

Digital Leadership as a Driver of Village Transformation: An Empirical Study in Pleret Village, Bantul Regency

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ABSTRAK

Transformasi digital di level desa merupakan salah satu upaya peningkatan efisiensi layanan publik, mempercepat akses informasi, serta mendorong pertumbuhan ekonomi lokal melalui pemanfaatan teknologi. Namun, keberhasilan transformasi digital sangat bergantung pada kepemimpinan yang visioner dan adaptif. Pemimpin yang memahami teknologi dan mampu menginspirasi masyarakat akan memainkan peran kunci dalam mengarahkan perubahan, memastikan inklusivitas digital, serta mengatasi tantangan seperti kesenjangan infrastruktur dan literasi digital. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji keterampilan kepemimpinan yang mendukung keberhasilan transformasi digital. Penelitian ini berfokus pada keberhasilan transformasi digital Kalurahan Pleret yang telah berjalan secara berkelanjutan dan memiliki berbagai prestasi. Penelitian ini menerapkan metode kualitatif dengan memanfaatkan data primer dan sekunder. Temuan penelitian mengindikasikan bahwa keberhasilan kepemimpinan digital di level desa didukung oleh keterampilan pemimpin terkait pengetahuan dan keterampilan digital. Namun tidak hanya keterampilan digital keterampilan manajerial juga turut menentukan keberhasilan, seperti membuat perencanaan strategis, memperkuat regulasi, dan kemampuan menciptakan inovasi. Hasil penelitian menegaskan bahwa Kalurahan Pleret dapat menjadi best practice transformasi digital di level desa, yang memadukan keterampilan teknologi, inovasi dan kapasitas manajerial dengan tetap menjaga kearifan lokal.

ABSTRACT

Digital transformation at the village level aims to improve public service efficiency, expand information access, and promote local economic growth through technology. Its success, however, largely depends on visionary and adaptive leadership. Leaders who possess technological understanding and can inspire their communities play a crucial role in fostering inclusivity and addressing challenges such as limited infrastructure and low digital literacy. This study explores leadership competencies that contribute to successful digital transformation, focusing on Pleret Village as a case study. Using qualitative methods and drawing from both primary and secondary data, the research found that effective digital leadership is supported by leaders' digital knowledge and skills, as well as managerial competencies. Beyond technological proficiency, strategic planning, regulatory strengthening, and innovation development also proved essential. The findings highlight that Pleret Village represents a best practice model for village-level digital transformation, successfully integrating technology, innovation, and managerial capacity while preserving local wisdom.

INTRODUCTION

The number of internet users worldwide continues to increase annually. According to a *We Are Social* survey, the number of internet users is expected to reach 5.4 billion by 2024, indicating global growth. This figure represents approximately 71% of the world's total population. The report also indicates that approximately 63% of the world's population has active access to

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social media, with over 4.5 billion social media users worldwide (Kemp, 2021). Meanwhile, according to a 2024 report from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), it is estimated that more than 200 million people in Indonesia will be internet users. This figure indicates that nearly 75% of Indonesia's total population is connected to the internet (APJII, 2024).

However, this connectivity development has not been fully matched by adequate digital literacy capacity. Based on the Indonesian Digital Literacy Index Survey (Ministry of Communication and Informatics, 2023), the national digital literacy rate was 3.65 on a scale of 5, which is classified as moderate. Furthermore, the digital divide between urban and rural areas remains substantial, with internet penetration rates reaching 80% in urban areas, while in rural areas, they are only around 55% (APJII, 2024). This is reinforced by 2023 BPS data, which shows that only around 30% of villages in Indonesia have active websites, and even fewer have implemented digital-based public service information systems.

The increasingly open digital space demands that every country, including Indonesia, adapt and transition to the digital era to survive and compete (Ramadhan et al., 2022). In this context, digital transformation is essential, not only for the private sector but also for governance at all levels, including villages. The increase in internet users has led to an alteration in digital governance. Digital transformation is an approach used by organizations to transform and create new business models and cultures through the effective use of technology. The emergence of the internet and various new technologies is a key factor driving digital transformation, accelerating this transformation process (Yusuf et al., 2023).

Digital transformation is often defined as the use of technology to transform analogue processes into digital ones. Digital transformation is defined as the use of digital technology to help grow a business and impact the lives of customers (Fitzgerald et al., 2023; Reis et al., 2018). Meanwhile, another opinion suggests that digital transformation is a change brought about by the application of new technologies, human work methods, and business processes to enhance business processes and increase customer satisfaction (Yusuf et al., 2023).

However, this digital development is not limited to the private sector but has also penetrated the government sector through the concept of digital bureaucracy. The term "bureaucracy" was initially introduced by Vincent de Gournay in 1745 when describing the Prussian government system (Thoha, 2023). It was introduced in the concept of bureaucracy, etymologically derived from the word "bureau," meaning desk or office, and explained that officials (at that time) worked behind it. The emergence of digital bureaucracy was driven by societal developments that also influenced the implementation of bureaucracy. The presence of digital bureaucracy is expected to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of bureaucratic work, including in the provision of services to the public (Parinusa et al., 2024). The government is currently intensively implementing various changes to improve service bureaucracy, but one of the concerns is the aspect of readiness and community involvement in the digital bureaucracy (Bachtiar et al., 2020).

