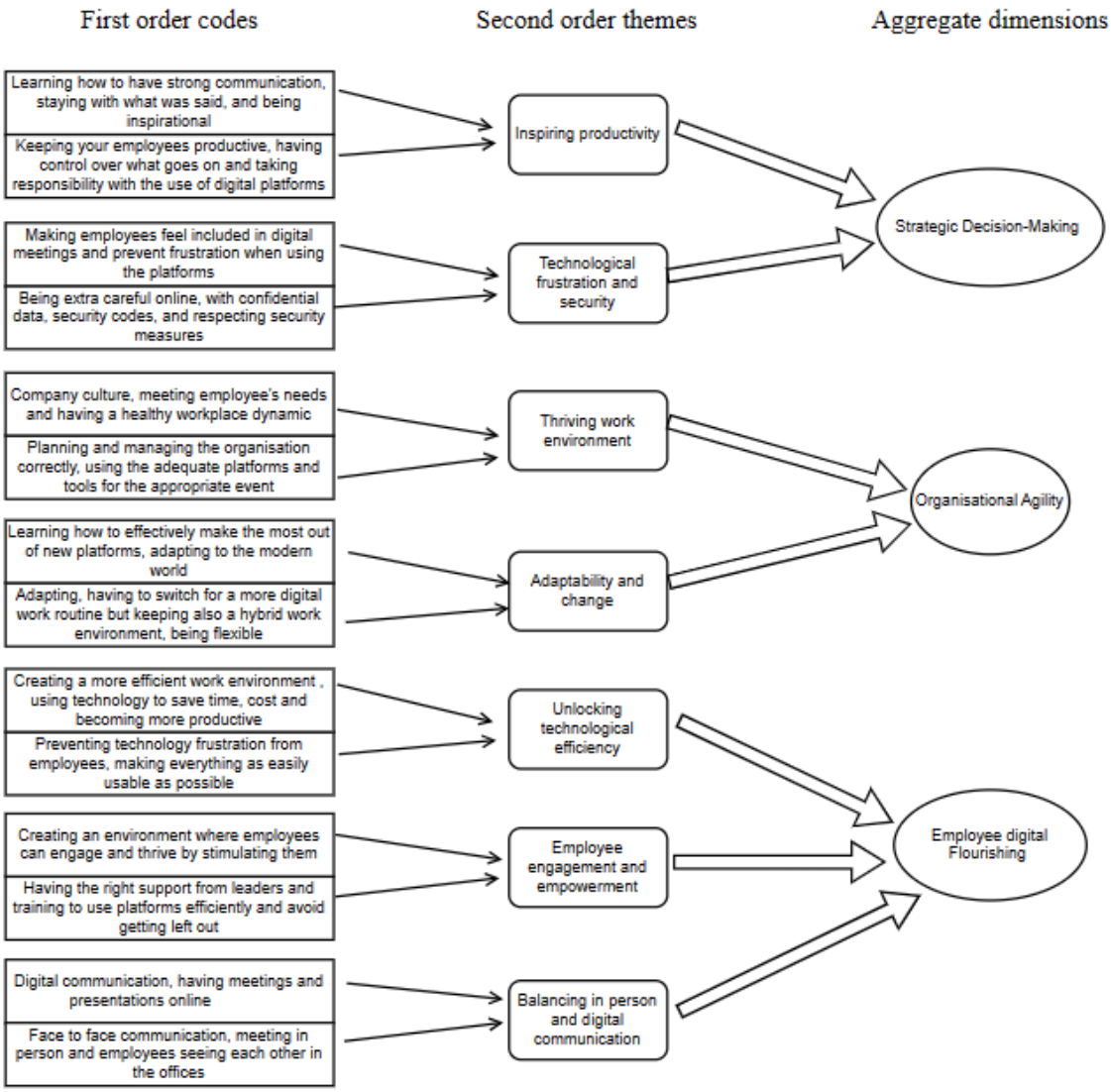

Figure 1. Data structure of the results

example. These are difficulty encountered especially during the Covid impact, as I could deduct from the interviews, where hybrid work was very present and people had to adapt abruptly. The dimension of Organisational agility was found after connecting the notions of adaptability and change as well as having a thriving work environment . **Unlocking technological efficiency** refers to employees utilising the full power of new technologies, using these tools as efficiently as possible and also realising that they can help them work better instead of being a nuisance. This can be accelerated or slowed by the different choices of platforms available *" During COVID A lot of companies were not using Microsoft Teams. I often received Microsoft Zoom invites for instance. It's also easy to use but it's different. " (B-Employee)* The choice of platform to work with is important, companies can choose their priorities, do they want easy to use platforms or platforms that have a lot additional tools but could be more complex to use *"we abandoned the idea of looking into tools that are more adapted to companies but rather use a platform we were really comfortable with" (A-Leader).* There were multiple instances where the participants pointed out the advantages of using these platforms *" Today, you could do 18 different meetings. Whereas before you might only do two or three different meetings" (B-Leader)* ranging from time saving to cost benefits, for the employees and the company itself. **Employee engagement and empowerment** can be unlocked through the help of training and correct leadership, and this consequently contributes to a more efficient company. *" So I think it's actually on the speaker to try and get the most out of Microsoft teams to create the content in such a way that it is engaging" (B-Leader)* The way leaders use tools, can change the engagement level and enthusiasm of an employee, by correct and creative usage of it, the employee can become more engaged in the workplace and satisfied with their work. *" My leader has been really supportive and made sure we all know how to use Discord effectively" (A-Employee)* Support is needed from the employee, but when the employee feels acknowledged and actually supported and trained, his will to work at its full is even more visible. When the tools he works with are mastered, he can thrive fully in the work environment. There is also this notion **of balancing in person and digital communication**, *"it's easy to miss non-verbal cues or the personal touch of in-person interactions, which can lead to misunderstandings. To balance it out, we make sure to schedule regular team meetings" (A-Employee)* Some participants looked forward to physical meetings more so then digital ones,

