Shaping Digital Culture in Vietnam's Multicultural Public Sector Workplaces

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Abstract: *This paper examines the development of digital culture in Vietnam's multicultural public sector workplaces amid the country's broader digital transformation. Drawing on mixed methods, including qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys among civil servants at central and local administrative levels, the study identifies how digital norms, communication patterns, and ethical standards evolve across generational and cultural lines. The findings underscore the role of leadership, legal frameworks, and intergenerational collaboration in fostering inclusive digital practices. While digital culture enables greater cohesion and efficiency, challenges such as regulatory gaps and resistance to change persist. The study offers strategic recommendations to institutionalize digital ethics and promote adaptive governance in Vietnam's administrative reform landscape.*

Keywords: Digital culture, multicultural workplaces, public administration, civil servants, digital transformation

1. Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed an unprecedented surge in digital technologies, reshaping the way people communicate, collaborate, and interact. Digital tools are no longer just technical instruments; they have become integral to modern culture. In this context, digital culture serves as a bridge that enables civil servants to share ideas, exchange information, and embody values, while simultaneously fostering creativity and innovation in the public sector.

Vietnamese workplaces are undergoing rapid transformation as digital technologies permeate daily operations. Public organizations bringing together civil servants of diverse ages, regions, and cultural backgrounds are evolving into vibrant spaces of cultural exchange in the digital era. This diversity is reflected not only in professional relationships but also in the ways individuals' approach and utilize technology. Consequently, digital culture introduces both opportunities and challenges, opening a new chapter in the development of public institutions and contributing to a more dynamic, creative, and inclusive working environment.

Studying digital culture in this setting is therefore both theoretically significant and practically urgent. If digital technologies redefine communication and governance, then digital culture determines the sustainability and effectiveness of these changes. Similar to predictive models used in digital governance, analyzing digital culture helps identify patterns, anticipate challenges, and guide modern public administration. This foundation supports administrative reform, accelerates national digital transformation, and promotes transparent, efficient, and citizen friendly governance.

The purpose of this study is to examine how digital culture is being formed and negotiated among civil servants in Vietnam's multicultural public sector settings, and to identify strategic pathways for building a cohesive and inclusive digital environment.

2. The Scientific Basis for Developing Digital Culture in Multicultural Vietnamese Workplaces

2.1 Methodology

To examine the foundations of digital culture in multicultural workplaces in Vietnam, the study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, ensuring comprehensive analysis. On the qualitative side, the research team conducted 20 in depth interviews, carried out through both direct and indirect methods, focusing on how civil servants perceive and experience the process of building digital culture in their daily work. These interviews provided rich insights into attitudes, challenges, and expectations, complementing the broader survey data.

For the quantitative component, structured questionnaires were designed to capture information from a larger pool of respondents. The questions addressed issues such as the frequency of digital technology use, levels of satisfaction, and perceptions of digital culture in the workplace. Two main groups of respondents were selected deliberately to reflect both central and local perspectives.

The first group included civil servants working in the Ministry of Home Affairs and Departments of Home Affairs in several provinces and cities: Hải Phòng, Thái Bình, Thanh Hóa, Đắk Nông, and Ho Chi Minh City. In total, 200 questionnaires were distributed, with 78 respondents (39%) from the central ministry and 122 respondents (61%) from local agencies. Demographically, the sample was diverse: 59.5 percent male and 40.5 percent female, with the majority aged 35–45 years (65%), followed by those over 45 years (26%), and a smaller proportion under 30 years (9%).

The second group comprised civil servants in Bac Tu Liem District, Hanoi, where 100 questionnaires were distributed through local offices such as the Xuân Tảo and Xuân Đỉnh ward police stations. This group provided additional perspectives from grassroots administrative units, enriching the dataset with experiences closer to citizens.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 20.0, a statistical software widely applied in social sciences, ensuring rigorous processing of survey results. In addition, AI based monitoring and communication tools were employed to evaluate digital interactions among civil servants. Secondary data sources were also consulted, including official reports, prior studies on digital culture, and Party State policies on digital transformation and public service ethics. These references provided a broader context and theoretical grounding for the study.

By combining qualitative interviews, quantitative surveys, and secondary data analysis, the research sought to capture both subjective experiences and objective patterns. This mixed methods design allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how digital culture is being shaped in Vietnam's multicultural workplaces, laying the groundwork for subsequent analysis of opportunities, challenges, and solutions.

Although purposive sampling was employed to reflect central and local diversity, future research may consider random sampling to enhance generalizability.

