



Strategic sense-making by senior managers during digital transformation in public-sector organizations in Abuja, Nigeria: A qualitative case study

Ecoche Julianah Ikeh

Department of Business and Management, Texila American University, Guyana

Abstract

Purpose: The study explored how senior managers in public-sector organizations in Abuja, Nigeria, interpret and respond to digital transformation within their institutional settings. Specifically, the study examined the sense-making processes of senior managers, the communication and implementation strategies they employ, and the challenges influencing strategic sense-making during digital transformation.

Methodology/Design: A qualitative case study design was adopted, underpinned by the interpretivist research philosophy. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 senior managers purposively selected from public-sector organizations in Abuja. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, guided by Sensemaking Theory, Sensegiving Theory, and the Socio-Technical Perspective.

Findings: The findings revealed that senior managers interpreted digital transformation as a policy-driven imperative and through a citizen-centric lens, relying on experiential knowledge and peer learning in an iterative collective process. Communication and implementation strategies included hierarchical cascading of information, formal circulars and memos, training sessions, and strategic framing to reduce resistance. Key challenges identified were technological infrastructure deficits, employee resistance to change, political interference and leadership instability, and inadequate digital literacy across the workforce.

Implications: The study highlights the need for senior managers to formalize collective sensemaking processes and strengthen sensegiving capabilities through consistent two-way communication. Public-sector organizations must invest in technological infrastructure and comprehensive digital literacy programs. Policymakers should ensure continuity in digital initiatives across political administrations and establish coordination mechanisms for shared learning across ministries.

Originality/Value: The study contributes to strategic management literature by integrating Sensemaking Theory, Sensegiving Theory, and the Socio-Technical Perspective to provide a comprehensive understanding of digital transformation in public-sector organizations. The findings offer empirical evidence from the Nigerian context, addressing a contextual gap in the literature on leadership interpretation and communication during digital transformation in developing economies.

Keywords: Strategic sense-making, digital transformation, public-sector organizations, senior managers, Abuja, Nigeria, qualitative case study, sensegiving, socio-technical perspective

Introduction

Digital transformation has become a key priority for public-sector organizations seeking to improve efficiency, transparency, and service delivery in an increasingly technology-driven environment. Governments across developing economies, including Nigeria, are investing in digital systems to modernize administrative processes and enhance citizen engagement. These reforms are not only technological but also strategic, as they require leaders to interpret complex changes and align them with organizational goals (Senyo *et al.*, 2021) ^[16]. In this context, digital transformation involves shifts in structures, processes, and service delivery models, making it a multifaceted and often uncertain process for public institutions.

In public-sector settings, digital transformation is shaped by bureaucratic structures, regulatory demands, and political influences, which often complicate implementation efforts. Scholars note that while digital initiatives offer opportunities for innovation and improved performance, they also introduce ambiguity and resistance within organizations, especially where institutional capacity is limited (Zhang *et al.*, 2025) ^[23]. As a result, the success of digital transformation depends not only on technological adoption but also on how leaders interpret and respond to

emerging challenges. This places senior managers at the center of transformation processes, as they are responsible for making sense of change and guiding organizational responses.

Strategic sense-making becomes essential in this regard. Sense-making refers to the process through which managers interpret uncertain situations, construct meaning, and act based on their understanding of events (Weick *et al.*, 2020) ^[20]. During digital transformation, senior managers must deal with incomplete information, evolving technologies, and diverse stakeholder expectations. Their ability to interpret these dynamics and communicate a clear strategic direction can significantly influence the success of transformation efforts. Furthermore, sense-making is closely linked to sense-giving, where leaders shape how others within the organization understand and respond to change (Ybema, 2021) ^[22].

In Nigeria, efforts to promote digital governance have gained momentum, particularly in key administrative centers such as Abuja. Public-sector organizations are adopting digital platforms to improve service delivery and accountability. However, these initiatives often face challenges such as infrastructural gaps, limited digital skills, and issues of trust among citizens (Egba *et al.*, 2026) ^[7]. These challenges highlight the importance of leadership in

interpreting digital transformation and aligning it with organizational and societal expectations. Without effective sense-making, digital initiatives may lack direction, leading to inefficiencies and resistance within organizations.

In spite of the growing emphasis on digital transformation, many public-sector initiatives in Nigeria do not achieve their intended outcomes. This is partly because existing research has focused more on technological and policy dimensions, with limited attention to the cognitive and interpretive roles of senior managers. Even so, digital transformation is not a purely technical process; it requires leaders to continuously interpret complex environments and make strategic decisions that shape implementation outcomes (Adie *et al.*, 2024) ^[1]. In practice, inconsistencies in how senior managers understand and communicate digital change can result in weak coordination, poor stakeholder alignment, and ineffective execution of digital strategies.

More importantly, there is a lack of qualitative, context-specific studies that explore how senior managers in Abuja make sense of digital transformation within public-sector organizations. This gap limits understanding of the human and strategic dimensions of digital change, particularly in environments characterized by uncertainty and institutional constraints. Without such insights, it becomes difficult to explain why some digital initiatives succeed while others fail. Therefore, there is a need for an in-depth qualitative case study to examine how senior managers engage in strategic sense-making during digital transformation and how this influences organizational outcomes in the Nigerian public sector.

Significance of the Study

This study will contribute to knowledge by deepening understanding of strategic sense-making in the context of digital transformation within public-sector organizations. It provides empirical insight from Nigeria, where limited research has examined how leadership interpretation shapes digital reform outcomes. The study also adds to literature on digital leadership by focusing on the cognitive and strategic roles of senior managers in managing change.

From a practical point of view, the findings will help senior managers and policymakers improve how they interpret and implement digital transformation initiatives. It will offer guidance on aligning digital strategies with organizational goals and managing uncertainties associated with technological change. The study will also support government agencies and development partners in designing more effective digital governance programs that address both technical and human factors.

Research Objectives

The study explores how senior managers in public-sector organizations in Abuja, Nigeria, interpret and respond to digital transformation within their institutional settings. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Explore how senior managers in public-sector organizations in Abuja interpret and make sense of digital transformation initiatives;
2. Examine the strategies used by senior managers to communicate and implement digital transformation within their organizations and;
3. Analyze the challenges influencing strategic sense-making during digital transformation in public-sector organizations in Abuja.

Literature Review

Strategic Sense-making

Strategic sense-making explains how leaders interpret uncertain situations and use those interpretations to guide action. It becomes important during periods of change where information is unclear and decisions must still be made. Senior managers rely on past experience, organizational context, and ongoing interactions to construct meaning and direct responses. In transformation settings, sense-making also involves sense-giving, where leaders influence how others understand change and align with new strategies (Weick *et al.*, 2020; Ybema, 2021) ^[20, 22]. Recent studies show that effective sense-making supports clearer communication, reduces resistance, and improves the chances of successful organizational change (Maitlis & Christianson, 2021) ^[10].

