The Significance of Embracing Digital Technology in attaining long-Term Institutional Superiority.

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Abstract

The study investigates the significance of digital transformation in attaining long-term excellence at Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) University, highlighting the need to integrate digital technology into all facets of institutional operations to boost efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability. The study encompasses a thorough examination of existing literature on digital transformation and sustainable institutional excellence, as well as an evaluation of data and information provided by the staff of Imam Sadiq University (peace be upon him). A survey was conducted among employees, students, and faculty members to gauge the influence of digital transformation on institutional excellence. The study's findings indicate that digital transformation has a substantial and direct positive impact on sustainable institutional excellence at Imam Sadiq University (peace be upon him). A strong correlation was found between digital transformation and excellence, with a correlation coefficient of 0.819. Furthermore, the data shows that the use of digital transformation techniques in business performance has a significant positive effect on achieving sustainable institutional excellence, with an F value of 203.89 and a coefficient of determination of 67.1%. Based on these results, the research suggests that Imam Sadiq University (peace be upon him) should continue to prioritize digital transformation, providing the necessary resources and training staff to effectively utilize digital technology, and fostering collaboration and communication among departments to achieve sustainable excellence.

Keywords: Digital transformation, Institutional excellence.

1. Introduction

In today's fast-paced, technology-driven world, digital transformation has become a vital component of daily life and business operations. In this setting, embracing digital transformation is essential for institutions and universities to achieve long-term excellence. Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) University strives to attain this excellence, a goal shared by numerous universities globally. Excellence in institutions involves excelling in performance, engaging with the environment, and fulfilling the needs of individuals and society.

At Imam Sadiq University (peace be upon him), digital transformation is a key factor in attaining sustainable institutional excellence. This involves integrating digital technology into all university operations, from administration to education and research. By doing so, the university can greatly improve resource management and efficiency, enhance the experience of students and staff, foster innovation and research, and facilitate interdepartmental communication. As sustainability and social responsibility become increasingly important, digital transformation is vital for Imam Sadiq University (AS) to achieve excellence while reducing its environmental footprint and promoting a more sustainable use of resources.

Understanding the significance of digital transformation in realizing sustainable excellence at Imam Sadiq University (peace be upon him) is crucial for the institution to fulfill its objectives and future aspirations. This study will undertake an in-depth examination of the role of digital

transformation at Imam Sadiq University (peace be upon him) and its influence on sustainable institutional excellence. The research will provide findings and actionable recommendations for enhancing digital transformation and attaining sustainable excellence at the university.

This study investigated the potential advantages of Imam Sadiq University's shift towards a digital environment, pinpointing the obstacles that may arise during the transformation process and proposing solutions to overcome them. It also sought to determine the primary preferences for digital transformation and identify effective tactics to achieve it. By examining the role of digital transformation in attaining enduring institutional excellence at Imam Sadiq University, this research aimed to provide valuable insights and practical suggestions for the university and other educational institutions seeking to achieve sustainable excellence through digital transformation.

2. Research methodology and previous studies

2.1 The research problem:

The rapid advancement of technology has made digital transformation a necessity for organizations across all industries. However, many companies struggle to successfully implement this transformation. One major hurdle is achieving sustainable corporate differentiation, which involves using digital transformation to gain a competitive edge while maintaining social responsibility. As a result, institutions across various sectors have come to realize that staying ahead of the competition requires achieving a distinct advantage through cutting-edge technology and techniques, ultimately leading to institutional excellence.

This study aims to explore the impact of digital transformation on achieving long-term distinctiveness for organizations, addressing the following questions:

1- Can digital transformation help Imam Jafar al-Sadiq University (peace be upon him) research community attain and maintain exceptional performance?
2- Do organizations encounter obstacles when implementing digital transformation?
3- What are the advantages of achieving institutional excellence, and to what extent does digital transformation influence the university in question?