To ensure community readiness to adapt, structural and functional adaptation skills are needed as a supporting effort (Kusmiyati et al., 2023). A leader must drive both structural and functional efforts. Leadership is crucial for successful digital transformation. Currently, many organizations require leaders with adequate knowledge and skills to manage organizations in the digital era (Dhingra & Mudgal, 2019). Successful digital transformation relies heavily on leaders possessing adequate digital literacy and skills (Promsri; Chaiyaset, 2019). Entering the early 21st century, particularly with the emergence of mobile technology, social media, and cloud computing, the need for digital leadership has increased. Organizations are beginning to

undergo significant transformations, encompassing changes in structure, processes, and even work culture. It is at this point that digital leadership evolves from simply understanding technology to the ability to integrate it comprehensively (Fahlepi, 2025). In the era of disruption, leadership with new skills is needed to master various technological dynamics (Kane et al., 2019).

Furthermore, according to Kevin Olp of the Digital Workplace Group, citing Sullivan (2018), the skills required of a digital leader encompass several key aspects, including digital literacy, defence, presence, communication, adaptability, self-awareness, and cultural awareness. Leadership in the information technology era emphasizes a leadership style that encourages innovation in policy. Adaptive leaders can optimize their positions to lead change, such as technology-based innovation, and improve the quality and skills of their members. All of this is done to achieve organizational goals by communicating effectively, collaborating, and maintaining strong coordination (Cahyarini, 2021b). Digital governance at various levels requires the support of leadership roles that can align policies, apparatus capabilities, and community needs for change, including government at the village level.

Digital leadership is crucial in steering organizational transformation in the digital era, especially within the public sector. As the field continues to develop, significant research gaps remain concerning the broader relevance of digital leadership frameworks and their effectiveness in diverse settings. Bridging these gaps is essential to create more comprehensive models that can effectively support organizations in navigating digital transformation. Numerous studies on digital leadership reveal several constraints, including a limited concentration on particular industries and the absence of a comprehensive framework that can be broadly implemented across diverse organizational settings. For example, the bibliometric analysis shows that although scholarship on digital leadership is expanding, it remains heavily centered within specific fields, thereby neglecting emerging areas that deserve further exploration (Karakose et al., 2022). Similarly, point out a lack of empirical investigations assessing how effectively digital leadership drives substantial organizational transformation (Musaigwa & Kalitanyi, 2024). Future research would benefit from longitudinal approaches that assess the sustained influence of digital leadership practices on organizational performance across multiple sectors, such as public administration, education, and rural governance.

To improve the quality of village services to the community and reduce the perception of village backwardness, technology is increasingly being applied in government administration, especially at the sub-district and village levels, commonly referred to as Smart Villages (Rachmawati, 2018). Village digitalization is a major factor in improving quality and accelerating village transformation to achieve independent village status. Digitalization is also a crucial factor in realizing sustainable rural development. As seen in rural Guangxi, China, there are still quite striking inequalities and imbalances in the level of digital development, which demonstrates strong clustering patterns and spatial linkages. In this context, local governments play a crucial role in encouraging digital village development through policy mechanisms tailored to the conditions and characteristics of each village (Li et al., 2023). Through digital technology, village governments can access more data and information to make more informed decisions (Desapedia.id, 2023). Digital transformation in rural areas is the starting point for realizing smart villages. The three main elements for building a Smart Village include government institutional capacity, the quality of human resources, and the availability of technological infrastructure (Desapedia.id, 2023).

One of the villages that has realized digital transformation is Pleret Village, Bantul Regency. Pleret Village is situated in Pleret District, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta Special Region. Pleret Village has a variety of tourism potential, including natural, historical, cultural, culinary, and religious tourism (Zeike et al., 2019). Pleret Village is a village that implements digital transformation and builds innovative digital leadership. Under visionary leadership, Pleret Village utilizes technology to enhance administrative efficiency, increase transparency, and facilitate the socio-economic empowerment of the community. Based on the efforts made, Pleret Village has received several awards, including being the First Place Winner of the Village/Sub-district Competition at the Bantul Regency level in 2022, the First Place Winner of the Village/Sub-district Competition at the DIY Province level in 2022, Third Place in the 2022 National Regional 2 Village/Sub-district Competition, and Third Place in the 2022 Pindeskel Competition of the Directorate General of Village Development, Ministry of Home Affairs. This article discusses digital leadership strategies in Pleret Village, as well as the challenges and solutions that arise during the digital transformation process at the village/sub-district level, examining the skills required in the digital era. The research problem is how digital leadership strategies are implemented in Pleret Village to support the digital transformation of village government and how digital leadership skills can support village government management in the digital era. This study aims to examine the leadership skills and capacities that support the success of digital transformation in Pleret Village.

Literature Review

The concept of digital transformation and digital leadership

Leadership in the digital era focuses on leadership styles that emphasize innovation in policy and adaptability to change. A dynamic leader is able to leverage their position to drive transformation within their organization in various ways, such as developing technology-based innovations, improving the quality and competence of members through effective communication, and building collaboration and strengthening coordination among members to achieve organizational goals (Cahyarini, 2021b). Digital leadership is a collection of attitudes and actions that a leader must have and implement to adapt and lead effectively in the digital era (Prabhu, 2025).

