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Fostering Digital Maturity: A Strategic Framework for Overcoming Socio-Organizational Resistance in Algeria

Adem Rahmoune* École Normale Supérieure de Laghouat, Algérie., a.rahmoune@ens-lagh.dz,
Oussama Merzougui* École Normale Supérieure de Laghouat, Algérie. o.merzougui@ens-lagh.dz

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Abstract:
This study provides a sociotechnical examination of digital transformation within Algerian institutions, pivoting from conventional technical discourse toward a nuanced sociological perspective. While digital adoption is often framed as a hardware-centric transition, this research conceptualizes it as a complex social phenomenon embedded in organizational power dynamics. Utilizing a qualitative analytical framework, the study investigates the underlying motivations and multifaceted challenges that govern this shift. Findings reveal a critical paradox: despite the presence of foundational digital infrastructure, the transformative process remains "arrested" in its nascent stages. This stasis is not a failure of technology, but rather a consequence of deeply entrenched human-centric barriers, including a pervasive deficit in digital literacy, normative resistance to procedural disruption, and rigid bureaucratic structures that stifle agility. The study concludes that the digital divide in Algeria is primarily cultural and organizational. Consequently, a strategic paradigm shift is required one that prioritizes the cultivation of human capital and the fostering of an innovative institutional culture over mere technological implementation. These insights offer a roadmap for policymakers to transition from "digital presence" to "digital maturity."

.**Keywords:**:Digital Transformation ،Sociology of Technology ، Institutional Barriers ، Digital Culture.

* **Adem Rahmoune**

1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary technological epoch is characterized by a relentless pace of innovation that fundamentally disrupts established institutional arrangements. This has created a global imperative for digital transformation, compelling organizations not merely to adopt new tools, but to undergo a profound reconfiguration of their operational logics and competitive strategies. At its core, digital transformation is a socio-organizational phenomenon; it extends beyond technology to challenge and alter an organization's internal culture, operational routines, and power structures, with the aim of achieving sustainable change.

Within the Algerian national context, institutions are not immune to these global pressures. The promise of digital transformation enhancing service quality, streamlining bureaucracy, and stimulating economic growth is clear. However, a critical gap exists between the ambition for full digital adoption and the lived reality on the ground. This gap is defined by a series of frictions that are fundamentally socio-organizational in nature. The challenges are not merely technical deficits in infrastructure but are deeply embedded in the social fabric: normative resistance to change from actors whose professional identities and authority are threatened, the persistence of entrenched organizational cultures, and the difficulty in formulating a digital strategy that resonates with the institution's social reality.

Despite state-led initiatives to modernize, the progress of Algerian institutions is demonstrably hindered by these interconnected technological, organizational, and cultural barriers. The true depth and dynamics of this process remain under-examined from a critical perspective. This study, therefore, addresses the following problem: **How do prevailing socio-organizational structures within Algerian institutions mediate**, hinder, or shape the trajectory of digital transformation? Specifically, it investigates the reality of this transformation and analyzes its most prominent challenges as products of their socio-organizational context.

1.2 Hypotheses:

H1: A formally articulated digital transformation strategy is positively associated with the successful **institutionalization** of more efficient operational routines within Algerian organizations

H2: Deficiencies in the digital infrastructure act as a primary structural barrier, inhibiting the implementation of digital transformation within Algerian organizations.

H3: The visible commitment of leadership functions to legitimize digital transformation initiatives, and is thus positively associated with their successful implementation in Algerian organizations.

H4: The implementation of employee development and change management programs is positively correlated with successful digital transformation, by serving to mitigate social friction and normative resistance.

H5: An organizational culture characterized by high social inertia constitutes a primary barrier to the successful implementation of digital transformation in Algerian organizations.

H6: Employee resistance is a significant social challenge, often manifesting as a rational response to the perceived disruption of established work routines and power structures.