2.2 The importance of research

The significance of this research lies in its focus on a crucial and perennial topic that is relevant to institutions across various sectors. This is because all institutions must adapt to the current digital landscape, leveraging modern technologies to enhance performance, stay competitive, and ensure their survival. By doing so, it can facilitate operations and ultimately reflect excellence, which is a key benefit of embracing digital transformation.

- The research objectives are to:

1. Examine the contribution of digital transformation to realizing sustainable institutional excellence at Imam Jafar al-Sadiq University (peace be upon him).
2. Develop a theoretical framework for the concepts of digital transformation and sustainable institutional excellence.
3. Investigate how digital transformation enhances organizational excellence.
4. Assess the current state of digital transformation adoption at the researched university.

2.3 Research hypothesis

Two research hypotheses were formulated to achieve the research objectives:

Firstly, it is hypothesized that a statistically significant correlation exists between digital transformation and the achievement of institutional excellence.

Secondly, it is hypothesized that digital transformation has a statistically significant effect on the achievement of institutional excellence.

2.4 The research community

The research community at Imam Jaafar Al-Sadiq University in Baghdad comprises senior management, employees, faculty members, and students, from which a sample was taken from four colleges: Administrative and Financial Sciences, Education, Law, and Arts. The researchers handed out 85 questionnaires and received 80 back, with 5 being deemed unsuitable for statistical analysis and thus excluded.

2.5 Research tools

To gather data and information for this research, the following sources were utilized: books, university theses and dissertations, periodicals, scientific conferences, and the Internet, which provided the theoretical foundation. Two data collection tools were employed: observation, where the researchers visited Imam Jaafar al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) University and recorded observations on the feasibility of applying the research variables; and a questionnaire, which collected and analyzed data to identify aspects related to the reality of the research variables outlined in the research plan.

2.6 Previous Studies:

1- Abu Zaid study, 2023.

A 2023 study by Abu Zaid investigated the necessary conditions for social care institutions to achieve excellence in the era of digital transformation. It also identified the challenges that hinder excellence and proposed solutions to overcome them. Using a comprehensive survey approach, the study surveyed 145 workers at the Social Solidarity Directorate in Asset Governorate. The findings indicated that achieving excellence requires financial, strategic, technological, and operational excellence. The main obstacles to excellence were found to be the lack of employee participation in decision-making, failure to keep up with modern developments, and an organizational culture that is inconsistent with excellence.

2- Study: Eid, 2022.

This 2022 study at Mansoura University explores the significance of digital transformation, its key objectives, justification, and benefits. It identifies the essential components, stages, and requirements of digital transformation, as well as the challenges it faces. The study also provides recommendations to implement digital transformation in the university's educational process. Using a descriptive approach and a social sample survey method, the research involved a questionnaire administered to 143 faculty members and in-depth interviews with 15 faculty members from various colleges. The results show that over half of the respondents recognized the advantages of digital transformation, including improved decision-making, modernized administration, and enhanced scientific products. Additionally, it leads to continuous workforce training, improved faculty performance, better program quality, cost reduction, and time-saving within the educational system.

3-Study: Ghada, 2019.

A 2019 study by Ghada examined the impact of digital transformation on Egypt's tourism industry. The research focused on the challenges and requirements faced by Egypt's official tourism agencies, aiming to improve the quality of services and restore the country's tourism status. The study recognized the importance of keeping up with modern technological techniques in managing, marketing, and developing the industry. To achieve this, the study employed a descriptive analytical approach and a case study approach, revealing the potential for digital transformation in Egyptian tourism, pending the overcoming of challenges. The study also emphasized the need to learn from successful experiences, implement integrated digital transformation mechanisms, and consider the recommendations that emerged from the research.

3.1 The theoretical aspect

Digital transformation

First: The concept and definition of digital transformation

Digital transformation is the integration of digital technology into all facets of daily life, marking a significant milestone in the development of various institutions, including public, private, commercial, service, and industrial ones. It signifies a profound change in how digital technology and communication are utilized to enhance operations, ensure sustainability, and achieve institutional excellence.

