Stalled Progress: The Unravelling of Digital Transformation in the Public Sector of Haiti

Completed Research Paper

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Abstract

Despite substantial financial investments, digital transformation remains elusive for many developing countries. Acknowledging a bias towards developed contexts in existing research, this qualitative study explores the stalled progress of DT in developing countries, exemplified by the case of Haiti. To gain deeper insight into the crucial elements pertinent to DT within this specific context, we conducted interviews with 42 key informants and identified four key roadblocks: Governance structure, resource dependence, organizational readiness, and institutional inertia. Our findings reveal unexpected resistance sources. Unlike prior research, we highlight high-ranking officials themselves as significant impediments to the process, often prioritizing personal gain within dysfunctional and politicized institutions. Additionally, unofficial actors, like lawyers threatened by standardized fees, disrupt progress. Frequent leadership changes and a preference for inefficiency further hinder DT while perpetuating institutional chaos. This study concludes with a research agenda for studying context-specific DT in developing countries.

Keywords: Digital transformation, developing countries, Haiti, Public sector

Introduction

Digital transformation (DT), whether in private firms or public institutions, strives for enhanced efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness (Mahmood et al., 2020; Mergel et al., 2019). Its benefits extend far beyond technology itself. DT fosters collaborative governance and encourages citizen engagement, facilitates private sector involvement in service delivery, and even stimulates economic growth (Gagliardi et al., 2017; Parviainen et al., 2017). However, the path to successful DT is not always smooth. Since the early 2000s, some countries have achieved remarkable DT successes (e.g., South Korea, see Kim et al., 2007). Nevertheless, many developing countries, despite significant investments, continue to struggle with efficiently or appropriately implementing new DT projects (see Addo, 2022; Effah & Nuhu, 2017). The global challenges of weak organizational capacity, human resource limitations, bureaucratic inertia, resistance to change, poor governance, and siloed operations are well-documented obstacles to DT (e.g., Syed et al., 2023; Berente et al., 2019). Yet, for countries in the Global South, these challenges are compounded by additional complexities that make DT even more difficult. For instance, continuous investment in IT infrastructure is crucial for the success of DT initiatives. Developed nations generally possess relatively well-established IT infrastructure, but in contrast, many developing countries face important infrastructure deficiencies that can undermine stakeholder buy-in for DT projects (Agbeko, 2021). These limitations are often intensified by natural disasters, extreme events that overwhelm local capacities and necessitate external assistance (Nel & Riguarts, 2008), thus increasing the dependency of

disaster-prone developing countries. Research by Nel and Riguarts (2008) shows that regions experiencing natural disasters are more likely to experience violent civil conflict in the short to medium term than those unaffected by disasters. The latter has both immediate and long-term impacts, i.e., impairing infrastructure and stalling economic development (Ibidem). Additionally, political instability is a pervasive issue in many developing countries. Encompassing a range of phenomena such as civil wars, democratic reversals, genocides, politicides, and state collapse (Bowlsby et al., 2020), political instability can disrupt governance and impede change-related efforts. As a result, resources, attention, and political will tend to be diverted away from initiatives that do not directly address these urgent crises.

The Information Systems (IS) literature is predominantly biased towards developed or Global North countries (e.g., Wilson & Mergel, 2022), leaving the specific challenges faced by developing nations underexplored. This paper seeks to address this gap through a single-case exploratory study, while focusing on how political instability—a unique and complex contextual factor—shapes DT efforts within Haiti's public sector and hinders the country's ability to succeed in these endeavors. By designing an inductive study, we aim to develop a context-specific theoretical model of DT failure while addressing two questions: How does political instability undermine the continuity and effectiveness of DT projects in Haiti's public sector? How do various actors and agencies involved in the DT process adapt their behaviors in response to this challenge? In the realm of information technology (IT), failure is often characterized by an IT project's inability to meet its intended objectives, such as streamlining processes, reducing time and costs, or implementing effective change management—leading to delays and escalated expenses. While a DT project may be considered successful from a project management perspective if it is completed on time, within budget, and with the required functionalities, it can still be deemed a failure if the technology has limited impact or is not sustained (Heeks, 2002). The success of DT initiatives largely depends on their adoption and ongoing use, both of which are intrinsically linked to context-specific factors (Nyame-Asiamah, 2020).

In this study, we adopted the single-case study approach because of its suitability for exploring complex phenomena within specific contexts (Castelnovo et al., 2021; Janowski, 2015) such as Haiti. Haiti is an exemplary case of a failing State due to its representation of the challenges common to many developing nations. Lemay-Hébert (2019) highlights Haiti's struggles with political instability, economic fragility, inadequate infrastructure, and vulnerability to natural disasters – all considered potential barriers to DT endeavors. Unlike developed countries with relatively robust support systems, Haiti's limited capacity to respond to crises makes it a compelling case study. Although qualitative, this research holds broader relevance for the Global South, where countries like Somalia, Yemen, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, and Myanmar, to name a few, face similar challenges. By studying Haiti's context, we aim to make a twofold contribution. First, we extend existing research on DT implementation while demonstrating the limitations of a "one-size-fits-all" approach. Second, we offer insights and actionable recommendations for policymakers, international institutions, and developed countries supporting DT efforts in developing nations.

Background

Context-independent barriers to successful DT implementation

Wilson and Mergel (2022) leveraged existing scientific and grey literature to categorize barriers to DT into structural and cultural aspects (Table 1). They define structural barriers as limitations in capacities, technical infrastructure, or resources; whereas, they refer to cultural barriers as perceptions, norms, and expectations (p.2). However, a closer examination of the studies analyzed by the authors reveals a concerning bias. All the studies they reviewed focused solely on developed countries, including among others the United States, Australia, Germany, New Zealand, Netherlands, Estonia, Italy, Norway, United Kingdom, Slovakia, and Canada.

Authors	*Structural*	*Authors*	*Cultural*
Barcevičiuss et al. (2019)	• Inadequate infrastructure • Lack of interoperability • Limited access to data	Wirtz and Daiser, (2018)	• Bureaucracy • Established practices
Tangi et al. (2020)	• Limited political and management support • Organizational complexity	Barcevičius et al., (2019)	• Ethics

	• Lack of coordination		• Lack of organizational leadership, vision, and strategy
Norris and Reddick (2013)	• Legal constraints • Competing priorities • Insufficient funding • Security concerns • Lack of digital workforce skills	Howes and Kidney Bishop (2018)	• Difficulty articulating the benefits • Lack of evidence-based
Cordella and Paletti (2019)	• Outdated legacy systems • Rigid and siloed organizational arrangement	Pittaway and Montazemi (2020)	• Lack of know-how
Table 1. Common barriers to DT within the public sector identified in the literature; adapted from Wilson and Mergel (2022)			

The context of developing countries and research gap

While the existing literature acknowledges barriers to DT common to both developed and developing countries, there remains a notable gap in understanding the unique challenges faced by the latter. This gap can render existing DT strategies, such as those proposed by Wilson and Mergel (2022), less effective when applied in developing contexts. In contrast to the supportive ecosystems found in many Global North countries, developing countries often grapple with fragile states, underdeveloped private sectors, and inadequate infrastructure. A recurring theme in these countries is political instability, which can be understood as the tendency of a government to collapse (Alesina, 1996). Research by Bowlsby et al. (2020) highlights that domestic political institutions characterized by intense, hostile, and often violent factionalism are crucial determinants of political stability. In such contexts, the essential functional prerequisites for maintaining social order become unstable and are periodically disrupted, which tends to create challenge across various domains, including economic performance, governance, social cohesion, and security (Steinberg, 2012).