1.3 Research Aims

This study is guided by the following primary research objectives:

1. To critically assess the current state and maturity of digital transformation within Algerian institutions from a **socio-organizational perspective**.
   (This is more analytical than "present and evaluate." It immediately establishes your theoretical standpoint).
2. To elucidate the **mechanisms** through which digital transformation influences organizational outcomes, specifically operational efficiency and service delivery.
   (This is stronger than "highlight the role." It suggests you are investigating the 'how' and 'why' of the impact, not just stating that an impact exists).
3. To identify and analyze the primary **structural barriers** and **socio-cultural frictions** that impede the digital transformation process, with a particular focus on organizational culture and resistance to change.
   (This reframes "obstacles and challenges" into more precise sociological concepts like "structural barriers" and "socio-cultural frictions").
4. To formulate **evidence-based recommendations** for institutional leaders and national policymakers, aimed at fostering a more effective and sustainable digital transition.
   (This is more formal than "provide insights." "Evidence-based" links the recommendations directly to your findings, and "sustainable" implies a long-term, embedded change).

1.4 Study Methodology

This study employs a descriptive-analytical methodology. This approach is predicated on a comprehensive review of the extant academic and theoretical literature. Its purpose is to systematically define, contextualize, and analyze the primary variables related to digital transformation, examining their interplay from a socio-organizational perspective to build a robust theoretical foundation for the research problem.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The scholarly discourse on digital transformation within the Algerian context, while growing, often focuses on either technical implementation or strategic imperatives. However, some studies provide a foundation for a more nuanced socio-organizational analysis.

A relevant Algerian contribution in this area is the study by Khalaf Allah and Ben Jaloul on the role of digital transformation in strengthening the competitiveness of food industries through the case of Omar Ben Omar Company. The study examined the relationship between the requirements of digital transformation and several dimensions of competitiveness, particularly innovation, quality, and cost. Relying on a quantitative approach, the researchers used a questionnaire administered to a sample of 50 employees in order to assess these relationships.

The findings showed that emerging technologies represent an essential factor in initiating the process of digital transformation. The study also indicated that the existence of a formal digital transformation strategy can positively support organizational creativity and innovation by strengthening employees' awareness of the importance of transformation and by influencing institutional culture. By contrast, the absence of a clearly formalized strategy was identified as a major structural barrier that may prevent the organization from fully realizing its digital potential.

While the previous study offers an important empirical starting point, it does not fully explain the deeper cultural and organizational dynamics that shape digital transformation. For this reason, the present research extends that discussion by examining in greater detail the socio-organizational barriers and enabling factors that influence transformation in Algerian institutions..

1. Literature on Digital Transformation

A. The Concept and Importance of Digital Transformation

Digital transformation has been discussed in the literature from several complementary perspectives. (Vial ,2019.p115) presents it as an evolving process through which organizations undergo significant change by combining different digital technologies. In a related sense, Hess, Matt, (Hess, Matt, Benlian, & Wiesböck 2016. p123) associate it with the adoption of contemporary digital tools to generate major improvements in organizational performance. Westerman, (Bonnet, & McAfee 2014, p. 5) similarly emphasize the strategic use of digital technologies to enhance business processes and value creation. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that digital transformation is not merely a technical upgrade, but a broad organizational and strategic shift.

In a context marked by accelerating technological change, digital transformation has become a strategic necessity for organizations. Its importance can be observed in several interconnected areas. First, it improves operational performance by automating repetitive activities, reducing delays, lowering costs, and allowing employees to focus on higher-value tasks. Second, it strengthens interaction with customers and stakeholders by enabling more responsive communication and more personalized services. Third, it supports innovation and better decision-making through the effective use of data and digital tools. For these reasons, digital transformation has become a major factor in improving competitiveness, adaptability, and long-term institutional sustainability.

B. The Dimensions of Digital Transformation

Digital transformation can be described as an integrated and multi-dimensional process in which several interrelated dimensions must work together in order to improve organizational performance and strengthen competitiveness. Rather than functioning as isolated components, these dimensions remain closely connected and mutually influential.

At the core of this process lies the technological dimension, which refers to the adoption and deployment of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, big data, and the Internet of Things. This dimension also requires the parallel development of the underlying infrastructure so that it can sustain the speed, flexibility, and efficiency expected from modern operational models (Westerman, Bonnet, & McAfee, 2014, p. 98).

Nevertheless, digital transformation cannot be reduced to technology alone. The organizational dimension is equally essential because it involves revisiting structures, workflows, and internal processes in ways that improve agility and responsiveness (Berghaus & Back, 2016, p. 79). This dimension is closely associated with the human dimension, which emphasizes the development of employee competencies, the spread of digital literacy, and the management of cultural adaptation necessary for successful transformation (Chanias, Myers, & Hess, 2019, p. 168).