Regarding government leadership, according to the results of the 2004 IKAL National Convention II, there are three criteria:

1. A leader who is trusted and accepted by the community (social trust).
2. A leader who is consistent, firm, and unambivalent.
3. A leader who possesses intellectual, emotional, and spiritual qualities (Sujatno, 2007).

The definition of digital transformation has been widely explained in several studies. Digital transformation is the process of integrating digital technology into various aspects of people's lives, changing the way we work, communicate, and carry out our daily activities. Digital transformation is a change in a company or organization that involves human resources, processes, strategies, and structures, through the adoption of technology to improve performance (Royyana, 2021). According to previous research, digital transformation can also be defined as the integration of digital technology into all aspects and operations of an organization, which in turn leads to infrastructural changes in how the organization runs and delivers value to its customers (McGrath & Maiye, 2010).

In the context of digital transformation, leadership's role becomes increasingly crucial. Leadership is a complex topic and can be studied in various ways, requiring different definitions. A manager is someone who holds a formal position and authority. A leader is someone who can be a manager or not, but who can influence others. Digital leadership is essential at the village level because communication between residents and interaction with village officials connected via the internet can increase community productivity in various aspects of life. Furthermore, digital leadership enables villages to become extensions of the government in implementing sustainable development programs (Suyatna et al., 2019). Digital leadership refers to the ability of leaders to create a clear and meaningful vision for the digitalization process and implement strategies to achieve it (Larjovuori et al., 2018).

In the digital era, leadership focuses on implementing numerous policy innovations. Dynamic leaders utilize their positions to effect change, introducing technology-based innovations and enhancing the quality and competence of their members to achieve organizational goals through effective communication, collaboration, and strong coordination. This is in line with findings in the context of smart village development, where the success of digital transformation at the village level is greatly influenced by the motivation of village leaders, active community participation, and the capacity of available resources (Masrich et al., 2023).

Public sector digital leadership and village digital leadership

Digital leadership plays a crucial role in public organizations, particularly in responding to increasingly complex and dynamic societal demands. Digital leaders in the public sector act as agents of change, driving bureaucratic transformation toward more efficient, transparent, and responsive governance. Digital leadership serves as a bridge to bridge the digital divide, particularly in regions or communities that have not yet fully benefited from technological advances (Fahlepi, 2025). The public sector differs from the private sector in that it is bound by various regulations, laws, and demands for public accountability. This requires leaders in the public sector to be able to navigate political pressure, policy constraints, and public scrutiny, while simultaneously promoting a safe, effective, and regulatory-compliant digital transformation. Therefore, digital leadership in the public sector requires a combination of capabilities, knowledge, skills, and experience focused on improving the quality of public services (Ushaka Adie et al., 2024).

The success of digital transformation depends heavily on the roles and actions of public organization leaders throughout the digitalization process, such as inspiring and motivating employees, maintaining awareness of the importance of innovation, communicating every change, demonstrating interest in information technology innovation, and possessing strategic decision-making skills. Leaders act as the primary drivers of change, responsible for implementing and realizing the digitalization process within the organization (Staniulienė & Lavickaitė, 2022).

Rural areas, especially those in peripheral areas, often face an accumulation of unfavourable social and economic conditions, giving rise to a phenomenon referred to in the literature as rural decline. Due to their vast geographical coverage, rural areas are also more susceptible to various public policy interventions from various levels of government (Komorowski, 2024). Digital skills gaps are still common in villages, and addressing these gaps depends on sustained support from local governments and other stakeholders. Emphasis on sustainable skills development and a supportive ecosystem,

particularly from village heads and local communities in villages, will be crucial for digital transformation and contributing to inclusive and resilient rural growth (Jatnika et al., 2024).

One of the key concepts in smart village development is digital transformation, the application of digital technology to society's lives and the economy. A key element in this process is digital infrastructure, which plays a role in reducing the gap between central and peripheral areas through internal and external development initiatives. Digital transformation in rural areas generally progresses through five main stages. The first stage, "excluded," is characterized by limited internet access and low digital literacy, resulting in minimal public and social services, and a widening gap between urban and rural areas. The second stage, "connected," emerges when basic internet networks become available and communities begin to develop digital capabilities, supported by collaboration between the government, communities, and the private sector. The third stage, "committed," demonstrates improved community digital skills, the availability of public services and training, and the active involvement of local stakeholders in designing and monitoring digital services. In the fourth stage, "experienced," villages have more advanced digital infrastructure such as fiber optic networks and are able to optimally utilize digital and social innovations. Public services in villages begin to equal those in urban areas, making villages more competitive and sustainable. The final stage, "players," describes the condition when villages have fully developed capabilities—technical, economic, and social—to create their own innovations and digital economy. At this stage, communities become active partners in data management and value creation, marking the achievement of a resilient and independent smart village (Komorowski, 2024).

Digital leadership skills

Supporting the era of digital transformation requires digital leadership skills that can adapt to change quickly. The skills required for leaders in the digital age, according to Kevin Olp's Digital Workplace Group (Sullivan, 2018):

1. Digital Literacy is the ability to use digital technology, communication tools, or networks to access, manage, integrate, analyse, and critically evaluate information. This capability encompasses not only technical skills but also critical, creative, and cognitive thinking.
2. Digital Vision, the ability to predict and convince others of the long-term opportunities and benefits of new technologies.
3. Defence: the ability to define the circumstances necessary for an institution to achieve its digital vision. In this context, leaders are committed to improving digital literacy while simultaneously motivating organizational members to achieve that goal.
4. Presence: The leader's presence is a form of concrete and actionable direction. A leader with a clear digital vision and strong communication skills can inspire and guide their team toward a common goal.
5. Communication: The leader's way of conveying messages. The ability to communicate direction in achieving the digital vision.
6. Adaptability: The adaptation component is a challenge for leaders who have a tolerance for innovation.
7. Self-Awareness: The leader's style of influencing others occurs naturally and sustainably.