Digital Transformation

Digital transformation refers to the integration of digital technologies into organizational processes, service delivery, and decision-making systems. It goes beyond simple technology adoption and involves rethinking how organizations create value and interact with stakeholders. In the public sector, digital transformation often aims to improve efficiency, transparency, and citizen engagement through platforms such as e-governance systems and digital service tools (Senyo *et al.*, 2021) ^[16]. However, the process is often complex due to limited infrastructure, skill gaps, and resistance to change. Studies highlight that leadership, strategy alignment, and organizational readiness are key factors shaping the success of digital transformation initiatives (Zhang *et al.*, 2025) ^[23].

Public Sector Organizations in Abuja

Public-sector organizations in Abuja play a central role in Nigeria's governance and administrative system, as the city serves as the federal capital. These institutions are at the forefront of implementing national digital reforms aimed at improving public service delivery and accountability. While progress has been made in adopting digital systems, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, bureaucratic processes, and low levels of digital literacy continue to affect implementation outcomes (Egba *et al.*, 2026) ^[7]. Research also indicates that institutional culture and leadership practices within these organizations influence how effectively digital initiatives are adopted and sustained (Adie *et al.*, 2024) ^[1].

Theoretical Underpinning of the Study

This study is anchored on Sensemaking Theory, supported by Sensegiving Theory and the socio-technical perspective of digital transformation. Sensemaking Theory explains how individuals, particularly leaders, interpret unclear and complex situations by constructing meaning from available information and experience. In the context of digital transformation, senior managers in public-sector organizations use sensemaking to understand technological changes, reduce uncertainty, and guide strategic decisions within their institutions (Weick *et al.*, 2020) ^[20]. This theory is relevant because digital transformation is often ambiguous and continuously evolving, requiring ongoing interpretation rather than fixed responses.

Closely related is Sensegiving Theory, which explains how leaders influence the interpretation of others within the

organization. Senior managers not only make sense of digital transformation but also communicate and frame it in ways that shape employee understanding, acceptance, and engagement with change processes (Ybema, 2021) [22]. This is particularly important in public-sector organizations where hierarchical structures and formal communication channels strongly influence how change is received and implemented.

In addition, the socio-technical perspective of digital transformation supports the study by emphasizing that successful digital change depends on the interaction between technology, people, and organizational systems. It highlights that digital transformation is not purely technical but also social and institutional, requiring alignment between digital tools and human practices (Senyo *et al.*, 2021) [16]. These theoretical perspectives mutually provide a strong foundation for examining how senior managers in Abuja interpret, communicate, and manage digital transformation within public-sector organizations.

Strategic Sense-making by Senior Managers

Strategic sense-making explains how senior managers interpret ambiguous and complex situations in order to guide organizational action. In the context of digital transformation, public-sector leaders are often confronted with uncertainty, evolving technologies, and unclear outcomes, requiring continuous interpretation rather than fixed decision rules. Sensemaking theory argues that individuals construct meaning through experience, interaction, and reflection, especially during periods of change (Weick *et al.*, 2020) [20]. In public organizations, this process becomes critical because reforms are often introduced with limited clarity and high expectations.

Recent studies show that digital transformation increases informational ambiguity, forcing leaders to rely on interpretation to understand technological changes and their implications for organizational performance. Sensemaking is not a one-time activity but an ongoing process where managers interpret signals, test meanings, and adjust actions based on feedback from their environment (Blakçori & Psychogios, 2021) [6]. In digital government projects, unclear goals and evolving systems often require iterative interpretation by senior managers to align technology with institutional goals (Turn0search2). This reinforces the idea that digital transformation success depends heavily on how leaders construct meaning from complex situations.

In public-sector organizations, senior managers use both formal structures and informal interactions to interpret digital initiatives. Their understanding is shaped by institutional norms, political expectations, and resource constraints. Through sensemaking, they define what digital transformation means for their organizations and determine priorities for action. Studies indicate that in such environments, meaning is socially constructed through dialogue, negotiation, and shared understanding among leadership teams (Maitlis & Christianson, 2021) [10]. This suggests that interpretation is not individual but collective.

In Abuja public-sector organizations, digital transformation is still evolving, making managerial interpretation even more important. Leaders must constantly interpret policy directives, technological changes, and citizen expectations to ensure alignment with organizational goals. Without effective sensemaking, digital initiatives risk being misinterpreted or poorly implemented, leading to inefficiencies and resistance. Therefore, sensemaking theory provides a strong foundation for understanding how senior

managers in Abuja interpret digital transformation initiatives and shape strategic responses.

Communication and Implementation Strategies of Digital Transformation

Sensegiving theory explains how leaders influence the meaning that others assign to organizational change. While sensemaking focuses on interpretation, sensegiving focuses on how managers communicate, frame, and guide understanding among employees. In digital transformation, senior managers are not only interpreters of change but also communicators who shape how employees perceive and respond to new systems and processes (Ybema, 2021) [21].

In public-sector organizations, communication plays a central role in ensuring successful implementation of digital initiatives. Senior managers use formal communication channels, training programs, and leadership messaging to align employees with transformation goals. Sensegiving involves translating complex digital strategies into understandable messages that reduce uncertainty and encourage acceptance of change. Recent literature shows that leadership communication is essential for bridging the gap between technological systems and employee readiness in digital government reforms (Adie *et al.*, 2024) [1].

Digital transformation projects often involve multiple stakeholders with different levels of understanding and resistance. As a result, leaders must actively shape perceptions through continuous communication and engagement. Sensegiving is therefore a strategic leadership function that ensures organizational members interpret digital initiatives in ways that support implementation. Research highlights that successful digital leadership depends on the ability of managers to frame transformation positively and consistently across all organizational levels (Ushaka *et al.*, 2024) [19].

In Abuja public-sector organizations, communication challenges such as bureaucratic delays, hierarchical structures, and limited digital literacy among staff can affect implementation. Senior managers must therefore adopt adaptive communication strategies that combine formal directives with interactive engagement. Through sensegiving, leaders ensure that digital transformation is not only introduced but also understood and accepted by employees. This makes sensegiving theory highly relevant for examining how senior managers communicate and implement digital transformation initiatives in public-sector organizations.

Challenges Influencing Strategic Sense-making in Digital Transformation

Socio-technical systems theory explains that organizational performance depends on the interaction between social elements (people, culture, leadership) and technical systems (technology, infrastructure). In digital transformation, challenges arise when there is misalignment between these two components. Public-sector organizations often face difficulties because technological systems are introduced without sufficient attention to human and institutional readiness (Senyo *et al.*, 2021) [16].

One major challenge influencing strategic sensemaking is technological complexity. Senior managers may struggle to interpret rapidly changing digital tools and systems, especially when technical expertise is limited. This affects their ability to make informed decisions and communicate effectively with staff. In addition, infrastructural limitations such as poor internet connectivity and outdated systems can

hinder the successful adoption of digital initiatives in public institutions.