In addition, the strategic dimension guides how institutions use digital technologies to redesign business models and create greater value (Nambisan, Wright, & Feldman, 2019, p. 242), while also improving customer experience through more personalized digital services (Fitzgerald, Kruschwitz, Bonnet, & Welch, 2013, p. 123). The economic dimension, for its part, evaluates the financial feasibility of transformation and its contribution to operational efficiency. Finally, digital transformation also includes a security dimension concerned with data protection and cyber risks, as well as a social dimension that addresses its broader implications for employment, society, and institutional responsibility.

2. The Reality of Digital Transformation in Algerian Institutions

Across the world, governments and institutions are investing more heavily in digital transformation in order to improve administrative performance and service delivery. The effectiveness of these efforts depends not only on technology, but also on the quality of governance, infrastructure readiness, and the availability of qualified human resources. Algeria follows this broader regional trend, having invested in technical infrastructure and network expansion. However, despite these efforts, the quality and consistency of connectivity continue to pose important challenges.

A. Digital Infrastructure

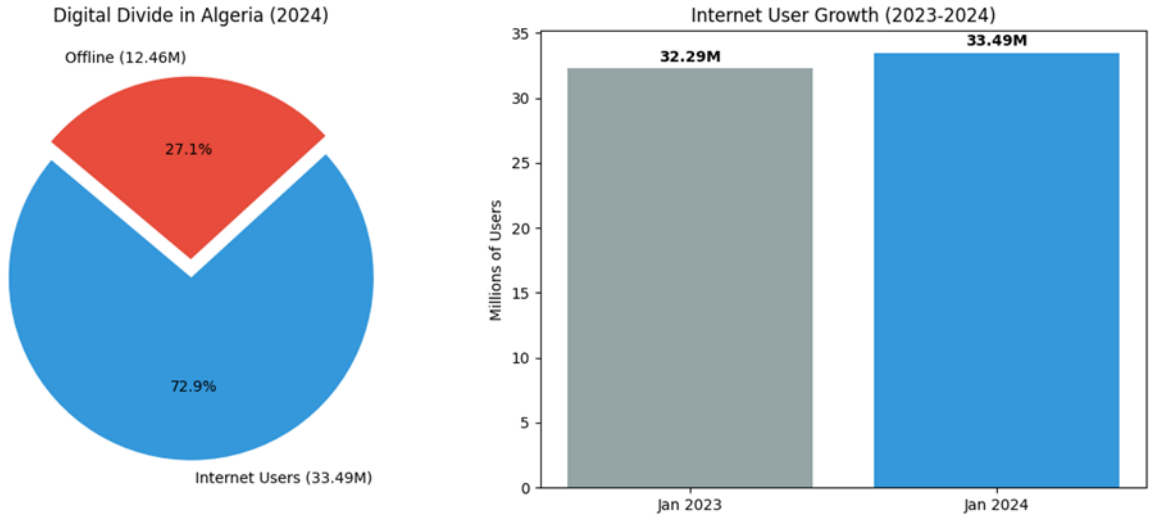
Internet-driven digital transformation has substantially altered business activity at the global level, enabling firms to adopt more innovative technological approaches in order to remain competitive and respond to changing consumer expectations. As noted by (Sharma, Mishra, Vinay, & Srivastav, 2023, p.154), the worldwide increase in internet users has had a strong effect on business practices, e-commerce development, and the broader process of digital transformation. The expansion of this connected user base has, in turn, accelerated the growth of e-commerce by helping firms reach broader markets and improve their operational effectiveness.

At the same time, the integration of digital technologies has allowed businesses in different sectors to simplify operations and provide more satisfying customer experiences. This close

relationship between e-commerce and digital transformation has encouraged the adoption of multi-channel strategies and more personalized forms of interaction, thereby contributing to the reconfiguration of traditional business models (Sharma, Srivastva, & Fatima, 2023, p.123). This tendency is also increasingly apparent among small businesses, which are using e-commerce as an important competitive tool despite the distinct challenges they continue to face in digital marketplaces (Drew, 2003, p.112).