Implementing IT systems in developing countries requires substantial infrastructure investments, often beyond the capacity of their public sectors. For instance, cyber-physical infrastructure projects are inherently complex and typically require years for development and deployment (Njihia & Merali, 2013). Therefore, sustained financial support is crucial for their success. In developed economies, public-private partnerships (PPPs) are frequently leveraged for capital-intensive projects. Conversely, entrepreneurship in developing countries faces considerable challenges due to underdeveloped financial markets, restricted access to capital, insufficient incentives, weak regulatory frameworks, and economic instability (Alhassan et al., 2021). These challenges, coupled with political instability, stifle the growth of the private sector in many Global South countries, hence limiting local PPPs and forcing a reliance on foreign partners. However, partnering with foreign investors introduces further complexities. They may be hesitant to invest owing to the risks associated with unstable political environments, such as political interference, unclear guidelines for managing partnerships, resolving disputes, or ensuring accountability. Political instability often weakens the rule of law, making judicial systems and law enforcement less effective and fostering a culture of weak managerial control and corruption, as seen in cases of weak state institutions (Peeters & Campos, 2023; Addo, 2022). In such settings, foreign private companies are likely to face demands for bribes (Justesen & Bjørnskov, 2014) or encounter unfair competitive practices. Moreover, the financial resources available for DT projects vary considerably between Global North and South countries. The former typically have greater budgetary flexibility to design and implement projects tailored to their contexts. Nevertheless, political instability in developing countries often leads to public protests, increased violence, and insecurity, prompting the shutdown or relocation of local firms. This results in the loss of vital public income, which, compounded by corruption, further weakens tax revenue collection. This fiscal disparity tends to create an over-reliance on external funding sources, which may limit the decision-making autonomy of local actors and their ability to allocate resources strategically (Browne, 2006). Consequently, applied to DT projects, these dynamics can hinder the alignment of project priorities with local needs, reduce local ownership of these projects, and ultimately result in suboptimal outcomes (Ibidem).

Finally, Resistance to change is a well-documented barrier to successful DT initiatives (e.g., Berente et al., 2019; Effah and Nuhu, 2017). Defined as the tendency to oppose changes that disrupt established practices

(Wirtz, 2016), this resistance must be understood within the specific organizational and political contexts where DT projects are implemented (Markus, 1983). The literature identifies various causes of resistance to IT, including perceptions of inefficiency, lack of user-friendliness, security concerns, and power dynamics (Vial, 2019; Markus, 1983). In developing countries, however, resistance to DT may be triggered by political instability, which typically fosters highly centralized control (Cohen, 2023). In such environments, leaders, uncertain about their positions and wary of disrupting entrenched systems, may resist DT projects to maintain the status quo (Syed et al., 2023). As Cohen (2023) observes, frequent staff changes in high-level political and bureaucratic roles can disrupt continuity by introducing new veto players who are likely to reverse previously initiated reforms. While some studies on technology adoption briefly touch upon political instability (e.g., Njihia and Merali, 2013; Syed et al., 2023), the full extent of its impact on the DT process remains unclear. This research highlights the need for a deeper exploration of this recurring issue in the context of developing countries. Our study aligns with the call by Castelnovo et al. (2021) to analyze and operationalize the political factors, historical and institutional legacies, and external pressures that shape administrative reforms, particularly modernization efforts in the public sector. In the following sections, we present our study's research method, findings, discussion, and conclusion.

Method

We adopted an exploratory case-study approach to study the process of DT projects in Haiti. Case studies, broadly accepted as the major source of theoretical innovation, are used to understand complex social phenomena and retain real-life events' holistic and meaningful characteristics (Yin, 2009). They rely on direct observation and interviews to study contemporary events when behaviors cannot be manipulated. Our case study is the digital transformation of the Haitian public sector. By focusing on the process of this specific case, our goal is to clearly understand the "how" and "why" behind the stalled progress of modernization endeavors in the Global South countries, thereby presenting a conceptual model for DT failure in a complex developing country context.

Overview of the Haitian context

To provide context for the Haitian situation, we drew upon internal documents from former project leaders and high-ranking officials involved in public sector reform, which trace efforts to modernize the public sector since 1987. In addition, we utilized publicly available reports from the Financial Reform Committee (CRFP-GE) from 2020 to 2023. As these reports are in French, and owing to limitations on the number of pages for this article, they have been omitted in the references. Haiti's modernization journey since the end of the dictatorship in 1987 can be divided into three distinct periods, each characterized by specific goals, outcomes, and challenges (see Figure 1). The initial period, spanning from the early 1990s to the early 2000s, focused on decentralization and collaboration, highlighted by the creation of the National Commission of Administrative Reform in 1997. However, progress during this period was hampered by a lack of clear direction and evaluation mechanisms. From the early 2000s to 2012, the focus shifted towards institutionalizing the modernization process, exemplified by the introduction of new laws and decrees, such as the 2009 public procurement law. Institutions like the Human Resources Management Office, established in 2006, aimed to improve recruitment transparency and training. Following the devastating 2010 earthquake, attention turned to modernizing public finance and administrative processes, particularly coordinating external aid and ensuring transparency in the government financial operations. This led to the current period (2012-present), marked by the establishment of the CRFP-GE in 2013. During this period, adopting new public management principles and introducing the "e-Governance" initiative became central while focusing on harmonizing information systems and providing citizen-centric services. Supported by international donors, these efforts included the creation and updating of government websites, online portals, and citizen engagement platforms. Key achievements include establishing the Inter-ministerial Committee on Information Technologies in 2014 and passing the e-signature law in 2017. It is important to recognize that all three periods were beset by ongoing challenges, comprising natural disasters, a cholera outbreak, political instability, and the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges, particularly political instability and insecurity, have created a difficult environment for medium- and long-term initiatives (CRFP-GE, 2022). This is evident in the mixed success of DT projects, many of which have either failed or are struggling to succeed (Ibidem). These outcomes underline the critical need to analyze how these factors hinder the successful modernization of Haiti's public sector.