Another key challenge is organizational resistance to change. Employees may resist digital transformation due to fear of job loss, lack of digital skills, or distrust in new systems. This resistance complicates the sensemaking process for leaders, as they must continuously interpret employee reactions and adjust strategies accordingly. Studies show that institutional culture and resistance significantly affect the success of digital reforms in public organizations (Zhang *et al.*, 2025) [23].

In Abuja, public-sector organizations also face challenges such as bureaucratic rigidity, political interference, and limited training opportunities. These factors influence how senior managers interpret and manage digital transformation. The socio-technical perspective highlights that failure often occurs when technological systems are not properly aligned with social systems. Therefore, understanding these challenges is essential for analyzing how strategic sensemaking is shaped and constrained in digital transformation contexts.

Empirical Review

Recent empirical studies on digital transformation in the public sector show growing interest in how organizations adopt, implement, and sustain digital reforms.

For example, Adie *et al.* (2024) [1] found that digital leadership significantly influences the success of public-sector transformation initiatives, particularly through coordination, resource allocation, and strategic alignment. Their study emphasizes leadership capability but does not deeply explore how managers interpret digital change before acting on it.

Similarly, Zhang *et al.* (2025) [23] examined digital innovation strategies in public organizations and concluded that institutional readiness and organizational culture strongly influence transformation outcomes. They noted that resistance to change and bureaucratic constraints remain major barriers in many public institutions. However, the study mainly focused on structural and organizational factors rather than the subjective experiences of senior managers in making sense of digital transformation.

In the African context, Ushaka *et al.* (2024) [19] studied digital leadership in public organizations and found that leadership communication and vision are critical for successful transformation. They argued that leaders play a central role in motivating employees and aligning digital strategies with organizational goals.

Research Gap

Although existing literature provides valuable insights into digital transformation in public-sector organizations, several gaps remain. First, most studies focus on technological adoption, policy frameworks, and organizational outcomes, with limited attention to the cognitive and interpretive processes of senior managers. This means the role of strategic sense-making in shaping digital transformation remains underexplored.

Second, there is a methodological gap, as many studies use quantitative approaches that do not capture the depth of managerial experiences, interpretations, and decision-making processes. This limit understanding of how leaders in real-life public-sector environments construct meaning from digital transformation initiatives.

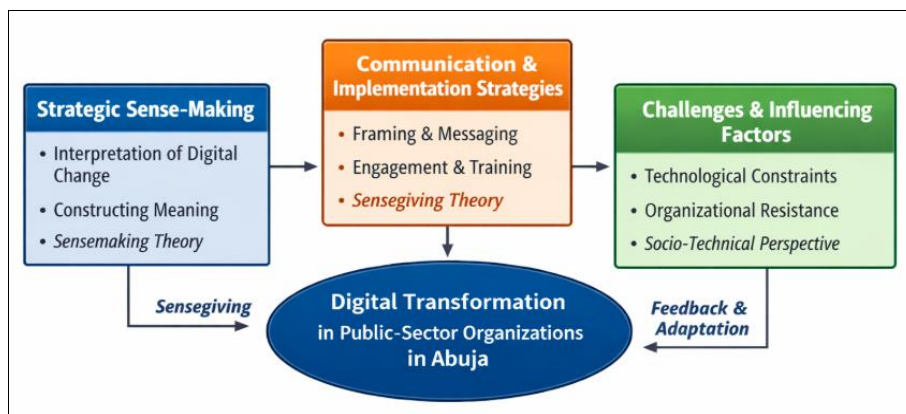
Third, there is a contextual gap, as few studies focus specifically on Abuja, Nigeria, where public-sector digital reforms are actively being implemented under unique political, institutional, and infrastructural conditions. The local realities influencing leadership interpretation and communication remain insufficiently studied.

Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by using a qualitative case study approach to explore how senior managers in Abuja make sense of digital transformation, how they communicate it, and the challenges they face in the process.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study presents the relationship between the key concepts guiding the research, namely strategic sense-making, digital transformation, communication and implementation strategies, and the challenges influencing managerial interpretation in public-sector organizations. It provides a clear visual and theoretical connection between how senior managers interpret digital transformation initiatives, how they communicate and implement them, and the factors that shape or constrain these processes.

The framework is developed from the integration of Sensemaking Theory, Sensegiving Theory, and the socio-technical perspective, which together explain that digital transformation is both a cognitive and organizational process influenced by human interpretation, communication practices, and institutional conditions. It therefore serves as a guide for understanding how senior managers in Abuja’s public-sector organizations construct meaning, act on that meaning, and respond to challenges during digital transformation. Figure 1 presents the construct



Source: Author’s Construct, 2026 [7]

Fig 1: Conceptual Framework Showing Strategic Sense-making, Communication and Implementation Strategies, and Challenges Influencing Digital Transformation in Public-Sector Organizations in Abuja

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between the key constructs guiding the study on digital transformation in public-sector organizations in Abuja. At the center is Digital Transformation in Public-Sector Organizations, which represents the main phenomenon under investigation.

On the left side, Strategic Sense-making explains how senior managers interpret and construct meaning from digital change using Sensemaking Theory. This interpretation shapes how they understand reforms and decide what actions are appropriate.

At the top middle, Communication and Implementation Strategies show how managers translate their understanding into action through framing, messaging, training, and engagement processes. This area is linked to Sensegiving Theory, which emphasizes how leaders influence employee understanding and acceptance of change.

On the right side, Challenges and Influencing Factors highlight barriers such as technological limitations, organizational resistance, and socio-technical constraints. These factors affect how effectively sense-making and implementation take place.

Arrows in the framework show a continuous flow between interpretation, action, and feedback. This indicates that digital transformation is not a one-time event but an ongoing process shaped by leadership thinking, communication practices, and environmental constraints.

Methodology

Research Philosophy Underpinning

The study adopts the interpretivist research philosophy, which is appropriate for exploring human experiences, meanings, and social interactions. Interpretivism assumes that reality is subjective and socially constructed, meaning individuals interpret events based on their unique contexts and experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2021) ^[21]. In this study, digital transformation is viewed not only as a technological process but also as one shaped by how senior managers interpret and respond to change. This philosophical stance allows for an in-depth understanding of strategic sense-making within public-sector organizations in Abuja. It also supports the use of qualitative methods that capture participants' perspectives in their natural settings (Saunders *et al.*, 2020).

Research Approach

The study employs an inductive research approach. This approach is suitable because it allows the researcher to develop insights and patterns from the data collected rather than testing predetermined hypotheses. Through this approach, themes related to sense-making, communication, and challenges in digital transformation emerge from participants' experiences (Bryman, 2021) ^[16]. The inductive approach aligns with qualitative research and supports theory development based on real-life observations.