2.2. Conceptual Framework

To introduce the concept of digital culture in multicultural workplaces, it is first necessary to discuss the tool-based notion of "digital culture", This concept emerged during the Fourth Industrial Revolution, alongside related ideas such as "digital transformation," "digital economy," and "digital society", According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), digital culture is defined as "a culture that uses digital tools and deep data insights to make decisions and focus on customers, while continuously fostering collaboration and innovation within organizations",

Culture itself encompasses codes of conduct, values, norms, and sets of behaviors that guide how tasks are performed. Within digital work environments shaped by culture, individual roles of individuals are clearly defined, and tasks are described in detail with specific requirements that demand accountability from those responsible [1].

It is evident that definitions of "digital culture" consistently emphasize values, norms, and human behaviors in digital environments. Digital culture is formed and developed through the use of information and communication technologies, and it plays a crucial role in building and advancing a digital society.

In this study, the research team adopts the definition of digital culture presented in the "Digital Transformation Handbook" published by the Ministry of Information and Communications of Vietnam [2], and agrees to use the concept that "digital culture of civil servants refers to codes of conduct, ethical standards, and the enjoyment of cultural values by civil servants in digital environments",

Furthermore, the research team argues that "digital culture is the participation of individuals, organizations, and communities in digital environments, oriented toward digitalized behaviors for organizations and society", For civil servants, responsibility in digital environments goes beyond enjoying cultural values; it also requires preserving and creatively promoting those values in the execution of public duties.

Building digital culture in multicultural workplaces is grounded in multiple scientific foundations and theories related to communication, social psychology, and organizational management. One important theoretical perspective is intercultural communication theory, which emphasizes that cultural differences influence how individuals interact and understand one another, leading to variations in interpretation and responses in workplace settings [3].

Additionally, the book *The Culture Map* [4] analyzes how different cultures build trust and interact in professional environments, showing that cultural differences can generate misunderstandings and conflicts if not properly recognized and managed. Based on this theory, building digital culture must take into account factors such as language, customs, and cultural values in order to establish effective communication channels and minimize conflict and misunderstanding among civil servants in the workplace.

Moreover, organizational inclusion theory highlights that an inclusive work environment fosters creativity and productivity. Holvino, Ferdman, and Merrill-Sand define a multicultural, inclusive organization as one in which the diversity of knowledge and perspectives contributed by members of different groups shapes strategies, tasks, management systems, and core values and norms necessary for success [5]. Applying digital technologies in workplaces therefore involves not only the use of technical tools but also the development of digital skills and new working habits within a multicultural context.

Research in social psychology further demonstrates that respect for and acceptance of cultural diversity can strengthen cohesion and enhance employee motivation [6]. Consequently, building digital culture is not merely a technical requirement but also a social management strategy aimed at creating an effective and inclusive working environment.

From these analyses, it becomes clear that building digital culture in multicultural workplaces emphasizes the importance of combining digital technologies with respect for cultural diversity. Digital culture does not only refer to the use of digital tools but also encompasses values, norms, and codes of conduct practiced by civil servants in digital environments. To build digital culture effectively, factors such as language, customs, and cultural values must be considered to establish efficient communication channels and reduce conflict. At the same time, an inclusive workplace will not only stimulate creativity and improve public service performance but also strengthen cohesion and motivation. Therefore, building digital culture in multicultural workplaces is not simply a technical requirement but a socially oriented management strategy, designed to create an effective, inclusive, and sustainable environment for all civil servants.

3. Current Situation, Opportunities, and Challenges

3.1 Current Situation

The importance of digital culture in Vietnamese workplaces has grown rapidly, particularly in the context of administrative reforms and staff downsizing. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, by the end of 2021 the total number of civil servants across central agencies and local governments (excluding the Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of Public Security) stood at 233,219 individuals, of whom 59,918 held master's or doctoral degrees [2]. However, by the first half of 2024, this figure had been drastically reduced to only 557 civil servants nationwide, including 47 at central ministries and agencies and 530 at local levels. Such a sharp reduction in personnel inevitably influences the process of building digital culture, as younger civil servants are increasingly expected to take on a leading role in adapting to the demands of digital transformation.