Case Selection

Haiti's devastating 2010 earthquake accentuated the fragility of its paper-based administrative systems, which resulted in substantial data loss and underscored the urgent need for DT within the public sector. In response, Microsoft launched a project to digitize government operations and provide cloud infrastructure through Microsoft Azure, initially offered free for three years. However, despite this promising start, the project ultimately failed due to governance challenges, including frequent leadership changes across institutions, and its reliance on international funding. Similar issues have plagued subsequent donor-funded DT projects in Haiti. Thus, our study examines DT efforts within the Haitian public sector by focusing on four of these projects. The first one involved the development of an online platform known as the One-Stop Shop system, designed to streamline the registration process for limited companies. Funded by two international donors, the platform allowed users to complete all necessary steps—from name reservation to official announcement in the country's official Gazette—entirely online, including selecting legal counsel and paying fees electronically. Unfortunately, despite its potential, the platform ceased functioning only a few months after its official launch in 2014. The second project, the Revenue Management System (RMS), aimed to enhance Haiti's Tax Agency's efficiency and collection capacity by replacing two outdated systems with a modern electronic solution. This donor-funded project was intended to allow taxpayers to file declarations online and improve nationwide tax administration. However, since its launch in 2016, progress has been minimal. The system is operational in only one affiliated agency in Port-au-Prince, the capital city, and taxpayers still cannot file their tax declarations online (CRFP-GE, 2023). The third project focuses on the Directorate of the Registry of Movable Securities (DRSM) within the Tax Agency. Established in 2011, the DRSM initially provided only manual, on-site registration and public disclosure of collateralized loan contracts without dispossession upon payment of a fee up to 30 USD, which limited its efficiency. In 2019, with financial support from an international institution, an online registration system was launched. This platform enables members to publicly disclose such contracts, access previous records, and obtain information about the value of a given asset, while also preventing them from purchasing others' debt. However, the system's effectiveness is compromised by the absence of an integrated online payment option, forcing individuals to visit the office in Port-au-Prince to complete the registration process. The fourth project is the Integrated Public Financial Management System (IPFMS), intended to replace Haiti's outdated public finance system. However, this project continues to face significant implementation challenges, which compromise its completion and reflect the broader difficulties in advancing DT within the country.

	Early attempts 1990-2000	**Priority shift 2000-2012**	**Evolving context and mixed results 2012 - Present**
Modernisation	Governance	Human Resources Management	Public finances and administrative processes
Focus	Decentralization	Institutionalization and legal framework	Coordination, efficiency, citizen-centric, trust, transparency, monitoring and evaluation, result-oriented, harmonisation of information systems
Output	National commission of administrative reform (1997)	Office of Human Resources Management (2006), law on public procurement (2009)	Commission for Public Finance Reform and Economic Governance (2013), Inter-ministerial Committee on Information Technologies (2014), law on Electronic signatures and electronic transactions (2017), professional emails, information system departments
Promotion	Intergovernmental collaboration	New public management	e-Governance/ Digital transformation
Events	Coup d'État	Coup d'État, flood, earthquake	Earthquake, cholera, hurricanes, covid 19, murder of the President, insecurity

Figure 1. Evolution of the public sector modernization in Haiti (own representation)

Recruitment

Using purposive sampling (Paré, 2004) and snowball sampling (Syed et al., 2023; Dobson & Nicholson, 2017), we recruited 42 participants with diverse backgrounds relevant to our study over six months, from June to December 2023. We used purposive sampling to ensure we targeted individuals (both IT experts and non-experts) directly involved in IT modernization projects, as well as those in complementary fields like human resources and legal frameworks, using an official document that the Government published on the modernization program of the public sector in 2018, which contains the list of some of the public servants who participated in such projects. Snowball sampling further expanded the pool by leveraging initial participants' recommendations. This resulted in a mix of project leaders (PL), members (PM), funders' representatives (FR), (former) government officials (FGO), civil servants as observers (CSO), foreign and local consultants (FLC) with public sector experience ranging from 5 to 30 years (see Table 2). This pool of participants enriches the study with various perspectives.

Expertise	PM	PL	FGO	FR	CSO	FLC	Total
Nontechnology experts	6	5	4	2	8	3	28
Technology experts	4	4	1	-	3	2	14
Projects							
One-Stop Shop	1	1	-	-	4	-	6
RMS	-	1	-	-	2	1	4
DRSM	-	1	-	1	-	-	2
IPFMS	3	1	1	-	-	1	6
Other IT-related projects	4	3	-	-	2	2	11
Other modernization projects	2	2	2	-	2	1	9
Public sector DT coordination	-	-	2	1	1	-	4
Total	10	9	5	2	11	5	42
Table 2. Number of interviewees by expertise, projects and appointed DT coordinators							

Data collection

Forty-two semi-structured interviews (I01-I42) and two follow-up interviews, lasting between 45 minutes and 3 hours were conducted via video conferencing. Among these interviews, 40 were conducted in French, 2 in English and one in Creole (later translated into English). One interview was conducted by phone due to internet connectivity issues. All participants provided informed consent and permission to record. We focused on gathering details about participants' experiences with (IT) modernization projects, including challenges faced and perceived reasons for project failures. The resulting 202 pages of French transcripts were translated into English for analysis. As mentioned in the previous sections, we also collected internal documents and public archival data to supplement participant accounts and establish organizational context. These data helped us trace timelines and key events and compare participant statements with official reports.

Data Analysis

To interpret the data, we employed a combination of narrative and visual mapping strategies. The narrative strategy involved constructing a detailed story from the raw data, while the visual mapping allowed us to present large quantities of information concisely (Langley, 1999). We followed Schmidt's (2004) five-stage analytical strategy to analyze semi-structured interviews while adopting a bottom-up approach that began with the informants' own vocabulary (Langley, 1999). In the first step, we created separate files for each interview transcript and imported them into Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software. We then repeatedly read the transcripts with a focus on our research question. This iterative reading process enabled us to identify not only the barriers discussed in the background section but also those emerging as context-specific. In the second step, we discussed both common and context-specific barriers, which led to the creation of preliminary categories, such as governance structure, organizational readiness, institutional inertia, and external dependency, along with their subtopics (Ibidem, p. 255). We coded each interview transcript in the third stage according to these categories. We applied the same coding techniques to reports on project progress published by the CRFP-GE from 2020 to 2023, excluding the DRSM project, as well as other reform-related documents (10 documents in total). Like Wilson and Mergel (2022), we identified the

subtopics as inductive codes and the corresponding quotes or text passages as deductive codes, characterizing this as first-order coding (see Table 3). Here, coding is not described as the process for material-based or grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) but is more akin to content analysis of structured data (Schmidt, 2004). Second-order coding involves assigning these coded topics to the relevant categories. At this stage, we revised or deleted any category regularly labeled as "unclassified", meaning it lacked supporting quotes in the interviews (Ibidem). Since "External dependency" was unclassified in only five interviews, we found insufficient evidence to remove or revise it. In the fourth stage, the software allowed us to record the frequency of inductive codes and their co-occurrence in the quotes. We then examined each code to determine how often it appeared alongside other codes within the dataset (see Table 4). We interpreted each category by analyzing the co-occurrence of related topics, repeatedly reviewing the transcripts to identify the most relevant quotes for our narrative, using a psychoanalytic approach (Schmidt, 2004). By examining the relationships between the inductive codes for patterns and processes (see Table 5), we developed a conceptual model that organizes events into three phases of the DT process: the beginning, middle, and end (see Figure 2). This model highlights both the causes and consequences of each event that affects the overall outcome. An event is defined as an occurrence that directly impacts the outcome—here, identified as discontinuity—or acts as a precursor to another event. When two events combine, they produce a stronger effect, represented by a more pronounced arrow in Figure 2. The initial events represent the context in which DT projects are introduced (e.g., dysfunctional agencies), while the mid-process events are disruptive occurrences that significantly interrupt or slow down the DT process in the Haitian public sector (e.g., leadership change). We illustrate these events using the most relevant projects from our study, with each project represented by a specific symbol.