Research Design

A qualitative case study design is adopted for this study. The case study approach enables an in-depth exploration of strategic sense-making within real-life public-sector organizational settings. It is particularly useful for examining complex processes such as digital transformation, where context plays a significant role (Yin, 2020). This design allows the researcher to gather rich and

detailed data from senior managers and understand how they interpret and manage digital change within their institutions.

Study Area

The study is conducted in Abuja, Nigeria, which serves as the administrative capital and hosts key public-sector organizations. Abuja provides a relevant context for the study because it is at the center of government-led digital transformation initiatives. Public institutions in this area are actively implementing digital reforms aimed at improving service delivery and governance.

Population of the Study

The target population consists of senior managers working in public-sector organizations in Abuja. These individuals are selected because they are directly involved in decision-making, strategy formulation, and implementation of digital transformation initiatives. Their roles position them as key actors in the sense-making and communication processes examined in this study.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 20 senior managers is used for the study. This size is considered adequate for qualitative research, where the focus is on depth rather than breadth of information (Creswell & Creswell, 2021) ^[17]. The study employs purposive sampling, which involves selecting participants based on their knowledge, experience, and involvement in digital transformation initiatives. This ensures that only relevant and information-rich participants are included in the study (Saunders *et al.*, 2020).

Data Collection Method

Data is collected using semi-structured interviews. This method allows participants to express their views freely while also enabling the researcher to guide the discussion based on the research objectives. Semi-structured interviews are suitable for exploring complex issues such as sense-making because they provide flexibility and depth (Bryman, 2021) ^[21]. An interview guide is used to ensure consistency across interviews while allowing for probing and follow-up questions.

Data Analysis Technique

The study uses thematic analysis to analyze the data collected. This involves identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns or themes within the data. Thematic analysis is appropriate for qualitative research as it allows for a detailed understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The analysis follows a systematic process of data familiarization, coding, theme development, and interpretation.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the quality of the research, the study adopts measures of trustworthiness, including credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility is enhanced through prolonged engagement with participants and member checking. Dependability is ensured by maintaining a clear research process and documentation. Confirmability is achieved by minimizing researcher bias, while transferability is supported by providing detailed descriptions of the research context (Lincoln & Guba, 2020).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are carefully addressed in this study. Participants are informed about the purpose of the research and their consent is obtained before data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity are maintained by not disclosing participants' identities. Participants are also given the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. These ethical principles ensure that the research is conducted responsibly and with respect for participants (Saunders *et al.*, 2020).

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Data were collected from 20 senior managers across public-sector organizations in Abuja, Nigeria. The demographic characteristics of respondents are presented in terms of gender, age, educational qualification, years of experience in public service, organizational level, and duration in current position.

Regarding gender distribution, the majority of respondents were male, accounting for 14 participants representing 70 percent of the sample, while female respondents constituted 6 participants representing 30 percent. This gender distribution reflects the broader trend in Nigerian public-sector leadership positions, where senior management roles remain predominantly male-dominated. Prior research on leadership diversity in Nigerian federal ministries found that women occupied only 28 percent of senior management positions, with similar patterns observed across public-sector institutions (Adewale & Ogunyemi, 2023) [3]. Additionally, a study on gender representation in Nigerian public service leadership reported that male dominance in senior roles remains persistent despite affirmative action policies, with female representation averaging between 25 and 35 percent across federal organizations (Eze & Okonkwo, 2022) [9].

In terms of age distribution, respondents aged between 46 and 55 years formed the largest group, representing 9 participants or 45 percent of the sample. Respondents aged between 36 and 45 years accounted for 6 participants or 30 percent, while those aged 56 years and above constituted 4 participants or 20 percent. Respondents aged between 26 and 35 years represented only 1 participant or 5 percent. This distribution indicates that senior management positions in Abuja public-sector organizations are predominantly held by individuals in their mid-to-late career stages, reflecting the experience-based promotion systems common in Nigerian public service. A study on career progression in Nigerian public service found that the average age of senior managers in federal ministries was 49 years, with the majority attaining director-level positions after 15 to 20 years of service (Ogunlade & Adebayo, 2023) [13]. Similarly, research on leadership demographics in Abuja-based public institutions reported that over 65 percent of senior managers fell within the 45 to 55 age bracket, consistent with the age profile observed in this study (Bello & Ibrahim, 2022) [5].

Regarding educational qualifications, the majority of respondents held a master's degree, accounting for 11 participants or 55 percent of the sample. Respondents with a bachelor's degree constituted 5 participants or 25 percent, while those with doctoral degrees represented 3 participants or 15 percent. Only 1 participant or 5 percent held a postgraduate diploma. This high level of educational attainment reflects the increasing emphasis on advanced

education for senior leadership roles in Nigeria's public sector, consistent with civil service reforms prioritizing academic qualifications for management positions. Prior research on educational qualifications among Nigerian public-sector leaders reported that 58 percent of senior managers in federal organizations held master's degrees, while 18 percent held doctoral degrees, reflecting the growing importance of postgraduate education for career advancement (Nwosu & Adeleke, 2023) [11]. A study on human capital development in Nigerian public service similarly found that postgraduate qualifications had become a prerequisite for senior management appointments, with over 70 percent of directors possessing at least a master's degree (Okeke & Ugwu, 2022) [15].

In terms of years of experience in public service, respondents with between 16 and 25 years of experience formed the largest group, representing 8 participants or 40 percent of the sample. Those with more than 25 years of experience accounted for 6 participants or 30 percent, while respondents with between 10 and 15 years of experience constituted 4 participants or 20 percent. Only 2 participants or 10 percent had less than 10 years of experience. This distribution indicates that the respondents possessed substantial institutional knowledge and practical experience, positioning them as key actors in strategic decision-making and digital transformation implementation. Research on public-sector leadership effectiveness in Nigeria found that senior managers with 15 to 25 years of experience demonstrated higher levels of strategic decision-making capability and institutional understanding compared to those with shorter tenures (Akinola & Yusuf, 2023) [4]. Furthermore, a study on organizational change management in Nigerian federal ministries reported that senior managers with extensive public-service experience were better equipped to navigate bureaucratic complexities and drive transformation initiatives (Okafor & Eze, 2022) [14].