Survey results conducted among civil servants in the Ministry of Home Affairs and local Departments of Home Affairs further highlight the extent of this impact. 100 percent of respondents agreed that digital transformation has affected workplace culture. More specifically, over 93 percent across all age groups (<30, 30–45, and >45 years old) acknowledged its influence on work spirit and attitudes. When asked about communication and conduct, 88.89 percent of civil servants under 30, 93.07 percent aged 30–45, and 82.69 percent over 45 recognized significant changes. Ethical standards and lifestyle were also seen as affected, with 83.33 percent of respondents under 30, 88.46 percent aged 30–45, and 86.53 percent over 45 agreeing. Even attire and digital appearance once considered peripheral are now part of professional identity, with 66.67 percent of civil servants under 30, 77.69 percent aged 30–45, and as many as 94.23 percent of those over 45 acknowledging their importance.

The survey results, summarized in Table 1, clearly demonstrate how civil servants across different age groups perceive the impact of digital transformation on their work spirit, communication standards, ethical behavior, and even their attire and digital appearance.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the survey results reveal clear generational differences in how civil servants perceive the impact of digital transformation on attire and digital appearance, with older groups showing stronger agreement on the importance of professional presentation in online environments.

The introduction of platforms such as Voffice has streamlined administrative processes, reducing workloads and saving time and resources. Yet these innovations also raise new challenges in communication etiquette. Civil servants must learn to interpret instructions accurately, respond respectfully, and maintain professional decorum in digital exchanges between superiors and subordinates. While many have adapted, inconsistencies remain, particularly in ensuring that digital communication conveys the same clarity and respect as traditional face to face interactions.

At the same time, broader socio-economic pressures cannot be ignored. The influence of the market economy, with its emphasis on material gain and individualism, sometimes undermines traditional values of integrity and public service. This has led to instances of non-standard behavior in digital communication, underscoring the need for stronger cultural and ethical frameworks. Generational differences further complicate the situation: younger civil servants often adopt a more relaxed approach to digital self-presentation, while older staff emphasize formality and professionalism. Such contrasts illustrate the diverse ways in which digital culture is being negotiated within Vietnam's public institutions [7].

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that building digital culture is not simply about adopting new technologies. It requires a deeper transformation in attitudes, ethics, and communication practices, ensuring that civil servants can uphold professional standards while navigating the complexities of a multicultural and increasingly digital workplace.

3.2 Opportunities

The process of building digital culture within multicultural workplaces in Vietnam presents a wide range of opportunities that can significantly enhance the quality and effectiveness of public administration. First and foremost, the digital environment allows civil servants to gain deeper insights into the values, customs, and perspectives of colleagues from different regions and ethnic backgrounds. This exposure fosters mutual respect and empathy, helping to create a more harmonious and inclusive working atmosphere where diversity is not seen as a challenge but rather as a valuable resource. Moreover, digital culture encourages greater interaction and collaboration among civil servants, enabling them to exchange ideas and experiences across cultural boundaries. Such exchanges broaden individual perspectives and contribute to a more dynamic organizational environment in which differences are embraced as drivers of creativity.

In addition, cultural diversity in the digital space acts as a catalyst for innovation. When multiple viewpoints and approaches are combined, public organizations are better equipped to develop practical and effective solutions to complex administrative problems. This not only improves productivity but also strengthens the organization's ability to adapt quickly to societal changes. Finally, a multicultural workplace enriched by digital culture enhances the public image and credibility of government institutions. Civil servants who understand the diverse needs of citizens from different regions, religions, and ethnic groups are better positioned to deliver services that resonate with the population, thereby reinforcing trust and legitimacy in public governance.

3.3 Challenges

Despite these opportunities, the process of building digital culture in multicultural workplaces also faces considerable

challenges. One of the most pressing difficulties lies in the complexity of unifying and standardizing digital cultural norms across diverse groups. Differences in values, habits, and codes of conduct among civil servants from various regions can easily lead to misunderstandings or even conflicts if not carefully managed. Leadership thus plays a vital role in ensuring cohesion.

Another challenge is the resistance often encountered among senior civil servants who have long been accustomed to traditional practices. For many, the transition to digital environments requires not only technical adaptation but also a shift in mindset, which can be difficult to achieve. Furthermore, the absence of specific legal frameworks regulating digital conduct in public service exacerbates the problem. For instance, there are still no clear rules regarding email etiquette, daily monitoring of official correspondence, or standardized administrative writing styles in digital communication. These gaps in regulation hinder the consistent application of digital culture across institutions.

Another key challenge arises from generational gaps in adopting digital technologies. Younger civil servants tend to adapt quickly to new digital tools, while older staff may struggle to keep pace. This disparity can reduce overall efficiency and limit the potential benefits of digital transformation. Without mechanisms to encourage intergenerational knowledge sharing and collaboration, organizations risk losing expertise and missing the full potential of digital culture.

