Digital transformation programmes are changing our current workplace environment (Erhan et al., 2022). Hence, leadership practices will have to adapt to effectively deal with risks and emergent uncertainties resulting from digital disruption (Hensellek, 2020). One example noted by Jakubik and Berazhny (2018) is that leaders will have to learn how to lead in a knowledge and creative economy where success depends on learning, creativity, and innovation. With such projections in mind, Tigre et al. (2023) analysed digital leadership over the period 2000-2020. These authors found that a new leadership paradigm is emerging – one that follows organisations’ digital transformation efforts in response to the digital disruptions that they face (Tigre et al., 2023). Leaders in this new digital world, therefore, need both a new mindset and a new skill set in order to respond to digital disruption.

Africa has also been significantly impacted by the digital transformation age, which has influenced and shaped every way of life (Ndemo & Weiss, 2017). Evidence commonly cited in support of this ‘contagious diffusion’ of digitisation across Africa include 1) the rapid adoption of mobile phones, 2) the number of new digital applications (hereinafter: apps) brought to market, 3) the increased number of mobile money transactions, and 4) the proliferation of entrepreneurial hubs emerging across the continent. Additionally, digital technologies are clearly becoming more pervasive; thereby catalysing the burgeoning digital transformation of African societies (Ndemo & Weiss, 2017).

Although limited research has been done on African leadership (e.g., Abebe et al., 2020; Bolden & Kirk, 2009; Ndemo & Weiss, 2017a), the general view in the available literature is that African leaders fail to respond well to rapid changes in the world (Dartey-Baah, 2014; Kuada, 2010; Ochola, 2007). Digital transformation programmes have the potential, therefore, to offer African leaders conceptual frameworks that could better assist them with responding to new realities (Ndemo & Weiss, 2017). Until African countries develop and upskill their leadership, progress on the continent may remain elusive (Edoho, 2007).

Kuada (2010) argues that over the past three decades, the prevailing view has been a hyper focus by African organisations’ on adopting Western Management practices but they revert to their pre-Western-based training behaviours, which suggests that there is a fundamental flaw in the orientation of Western management practices when applied to the African context. Studies on African leadership have also omitted the potential significance of the role that culture plays in African leadership (Kuada, 2010).

Of further note is how Dorfman et al. (2006) particularly supports the notion that culture provides a frame of reference by which leadership behaviour can be understood. There are elements of African culture that promote unique and positive leadership behaviours (Kuada, 2010). However, there are also some cultural rules of behaviour that may hinder effective leadership and, thereby, constrain entrepreneurship and economic growth across the continent. The failures on the African continent could, thus, be argued as being the result of a lack of understanding regarding the connection between the African cultural context(s) within which leadership is practised (Kuada, 2010). Such insight provides a conceptual framework that acknowledges the macro-cultures of African societies as informing the goals, expectations, relationships, and resource allocation decisions of African leaders. These, in turn, influence leaders’ decisions and behavioural patterns within organisations, as well as their overall contributions to organisational performance.

The impact of digital transformation on Africa will require a new leadership paradigm in order for leaders to effectively respond to the digital disruption the continent faces. With regard to this new ‘digital Africa’ scenario, Kuada (2010) states that the prevailing view that African organisations’ success will be dependent upon their Hyper focus on Western management practices is flawed, as these leadership practices ignore the connection between African leadership practice and the role of culture.

A further concern is that researchers tend to use binary positions; either accepting Western theory and practices of management *or* African management philosophy in opposition to Western conceptions of management (Guma, 2012). April and Ephraim (2006) argue, however, that history cannot be erased, and the influence of multinationals and globalisation are not going to recede. Therefore, as a means of blending the two noted positions, African organisations would need to synthesize the best elements of both domestic and imported ideas. Such an approach would result in a complex combination of convergence – associated with science – and divergence – associated with traditions. This type of synthesis has been termed ‘crossvergence’ by Guma (2012). With this understanding in mind, this proposed study aims to explore a new digital leadership paradigm focused specifically on addressing the unique African digital scenario.