others actually preferred digital and some other like a mix of both. Everyone is different and so there needs to be a right balance with using digital platforms, a balance so that every employee is relatively satisfied with the usage of it. On a global level there was an emphasis on a preference of doing meetings online, when they were fairly general and not very important, as that saved time and costs for them and the company, but when a meeting was more important such as an HR one on one meeting, the preference was physical. It depends of the situation on which the meeting needs to take place. The final dimension found was Employee digital flourishing.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Theoretical implications

Figure 2 presents a model that shows how a leader's strategic decision making and organisational agility influences the utilization of digital communication under leadership in a company. Consequently this digital communication under the leaders guidance then affects employees strive for digital flourishing in different ways. In this part we will discuss the following model with all its existing attributes.

Organisational agility refers to the need to fully embrace and implement agility in a company's operations, and keeping up with a hypercompetitive and volatile environment. Leaders need to be able to be agile, having better business outcomes with less wasted time and resources, to be capable of setting the guiding principles, develop strategies (Attar & Abdul-Kareem, 2020). As we enter the twenty-first century, many organizations now depend on flexibility to survive (Becker, 2001), this need to be agile is from the fast and changing rise of digital technology usage in companies. A system needs to be put in place to embrace all these new technologies and in this case digital communication. There must be a fast implementation of these platforms, so that organisations can keep up with the competition. This directly connects with companies undergoing digital transformation, as the leaders are the one that must master new skills for thriving in an unpredictably changing environment (Tigre et al., 2023).

Proposition 1: Digital communication under leadership serves as a mediator between organisational agility

At its core, strategic decision making is about leaders knowing what decisions to make and keep the interest of the company and the employees above all. Employees will be less committed to the team if the leader doubts his own decisions. They must show their employees that they are able to acknowledge when they are wrong and move forward to a better solution (Ejimabo, 2015). The model shows that Strategic decision making is directly connected with digital communication, leaders have to make the choice for the company and the employees to possibly restructure a way a company works around integrating digital communication. They also need to be careful in the choices they make concerning the available platforms they can integrate in the company as every choice has repercussions and affect employee's digital flourishing. The pursuit of employees who are satisfied is a crucial objective as it influences the employers' desired productivity levels (Ho & Chan, 2022).