Deductive coding	*Inductive coding*	*Literature vs Context-specific*
"Many attempts have been made to ensure the completion of the business registration process within a maximum of 7 days, but to this day, 12 years later, it is struggling to materialize due to the complexity of the context (…) The main obstacle is the loss of privileges that will result" [I07].	• Resistance to change • Fear of loss of benefits	Literature
"These projects, in my opinion, were part of a dynamics to grant funds, but the aspect of sustainability and continuity is not considered" [I12].	• Absence of continuity • Funding-motivated projects	Context-specific
"I like Haiti, but currently, the country is plagued by gangsterism, deep-rooted corruption, and nepotism" [I02].	• Culture of corruption • Culture of nepotism • Insecurity issues	Context-specific
"Instability doesn't facilitate the transition because there isn't a clear, well-defined vision since each person arrives with their project not adapted to a broader common vision. This results in a perpetual restarting and adapting, which prevents us from moving forward" [I11].	• Lack of vision • Absence of continuity • Fragmented approach to DT	Literature
"The factors are more infrastructural, such as energy and electricity" [I01].	• Energy deficit • Unstable electricity	Context-specific
"People are accustomed to the repeated change of high officials, which leads to a constant fear that the current one will no longer be" [I12].	• Frequent leadership changes • Culture of fear	Context-specific
"These projects are funded by donors who often send their own experts who may not necessarily have the required skills (…) Since the State doesn't have enough funds for such projects, the only option is international support" [I20].	• Financial dependency • Human-resource dependency	Context-specific
The country's instability leads to brain drain, where professionals leave the country for other opportunities elsewhere, which also impacts the quality and availability of human resources." [I013]	• Emigration and Brain drain • Shortage of HR	Context-specific

"In Haiti, since October [2022], we've been forced to return to the old system due to political instability leading to fuel-related issues, bwa kale [a resistance] movements, and insecurity" [I06].	• Impact of political instability • Revert to the old system	Context-specific
"[The Government] wanted to have computers placed in offices without electricity (…) There's no cabling, no internet access, very slow internet" [I34].	• Limited access and poor internet connectivity • Lack of electricity	Context-specific

**Table 3. Example of first-order coding based on the literature and context specificity**

Resistance to change (Occurrences=60)	*Occ.*	*Co-occ.*	*Coeff.*	*Second-order coding*
Culture of corruption	44	13	0.14	
Culture of fear *(Lack of awareness of DT Benefits: Occ=17|Co-occ=4| Coeff=0.9)*	33	21	0.29	Institutional inertia
Preference for the status quo	33	16	0.21	
Top-management support	14	7	0.10	
Absence of continuity (Occurrences= 57)				
Financial Dependency *(Donor-beneficiary power dynamics: Occ=19|Co-occ=5| Coeff=0.13)*	27	9	0.12	External dependency
Insufficient financial resources	13	7	0.11	
Local government financial contribution	14	8	0.13	
Absence of vision *(Donor-driven modernization projects)* *Occ=25|Co-occ=6| Coeff=0.13*	37	9	0.11	Governance structure
Fragmented-approach to DT *(Political influence: Occ=16|Co-occ=3| Coeff=0.10)*	17	6	0.09	
Lack of Political will	31	10	0.12	
Lack of interest (Shelving) *(Culture of secrecy: Occ=16|Co-occ=4| Coeff=0.11)*	24	6	0.08	Institutional inertia
Dysfunctional Agencies *(Lack of coordination: Occ=8|Co-occ=3| Coeff=0.18)*	12	5	0.08	
Frequent leadership changes	26	14	0.20	
Data access and protection issues	26	6	0.08	Organizational readiness
Shortage of human resources *(Brain drain: Occ=14|Co-occ=7| Coeff=0.25)*	21	6	0.08	
Negative effects of political instability	19	8	0.12	Political crisis
Unstable electricity (Occurrences =22)				
Shortage of human resources	21	7	0.19	Organizational readiness
Lack of infrastructure	19	5	0.14	
Limited access and poor internet connectivity	19	7	0.21	
Lack of Energy (fuel)	18	7	0.21	
Lack of digital skills *(Aging workforce and transition: Occ=14|Co-occ=3| Coeff=0.12)*	14	5	0.16	

Table 4. Co-occurrence analysis and example of second-order coding

Patterns	Event: Inadequate and outdated legal framework (Timeframe -Start)
Causes: Interest dynamics, delays, shelving	*"To this day, the parliament and some unofficial actors [the lawyers] oppose the idea of reforming the law regarding business registration [The One Stop Shop]"* [I28]. *"The legislation is not in line with the current reality (…) We've submitted several bills [to Parliament] to address this issue [of outdated laws] (…) they've remained in drawers"* [I41].
Consequences: partially used systems, unused systems, Noncompliance,	*"Not all options in the software are used because they are not adapted to the local legislation"* [I16]. *"We've tested online payment [for another IT related project] with banks, etc. Unfortunately, it's not yet operational due to the lack of legislation"* [I18]. *"A very specific legal framework is needed to set sanctions in case of non-compliance (…), this is what's lacking; laws exist, but the section on sanctions is written so lightly that it's difficult to apply and operationalize them [I19]."* *"Having the laws is one thing, going towards applying them is another thing. For example, it's been 10 years since the Electronic Signature Law exists, but it's not yet applied"* [I33].
Table 5. Example of a key event related to Governance structure	