4. Proposed Solutions for Building Digital Culture in Multicultural Workplaces in Vietnam

To overcome these challenges and maximize the opportunities, building digital culture in multicultural workplaces must be approached through comprehensive and strategic solutions. A crucial first step is to strengthen the digital skills and awareness of civil servants by organizing training programs that focus not only on technical competencies but also on the cultural dimensions of digital interaction. Establishing a digital competency framework tailored to public service roles will help set clear expectations and provide a model for widespread implementation.

Equally important is the role of leadership. Leaders must demonstrate a deep understanding of multicultural contexts, commit to innovation, and actively promote the adoption of digital practices. By setting an example and encouraging experimentation with new technologies, leaders can persuade senior staff to embrace change and inspire creativity across all generations.

Another essential solution is the development of a robust legal framework. Updating policies and regulations to address digital conduct will provide the necessary foundation for consistent and effective implementation. Filling these legal gaps will not only prevent misconduct but also ensure that digital culture is applied uniformly across institutions.

Finally, fostering intergenerational cooperation is vital. Encouraging teamwork between younger and older civil servants allows for the exchange of knowledge and experience, fostering synergy where technological adaptability and institutional knowledge are both respected. Younger staff can benefit from the insights of their senior colleagues, while older staff can receive support in navigating digital tools. This synergy will help build a sustainable digital culture that strengthens cohesion, enhances creativity, and ensures long term organizational success.

5. Conclusion

Digital transformation has profoundly reshaped workplace culture in Vietnam. It influences not only work attitudes and ethics but also how civil servants present themselves in digital spaces. Importantly, the digital environment offers opportunities to embrace cultural diversity, turning differences into drivers of innovation and credibility. Building digital culture, therefore, is not a peripheral task it is a central strategy for modern governance, ensuring that Vietnam's public institutions remain efficient, inclusive, and responsive in the digital age.

Table 1: Percentage of Civil Servants Assessing the Impact of the Digital Working Environment on Public Service Performance

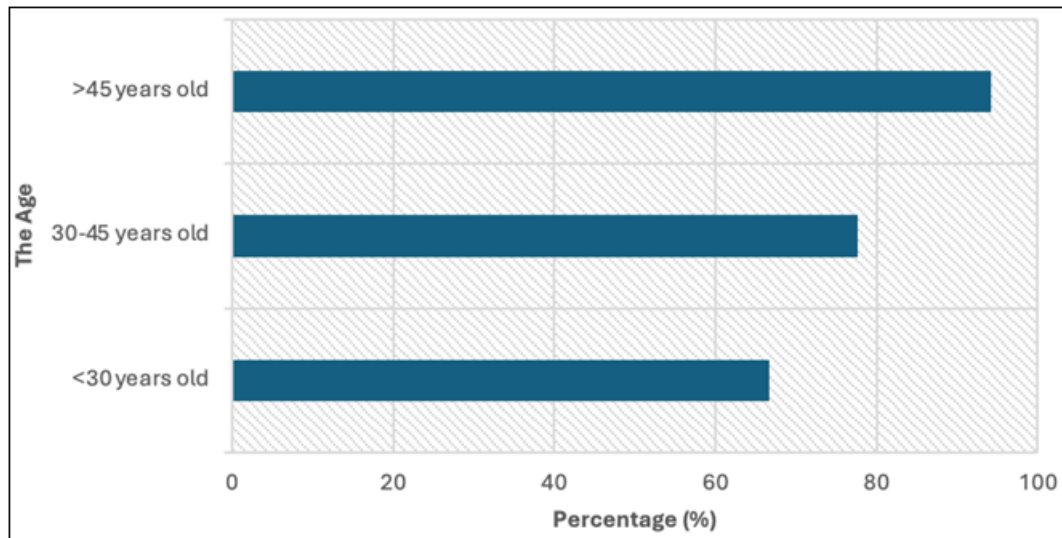| Aspect of Impact (%)	Years old		
	<30	30 45	>45
Work spirit and attitude of civil servants	94.4	93.07	98.07
Standards of communication and conduct of civil servants	88.89	93.07	82.69
Standards of ethics and lifestyle of civil servants	83.33	88.46	86.53
Attire and digital appearance	66.67	77.69	94.23

Figure 1: Percentage of Civil Servants Assessing the Impact of Digital Transformation on Attire and Digital Appearance in the Digital Environment"

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