Proposition 2: Digital communication under leadership serves as a mediator for strategic decision making

Digital communication under leadership then impacts employee digital flourishing through these 3 factors visible in figure 2. Adequate training and support is essential for the usage and integration of digital communication platforms. Leaders must put in place a proper digital training culture. A culture that promotes a healthy workplace dynamics makes a perfect environment for digital communication to thrive, giving the proper support for employees to use these platforms is key (Kratzer et al., 2017). Providing training and giving employees time to adapt is important, the company culture that facilitates any changes and any difficulties that an employee encounters while using digital communication is vital for them to thrive with these platforms (Bessiere et al., 2003).

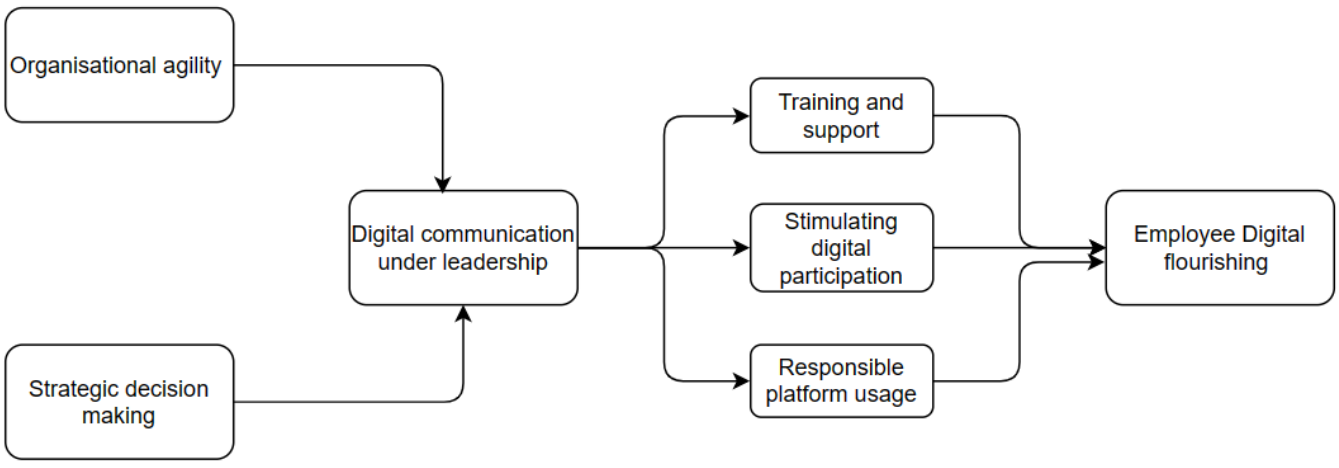

Figure 2. represents the model which answers the research question

Proposition 3: Digital communication under leadership leads to employees being more trained and experienced in using digital platforms when the correct support and help is given, which will then enhance employee digital flourishing

The stimulation of employees during digital participation is another aspect that affects heavily the digital flourishing of employees. When communicating digitally, leaders and users of these platforms need to utilize them properly and make colleagues feel part of a meeting for example. They do that by making sure employees follow certain presentations and have the correct environment to participate in discussions digitally. Furthermore employees need to feel engaged and stimulated , and with digital platforms leaders can be creative and make them feel integrated (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2021). The case is even more difficult when talking about hybrid work, as there may be situations where there is a divide between people joining online and in person, but these issues can be tackled through utilizing the full potential of these platforms by making both parties fully engaged and feeling integrated (Gratton, 2021). Current research explored the notion that there are a few notable exceptions that sets the many existing digital platforms apart (Mora-Jimenez et al., 2022). But it can now be discussed that the bigger differences comes from the proper and creative usage of these platforms to really engage employees.

Proposition 4: Digital communication under leadership leads to employees participating and being more engaged in digital meetings when there is correct stimulation, which will then enhance employee digital flourishing

The final aspect is responsible platform usage, this encompasses security importance while utilizing digital communication platforms and also ease of usage of these platforms. Employees need to be careful while using these tools, whether it is confidential passwords, information or company files, the employees have a responsibility towards it (John, 2020). Having to focus on all these aspects can be negative for employees, remembering passwords, failing to save a file and losing a digital work file are all prone to make employees less desirable to use these tools. Unfortunately problems are extensive, especially with digital communication specifically, having network issues, sound issues, files not being able to be sent, presentations failing to work during an important meeting. They are thankfully improved with each year, but there is yet to be a tool that works perfectly and without any issues, this is vastly due to the fact that these technologies are still quite recent and at their early stages (Aiken, 2020).