Digital transformation is a multifaceted process that necessitates a comprehensive commitment from all organizational levels, involving financial, organizational, and human resources to integrate technology across the organization and its operational processes (Verina & Titko, 2019; Danita et al., 2020). It involves the pervasive presence of technology in all aspects of the business, leading to fundamental changes in management and service delivery. As Al-Bar (2020: p. 3) puts it, digital transformation is the application of digital technology in both government and private institutions to enhance service efficiency and customer experience through automation. The process is defined as a strategic and comprehensive change that incorporates digital technology and innovations across all aspects of an organization's operations to maintain its competitiveness.

Benefits of Implementing Digital Transformation

- Implementing digital transformation yields several key benefits, including:
- Enhancing operational efficiency by streamlining processes, improving quality, and reducing costs and effort for both the service provider and beneficiary (Omar, 2021: p. 158).
- Leveraging computer technology to digitize operations, thereby optimizing time management across administrative levels (Rabhi, 2022: p. 101).
- Fostering stronger relationships with relevant institutions through facilitated remote communication (Kamal, Mahmoud, 2022, p. 166).
- Cultivating a culture of innovation and development within the workplace, where traditional ideas and methods are re-evaluated and new approaches are explored (Al-Sherbaz, 2020).
- It increases transparency and accountability within an organization, ultimately resulting in a decrease in errors, as noted by the European Commission in 2019.

Key aspects of digital transformation, including necessary requirements, relevant technologies, and fundamental areas of focus.

The World Bank has created a comprehensive framework for digital transformation, outlining strategies to facilitate and accelerate this process, as summarized in Table (1) below:

Table (1) Digital Transformation's Fundamental Areas, Required Technologies, and Key Requirements

Areas of digital transformation	Digital transformation technologies	Digital transformation requirements
-Economy. -Industry. -tourism. -commerce. -Investment. -the health. -education.	- The Internet. -Virtual reality and augmented reality. -3D printing. -artificial intelligence. -Big data. -Cloud Computing. -Cybersecurity.	1- Human resources (competencies, work team and trainers). 2- Technical requirements (hardware, applications, and software). 3- Support senior management. 4- Innovation system. 5- Dynamic information infrastructure.

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on (Nasima, 2021, p. 344) and (Rabee', 2022, p. 308)

Sustainable institutional excellence

The Concept of Organizational Excellence

Institutional excellence is the capacity of an organization to attain exceptional performance and distinction in its field, particularly in the face of rapid digital advancements, which is crucial for maintaining competitiveness. This is accomplished by implementing distinctive strategies and practices that set the organization apart from its rivals and provide a competitive edge in response to prevailing technological challenges. Institutional excellence can be described as a state of innovation, administrative proficiency, and organizational superiority that yields high-performance operations and achievements surpassing those of competitors. It can also be viewed as the excellence institutions achieve by adopting best modern practices, engaging with customers, and fostering supportive relationships. According to Shirvani and Iranian's 2014 study, Sustainable Organizational Excellence involves a commitment to sustainable development by enhancing the work environment, resources, and organizational culture. Jankov and Jackal (2020) distinguish between sustainable corporate excellence and institutional excellence by adopting a long-term perspective and plans that cater to the future needs of customers and stakeholders, thereby achieving a balance between societal and environmental interests. Abdel Aziz (2022, p. 117) categorizes excellence into three dimensions.

- One aspect of human excellence involves empowering workers at all levels to share their opinions and contribute to the decision-making process, thereby enabling the organization to achieve its goals.
- This dimension of service excellence is what sets one organization apart from another, offering tailored and diverse services that cater to customers' expectations and preferences, built on several key pillars, including the types of services offered, the characteristics of the customer, and the service provider's approach.
- Leadership excellence is characterized by a leadership style that values fairness, transparency, and respect for employees. This style involves active listening, equal treatment, and credible interactions, which in turn foster employee loyalty, efficiency, and effectiveness, ultimately giving the organization a competitive edge over others.