Findings

By investing millions in the Haitian public sector DT initiative, stakeholders expected a shift from paper-based systems to digital platforms, updated ministry websites, and improved information management systems in order to generate tangible improvements in efficiency, transparency, and citizen services. However, the interview data revealed a stark contrast: *"The results are barely visible; papers are still very present, even the ministries' websites remain poorly supplied with information"* [I15]. This limited visibility of results suggests that the expected gains have not materialized. The interviewees attributed this disappointing outcome to several factors, which we presented into 4 categories as discussed in the previous section: Governance structure, institutional inertia, organizational readiness, and external dependency, each of which representing an area of Figure 2.
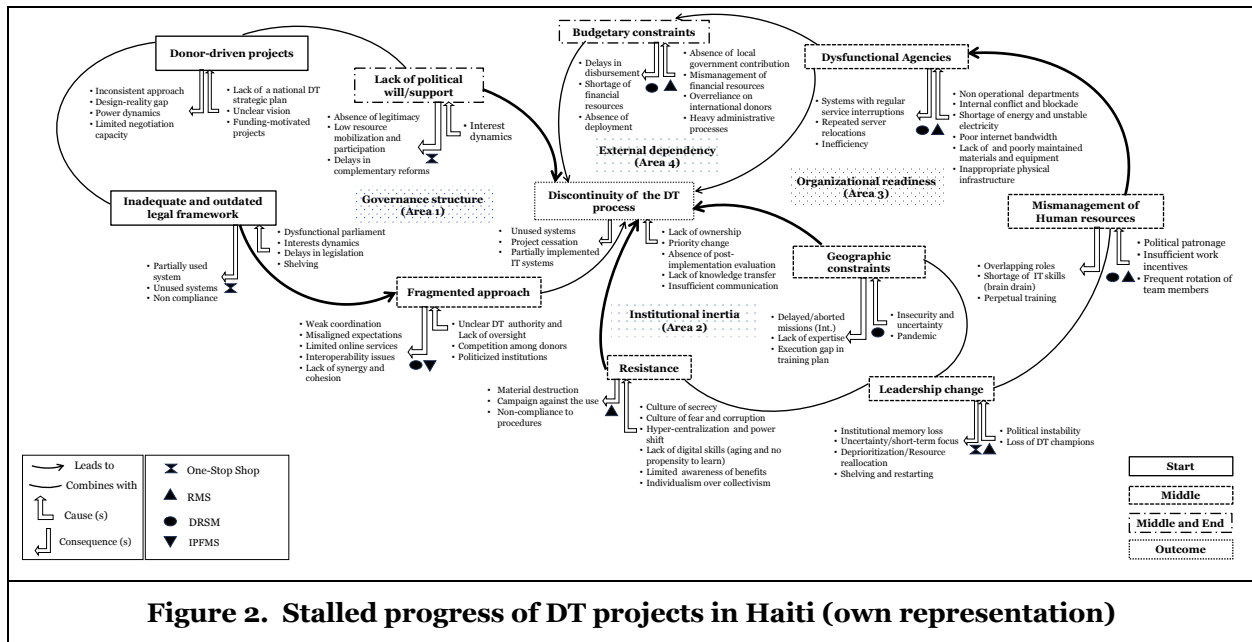
Figure 2. Stalled progress of DT projects in Haiti (own representation)

Governance structure

Donor-driven projects. The interviewees emphasized that the lack of a clear vision for DT often leads to a donor-centric approach in modernization projects (see Area 1, Figure 2). This approach results in projects that fail to fully consider the local context: *"The [modernization] projects are often imported and do not necessarily take into account the local reality"* [I23]. One interviewee noted, *"[The international donors] simply decided to plug and play. Unfortunately, that plug and play does not work in Haiti"* [I40]. Besides,

frequent government changes intensify the problem, as local leaders are inclined to implement projects that serve their personal or political interests, even if these projects do not align with established internal priorities [I29]. When the projects come from local leaders, they are often initiated primarily to secure funding from donors rather than focusing on their intrinsic value or alignment with the public sector's needs. This focus on funding over sustainability further jeopardizes the long-term success of these initiatives: "*These [modernization] projects, in my opinion, were part of a dynamic to obtain funds, but the aspect of sustainability and continuity is not considered*" [I34]. The interviewees also highlighted inconsistencies in donor approaches as a factor undermining the long-term sustainability of DT projects. Donors tend to abandon failing projects and initiate entirely new ones while overlooking the potential to build upon previous experiences and knowledge: "*So, for this [DT-related] project, there were new resources, new people [from international organizations], but nobody touched [the previous project] anymore*" [I40]. Finally, donors often prioritize adherence to spending within a specified timeframe over achieving meaningful results, which tends to lead to inefficiencies [I07].

Inadequate and outdated legal framework. The Haitian legal framework is not aligned with the current demands of the digital age. This misalignment is particularly evident in the absence of comprehensive cybersecurity laws, leaving critical IT systems vulnerable to threats. As one interviewee noted, "*Today, I don't think there is a cybersecurity law in Haiti…. everything related to cyber-attacks, cybercrime, etc., are not given legal attention*" [I33]. Outdated laws that remain in place hinder the effective use of modern IT systems, either by imposing unnecessary restrictions or by failing to provide the necessary legal support for their implementation: "*Not all options in the software [of a system other than the projects studied] are used because they are not adapted to the local legislation*" [I16]. Lawmakers, along with other influential actors, have demonstrated a reluctance to pass new laws or update the existing framework to support the DT process. For instance, "*to this day, the parliament and some unofficial actors [the lawyers] oppose the idea of reforming the law regarding the registration of limited companies*" [I28], a necessary step that would facilitate the smooth implementation of the One-Stop Shop system. Moreover, the laws that do exist are rarely enforced and have minimal impact on the ground because the public and even professionals in the IT field are unaware of their existence, which diminishes their relevance and effectiveness: "*So far, despite the existence of the law [on the e-signature], sending an email to a Minister means nothing (…) I heard there's a law on electronic signatures, but I've never seen it*" [I32]. The situation is unlikely to improve in the near future, as "*The Haitian parliament has been dysfunctional for more than three years due to the failure of successive governments to organize elections*" [CRFP-GE, 2023, p.25].

Fragmented approach. Donor-driven projects in Haiti often result in a fragmented approach, as "*there is competition between donors that harms the country—each donor would like to specify that they have implemented such and such a project without the country making real progress*" [I19]. This fragmentation fosters a lack of coordination and collaboration between the agencies. DT initiatives are frequently treated as isolated, Agency-specific projects rather than being approached as a unified, government-wide effort: "*A [DT initiative] cannot be that of a ministry [an agency] but that of the Government*" [I31]. This siloed approach, where "*each office has its server*" [I37] and "*each ministry has its data*" [I24], leads to incompatible systems that hinder information sharing and interoperability. For instance, in some cases, some systems require a combination of online and in-person transactions due to interoperability issues: "*It's been five or seven years; I don't know… we tried to test and check [the online payment option]. We realized that it's not effective [not compatible]. Unfortunately, that's why we closed this option, and currently, payment [when using the DRSM system] should be made at the [Central Bank] counter*" [I39]. Political instability further aggravates the problem by creating public agencies that are overly politicized [I06], where each one of them tends to prioritize its own interests over the broader goals of the administration [I12]. This politicization reinforces fragmentation and discourages collaboration, as "*there is a systematic refusal by certain [public agencies] involved in the public finance reform to collaborate in promoting transparency in public finances*" [CRFP-GE, 2023]. For example, when the e-Payment option of the RMS system was launched, a memorandum of understanding with the Central Bank was necessary due to its role in handling public funds [I37]. However, a technological mismatch arose when the Central Bank upgraded its equipment without informing the Tax Agency and the Ministry of Finance. Despite successful tests and simulations, the Tax Agency has been unable to fully implement the e-Payment system owing to incompatible equipment. Hence, taxpayers can potentially submit their declarations online but will not be able to complete payments because the necessary integration with the Central Bank's updated system has not yet been achieved. Similar to Syed et al. (2023), the interviewees [I17, I22, I23, I33] also

identified the lack of a clearly defined central authority for DT as another fragmentation-related issue leading to a lack of synergy and cohesion in the process, which is paradoxical, considering there is a decree assigning the DT responsibility to the Bureau of Statistics and Information Technology (IHSI), a technical, non-political entity appointed to provide expertise, ensure coherence and continuity across political transitions. Therefore, it is evident that the absence of a clear, universally accepted hierarchical structure is contributing to the current challenges and stalled DT progress in the Haitian public sector.