8. Cultural Awareness: Cultural awareness is a representation of the digital vision. The leader's ability to recognize cultural differences that arise in the communication and participation process.

These competencies not only equip leaders to manage technology but also empower them to lead organizational change effectively. When connected to the framework of public administration, especially Good Governance and New Public Management (NPM), these digital leadership skills become crucial in transforming public institutions to be more responsive, efficient, and citizen-centered. For example, digital literacy and communication strengthen transparency and public accountability—two core principles of Good Governance. Digital vision and adaptability align with NPM's emphasis on innovation and performance orientation in delivering public services. Defence, presence, and self-awareness reinforce ethical leadership and institutional commitment to change, while cultural awareness ensures inclusivity and fairness in a diverse digital society. Therefore, digital leadership acts as a strategic bridge that connects technological advancement with the core values of modern public administration, enabling government institutions to not only keep pace with digital disruption but also to serve the public more effectively and equitably.

Research on digital transformation has been widely studied in government at both the national and local levels, but in-depth studies on the role of digital leadership at the village government level are still relatively limited. The research gap that aims to be filled is the lack of studies that examine the specific skills of a village digital leader, the strategies used, and the challenges and solutions taken in implementing digital bureaucracy at the village level. Meanwhile, studies such as those by (Cahyarini, 2021a) and (Rachmawati, 2018) have touched on the role of digital technology in public services and smart village development, but have not specifically linked it to digital leadership competencies at the village level.

This research presents novelty by Lifting the case study of Pleret Village as a best practice that has achieved national recognition as a model for implementing digital leadership in villages, Linking seven digital leader skills theory (Digital Literacy, Defense, Presence, Communication, Adaptability, Self-Awareness, Cultural Awareness) with the success of village digital transformation, Providing an integrative perspective between aspects of leadership, technology, and community empowerment in rural areas. This provides substantial empirical weight and differentiates it from other theoretical studies. Previous studies on villages (especially tourist villages) also show that effective public service management, with responsive and collaborative leadership, is a key factor in the success of villages in achieving national-level achievements (Sulistyanto et al., 2022).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach, enabling in-depth exploration of the phenomenon under study. Qualitative descriptive research is a research method that utilizes a simple qualitative approach with an inductive flow. This inductive flow means that qualitative descriptive research begins with an explanatory process or event, ultimately leading to a generalization, which is a conclusion (Yuliani, 2018). During the data collection and analysis process, the researcher served as the primary instrument. This research was conducted in Pleret Village/Sub-district, Pleret Sub-district, Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, with a focus on the digital leadership of the Village Head. It was chosen as the research location because it is a pioneer in digital transformation in Bantul Regency. The

Village Head performs an active role as a digital leader by implementing 20 digital innovations that have been implemented continuously to date.

In determining the research informants, a purposive sampling technique was employed, which involves selecting samples based on specific criteria. This technique enables researchers to select informants who possess competence and an in-depth understanding of the research object, ensuring that the data obtained is more relevant and accurate. The informant in this study is the Head of Pleret, who has a digital leadership role in the transformation of Pleret Village. The primary informant in this study is the Head of Pleret, who plays a role in digital leadership and village transformation. In addition, this study also involved a village staff member who serves as Head of Administration and General Affairs, having been involved in the leadership transition process since 2020 in implementing a change strategy towards a digital village.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from interviews with key informants, namely the Head of Pleret Village and the Head of Administrative and Public Affairs. Data collection was conducted through observation and in-depth interviews to gain a comprehensive understanding of digital transformation in Pleret Village. Secondary data were sourced from supporting documents, including digital documents on the website, the Pleret Village innovation catalog, Pleret Village regulatory documents, masterplan documents, and a Community Satisfaction Survey.

Data analysis was conducted using interactive analysis techniques, which include three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana). Data reduction was achieved by selecting data relevant to the research objectives. Data presentation was organized in a descriptive narrative format to facilitate researchers' understanding of the relationships between findings. Conclusions were drawn gradually throughout the research process, verifying the findings based on the collected data.

To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation, comparing and verifying the consistency of data from various sources, such as interviews, observations, and supporting documents. In addition to triangulation between key informants, the researcher also conducted additional triangulation with the Head of the Village Consultative Body (BPM)/Bamuska Kalurahan Pleret, the institution responsible for representing the village community in evaluating and overseeing the implementation of digital transformation at the village level. This step was taken to strengthen the validity of the findings, provide a broader institutional perspective, and ensure that the research results not only reflect the internal perspective of the village government but also align with the policies and oversight of the village development agency.

This research begins by identifying leadership profiles at the village level to understand the characteristics, vision, and leadership style of village heads or sub-district heads in the context of digital transformation. The research then explores the forms and stages of digital transformation that have taken place, including innovation services, the use of information technology, and the challenges faced during the implementation process.