In Algeria, internet penetration remains one of the main indicators of digital readiness. Recent figures show that online access has expanded considerably and now includes a large proportion of the population. At the same time, a significant segment remains outside the digital sphere, which indicates that the digital divide has not yet been fully overcome. This means that progress in connectivity continues to coexist with unequal access across society

Figure (01): "Algeria's Digital Landscape (2024): Internet Penetration and Annual Growth Trends"



Source: (Prepared by researchers).

Internet performance in Algeria improved during 2024, although the pace of progress differed between mobile and fixed connections. According to (Kemp, 2024), mobile internet speed over cellular networks rose by 59.4% to reach 21.36 Mbps, whereas fixed broadband speed increased by 12.0% to 12.32 Mbps. These figures suggest a measurable improvement in the country's digital connectivity environment, even if the overall level remains below that of more advanced digital economies.

Social media participation also expanded considerably. At the beginning of 2024, Algeria counted 24.85 million active social media users, representing 54.1% of the total population, with an increase of 2.2 million users compared with early 2023, equivalent to a growth rate of 9.5% (Kemp, 2024). In demographic terms, platform use was not evenly distributed, as women accounted for 41% of users, while men represented 59% (Kemp, 2024).

In terms of platform reach, Facebook remained the most dominant service, with 24.85 million users, equivalent to 54.1% of the population. YouTube also maintained a very broad audience, with advertising reach estimated at 22.80 million users, or 49.6% of the population. Instagram, for its part, recorded notable annual growth, reaching 11.40 million users, an increase of 35.7% compared with the previous year (Kemp, 2024). Despite these positive indicators, Algeria continues to face structural connectivity constraints, especially in rural areas where access to high-speed broadband remains limited. This challenge is particularly important given that 24.5% of the population lives in rural zones, while 75.5% is concentrated in urban areas (Kemp, 2024).

Since the introduction of electronic payment services in Algeria in 2016, the use of this system has progressed steadily. By 2024, the number of online stores relying on electronic payment had reached 510, while the total volume of transactions carried out through this service amounted to approximately 48,491,701 transactions (GIE Monétique, 2024). These figures reflect a gradual

consolidation of digital payment practices within the Algerian commercial environment and suggest a growing acceptance of electronic transactions among market actors.

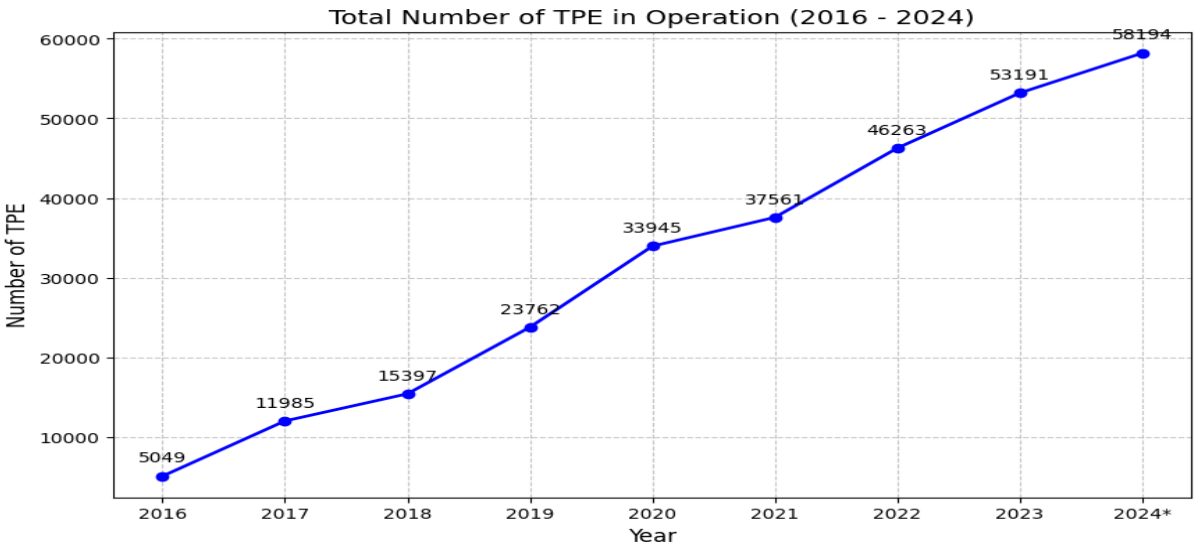
At the same time, the expansion of electronic payment remains closely linked to broader conditions such as user trust, the quality of digital infrastructure, and the wider diffusion of online commercial practices. In this sense, the recorded growth is important, but it also indicates that the full development of digital payment still depends on strengthening the institutional and technical environment that supports e-commerce (GIE Monétique, 2024).