Lack of political will/support. High government officials frequently fail to provide tangible support for IT projects, which results in a gap between their expressed commitment and the practical measures necessary for ensuring the sustainability of these initiatives. This lack of actionable support has a detrimental effect on the implementation of planned activities and the achievement of expected outcomes [CRFP-GE, 2022, p. 23]. As one interviewee noted: "*These people [high-ranking officials] express a desire for modernization loudly but do not mobilize all the necessary resources to achieve this end, fearing that it could backfire on them*" [I21]. The One-stop Shop project exemplifies this issue, where initial enthusiasm from officials did not translate into necessary follow-through: "*All these people understood [the benefits] very well, and they didn't defend the [One-Stop Shop] project when [the Leader] left*" [I31]. In general, political leaders often show support by encouraging participation and collaboration among agencies (Van Dijck & Steen, 2023), but due to the politicized nature of public agencies and the prevalence of vested interests, this support is rarely effective in Haiti [I39]. The RMS project illustrates this issue: "*These works [related to RMS] are currently suspended because [the Tax Agency] has not followed up on their continuation. Despite several technical meetings being convened, they never took place due to the absence of representatives* from the Tax Agency" [CRFP-GE, 2022, p.31]. Therefore, the interviewees stressed that the legitimacy and success of IT projects heavily depend on the active involvement of high-ranking officials, or else projects are almost certain to fail: "*If the president understands this [the DT initiative] well, he will put pressure on his [Prime] Minister*" [I31], who in turn will "*mobilize the officials at the lowest level*" [I19].

Institutional inertia

Leadership changes. Successful and sustainable DT projects are contingent upon stable leadership that prioritizes, oversees, and provides sustained support for such endeavors (Syed et al., 2023; Van Dijck & Steen, 2023). However, the continuity of DT projects in Haiti's public sector is strongly impacted by frequent leadership changes (see Area 2, Figure 2), a direct consequence of political instability and the loss of key DT champions. According to one interviewee, "*the problem is that everything restarts with each change of government*" [I16]. New leadership often brings in new DT coordinators, but these transitions typically occur without adequate knowledge transfer, leading to repeated attempts to reinvent the wheel: "*They keep replacing people [as coordinators of the e-Governance unit] who did not even know what to do (...) the three years [to use the virtual server for free] were gone, and nothing was done*" [I40]. When high-ranking officials leave office, the progress of ongoing projects is likely to be disrupted and result in a loss of institutional memory, "*which in most cases is intentional*" [I22]. This loss is mainly caused by the bureaucratic red tape that creates obstacles to accessing information, since "*the process [of obtaining information] is long and tedious due to the involvement of many institutions*" [I41]. In addition, formal processes for knowledge transfer are often neglected for lack of a strong culture of accountability within the public sector, i.e., "*when someone leaves [office], there is no requirement for accountability, where they are asked for a report [that would] facilitate the transition*" [I19]. Furthermore, in the context of political instability, new leadership often brings new priorities, especially, where uncertainties shift the focus away from long-term projects. More concerned with immediate, visible outcomes, new leaders, tend to prioritize short-term initiatives over the sustained efforts required for DT: "*Successive ministers did not give the same importance to e-Governance, which caused the [e-Governance] unit's dysfunction. It was reduced to a single person, [Mr. X] who later became the director of another agency*" [I17]. This issue is all the more important when new political leaders must fight to maintain their position, as one interviewee pointed out: "*The country does not have a legitimate president since the murder [of the former President], the [interim] Prime Minister is in a constant battle to keep his position, DT would be the least of his concerns*" [I40]. This tendency to deprioritize DT is a recurring theme among interviewees: "*We can always talk about [DT], but in actions, it's never a priority*" [I05]. New political leaders often prefer launching their own initiatives rather than continuing existing ones. As a result, resources are frequently reallocated following leadership changes, leading to a cycle of perpetual restarting and readapting [I10]: "*Some computer equipment acquired for the launch of RMS in other [agencies] has been used by other*

departments" [CRFP-GE, 2021, p. 30]. Likewise, when the champion leader of the One-Stop Shop project left, all established mechanisms were dismantled, and funding was reallocated to other projects "*because those who came after [him] did not feel concerned*" [I31]. During the implementation of the DRSM system, the project leader had to repeatedly cut expenses due to shifting priorities, causing serious delays [I39].

Resistance. Resistance to DT within the Haitian public sector can be attributed to four main factors: pervasive distrust and skepticism deeply rooted in the Haitian culture, limited digital literacy among senior officials, a culture of secrecy driven by corruption, and hyper-centralization of decision-making that favors individualism over collectivism. As one interviewee stated, "*Regardless of what is said, done, or brought, [Haitian] people see evil everywhere*" [I19]. While political instability often leads to leadership changes, some senior officials are not easily replaced or retired. As a result, many of them, being older and lacking digital skills, show little interest in DT initiatives: "*These [the senior officials] are people who struggle to operate a smartphone, so what does DT mean to them?*" [I42]. They are also among those who wary of any changes that challenge their traditional ways of working, i.e., preference for paper-based practice [I23]. Corruption, which is deeply embedded in the institutional culture [I08], fosters an environment where transparency is feared. Modernization in general and digitalization in particular are viewed with suspicion, as they threaten to expose long-standing unethical practices [I21] [I24]. This entrenched culture of secrecy severely hampers DT efforts, as illustrated by one interviewee: "*How can you ask the public servants to use an email address on a government domain, when they keep using their Gmail address? So, they say it's for security reasons (…) I think it's more of a posture, there is another agenda behind it than insecurity because having all your little secrets on Gmail is not a problem but could potentially be if they are on a local server*" [I05]. Hyper-centralization of power further complicates the situation, as officials fear that IT systems could render certain bureaucratic steps obsolete, which is likely to reduce their influence. For example, during the implementation of the RMS project, a director actively campaigned against the system's installation within other affiliated agencies and his own, fearing the loss of his [handwritten] signing authority, as documents printed through the system are already electronically signed [I37]. Even when DT projects are embraced, they often become tools that government officials feel compelled to control at all costs. As one interviewee noted: "*The [then] Prime Minister wanted to keep e-Governance under his control*" [I19]. The culture of individualism also plays a non-negligible role, with potential users resisting DT projects out of fear of losing key sources of income, even though these systems would create public value by increasing efficiency. For instance, the implementation of the One-Stop Shop faced staunch opposition from lawyers who feared that the new system would disrupt their income streams, as service fees, much lower than what they currently charge, would be set in advance. Had they not opposed the system, it would drastically increase the number of limited liability companies in the country [I28] [I31]. Additionally, resistance is often passive, as "*[some] users of the new [RMS] system [in the pilot agency] did not follow the procedures … to show that it is not able to do the job, so it is not worth continuing with*" [I37].