Advantages of institutional excellence

According to Al-Shammari and Al-Wakeel (2023, p. 377-378), institutional excellence results in numerous benefits, with the most significant ones being...

- ✓ Institutions strive to optimize their operations and management by streamlining processes, boosting productivity, cutting costs, and utilizing resources effectively to attain maximum efficiency.
- ✓ Timely and effective customer service is a top priority for organizations, which strive to promptly address customer needs, minimize wait times, and offer swift resolutions to issues and queries.
- ✓ Swift market access through ongoing refinement and growth.
- ✓ Companies strive to enhance their offerings and stay ahead of the curve by fostering innovation and creativity, which involves creating cutting-edge technologies, crafting unique products, and refining operational processes and business methods.

The characteristics of organizational excellence

According to a study (Al-Maghiriya, Dahleez, 2023, p. 482) based on the study of (Al-Nisour, 2010) and (Grote, 2022), certain key characteristics are commonly found in institutions that excel, including:

- Taking on challenging tasks is seen as a key factor in achieving organizational excellence and can lead to enhanced operational efficiency and business growth.

- Resilience in the face of adversity: The organization's capacity to weather and overcome challenges enables it to refine its capabilities, setting it apart from others.
- The presence of training and development programs within an organization can significantly boost its overall performance and quality.
- Volunteer activities beyond the workplace, such as community service, can bring recognition to the organization.
- Precision: By creating a precise system that selects the most effective methods for completing tasks.

Obstacles to organizational excellence:

Overcoming hurdles is a necessary step in achieving sustainable organizational excellence, and some of the common challenges that may arise include the following.

- Limited resources, including budget, labor, and technology, can hinder the implementation of sustainable excellence by making it challenging to allocate the necessary resources for long-term exceptional practices.
- A company's culture plays a crucial role in achieving excellence and innovation. Without a culture that promotes and rewards excellence and innovation, it's challenging to maintain high standards over time. When a company's culture values consistency and imitation over creativity, it can be hard to implement changes and improve processes.
- Resistance to change within an organization can hinder the implementation of sustainable excellence, as some individuals and departments may be hesitant to adopt new practices, fearing the unknown or believing that current methods are superior.
- Organizational time constraints can create tension between swiftly delivering results and adopting best practices that require more time. Effective management of these pressures is crucial to attain long-term excellence.
- The absence of clear direction and commitment from top-level management can hinder the implementation of sustainable excellence. It is essential for senior leaders to be dedicated to excellence and inspire and empower their employees to strive for it.

4.1 The practical aspect

Analyze the results of the research test

1- The questionnaire's validity and reliability were assessed through various tests. The researchers used validity tests to ensure the questionnaire items accurately measured the role of digital transformation in achieving sustainable institutional excellence. The researchers employed the confirmatory construct validity method to evaluate the items' validity. Furthermore, the researchers used the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient to test the reliability of the data, verifying the consistency of the participants' responses to the questionnaire items.

2- To verify the structural validity of the research questionnaire, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. This method requires a sufficient sample size, which can be determined by calculating the Kaiser-Meiser-Olkin (KMO) value. A KMO value above 0.500 indicates that the sample size is suitable for confirmatory factor analysis. The results of the analysis showed that the sample size is adequate, with a high KMO value, as presented in Table 2.

Table (2) KMO test results

Interpretation	Scale value KMO	Variables
The scale values exceeded 0.500, indicating that the data collected from the studied sample can be effectively analyzed using the confirmatory factor analysis method.	0.669	**Digital transformation**
	0.637	**Sustainable institutional excellence**
KMO :(The Kaiser – Meyer – Olkin Measure		

Table (2) indicates that the measure (KMO) had values of 0.669 for digital transformation and 0.637 for sustainable institutional excellence, confirming that the sample size is adequate for applying confirmatory factor analysis. Before using the confirmatory factor analysis method, it's necessary to verify the second condition, which requires significant correlations between items within the two variables (digital transformation and sustainable institutional excellence). This is supported by the Bartlett Test results shown in Table 3, which reveal statistically Significant correlations between the items within the two research variables (digital transformation and institutional excellence).