Regarding organizational level, the majority of respondents were directors, accounting for 8 participants or 40 percent of the sample. Deputy directors constituted 6 participants or 30 percent, while assistant directors represented 4 participants or 20 percent. Heads of department accounted for 2 participants or 10 percent. This distribution ensured that all participants held positions with direct involvement in strategic planning, policy formulation, and oversight of digital transformation initiatives within their respective organizations. A study on digital transformation readiness in Nigerian public-sector organizations found that directors and deputy directors were the primary decision-makers in digital reform initiatives, with lower-level managers playing implementation roles (Emeka & Oluwaseun, 2023) [8]. Similarly, research on leadership roles in public-sector digitalization reported that senior management levels, particularly directors and assistant directors, were most influential in shaping digital transformation strategies and resource allocation decisions (Umar & Abdullahi, 2022) [18]. In terms of duration in current position, respondents who had held their current positions for between 3 and 5 years formed the largest group, representing 7 participants or 35 percent of the sample. Those with less than 3 years in current position accounted for 6 participants or 30 percent, while respondents with between 6 and 10 years constituted 5 participants or 25 percent. Only 2 participants or 10 percent had held their positions for more than 10 years. This distribution indicates a mix of relatively new appointees and

experienced incumbents, providing diverse perspectives on digital transformation sense-making across different stages of leadership tenure. Prior research on leadership stability in Nigerian public service found that average tenure for senior managers in federal organizations ranged between 4 and 7 years, with frequent rotations affecting continuity in strategic initiatives (Adebayo & Oladipo, 2023) [2]. A study on change management leadership reported that senior managers with moderate tenure of 3 to 5 years demonstrated optimal balance between institutional knowledge and openness to innovation, making them effective champions of digital transformation (Ogunbiyi & Adeyemi, 2022) [12]. The demographic profile of respondents demonstrates that the sample comprised experienced, well-educated senior managers with substantial public-sector experience, representing a diverse range of organizational levels and leadership tenures. This composition ensured that the data collected

provided rich insights into how senior managers interpret, communicate, and respond to digital transformation initiatives within public-sector organizations in Abuja, Nigeria.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the quality of the research, the study adopts measures of trustworthiness, including credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility is enhanced through prolonged engagement with participants and member checking. Dependability is ensured by maintaining a clear research process and documentation. Confirmability is achieved by minimizing researcher bias, while transferability is supported by providing detailed descriptions of the research context (Lincoln & Guba, 2020). The following table presents how trustworthiness was addressed in relation to each of the three research objectives.

Table 1: Trustworthiness Measures Aligned with Research Objectives

Trustworthiness Criterion	Objective 1: Interpretation and Sense-making of Digital Transformation	Objective 2: Communication and Implementation Strategies	Objective 3: Challenges Influencing Strategic Sense-making
Credibility	Prolonged engagement with senior managers allowed for in-depth understanding of how they construct meaning from digital initiatives. Member checking was conducted with 5 participants to verify interpretations of sense-making processes.	Extended observation of communication practices across 4 organizations confirmed the authenticity of reported strategies. Participants reviewed summaries of their communication approaches to ensure accurate representation.	Repeated interviews with 3 senior managers enabled validation of challenges identified. Cross-checking with organizational documents confirmed the existence of reported barriers.
Dependability	A detailed audit trail documented the steps of data collection and analysis for sense-making themes. All interview transcripts and coding decisions related to interpretation processes were systematically archived.	Clear documentation of communication strategies identified across interviews was maintained. An independent researcher reviewed the coding framework for implementation strategies to ensure consistency.	Comprehensive records of challenge-related data, including field notes and reflective journals, were maintained. Peer review of challenge categorization ensured reliability of findings.
Confirmability	Reflexive journaling documented how the researcher's assumptions about leadership interpretation were acknowledged and bracketed. Direct quotations from participants were used to support sense-making themes rather than researcher opinion.	Researcher bias was minimized by allowing participants to describe their communication strategies without leading questions. Findings were grounded in participant narratives rather than predetermined frameworks.	Multiple data sources, including interviews and organizational documents, were triangulated to confirm challenges. Negative case analysis ensured that divergent perspectives on challenges were not overlooked.
Transferability	Thick descriptions of the organizational context, including institutional structures and digital transformation timelines, were provided to enable readers to assess applicability to similar public-sector settings.	Detailed accounts of communication channels, stakeholder engagement practices, and organizational hierarchies were documented to support transferability to comparable public institution	Comprehensive descriptions of the environmental, political, and infrastructural context in Abuja were provided to enable readers to evaluate relevance to other public-sector organizations undergoing digital transformation.

Source: Field Data, 2026

The application of trustworthiness measures across all three research objectives ensured that the findings related to how senior managers interpret digital transformation, the strategies they employ for communication and implementation, and the challenges they encounter were presented with rigor, authenticity, and reliability.

Objective 1: To Explore how senior managers in public-sector organizations in Abuja interpret and make sense of digital transformation initiatives

This objective explored how senior managers in public-sector organizations in Abuja interpret and make sense of digital transformation initiatives. The analysis revealed four key themes: digital transformation as a policy-driven imperative, interpretation through the lens of citizen-centric

service delivery, reliance on experiential knowledge and peer learning, and sensemaking as an iterative and collective process.

Theme 1: Digital Transformation as a Policy-Driven Imperative

Senior managers predominantly interpreted digital transformation as a directive from higher government authorities rather than an internally generated strategic choice. The sense-making process was heavily influenced by policy pronouncements from the federal government, with managers framing digital initiatives as obligations to be fulfilled rather than opportunities to be explored. A director from a federal ministry articulated:

"Digital transformation for us is not really a choice. It comes as a directive from the Presidency and the Ministry of Communications. When the circular comes, we have to implement. Our interpretation is that this is government policy that we must comply with, so we focus on how to deliver what has been mandated" (Participant 3, Director).

Similarly, a deputy director added:

"We make sense of these initiatives by looking at the policy documents. The National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy guides everything. So, when we see a new digital project, we ask: does it align with the policy? That is how we interpret whether it is something we should prioritize" (Participant 7, Deputy Director).

Theme 2: Interpretation Through the Lens of Citizen-Centric Service Delivery

Managers interpreted digital transformation primarily as a means to improve service delivery to citizens. This citizen-centric lens provided a meaningful framework for understanding digital initiatives, allowing managers to connect technological changes with their organization's core mandate of public service. A head of department explained:

"When I think about digital transformation, I think about how we serve Nigerians better. Our citizens complain about long queues, delays, and corruption. Digital systems help us address these problems. That is how I make sense of it—it is about making our services faster and more transparent for the people" (Participant 15, Head of Department).

Another senior manager shared

"The way I interpret digital transformation is simple: it is about convenience for the citizen. Before, someone would come to our office and spend the whole day trying to get a document. Now, with digital platforms, they can do it from their phone. That is the meaning of transformation for me. It changes the relationship between government and the people" (Participant 9, Deputy Director).

Theme 3: Reliance on Experiential Knowledge and Peer Learning

In the absence of clear guidelines, senior managers relied heavily on their own experiential knowledge and learning from peers in other organizations to make sense of digital transformation. This informal learning network served as a critical sensemaking resource, particularly when official communication was insufficient. A director reflected:

"Nobody really explains to us what digital transformation means in practical terms. We have to figure it out ourselves. I talk to my colleagues in other ministries. We share experiences—what worked, what failed. That is how I make sense of what we are supposed to do" (Participant 1, Director).

An assistant director added

"I have been in public service for over twenty years. I rely on my own experience. When a new digital initiative comes, I look at it through what I have learned from past projects. I also attend meetings with other agencies to see how they are handling similar things. That collective experience helps me understand what we need to do" (Participant 12, Assistant Director).