Table (01): Total number of TPE in operation

Year	Total number of TPE in operation
2016	5049
2017	11985
2018	15397
2019	23762
2020	33945
2021	37561
2022	46263
2023	53191
until August 2024	58194

Source: (GIE Monetique, https://giemonetique.dz/activite-paiement-sur-tpe/, 2024).

Figure (02): Total Number of payment transaction by TPE



B.

Digital Transformation at the Institutional Level

At the institutional level, digital transformation in Algeria reveals an uneven and sometimes contradictory reality, particularly within the SME sector. This situation is closely linked to the structure of the national economy, which is dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises, with more than one million registered entities. Among these firms, 97.1% are classified as micro-enterprises employing fewer than ten workers, and they operate alongside a large informal sector. Such a structure makes capital-intensive digital investment especially difficult for a large share of Algerian businesses.

This institutional landscape is also marked by an imbalance in the adoption of technology. While basic ICT tools are relatively widespread, the integration of more advanced digital systems, including Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solutions, remains limited. This suggests that digitalization in many firms has not yet moved beyond a relatively superficial stage and still has only a modest influence on core business operations. The situation is further complicated by the strong presence of foreign actors in the digital environment, as 14 of the 20 most visited websites in Algeria are international platforms, which creates additional pressure on local digital content and service providers.

In parallel with the slower pace observed among traditional SMEs, the country has witnessed the emergence of a startup ecosystem. More than 900 startups have been identified, and over 40 of them have obtained the official government "Startup Label." However, this momentum remains constrained by limited access to finance. Venture capital activity is still weak, and between 2011 and 2020 only three Algerian startups succeeded in raising more than 100,000 US dollars, compared with 13 in Tunisia and 92 in Egypt over the same period.

The human capital dimension presents another contrast. Although Algeria is reported by UNESCO to have the highest proportion of female engineers in the world, the supply of IT graduates remains insufficient in relation to market demand. Moreover, this potential is weakened by the outflow of qualified professionals and by the mismatch between academic training and the practical skills required by industry. As a result, digital transformation in Algeria follows a dual-speed pattern: advanced technologies such as cloud computing and artificial intelligence are gradually entering the business environment, yet overall adoption remains behind countries such as Morocco and Tunisia. In practice, large corporations, especially in telecommunications and energy, are moving faster than the broader SME sector, thereby widening the gap in digital capabilities (Ramdani & Boudinar, 2021.p287).

C. Data Protection and Localization

A major factor shaping digital transformation in Algeria concerns the institutional and legal regulation of personal data. Because digitalization depends on the continuous collection and processing of information, strong legal safeguards are necessary. Algeria addressed this issue through Law No. 18-07, enacted on June 10, 2018, which sets out the legal conditions governing the collection, storage, use, and transmission of personal data. The implementation of these provisions falls under the supervision of the National Authority for the Protection of Personal Data (ANPDP), which is responsible for ensuring that data-processing practices respect legal requirements and privacy standards. While this framework strengthens regulatory clarity, it may also impose procedural constraints that can limit market access and slow digital innovation (Algeria, 2018).

D. Digitization of Human Resources

In Algeria, the digital transformation of the human resources function remains constrained by several persistent obstacles. Despite the strategic importance of HR in supporting institutional transformation, its digitalization is frequently slowed by structural constraints and entrenched cultural resistance. The problem is further aggravated by the absence of an integrated digital strategy at the organizational level, a situation that often produces fragmented HR systems and weak internal coherence. As a result, institutions face difficulties in adapting more flexibly to workforce needs and in keeping pace with evolving global approaches to human capital management (Ramdani & Boudinar, 2021.p387).