Table (3) Test (Bartlett) data

Interpretation	Eventuality value Sig.	Calculated Chi-Square value	Search variables
The results show that all values are statistically significant, indicating that there are meaningful connections between the items within the two variables being studied.	**0.00**	**670.640**	Digital transformation
	0.00	**645.391**	Sustainable institutional excellence

An examination of the sample's responses to items serving as the independent variable.

Based on Table 4, the weighted arithmetic mean for the digital transformation variable is 3.761,

exceeding the hypothesized mean of 3. The results indicate a high level of agreement among the sample members, with a standard deviation of 1.292 and a coefficient of variation of 34.91%. This suggests a high degree of homogeneity in the sample's responses to the modern technologies items, with 74.53% of the sample emphasizing the importance of digital transformation in Iraqi universities. The importance of digital transformation is further highlighted by the fact that 79.02% of the sample agrees that it plays a role in achieving institutional excellence. However, there is more variation in the responses to paragraph 11, with a coefficient of variation of 46.65%, indicating less homogeneity among the sample members.

Table (4) The sample's responses to digital transformation items by level

Coefficient of variation%	Relative importance %	Standard deviation	Answer level	Direction of the answer	weighted arithmetic mean	Points	code
36.55%	73.53%	1.344	high	agreement	3.677	The institution supplies the required tools to finish assignments.	q01
27.53%	81.57%	1.123	high	agreement	3.755	The university offers digital tools and platforms to facilitate task completion.	q02
35.50%	75.29%	1.336	high	agreement	3.52	The institution offers both an internal and external network for the purpose of sharing data.	q03
41.01%	68.82%	1.411	high	agreement	3.951	The institution of higher learning maintains an online presence.	q04

20.27%	79.02%	0.801	high	agreement	4.039	The institution offers safeguarded repositories for data storage.	q05
38.52%	72.35%	1.393	high	agreement	3.441	The university depends on experts in electronic commerce, including engineers and technicians with specialized skills.	q06
41.11%	70.39%	1.447	high	agreement	3.216	The organization has adequate internet connectivity.	q07
36.21%	73.73%	1.335	high	agreement	3.735	University staff possess the necessary expertise and experience to successfully execute a digital transformation.	q08
36.88%	73.33%	1.352	high	agreement	3.569	The university aims to equip employees with the necessary skills and competencies to thrive in a rapidly digitalizing work environment.	q09
32.08%	76.86%	1.233	high	agreement	3.873	The university promotes staff involvement in its digital overhaul.	q10
46.65%	64.31%	1.500	high	agreement	3.941	The university hires staff based on the qualifications needed for each position.	q11
31.91%	77.84%	1.242	high	agreement	3.892	Training programs enhance employees' knowledge of work procedures.	q12
34.84%	75.10%	1.308	high	agreement	3.667	The university's policy plays a key role in driving the digital transformation process forward.	q13
35.12%	74.71%	1.312	high	agreement	3.922	The university is eager to promote a culture of digital innovation and integration among its staff.	q14

32.12%	77.84%	1.250	high	agreement	3.843	The university administration permits academic collaboration to facilitate task execution.	q15
30.11%	77.45%	1.166	high	agreement	3.804	The university fosters an open culture where workers can openly share and reflect on their mistakes to draw valuable lessons and improve.	q16
37.47%	73.33%	1.374	high	agreement	3.892	The university strives to enhance and refine its services, aiming for exceptional quality.	q17
37.57%	71.96%	1.352	high	agreement	3.735	The university aims to equip its staff with the skills and motivation to excel in their roles.	q18
35.12%	74.71%	1.312	high	agreement	3.863	The university is counting on the digital transformation process to attain exceptional performance and distinction.	q19
31.63%	78.43%	1.240	high	agreement	3.892	The university's administrative operations are heavily reliant on contemporary technology.	q20
34.91%	74.53%	1.292	high	agreement	3.761	The university offers its services via state-of-the-art digital platforms.	q21