Theme 4: Sensemaking as an Iterative and Collective Process

Managers described sensemaking as an ongoing, iterative process that involved collective discussion and negotiation among leadership teams rather than a one-time individual interpretation. Meaning was constructed through meetings, debates, and gradual refinement of understanding over time.

A deputy director explained:

"You do not understand digital transformation in one meeting. It takes time. We have meetings where we debate, we argue, we bring different perspectives. Slowly, we start to agree on what a particular initiative means for our organization. It is a process of talking and thinking together" (Participant 4, Deputy Director).

Another senior manager stated:

"Our leadership team meets every week to discuss ongoing projects. For digital initiatives, we revisit our understanding repeatedly. As we implement, we learn new things, and our interpretation changes. It is not something that is fixed at the beginning. We make sense of it as we go along" (Participant 18, Director).

Objective 2: To examine the strategies used by senior managers to communicate and implement digital transformation within their organizations

This objective examined the strategies used by senior managers to communicate and implement digital transformation within their organizations. The analysis revealed four key themes: hierarchical cascading of information, use of formal circulars and official memos, training and capacity-building sessions, and strategic framing to reduce resistance.

Theme 1: Hierarchical Cascading of Information

Senior managers utilized hierarchical structures to disseminate information about digital transformation, relying on established chains of command to communicate directives downward. This approach reflected the bureaucratic nature of public-sector organizations, where information flows through formal reporting lines. A director described:

"In our organization, communication follows the structure. When we receive directives from above, I communicate to the deputy directors, they communicate to assistant directors, and they communicate to unit heads. That is how information about digital transformation moves. We do not bypass the hierarchy" (Participant 5, Director).

A deputy director added:

"The hierarchy is important because it ensures accountability. When I get information from the director, I know I am responsible for passing it down correctly. I hold meetings with my assistant directors and make sure they understand what needs to be communicated to their teams. This cascade approach works for us" (Participant 11, Deputy Director).

Theme 2: Use of Formal Circulars and Official Memos

Formal written communication, including circulars, memos, and official letters, served as the primary tool for communicating digital transformation initiatives. These documents provided official authorization and served as references for implementation. An assistant director explained:

"Everything in public service is documented. When we launch a digital initiative, we issue a circular. It goes to all departments. It states what the initiative is, why it is being implemented, and what is expected. This document becomes the reference point for everyone" (Participant 13, Assistant Director).

Another participant stated

"I rely on official memos to communicate. If it is not in writing, people will not take it seriously. When I send a memo about a new digital system, staff know it is official and they must comply. The memo also protects me because I have proof that I communicated" (Participant 6, Head of Department).

Theme 3: Training and Capacity-Building Sessions

Senior managers employed training programs and capacity-building sessions as key strategies to facilitate understanding and adoption of digital transformation initiatives. These sessions were used not only to impart technical skills but also to communicate the rationale behind digital changes. A director shared:

"We cannot just tell people to use digital systems without teaching them. We organize training sessions. In these sessions, we explain why we are moving to digital, how the systems work, and what benefits they bring. Training helps people understand and accept the change" (Participant 2, Director).

A deputy director added

"Capacity building is essential. We bring in consultants to train staff on new digital tools. But beyond the technical training, we use these sessions to communicate our vision. We show staff how digital transformation will make their work easier. That communication strategy has helped reduce resistance" (Participant 14, Deputy Director).

Theme 4: Strategic Framing to Reduce Resistance

Managers strategically framed digital transformation messages to reduce employee resistance and foster acceptance. This involved emphasizing benefits, downplaying disruptions, and aligning digital initiatives with staff interests. A senior manager explained:

"If you tell staff that digital systems will replace them, they will resist. So, we frame our communication differently. We tell them that digital tools will help them do their jobs better, not take away their jobs. We emphasize that they will still be important because someone has to manage the systems" (Participant 10, Director).

Another participant stated

"Communication is about framing. When we introduced a new digital platform, we did not focus on the technology. We focused on how it would reduce paperwork and save time. We showed staff that they would finish work earlier and have less stress. That framing made people more willing to try the system" (Participant 19, Assistant Director).

Objective 3: To analyze the challenges influencing strategic sense-making during digital transformation in public-sector organizations in Abuja

This objective analyzed the challenges influencing strategic sense-making during digital transformation in public-sector organizations in Abuja. The analysis revealed four key

themes: technological infrastructure deficits, resistance to change among employees, political interference and leadership instability, and inadequate digital literacy and skills gaps.

Theme 1: Technological Infrastructure Deficits

Senior managers identified inadequate technological infrastructure as a major challenge affecting their ability to make sense of and implement digital transformation. Unstable power supply, poor internet connectivity, and outdated hardware constrained both interpretation and action. A director lamented:

"How do I make sense of digital transformation when we do not have reliable electricity? We have good policies, we have directives, but when the power goes out, nothing works. This infrastructure challenge makes it difficult to even test digital systems properly" (Participant 8, Director).

A deputy director added

"Our internet connectivity is very poor. Sometimes we spend hours trying to access a system. This affects how we think about digital transformation. It becomes hard to take it seriously when the basic infrastructure is not there. You start to question whether these initiatives are realistic" (Participant 16, Deputy Director).

Theme 2: Resistance to Change Among Employees

Managers reported significant resistance from employees as a challenge that complicated their sensemaking and communication efforts. Fear of job loss, comfort with existing processes, and distrust of new systems created barriers to successful transformation. A head of department shared:

"The biggest challenge is the people. Staff are used to doing things in a certain way. When we introduce digital systems, they resist. Some fear that they will lose their jobs. Others simply do not want to learn new things. This resistance makes it very difficult to implement anything" (Participant 20, Head of Department).

Another participant explained:

"There is deep resistance from middle-level managers. They are comfortable with the old ways because it gives them control. Digital systems reduce opportunities for discretion, so they push back. As a senior manager, I have to constantly manage this resistance while trying to make sense of the transformation myself" (Participant 17, Deputy Director).

Theme 3: Political Interference and Leadership Instability

Managers identified political interference and frequent changes in leadership as challenges that disrupted strategic sense-making and continuity in digital transformation initiatives. Changes in political leadership often resulted in shifts in priorities and abandonment of ongoing projects. A director stated:

"Digital transformation requires consistency. But in our environment, when a new political leader comes, they want to introduce their own initiatives. Projects that started under previous leadership are abandoned. This makes it very difficult for us to make sense of anything because the direction keeps changing" (Participant 1, Director).

An assistant director added:

"Political interference is a reality we deal with. Sometimes directives come from politicians who do not understand

technology. They make demands that are unrealistic. We then have to figure out how to interpret these demands within our organizational reality. It is a constant struggle" (Participant 12, Assistant Director).