This analytical approach is based on the theoretical framework of digital leadership, which emphasizes the role of leaders in guiding technology-based change. Furthermore, the research examines the responses of village officials as policy implementers and the community as beneficiaries of the digital transformation.

Through observation, interviews, and in-depth analysis, this research aims to identify the

digital leadership skills most influential in the success of digital transformation in villages. The final results are expected to illustrate key competencies and best practices that can serve as a reference for strengthening digital leadership at the village government level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study examines the digital leadership role of the Head of Pleret Village in facilitating digital transformation within the Pleret Village environment. Pleret Village has several advantages that support the implementation of digital transformation, one of which is the utilization of information and communication technology (ICT), which has been applied to accelerate administrative processes and enhance the efficiency of public service delivery. This study examines how Village Leaders approach, collaborate, and fulfill their leadership roles to support digital transformation within the Village. This research framework refers to the skills required by leaders in the digital era, including Digital Literacy, Digital Vision, Defense, Presence, Communication, Adaptability, Self-Awareness, and cultural awareness.

Figure 1.
Organic Traffic of <https://visit.pleret.id/>



Source: processed data source <https://visit.pleret.id/> Tools : <https://ahrefs.com/traffic-checker>

From the results of the data processing above, how "digitalization and culture meet" is something that is very relevant in the context of current developments and can increase cultural awareness. It can be seen from the traffic of the existence of digital tourism through websites that a positive trend has shown a very significant increase, indicating that culture and digitalization can collaborate to realize digital transformation. From the results of the data processing above, how "digitalization and culture meet" is something that is very relevant in the context of current developments and can increase cultural awareness. It can be seen from the traffic of the existence of digital tourism through websites that a positive trend has shown a very significant increase, indicating that culture and digitalization can collaborate to realize digital transformation. The graph showing monthly increases in visits to the visit.pleret.id website illustrates how the commitment and skills of village digital leaders contribute to digital development in the village. Keyword rankings that are already at the top of search engine rankings indicate that there are good efforts being made to build village visibility in the digital world. This means that the success of a village's digital transformation depends not only on the availability of the website but also on the leadership's commitment to conducting evaluations, developing continuous digital innovation, and strengthening digital competencies to increase

the accessibility of village tourism information to the wider community. With strong digital leadership and a consistent vision, website traffic can continue to increase and provide tangible benefits for the development of Pleret Village.

Digital Leader Skills in the Digital Transformation of Pleret Village

Digital Literacy

Pleret Village began transforming towards digital-based village governance in 2020, in line with the pandemic conditions at that time. It coincided with the inauguration of the Pleret Village Head for the 2020 Period. The presence of the Pleret Village Head brought various innovations, both in the management of the Village government and in improving services for the community. Inaugurated on December 29, 2020, he is recognized as the primary driver of digital transformation in the Village government, to enhance transparency and public participation through online platforms. Armed with a strong educational background, with a Bachelor's degree in Informatics Engineering and a Master's degree in Computer Science from one of the leading universities in Central Java, this expert in the field of Information Technology supports the Pleret Village Head in implementing a digital government system in the Village.

The village head designed and developed an integrated digital platform called "pleret.id", which is managed by the Pleret Village/Village Government as an integrated information system. This platform aims to increase transparency and efficiency in village governance. Its functions include administrative data management, providing access to public services, promoting financial transparency, fostering local economic empowerment, and serving as a platform for digital outreach and training.

This information is supported by the statement of the Head of Administration and General Affairs of Pleret Village that "The Village Head did indeed immediately check the digital availability when he came, he created his website according to the Village's requirements. He was skilled at working at Microsoft and often travelled extensively, even to Kalimantan, where he also served as a lecturer. Initially, he did not want to be Village Head, but always had many good ideas for developing the Village, so he was nominated to be Village Head and has been elected until now." (Results of interviews with the Head of Administration and General Affairs).

Residents of Pleret Village experienced digital literacy challenges. Some initially struggled with access due to limited access to adequate digital devices and unstable internet connections in some areas. However, the Village Head continues to address this digital divide, including providing public Wi-Fi, a co-working space (Gerbang Pleret), and conducting application training.

Interviews with the Head of Administration and the General Manager revealed that the spirit of digital transformation in Pleret Village stems from the superior capabilities of its leaders, supported by a strong educational background and experience in technology-based governance. This capability is reflected in the various innovative applications launched in Pleret Village.

Digital Vision

The progress of a village/sub-district can be seen from how the Village Vision is clearly defined and directed. Competent leaders play a crucial role in determining the success of achieving the vision. Pleret Village has a Vision to become "a digital village that is independent, cultured,

prosperous, and religious." In line with the Village Vision, the Village Head has successfully transformed the village government system into a digital basis, demonstrating a strong commitment to his role as Village Head. The transformation of Pleret Village integrates various systems and databases to enhance efficiency and prevent duplicate work. Through this effort, the transition to a digital village government is expected to create a more responsive, efficient, and community-focused government, while also improving the overall quality of services to the community. Digital innovations in Pleret Village include:

Table 1.
List of Application Innovations / Features of Pleret Village

No	Application/Feature Name	Information
1	Pleret.id	Self-service basic correspondence services
2	Whatsapp Gateway	Automated communication system for self-service PIN requests
3	BSrE Electronic Certificate	Digital Village Signatures
4	Population Database	Integrated Population Data
5	Correspondence Agenda Book	Disposition Notifications
6	Regional Map	Real-time village boundary and hamlet profile information
7	Pasar.pleret.id	Village e-commerce
8	Perpustakaan.pleret.id	Library digitization
9	Village Masterplan	Village's potential strategic plan
10	Face Presence	Online attendance system using facial recognition
11	Regional CCTV	Hamlet CCTV integration
12	Household QR Code	Household ID for population data collection
13	Visit.pleret.id	Management and marketing of the "Bumi Mataram Pleret" tourist village

Source: Website Pleret.id 2024

Based on Table 1, there are 13 innovative applications for Pleret Village. The applications developed are tailored to the needs and conditions of Pleret Village. The transformation implemented received a very positive response from the community. "The community response was very good with the transformation, the renewal of the digital service system, making Pleret Village a best practice, and this makes the Pleret community proud." (Results of interviews with the Head of Administration and General Affairs). Based on this statement, residents of Pleret Village felt the positive impact of the implemented digital transformation. Various innovations and village programs were also well received by the community because the Village Head actively provided an understanding of the long-term benefits of these changes, including their contribution to the development of the Village's potential. As stated by the Minister of Villages, "Digitalization is currently a necessity to optimize village potential. Village stakeholders can apply digitalization to improve public services and add value to village-level industrial community products." (Ministry of Villages Website, Minister of Villages 2023) Some of the tourism potential in Pleret Village includes nature tourism, historical sites, and local crafts, which can be further developed to improve community welfare.

In line with the potential of the Pleret region, innovative tourism initiatives have been developed at the Pleret site, offering a variety of attractive programs designed to attract tourists. The Pleret community possesses strong local wisdom, with traditions and culture still

preserved to this day. This led to the formation of a tourism village, Bumi Mataram Pleret, as a community-based institution. The membership of this tourism village comprises tourism stakeholders who demonstrate concern and responsibility, actively participating in managing the tourism sector in Pleret. To support this potential, the official portal Visit.pleret.id was created. This website provides comprehensive information on the historical and natural tourism potential of Pleret Village, including the heritage sites of the Islamic Mataram Palace. Additionally, the website provides various tour packages, activity information, MSME products, homestay options, and opportunities for village studies. The primary objective of this site is to promote tourism and support local economic development through professional management of tourist destinations.

The development of Pleret Village is based on planning outlined in the Pleret Village Masterplan, a strategic document aimed at sustainably developing the Village's potential. This master plan focuses on enhancing the community's quality of life and promoting environmental preservation, encompassing infrastructure, public facilities, and sustainable management of natural resources. Furthermore, the tourism sector is a primary focus, given Pleret Village's rich natural and cultural potential. This master plan is expected to enhance village management, attract tourists, and improve community welfare effectively and sustainably.

The Masterplan document outlines long-term plans for various village/sub-district potentials, including the Pleret Gate, Pleret Resort, Gajah Wong Reservoir, Tepi Sawah Culinary, Kedaton Tourism, Andong Transit, Sendang Kartini, playgrounds, waste processing, as well as parking areas and UMKM kiosks. This document is available in digital format, making it easier to access, reducing the risk of loss, and accelerating data updates. The digital publication of the Master Plan reflects the village government's strong commitment to aligning long-term visions, village potential, and the effective use of technology.

The Village Head's commitment to achieving the established Vision has led the Village to win several awards, the assessment of which is a consequence of the Village Head's commitment to digital transformation. For example, based on the publication document of the achievement winning 1st place in the Village at the Bantul Regency level is a manifestation of the many innovations and digitalizations that have been implemented in all areas, namely Government, Development, Empowerment, Guidance, and Disaster Management. Then winning 1st place in the Village at the DIY Provincial Level is a manifestation of the strong commitment outlined in the Vision as an Independent, Cultured, Prosperous and Religious Digital Village. Although digital infrastructure support from the Bantul Regency Government is a supporting factor, interviews with village officials indicate that the success of digital implementation is more determined by the leadership initiative of the village head in encouraging cross-institutional collaboration and technology adoption at the grassroots level.

Defense

To achieve the Pleret Village Vision, the Pleret Village Head has established several missions, including:

1. Good Governance: Clean, Transparent, and Professional Village Government.
2. Smart People: Improving the Quality of Human Resources, an Intelligent and Religious Society.
3. Digital Village: Digitizing Public Services, Information, and Technology.
4. Village-Based Village Development (PADES): Increasing Village Original Income in the Creative Economy, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, Culture, and Tourism.

5. Green Village: Clean, Beautiful, Safe, and Comfortable Village

In line with the Second Mission Statement, "Smart People," which focuses on improving the quality of human resources to make the community more intelligent and professional, the Pleret Village Head developed this program with the hope that village officials and residents would adapt well. If the community intelligently follows the village program, every program implemented by the village government will receive full support from the community.

To create an intelligent society, the first step is to ensure that all village officials can effectively adapt and implement various programs. Before educating the community, village officials need first to have an adequate understanding and intelligence. The Head of Pleret explained that "back now to human resources, I used to train every Monday, there was a group we trained, increased one step at a time, and now it is running. That includes honing knowledge and competencies. What is analysed is the human resources because the requirements are intelligence, enthusiasm, patience, calmness, there are costs and time." (Results of interview with Head of Pleret). Based on this explanation, the strategy implemented by the Head of Pleret is to ensure the quality of human resources, starting with village officials, so that they can run digital-based programs in Pleret Village. When officials have mastered technology and can adapt, the community will also have more trust in the village government. It will be committed to supporting the success of the programs being implemented. For example, in the Independent Service of Pleret Village, the community has now adapted to the Independent Correspondence Service because they have felt its benefits. The community recognizes that various village innovations contribute to the development of the village.