E. Accounting Information Systems (AIS)

In Algerian enterprises, the digitalization of Accounting Information Systems (AIS) has not yet reached a sufficiently advanced level. Evidence from an empirical study covering 237 individuals in 120 enterprises suggests that awareness of the strategic importance of digitizing accounting systems remains limited. The same study indicates that many firms have not upgraded their automated systems enough to respond effectively to the broader demands of digital transformation. This situation can be linked to a combination of structural and organizational constraints, especially inadequate infrastructure, a weak digital culture, and financial limitations that hinder investment in modern accounting systems (Meraghni, Bekkouche, & Demdoum, 2021.p244).

F. The Oil and Gas Sector

Despite the strategic importance of the oil and gas sector in Algeria, its engagement with digital transformation remains cautious and slower than expected. The potential benefits of digital technologies, particularly real-time data systems and predictive analytics, are widely recognized in terms of improving operational performance and supporting decision-making. However, evidence from a case study of digital initiatives in a national drilling contractor suggests that effective digitization continues to be constrained by several persistent barriers, including weak data integration, the lack of standardized procedures, and organizational inertia (Arnaout, Sarah, & Gerhard, 2019.p243).

3. Challenges and Opportunities of Digital Transformation in Algeria

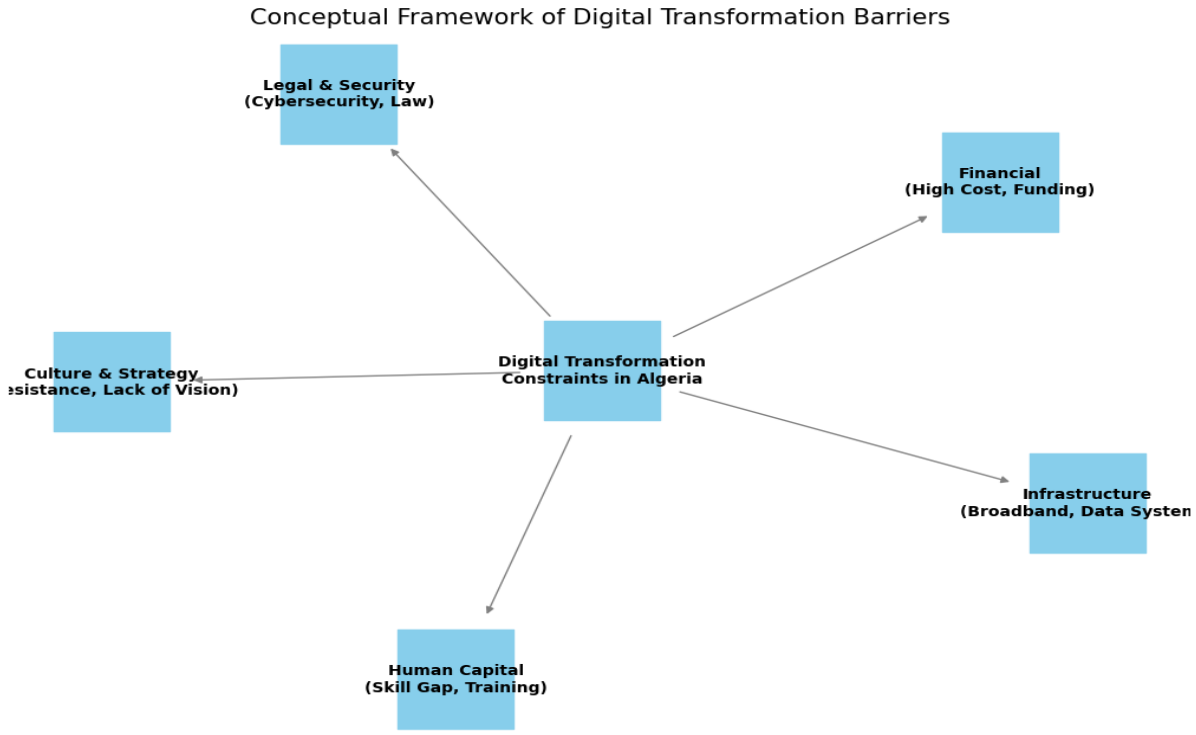
A. Challenges of Digital Transformation in Algeria

The process of digital transformation in Algerian institutions remains constrained by a combination of interrelated structural and human factors. A major obstacle concerns the weakness of the technological environment, including insufficient internet penetration, limited access to high-speed broadband, and inadequate data management systems, all of which reduce the ability of firms to exploit digital platforms effectively. These constraints are compounded by a deficit in qualified human resources, since the scarcity of professionals able to manage digital projects, together with the limited availability of appropriate training programs, significantly weakens the capacity of organizations to benefit from digital opportunities (Arnaout, Sarah, & Gerhard, 2019.p544; Molchanova, 2023.p243).