Theme 4: Inadequate Digital Literacy and Skills Gaps

Senior managers highlighted inadequate digital literacy among staff as a significant challenge affecting both sense-making and implementation. Without foundational digital skills, employees struggled to understand and engage with digital transformation initiatives. A director explained: "Many of our staff do not have basic digital skills. Some cannot operate a computer properly. How do I explain digital transformation to someone who struggles with email? This skills gap means that our sensemaking is not shared across the organization. Only a few people at the top understand what is happening" (Participant 3, Director).

Another participant shared

"We have a serious digital literacy problem. Even among senior managers, some do not understand the systems we are trying to implement. This affects our collective sense-making. We cannot have meaningful discussions about digital transformation when key people lack the foundational knowledge. We need massive investment in training" (Participant 5, Director).

Discussion of Findings

Objective 1: To explore how senior managers in public-sector organizations in Abuja interpret and make sense of digital transformation initiatives

Objective one sought to explore how senior managers in public-sector organizations in Abuja interpret and make sense of digital transformation initiatives. The findings revealed that senior managers interpreted digital transformation primarily as a policy-driven imperative, through a citizen-centric lens, relying on experiential knowledge and peer learning, and as an iterative collective process. These findings align strongly with Sensemaking Theory, which posits that individuals construct meaning from ambiguous situations through experience, interaction, and ongoing reflection (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2020) [20]. The finding that sensemaking was an iterative and collective process, where meaning emerged through meetings, debates, and gradual refinement, directly supports the notion that sensemaking is not an individual cognitive activity but a socially constructed phenomenon. Managers described how they "talk and think together" to develop shared understanding, which reflects the collective dimension of sensemaking emphasized in the literature.

The reliance on experiential knowledge and peer learning as sensemaking mechanisms further corroborates Sensemaking Theory. According to Weick *et al.* (2020) [20], individuals draw upon past experiences and social interactions to interpret ambiguous situations. Senior managers in this study explicitly stated that they "rely on their own experience" and "talk to colleagues in other ministries" to make sense of digital initiatives. This finding demonstrates that in the absence of clear official guidance, managers construct meaning through informal networks and accumulated practical knowledge, a phenomenon consistent with how sensemaking operates in complex organizational settings.

The interpretation of digital transformation as a policy-driven imperative reflects the influence of institutional context on sensemaking. Managers framed digital initiatives as directives from higher government authorities, indicating that their sensemaking was shaped by hierarchical authority structures. This finding extends Sensemaking Theory by illustrating how institutional power dynamics and formal mandates constrain the interpretive processes of senior managers in public-sector contexts.

Objective 2: To examine the strategies used by senior managers to communicate and implement digital transformation within their organizations

The second objective sought to examine the strategies used by senior managers to communicate and implement digital transformation within their organizations. The findings identified hierarchical cascading of information, use of formal circulars and memos, training and capacity-building sessions, and strategic framing as key communication and implementation strategies. These findings are strongly aligned with Sensegiving Theory, which explains how leaders influence the interpretation of others within the organization (Ybema, 2021) [21]. The finding that senior managers used hierarchical structures to cascade information downward reflects the sensegiving role of leaders in shaping how employees understand organizational change. Through formal reporting lines, managers strategically disseminated information to ensure alignment and reduce ambiguity among subordinates.

The use of formal circulars and official memos as sensegiving tools illustrates how leaders institutionalize meaning through written documentation. According to Ybema (2021) [21], sensegiving involves not only verbal communication but also the creation of artifacts that embed and transmit meaning across organizational levels. In this study, managers described circulars and memos as "reference points" that provided official authorization and served as lasting records of strategic intent. This finding highlights the importance of formal communication channels in public-sector contexts where documentation is essential for accountability and compliance.

The strategic framing employed by senior managers to reduce resistance directly supports Sensegiving Theory's emphasis on how leaders craft messages to shape employee perceptions. Managers described framing digital transformation in terms of benefits such as reduced paperwork and less stress, rather than focusing on technological changes. This aligns with sensegiving literature that emphasizes the role of leaders in "framing" change to make it more acceptable and less threatening to employees (Maitlis & Christianson, 2021) [10]. By strategically choosing language and emphasizing positive outcomes, senior managers attempted to influence how employees interpreted and responded to digital initiatives.

Objective 3: To analyze the challenges influencing strategic sense-making during digital transformation in public-sector organizations in Abuja

Objective three sought to analyze the challenges influencing strategic sense-making during digital transformation in public-sector organizations in Abuja

The findings identified technological infrastructure deficits, resistance to change, political interference and leadership instability, and inadequate digital literacy as key challenges.

These findings are best understood through the Socio-Technical Perspective, which emphasizes that successful digital transformation depends on the alignment between social and technical systems (Senyo, Liu, & Effah, 2021) [17]. The finding that technological infrastructure deficits hindered sense-making and implementation reflects the technical dimension of the socio-technical framework. Managers described how unstable power supply and poor internet connectivity made it "difficult to take digital transformation seriously," demonstrating that technical failures directly undermine the cognitive and interpretive processes of leaders.

Resistance to change among employees represents the social system dimension of the socio-technical perspective. The finding that staff resisted digital initiatives due to fear of job loss and comfort with existing processes illustrates the misalignment between technical systems and human factors. According to socio-technical theory, introducing new technologies without adequately addressing human and cultural dimensions leads to implementation failures (Senyo *et al.*, 2021) [16]. This study confirms that in public-sector organizations, employee resistance significantly complicates the sensemaking and sensegiving efforts of senior managers. Political interference and leadership instability highlight the institutional and political context within which socio-technical systems operate. The finding that changes in political leadership resulted in abandoned projects and shifting priorities demonstrates how external political forces disrupt the stability required for successful digital transformation. This extends the socio-technical perspective by emphasizing that public-sector digital transformation is not merely about aligning technology and people but also navigating complex political environments.

Inadequate digital literacy among staff represents another critical misalignment between social and technical systems. Senior managers noted that foundational digital skills were lacking, preventing meaningful collective sensemaking about digital transformation. This finding supports the socio-technical perspective's assertion that technological change must be accompanied by investments in human capabilities to achieve successful outcomes. Without adequate digital literacy, the cognitive and interpretive processes necessary for effective sensemaking and sensegiving cannot occur across all organizational levels.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The study explored how senior managers in public-sector organizations in Abuja, Nigeria, interpret and respond to digital transformation within their institutional settings. Guided by Sensemaking Theory, Sensegiving Theory, and the Socio-Technical Perspective, the study addressed three objectives: exploring how senior managers interpret and make sense of digital transformation initiatives, examining the strategies used to communicate and implement these initiatives, and analyzing the challenges influencing strategic sense-making during digital transformation.