1- **Assessment of moderation (evaluating the normal distribution of test results).**

The moderation test is used to determine if research data follows a normal distribution, a crucial condition for selecting suitable statistical methods. This is especially important since not meeting this condition would limit the use of certain statistical methods. There are various moderation tests, with the Smirnova-Kolmogorov test being the most accurate and commonly used for samples of 50 or more, and the Shapiro-Wilk test for samples under 50. In this study, the Smirnova-Kolmogorov method is used since the sample size is 85 questionnaires. The test results, as shown in Table 5, indicate that the data will be normally distributed and possess moderation characteristics if the null hypothesis is accepted, with a probability value greater than the 0.05 level of significance.

Table (5) presents the Smirnova-Kolmogorov test data, which are plotted along the axes of the research questionnaire.

Researchers' comment	Eventuality value SIG.	The value of the test statistic	Variables
The concept of digital transformation is treated as an independent variable that is normally distributed.	0.200		**Digital transformation**
The dependent variable, institutional excellence, is normally distributed.	0.200		**Institutional excellence**
If the null hypothesis is not rejected, the data is considered to be normally distributed, which occurs when the probability value exceeds the predetermined significance level of 0.05.			

Table (5) indicates that the variables of digital transformation technology and sustainable institutional excellence conform to a normal distribution, making it suitable for the application of parametric statistical methods and measures to the data of the independent and dependent variables, as illustrated in Figure (1) and Figure (2).

Figure (1) The independent variable (digital transformation)

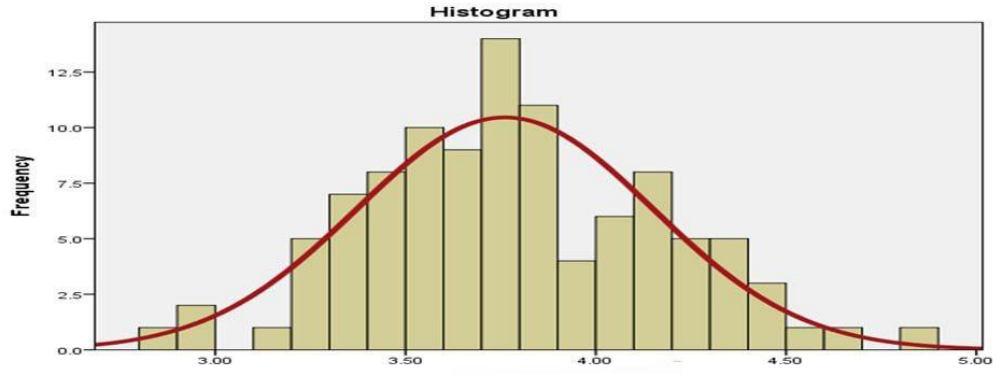
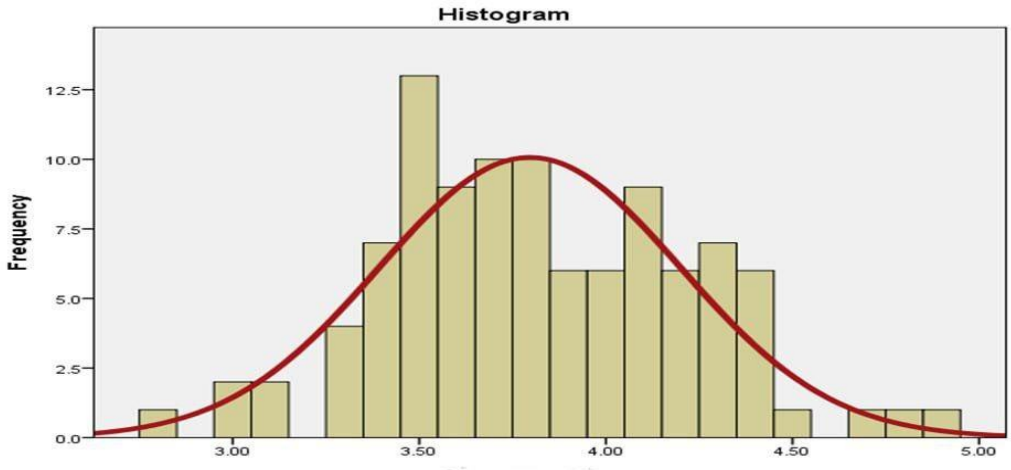


Figure (2): The dependent variable institutional excellence



The connection between adopting digital technologies and achieving long-term, environmentally responsible success in institutions.