Geographic constraints/mobility issues. "*The two main factors that have influenced the timeline for completing the activities are primarily the recurring socio-political unrest and the rise of insecurity throughout most of the country*" [CRFP-GE; 2023, p.7]. Rampant gang violence and widespread kidnappings have forced many people to stay home, thereby limiting the operational capacity of public agencies involved in the DT efforts. These agencies have had to operate with reduced staff, which has had a major impact on the timelines for both the IPMFS and RMS projects. For example, the RMS project team faced severe challenges in conducting training in cities outside the capital, as gangs frequently blocked the main roads, hence preventing the movement of personnel and resources [I39]. Consequently, "*the deployment of the system has been delayed due to unmet needs such as user training*" [CRFP-GE, 2023, p. 37, 39]. Similarly, the progress of the IMPFS system was hindered by the inability of international technical experts to travel to Haiti due to both security concerns and COVID-related travel restrictions: "*Experts were supposed to come to the country to work on the [IPMFS] project… the insecurity prevented this, causing delays*" [I23]. In another DT-related project, an interviewee explained: "*We [the project team] have installed equipment in 7 jurisdictions of the country but cannot use them because of instability and problems related to the movement of personnel*" [I41]. These combined factors have undermined the continuity and effectiveness of the DT process across the country.

Organizational readiness

Dysfunctional agencies. The effectiveness of DT within the public sector relies mainly on the functionality of public agencies, yet many of them are far from being properly functional, which highlights

significant weaknesses in organizational readiness (see Area 3, Figure 2). Some agencies are housed in makeshift buildings, which compromises the sustainability of their DT initiatives, as one interviewee pointed out: "*Currently, ministries [public agencies] are housed in houses, meaning the physical infrastructure doesn't meet the [DT] requirements*" [I10]. Internal conflicts, such as strikes and blockades, frequently disrupt regular activities, causing major delays. This was evident in the IPMFS project, where because of internal disputes, "*[the implementing agency] has been unable to carry out any missions during this period*" [CRFP-GE, 2023, p.21]. Furthermore, some public agencies lack even the most basic infrastructure necessary for DT. Many do not have dedicated IT departments and rely solely on a single "*computer technician... not even a network administrator*" [I24], which is highly inadequate for supporting complex IT systems. For instance, despite plans to deploy the [RMS] system in 22 agencies across the country, no progress has been made. Key challenges include building renovations and the impact of recent socio-political unrest, during which the Tax Agency suffered significant losses, including the destruction of several administrative buildings [CRFP-GE, 2023, p. 37, 39]. The situation is further exacerbated by unreliable energy supplies and frequent power outages [I19], which often render IT systems and servers non-operational: "*It is common to hear that the system is temporarily out of service due to power cuts*" [I20]; "*if electricity is not stable, we cannot leave the servers on*" [I37]. High-speed internet, another critical requirement, is also often unavailable, as noted by several interviewees. For example, when the One-Stop Shop system was launched, it was frequently inaccessible because of poor internet connectivity, which severely limited its functionality: "*The [internet] connection was not quite stable... and often [People] did not have access to the [One-stop shop] system*" [I35]. Furthermore, servers are dispersed across various locations [I32], and the prevailing insecurity led to their frequent relocation, hence impacting their functionality. This constant back-and-forth has severely impacted the progress of the IPMFS project, as public agencies that had begun using the new system modules were compelled to abandon them and revert to the outdated system it meant to replace [I25, I11].

Mismanagement of human resources. Political patronage, driven mostly by instability, often results in the appointment of unqualified individuals to critical positions, thereby compromising the smooth running of the process: "*Even if people are very competent, they are replaced based on different political sources and ideologies*" [I19]; "*Because the guy doesn't know anything about IT, when he gets to an influential position, he tends to replace the IT guy who was there before with somebody who is not even qualified for the position*" [I140]. Insecurity has worsened the issue by fueling a brain drain, with qualified IT professionals seeking more stable and lucrative opportunities abroad. As one participant observed: "*Each time we train them [for a new IT system], there are other institutions in Canada or the United States that snatch them away from us*" [I34]. In fact, human resources departments within public agencies are often ill-equipped to retain IT talent for lack of incentives, such as competitive salaries and benefits. "*The Human Resources and Training Department is unable to retain trained executives (especially IT specialists and Business Analysts), not to mention (...) the exodus of executives and the necessary skills to support the RMS infrastructure*" [CRPF-GE, 2023, p.39]; "*often salaries don't reflect the level of skills and expectations of young individuals who have great IT skills. That is why they leave the country for other opportunities elsewhere*" [I30]. The situation is worsened by inadequate working conditions, with many IT professionals forced to operate in dilapidated and unsuitable office spaces: "*Would these people be motivated to work in somewhat dilapidated offices when the private sector can offer more interesting things than the public sector?*" [I05]. The continuous loss of qualified individuals creates a cycle of perpetual training, where new recruits must be constantly brought up to speed, only to leave once they find better opportunities in the private sector or international organizations: "*The people working on [the One-stop Shop platform] were recruited elsewhere*" [I31]; "*This experience [related to another IT project] was not successful, and with the departure of the IT specialist, the most dedicated and available one, [the project] came to a halt*" [I42].

External dependency

Budgetary constraints. Since the DT projects are mostly donor-funded, the local beneficiaries tend to overly depend on the external funding whether in the middle of the process or post-completion (see Area 4 in Figure 2). For example, the RMS project highlights several gaps in planning and budget allocation. The project commenced without a clear understanding of the financial and logistical commitments required from the Haitian government. Although the outsourced firm's activities were thoroughly quantified, the government's responsibilities—including financial contributions—were not [I37]. This lack of planning was

compounded by the project's initiation in the middle of a fiscal year, followed by a three-year period during which parliamentarians blocked the national budget vote. Consequently, the project lacked allocated funding for several fiscal years. Software development continued and modules were tested, but deployment was impossible because of the government's inability to provide the necessary resources. The little provision in the national budget for reform entails a lack of internal mechanisms for self-renewal that fosters overreliance on external support [I13, I23, I27], i.e., a vicious circle where the sustainability of the DT project depends on the continuous support from the donor or else stagnation and eventually failure will occur: *"[the Donor] considered [the initiative] a failure and disappeared... Because [the virtual server project] was not part of the national budget, it immediately died out"* [I40]. Therefore, this over-reliance on external actors creates an unsustainable model for DT in Haiti. Given the *"weak institutional controls and limited [Haitian] public servant accountability foster a public resource management environment conducive to embezzlement, waste, and corruption"* [IPFMS project document, World Bank, 2018, p.36], the Haitian's public sector is highly dominated by a rigid bureaucratic management as evidenced by having *"multiple people sign a single document"[I28]*. Obviously, this has an incidence on the timely disbursement of funds and compromises the progress of the process. Interviews and reports consistently highlight how the IPMFS system, for instance, has suffered from delays in payment requests due to cumbersome administrative procedures: *"There is often an excess of rules and norms that sometimes block procedures and hinder disbursements"* [I22]; *"some payment requests were simply delayed without any justification. While others were even denied for lack of availability"* [CRFP-GE, 2022, p.16].