Presence

The Pleret Village Head's presence in guiding village government officials demonstrates a strong commitment to realizing digital transformation in Pleret Village. Under his leadership, the Pleret Village Head applies principles such as discipline, honesty, enthusiasm, and an innovative and adaptive attitude to change. To ensure that officials carry out their duties properly, supervision is carried out strictly using technology through the "Civil Servant Activity" feature on the pleret. The Pleret Village Head can monitor staff attendance and tasks in real-time, using a facial attendance system connected to the website. This system also provides information on employee attendance during working hours as well as routine and non-routine agendas in Pleret Village.

The Pleret Village Head's role as a leader focuses not only on directing the apparatus but also on demonstrating a real commitment to the community through oversight of "Guardian Activities." This transparency of information allows the public to directly observe the performance of the village government, thereby fostering trust and acceptance of the various transformations taking place in the Village. A leader who serves as a role model for his followers and behaves consistently with his values can more easily build commitment to the values, goals, or standards of behaviour of a group or organization.

Communication

The role of a leader in Pleret village is determined by their ability to communicate effectively with officials and the community. Communication with officials is both formal and informal. Formal communication occurs through direct or written instructions, depending on the needs of village government management. Meanwhile, informal communication is implemented to strengthen the relationship between leaders and officials, such as through casual discussions between the village head, officials, and the community at the Gerbang Pleret Co-working

Space, which is often used as a meeting place.

Additionally, the Pleret Village Head facilitates communication with the community through a WhatsApp Gateway. This system is used to send automatic notifications regarding important information, such as invitations or announcements, and to quickly and effectively answer residents' questions about village services.

To ensure data validity, interviews with the Village Head and administrative staff were triangulated with representatives of the Pleret Village Community Consultative Body (BPD). The BPD confirmed that the community generally appreciates the digital innovations in Pleret Village, as they have improved service delivery. The village head consistently coordinates with the BPD, providing dedicated communication channels to align program plans and innovations with community needs.

Adaptability

Rapid technological developments certainly present various challenges. In this context, the Head of Pleret Village faces the challenge of adapting to the digital transformation policies implemented at the Kapanewon (Sub-district) level, Bantul Regency, and the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY) Province. Furthermore, adaptation is also evident in how the Head of Pleret Village designs programs and innovations that are then implemented by village officials and well-received by the community. As a leader at the Village/Sub-district level, the Head of Pleret Village adapts to the digital transformation policies at the Regency and Provincial levels through various strategic steps. One form of this adaptation is strengthening regulations, which is manifested in the issuance of various regulations to support the implementation of digitalization in Pleret Village, including:

1. Decree of the Head of Pleret Village Number 36 of 2024 concerning the Appointment of Digital Cadres for Pleret Village, Pleret Subdistrict, Bantul Regency
2. Decree of the Head of Pleret Village Number 40 of 2024 concerning the Establishment of the Pleret Village Government Media Team
3. Decree of the Head of Pleret Village Number 35 of 2024 concerning the Establishment of the Pleret Village Reform Team, Pleret Subdistrict, Bantul Regency

The strengthening of regulations in Pleret Village serves as a reference for creating various innovations and programs to improve public services. Meanwhile, both officials and the community have experienced adaptation. Village officials initially felt overwhelmed by the numerous changes and adjustments that occurred when the Pleret Village Head arrived. As explained by the Head of Administration and General Affairs, "In 2020, we were worried that it would be difficult. With the system established by the village head, we have become accustomed to it, such as arriving early and reading out any changes. Our advantage now is that it is easier to find things, so we have become accustomed to it and feel helped. Some in the community may still use outdated methods. Some people are unhappy with the things they have to report." (Results from the Head of Administration and General Affairs)

The difficulties experienced by officials echo those expressed by the Pleret Village Head, who stated, "At first, village officials found it difficult to cope with various changes, both related to systems and disciplinary changes. They were also reluctant to attend. There was some resistance from the community association. Leadership skills emerged there. Furthermore, there is leadership capacity. Then there is social capacity, which refers to the kind of community it is. The average person cannot be contextual. Here, there is something called the knight culture, which is the same as bureaucratic reform." (Interview with Pleret Village Head).

Based on interviews with the Pleret Village Head and one of the Pleret Village Heads, adapting to digital transformation is a necessary step in the village transformation process. This is also reinforced by the confirmation from the Head of BPD that "there was definitely initial shock, everything changed to be transparent, fast, and digital. This is because the device had felt a comfort zone for quite a long time, but finally the device was able to adapt and feel the benefits." Despite initial challenges, this did not diminish the commitment of all parties to continue advancing Pleret Village. Over time, village officials began to see the benefits of this transformation, so that each change was understood as a shared step towards the advancement of Pleret Village. Meanwhile, the community is currently undergoing a consistent adaptation process. This is evident in the results of a survey of Pleret residents' satisfaction with Pleret Village government services, as shown in the following table.:

Table 2.
Pleret Village Community Satisfaction Survey 2024

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Sufficiently	Bad
81,72%	7,56%	5,45%	5,27

Source: Website Pleret.id 2024

The Village Head's statement regarding the success of the public service digitalization program is supported by documentary data in the form of the 2024 Community Satisfaction Survey. Based on Table 2 regarding the Pleret Village Community Satisfaction Survey, there is consistency in the use of digital-based village government services by the community. The consistent use of digital-based village government services by the community demonstrates that they have adapted to changes in governance and services provided by Pleret Village. This is reinforced by the results of a satisfaction survey, which showed 81.72% were delighted with Pleret Village's services.