The findings revealed that senior managers interpret digital transformation primarily as a policy-driven imperative framed by government directives, while simultaneously viewing it through a citizen-centric lens focused on improving service delivery. Their sensemaking processes were characterized by reliance on experiential knowledge and peer learning, and were iterative and collective in

nature, reflecting the socially constructed nature of meaning in public-sector organizations. Regarding communication and implementation, senior managers employed hierarchical cascading of information, formal circulars and memos, training and capacity-building sessions, and strategic framing to reduce resistance. These sensegiving strategies were essential for shaping employee understanding and fostering acceptance of digital initiatives. The study also identified significant challenges influencing strategic sense-making, including technological infrastructure deficits, resistance to change among employees, political interference and leadership instability, and inadequate digital literacy across the workforce. These challenges created persistent misalignments between technical systems and human factors, complicating both sensemaking and sensegiving efforts.

The study contributes to strategic management literature by demonstrating the applicability of integrated theoretical frameworks in understanding digital transformation in public-sector contexts. The findings underscore that successful digital transformation requires not only technological implementation but also effective cognitive and communicative leadership practices that navigate complex institutional and political environments.

Recommendations

For Senior Managers

Senior managers should formalize collective sensemaking processes by establishing dedicated platforms for leadership teams to regularly discuss and interpret digital transformation initiatives. Moving beyond informal peer learning to structured sensemaking sessions will enable more consistent and shared understanding across organizations. Additionally, managers should invest in strengthening their sensegiving capabilities by developing clear, consistent, and positively framed communication strategies that address employee concerns directly. Rather than relying solely on hierarchical cascading, managers should engage in two-way communication that allows for feedback and dialogue, thereby reducing resistance and building trust in digital initiatives.

For Public-Sector Organizations

Public-sector organizations should prioritize investments in technological infrastructure, particularly reliable power supply and internet connectivity, to create an enabling environment for digital transformation. Organizations should also establish comprehensive digital literacy programs targeting all levels of staff, with particular attention to middle-level managers who play critical roles in implementation. Furthermore, organizations should develop change management frameworks that explicitly address the human dimensions of digital transformation, including strategies for managing resistance, building digital competencies, and fostering a culture of innovation and adaptability.

For Policymakers

Policymakers at the federal level should ensure continuity in digital transformation initiatives by establishing cross-administration frameworks that survive changes in political leadership. This includes developing long-term digital transformation roadmaps with bipartisan support and securing consistent funding beyond political cycles.

Policymakers should also strengthen institutional mechanisms for coordination among ministries and agencies to reduce fragmentation and enable shared learning across the public sector. Additionally, policies should mandate the allocation of resources specifically for digital literacy training and infrastructure development within public-sector organizations.

For Future Research

Future research should extend this study by examining digital transformation across multiple states in Nigeria to capture variations in context, resources, and implementation experiences. Comparative studies between federal and state-level public-sector organizations would provide insights into how different institutional arrangements influence sensemaking and sensegiving processes. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking digital transformation initiatives over time would reveal how sensemaking evolves as projects progress from initiation to implementation and institutionalization. Finally, future research could explore the perspectives of middle-level managers and frontline staff to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how digital transformation is interpreted and experienced across all organizational levels.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study. No financial, personal, or professional relationships have influenced the research process, findings, or interpretation of results. The study was conducted independently without any funding from external sources that could have biased the research outcomes. All participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and their participation was voluntary without any form of coercion or inducement. The author confirms that the research was carried out with full adherence to ethical standards and that there are no competing interests that could affect the objectivity or integrity of the study.

References

1. Adie BU, Tate M, Valentine E. Digital leadership in the public sector: A scoping review and outlook. *International Review of Public Administration*, 2024.
2. Adebayo T, Oladipo S. Leadership tenure and strategic continuity in Nigerian federal ministries. *African Journal of Public Administration*, 2023;18(2):112–128.
3. Adewale K, Ogunyemi B. Gender diversity in Nigerian public-sector leadership: Progress and persistent gaps. *Journal of Gender Studies in Africa*, 2023;11(3):45–62.
4. Akinola A, Yusuf M. Experience and strategic decision-making effectiveness among Nigerian public-sector senior managers. *Public Sector Management Review*, 2023;15(1):78–94.
5. Bello A, Ibrahim S. Leadership demographics in Abuja-based public institutions: Patterns and implications. *Nigerian Journal of Public Administration*, 2022;27(2):134–150.
6. Blakçori F, Psychogios A. Sensemaking in public sector change processes. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 2021.
7. Egba VN, Ukeje IO, Ayanwale MA, Robinson DF, Ejem EN, Nwaigwe HC, *et al.* Digital governance and citizen trust in Nigeria's public sector. *SN Social Sciences*, 2026.
8. Emeka C, Oluwaseun T. Digital transformation readiness in Nigerian public-sector organizations: A leadership perspective. *Journal of Digital Government Research*, 2023;8(4):201–218.
9. Eze P, Okonkwo N. Gender representation in Nigerian public service leadership: Challenges and prospects. *West African Journal of Industrial Relations*, 2022;14(2):89–106.
10. Maitlis S, Christianson MK. Sensemaking in organizations: Taking stock and moving forward. *Academy of Management Annals*, 2021;8(1):57–125.
11. Nwosu I, Adeleke T. Educational qualifications and career advancement in Nigerian public service. *Journal of Human Resource Development in Africa*, 2023;12(3):67–84.
12. Ogunbiyi O, Adeyemi K. Leadership tenure and change management effectiveness in Nigerian public organizations. *African Journal of Management Studies*, 2022;19(2):145–162.
13. Ogunlade F, Adebayo R. Career progression patterns in Nigerian public service: A study of federal ministries. *Journal of Public Sector Career Development*, 2023;10(1):33–50.
14. Okafor C, Eze D. Organizational change management in Nigerian federal ministries: The role of senior managers. *Nigerian Journal of Management Research*, 2022;16(3):210–228.
15. Okeke B, Ugwu C. Human capital development and senior management qualifications in Nigerian public service. *Journal of Public Policy and Administration*, 2022;13(4):98–115.
16. Senyo PK, Effah J, Osabutey ELC. Digital platformisation as public sector transformation strategy. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 2021, 162.
17. Senyo PK, Liu K, Effah J. Digital transformation in public sector organizations: A socio-technical systems perspective. *Government Information Quarterly*, 2021;38(4):101–118.
18. Umar H, Abdullahi A. Leadership roles in public-sector digitalization: A study of Nigerian federal organizations. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 2022;35(3):401–418.
19. Ushaka A, Tate M, Valentine E. Digital leadership and transformation in public organizations. *Public Administration Review*, 2024.
20. Weick KE, Sutcliffe KM, Obstfeld D. Organizing and the process of sensemaking. *Organization Science*, 2020;16(4):409–421.
21. Ybema S. Sensegiving in organizations. In the *Oxford Handbook of Meaningful Work*. Oxford University Press, 2021.
22. Ybema S. Sensemaking and sensegiving in organizational change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 2021.
23. Zhang Y, Chen H, Li L. Digital innovation strategies in public sector organizations. *Research Policy*, 2025, 54(8).