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Cultural, organizational, and financial factors further complicate the process of digital transformation in Algerian institutions. Resistance to change, attachment to conventional business models, and the persistence of traditional managerial practices often undermine innovation and reduce institutional readiness for digital adoption. These difficulties are aggravated by the lack of a clear strategic vision among senior management and by limited awareness of the strategic value of digitalization, which frequently results in underinvestment in both technology and workforce development. At the same time, financial constraints, including the high cost of technological solutions and the difficulty of securing adequate funding, continue to restrict transformation efforts. This situation is further compounded by cybersecurity concerns and fears related to data breaches, particularly where the legal and regulatory framework is perceived as insufficiently clear or supportive (Hu, Wu, & Yu, 2023.p322).

Figure (02) :Key Constraints Affecting Digital Transformation in Algerian Institutions



B. Opportunities for Algerian Companies in Digital Transformation

Despite these significant challenges, digital transformation presents substantial opportunities for Algerian companies to enhance their competitive capabilities.

The most immediate opportunity lies in increasing operational efficiency. Even in sectors with slow adoption, such as oil and gas, digital tools like real-time data reporting can vastly improve performance and optimize resource allocation, leading to cost reductions and enhanced accuracy (Arnaout, Sarah, & Gerhard , 2019.p124).

Digitalization also serves to boost innovation and product development. By integrating advanced systems, companies can streamline development processes and create new offerings tailored to customer needs, thereby improving their ability to compete in a global market. The adoption of technologies like cloud computing and AI can position Algerian firms to drive significant innovation (Hu, Wu, & Yu, 2023.p46).

Ultimately, these efforts culminate in enhancing overall competitiveness. By digitizing processes and improving customer service, Algerian institutions can strengthen their market presence both nationally and globally. The competitive advantage gained from digital adoption fosters greater flexibility and responsiveness to dynamic market conditions (Wolf, Arlett, & Christian , 2018.p265). Moreover, it enables an improved customer experience through personalized services and opens new markets via e-commerce, allowing firms to transcend local borders and build customer loyalty.

III. CONCLUSION

The digital transformation within Algerian enterprises is in a nascent and paradoxical stage. It is characterized by significant potential yet constrained by deep-seated structural and socio-organizational barriers. This study has demonstrated that progress is impeded not merely by technological deficits but by a confluence of factors, including pervasive organizational inertia, critical gaps in digital skills and competencies, and a cultural resistance to change. Nonetheless, the promise of enhanced efficiency, robust innovation, and greater market competitiveness presents a compelling imperative for Algerian institutions to strategically prioritize their digital evolution.

Based on the findings of this study, moving beyond this early stage requires a multi-faceted and integrated strategy. We propose the following recommendations for policymakers and institutional leaders to foster a successful and sustainable digital transition:

First, fostering a robust digital culture is paramount. This involves actively cultivating an environment that supports creative thinking and innovation, which is essential for mitigating employee resistance. This cultural shift must be underpinned by a significant investment in human capital, realized through continuous training courses designed to bridge the digital skills gap and empower employees for self-learning and innovation.

Second, strategic investment in modern technological infrastructure including cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things is a non-negotiable prerequisite. This investment must be accompanied by the implementation of stringent cybersecurity measures to protect sensitive data and build institutional trust. Furthermore, organizations must leverage these technologies to analyze data and improve the customer experience, enhancing interaction across digital channels to provide personalized services that foster loyalty.

Finally, Algerian enterprises should not operate in isolation. Strengthening partnerships and collaborations with technology companies is crucial for knowledge exchange and building internal expertise. This external engagement should fuel an organizational focus on continuous innovation in products and services, ensuring that institutions develop the agility required to adapt to dynamic market changes.

By adopting these integrated strategies, Algerian enterprises can overcome their current challenges, move beyond the preliminary stages of digitalization, and build the resilient, innovative, and competitive capabilities necessary to thrive in the global digital economy.

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