Self-Awareness

One approach the Pleret Village Head has adopted in interacting with the community is to provide a space where they can feel empowered. The community not only benefits from various innovations but is also allowed to participate actively. Some forms of community involvement in Pleret Village's digital transformation include:

1. Implementing independent population services, allowing residents to process various documents online through the pleret.id website using only their National Identification Number (NIK) and PIN.
2. Community involvement in the use of Household QR Codes. This application provides a unique label in the form of a QR Code for each household, aiming to simplify population data updates. Furthermore, QR Codes are used to collect information related to 27 indicators of resident welfare, such as housing conditions, health, and sources of income. The collected data plays a crucial role in determining poverty levels and community well-being.
3. The Pleret Village Head actively encourages community participation in digital literacy training programs and the use of e-commerce platforms for local products. The Pleret Village Head provides opportunities for community participation in the development process through discussion forums and village deliberations. The community is also allowed to closely monitor village development progress through the Development Transparency application (<https://pleret.id/pembangunan>). The development

transparency feature is an effort to build trust and active community involvement in sustainable development.

These efforts align with the Pleret Mission, which aims to establish good, transparent, and professional village governance. Therefore, the implementation of this mission is not only oriented towards good governance but also creates space for transformational leadership that emphasizes the importance of creativity and innovation. This demonstrates that transformational leaders primarily encourage the creativity and innovation of their followers by providing a climate that supports their innovative efforts.

Cultural Awareness

The cultural awareness implemented by the Pleret Village Head does not emphasize understanding cultural differences; instead, this cultural awareness has been deeply rooted in the history and culture that the community continues to maintain to this day. Pleret Village is the site of the Islamic Mataram Kingdom during the reign of Sultan Agung Hanyokrokusumo and Sunan Amangkurat II. Several heritage sites, including the Kerto Palace and the Plered Palace, have been designated as Cultural Heritage Sites by the Yogyakarta Provincial Government. The names of the hamlets in this area still strongly reflect the names of places from the kingdom era.

This history and culture are the main potential of Pleret Village. As explained by the Head of Pleret, "Pleret was once a wealthy kingdom. I named it Heritage of Mataram or Bumi Mataram Pleret, positioning the locomotive as a symbol of tourism, the carriage as a representation of culture, and entrepreneurship to foster independence. I believe Pleret will attract many visitors. With this, I see how to make something the best or most unique, and I chose the most unique, coupled with the potential for a Digital Village." (Interview with the Head of Pleret).

The Pleret Village Head's explanation of cultural potential reflects his commitment to advancing the Village through its resources. In his leadership, he also practices social leadership, engaging directly with the community to understand the concerns and conditions of the Pleret community.

CONCLUSION

The digital leadership implemented by the Pleret Village Head has been a key factor in the Village's digital transformation. With a strong educational background in Information Technology and Computer Science, the village leader possesses the expertise to support the implementation of a digital government system. One of the key innovations developed is the integrated digital platform, Pleret.id, which functions as an integrated information system to increase transparency and efficiency in village governance.

The spirit of digital transformation in Pleret Village stems from superior leadership capabilities, supported by experience and a deep understanding of technology-based governance. The village head not only aligns his vision and mission with digital programs and innovations, but also possesses managerial skills in strategic planning, master plan development, and the issuance of various regulations and village decrees.

Adaptability is evident in efforts to create innovation, strengthen regulations, improve public services, and strengthen government-community relations. Furthermore, the cultural awareness implemented goes beyond simply understanding cultural diversity to preserving and upholding deeply rooted historical values and traditions within the community. With this approach, digital transformation in Pleret Village remains aligned with local cultural identity,

advancing the Village without abandoning its heritage.

The practical implications of this research relate to the village digital leadership model, the development of village information systems, and the synchronization of digitalization and preservation with local culture. The leadership of the Pleret Village Head can serve as a concrete example for other village leaders in integrating technological competency with governance. The innovation of the Pleret.id platform demonstrates the importance of building an integrated information system to increase transparency, efficiency, and accountability in public services. These findings can serve as a reference for other villages in designing similar applications tailored to local needs. The practice in Pleret confirms that digital transformation at the village level does not have to neglect cultural identity. The integration of technological innovation with the preservation of local traditions can serve as a reference in developing smart villages and supporting inclusive digitalization rooted in local wisdom without eroding the traditional identity of village communities.

Future research recommendations include broadening the scope of the study by comparing digital leadership models in several other villages or sub-districts to identify common patterns and unique characteristics in the village digital transformation process. Furthermore, future studies could also address the challenges of sustainable digital innovation, including funding, regulations, and human resource capacity, so that village digital transformation does not stop with a single leadership period.

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