The data analysis using the Z-TEST method examines the relationship between digital transformation and sustainable institutional excellence. If the p-value corresponding to the calculated Z value is 0.05 or less, the association hypothesis is accepted with a 95% confidence rate.

The Spearman correlation coefficient measures the strength and direction of the correlation between digital transformation technology and sustainable institutional excellence. The main hypothesis, which proposes a statistically significant correlation between digital transformation technology and sustainable institutional excellence, is tested and supported with a 95-99% confidence rate. The calculated Z value of 8.231 and correlation coefficient of 0.819 indicate a strong direct correlation between digital transformation technology and sustainable institutional excellence, as observed in the research sample.

Table (6): Results of testing the first main hypothesis

Interpretation	Z test		Interpretation	Correlation coefficient between the two variables	Dependent variable	Independent variable
	Eventuality value	Calculated Z value				
Accept the first main hypothesis	0.00	8.231	The two variables are highly correlated, with a strong direct relationship between them.	0.819**	Institutional excellence	Digital transformation technology
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						

The statement was crafted by the research team based on the outcome of hypothesis testing, utilizing SPSS Version 26.

The effect of digital technology on achieving operational excellence in organizations.

The study utilizes the F-TEST method to determine whether the hypothesis of digital transformation technology's impact on institutional excellence is accepted or rejected. If the calculated F value's corresponding probability is 0.05 or lower, the hypothesis is accepted with a 95-98% confidence level. Conversely, if the probability is greater than 0.05, the hypothesis is rejected. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is used to diagnose the percentage of digital transformation technology's explanatory power for changes in institutional excellence. The second main hypothesis, which proposes a statistically significant effect of digital transformation technology on institutional excellence, is tested and accepted with a 95-99% confidence level, as the calculated F value (203.89) is significant and the R^2 value (67.1%) indicates a substantial explanatory power.

Table (7): Results of the statistical analysis to test the second main hypothesis

Interpretation	Test F		Interpretation	The coefficient of determination R^2 %	\Dependent variable	Independent variable
	Eventuality value	Calculated F value				
Accept the second main hypothesis	0.00	203.89	The proportion of digital transformation technology that accounts for the shifts in institutional excellence.	67.1%	Institutional excellence	Digital transformation technology

Source: Prepared by the researchers according to the results of the SPSS V26 program

The previous statistical analysis suggests that digital transformation technology has a significant impact on sustainable institutional excellence, making it a viable option for achieving positive outcomes in this area.

Conclusions

- Digital transformation drives significant improvements in workflow by streamlining operations and enhancing the flow of information between departments, ultimately resulting in operational excellence.
- Digital transformation helps institutions achieve excellence by streamlining daily operations, cutting costs, and genuinely ensuring high-quality outcomes.
- There is a strong and statistically significant link between an organization's digital transformation and its ability to achieve sustainable excellence, with a correlation coefficient of 0.819 indicating a direct and powerful relationship between the two.
- The analysis reveals a statistically significant correlation between the implementation of digital transformation techniques in business performance and the attainment of sustainable institutional excellence, with a high F value of 203.89 and a coefficient of determination of 67.1%, indicating a substantial positive impact of digital transformation on achieving excellence.

Recommendations: -

- Enhancing the key drivers of digital transformation at the university, thereby propelling it towards excellence.
- Determining the reasons behind the lack of digital transformation implementation at the university.
- Foster a culture of ongoing learning and growth among administrative teams by providing training and support, ultimately driving digital transformation.

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