Discussion and conclusion

This qualitative study, using a single-case approach, highlights the stalled progress of DT initiatives within the Haitian public sector, focusing on the impact of political instability. The findings align well with two established theories, namely institutional theory (Tina Dacin et al., 2002) and state capacity theory (e.g., Hendrix, 2010). From the institutional theory perspective, the success of DT projects is highly dependent on institutional stability and legitimacy—qualities notably lacking in Haiti's public sector. The absence of a clear DT policy or strategic plan from the outset has resulted in fragmented efforts, intensified by a weak legal framework that fails to exert necessary coercive pressures. This disjointed approach undermines governance structures, making coordination and collaboration difficult. Consequently, many IT projects remain incomplete; for instance, some systems offer electronic services but still require users to visit physical offices to finalize transactions. This reliance on in-person interactions creates inefficiencies, opens opportunities for corruption, particularly when large cash transactions are involved, and endangers citizens in areas with security concerns. Midway through these initiatives, political instability, coupled with the lack of coercive pressures, leads to institutional memory loss, making it nearly impossible to build on previous efforts. In the Haitian context where shifting priorities are common, new leaders often disregard existing projects, which tends to destabilize the institutional coherence essential for successful DT. Additionally, the absence of political support undermines the legitimacy of these efforts. High-ranking officials, such as Ministers, Senators, and Directors General, often fail to mobilize lower-level employees, as they themselves act as barriers to progress. This lack of legitimacy intensifies institutional inertia, fueled by a deep-seated culture of secrecy and a preference for maintaining the status quo, benefiting from corrupt practices. The literature underscores how entrenched institutional norms can obstruct DT efforts (e.g., Bjerke-Busch & Aspelund, 2021; Syed et al., 2023). In Haiti, individuals who challenge these norms, such as corruption and secrecy, are often seen as threats. This perception of threat leads to active measures aimed at eliminating reform advocates, sometimes even resulting in the murder of modernization champions. Moreover, resistance is further heightened by an individualistic logic, where unofficial actors like lawyers oppose standardization efforts that would enhance efficiency, fearing it would reduce their income.

Hendrix (2010) emphasizes that both bureaucratic quality and political coherence are essential components of state capacity, which are deficient in Haiti. The state's preoccupation with addressing immediate crises, driven by ongoing political instability, often eclipses the need to address systemic issues that DT initiatives could effectively resolve. This lack of focus on long-term solutions is compounded by the state's inability to secure robust IT infrastructure, create a safe operational environment, and ensure sustainable local contributions to maintain DT systems (e.g., organizational readiness). Moreover, political instability triggers the brain drain, as qualified IT professionals seek more stable and lucrative opportunities abroad, which further diminishes the state's capacity to manage complex IT systems. The constant turnover of personnel, driven by frequent leadership changes and reliance on patronage networks, leads to a loss of

institutional knowledge, hence making it difficult to build on previous initiatives and maintain project momentum. Further weakening state capacity is the absence of dedicated budgetary provisions for DT initiatives, thereby making these projects heavily reliant on external funding. This external dependency often results in significant delays, incomplete projects when funds run out—as seen with the RMS project—or budget constraints that emerge midway through implementation, as observed with the IPMFS project. Such reliance on external support undermines the sustainable management of financial resources and compromises the long-term success of DT efforts.

Developing nations often rush into adopting new technologies under pressure from international donors. This hurried approach, combined with insufficient attention to the complexities of change management, results in modernization efforts that are largely ineffective. While this paper may evoke a sense of "déjà vu" (e.g., Syed et al., 2023), it emphasizes the critical role of political instability as a major barrier to successful DT in developing countries. Using Haiti as a case study, our research underscores the importance of considering disruptive factors such as leadership transitions and political support when addressing DT challenges in the public sector. In developing countries, leadership changes frequently stem from violent social unrest, which further destabilizes already fragile public institutions. Without systematically addressing these environmental challenges, DT projects risk becoming idealistic and unsustainable endeavors. Reliable energy infrastructure is crucial, especially as technology becomes increasingly energy-intensive. In Haiti, frequent power outages severely impact the daily operations of public agencies, including data centers. This situation is heightened by political instability and criminal activities, such as gangs disrupting fuel distribution. Addressing these energy challenges is fundamental to realizing the full benefits of DT in such difficult environments. Van Dijck and Steen (2023) emphasize that political support is crucial for innovation projects facing active opposition, as consistent political backing ensures continued attention and resources, even amid government changes. Similarly, Cohen (2023) argues that sustained political will and senior-level involvement are necessary for enacting significant, lasting changes in public administration. Our study, through the four illustrative DT projects, provides evidence for both.

In conclusion, DT projects is inherently challenging, even in stable and well-functioning environments. These challenges are amplified in unstable and dysfunctional settings. This research underscores the unique obstacles public managers in developing countries face compared to their Western counterparts. In such contexts, managers must contend with political instability, brain drain, and a scarcity of essential resources, all of which severely hinder their ability to lead and sustain DT initiatives. The stalled progress of DT in Haiti's public sector can largely be attributed to institutional weaknesses and insufficient state capacity. In the Haitian context, where precarious conditions and a culture of individualism within politicized institutions dominate, modernization efforts are at high risk of failure or abandonment unless supported by strong political will (Mahmood et al., 2020). Looking ahead, Haiti's success in DT hinges on addressing critical issues such as institutional stability, coherence, and developing a secure IT infrastructure. Without these, DT efforts will continue to encounter major obstacles. More specifically, stakeholders must adopt a strategic mindset, foster collaboration through appropriate incentives, build organizational capabilities aligned with a clear national DT strategy, and ensure strong leadership and political support within a secure and stable environment. Yet, our study has some limitations. First, it primarily reflects the perspectives of high-level public managers and potentially overlook insights from other stakeholders, including private sector representatives and street-level bureaucrats. This narrow focus may limit a thorough understanding of the complexities surrounding DT projects in Haiti. Second, the minimal inclusion of funders' perspectives might lead to an incomplete understanding of the financial landscape and its impact on the DT process. Finally, the lack of technological expertise among interviewees could affect the accuracy and depth of insights into the technical challenges encountered during implementation. Future research should address these limitations by incorporating a broader range of actors, including those outside the public sector and street-level bureaucrats, to provide a more holistic view of the issue. Further research is also needed to explore how political support can be effectively leveraged to achieve successful DT outcomes, particularly in developing countries facing similar challenges.

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