Proposition 5: Digital communication under leadership leads to employees needing to be more responsible when using digital platforms which then leads to possible frustrations that has a negative effect on employee digital flourishing

For leaders in firms going through digital transformation, this report offers insightful advice. This thesis helps executives make educated decisions by providing recommendations on the effective use of digital tools, how their creativity and support to employees can be effective and have a grand impact on their digital flourishing. But in addition to their skills, the best tool that fits the company is also important This study closes a knowledge gap and offers a thorough understanding of the consequences of these platforms by looking at both their benefits and drawbacks in terms of fostering employee digital flourishing. It advances the research on workplace and digital flourishing which was a neglected area.

5.2 Practical implications

Organizations need to understand how crucial it is to be flexible and agile in the face of the rapid digital revolution. To keep up with the evolving digital landscape, leaders must actively embrace agility in their decision-making processes and strategies. Companies should encourage a positive work environment that fosters collaboration and offers the assistance staff members need to use these platforms efficiently. Training programs, resources, and a culture that welcomes change and innovation can all help with this. Leaders must guarantee that all participants are properly integrated and engaged for digital communication to be effective. In order for employees to feel included and connected through digital interactions, leaders should foster an inclusive workplace. Participants discussed the importance of productive and inclusive meetings led by confident leaders. To do this, digital meetings and presentations should be designed to actively involve all attendees, and engaging and integrating strategies should be used, through ways such as quizzes and active discussions where both parties are active. Firms should address the technological constraints preventing employees from thriving online. This entails giving security precautions a high priority in order to safeguard sensitive data and educate staff members on how to use digital communication tools safely and responsibly. To reduce technological problems and frustrations, businesses should also take into account how simple these technologies are to use and how accessible they are. Over time, these barriers may be lessened by continual improvement and keeping up with technological advancements and the latest tools available.

5.3 Limitations and further research

There may be certain limitations such as employee characteristics and personality traits that may impact employees' digital flourishing. Thus, the study may not capture the full range of factors that contribute to digital flourishing. By focusing on individual characteristics and personalities, the thesis may become overly subjective and may not be able to provide a generalizable conclusion. Happiness, tranquillity, fulfilment, and life satisfaction are terms used by ordinary individuals to describe how people feel and think about their lives (Diener et al., 2003). These levels can be significantly influenced by personality traits like extraversion, and self-esteem, this could potentially lead to discriminatory or unfair judgments of individuals or groups based on their personal traits rather than on the objective impact of the leader's actions (Diener et al., 2003). The qualitative aspect of the study could be another contributing factor. The data analysis that can be done may be limited if

the study is unable to offer quantitative data. Additionally, the study may be limited in the ability to generalize the finding to other populations. It must be noted that workspace cultures vary depending on the country. It is useful to have companies from different countries so that the perspectives are taken from different places and can add to the depth of the research. But the cultural factor for each country was not taken into account as this factor can also be subjective like personality.

To complement the qualitative component of the research, conducting quantitative investigations can be done as a more thorough examination can be performed by gathering quantitative data, giving a wider knowledge of the influence of leaders' usage of digital communication channels on employees' digital thriving. Investigating the cross-cultural variations in workplace cultures and how they affect digital thriving can also be beneficial to investigate how cultural influences affect employees' experiences and perceptions of digital communication platforms and leadership, consider conducting comparative studies with businesses from other nations.

6. CONCLUSION

To conclude, this study explored the impact of leaders' use of digital communication platforms on employees' digital flourishing in organizations undergoing digital transformation. The research question focused on understanding how the use of these platforms by leaders influences employees' ability to thrive in the digital work environment.

Throughout this research, the many ways a leader can integrate the use of digital communication platforms beneficially through correct communication, using adequate platforms, and also giving support and training to the employees, was observed. It was noticed that employees if digital flourishing is embraced, can become even more efficient and productive in the workplace. This is also beneficial for the company in the end through accelerated productivity and lower costs in general. On a final note it was observed how digital flourishing could be negatively impacted, although minimal, through the limitations of the tools themselves and misuse from employees.

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