

Digitalisation, AI, and the Future of Workplace Safety: Implications for Youth-Serving Organisations

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Leaders across sectors are increasingly grappling with the profound impact of digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) on operations and human well-being. For youth-serving organisations like LEAP Africa, which engages with new technologies from digital learning platforms to AI tools, this presents both opportunities for efficiency and outreach, alongside novel risks and ethical considerations. These concerns include potential impacts on mental health, data privacy, workload automation, and digital fatigue.

In May 2025, LEAP Africa hosted a Fireside Chat to commemorate the *World Day for Safety and Health at Work*, with a focus on the emerging implications of digitalisation and AI for occupational safety and health (OSH). Beyond fostering internal reflection and dialogue among staff, the session offered valuable

insights into how youth-serving organisations can proactively adapt their workplace cultures, policies, and practices in response to rapidly evolving digital trends. It also highlighted the importance of aligning organisational strategies with global conversations around decent work, staff well-being, and building inclusive, sustainable digital futures for young professionals.

The chat, moderated by [Joy Igbinedion](#) (Alumni Engagement and Communications Coordinator), featured LEAP Africa team members: [Joy Godwin](#) (Programmes Manager), [Oluwaseyi Simeon](#) (Senior Programmes Coordinator), and [Abisoye Ajose](#) (Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning Officer).

Below are some key takeaways from the webinar. These excerpts have been edited for clarity and brevity.

Defining Digital Safety and Well-being in the Age of AI

Joy Igbinedion: *What does digital safety or well-being in the age of artificial intelligence personally mean to you, especially in the context of LEAP Africa's work?*

Oluwaseyi Simeon: Digital safety involves how we manage data and the kind of information we bring online or use to prompt AI systems like ChatGPT. Consciousness and attention to detail in using information provided by these systems is crucial, as people sometimes copy everything they get and may inadvertently release sensitive information. There's also uncertainty about the future of AI, creating a 'middle place' of not knowing if you're giving too much information or setting yourself up for future issues.

Abisoye Ajose: Digital safety is about employee consciousness at different levels. Are we conscious of the data we input into AI and digital tools, and its sensitivity? It involves being aware if someone could access data on the back end. It also implies awareness of potential data breaches from using digital platforms. Digital well-being, conversely, is an intentional decision by an employee to be conscious of their interactions and exposure to AI tools. It means being aware of safety devices you can use to protect yourself from overexposure.

Joy Godwin: To add to what my colleagues have shared, safety and well-being in the digital age also mean being mindful of the human side of our work. Even in the digital age, our work has a soul because we are connecting to human beings. Leveraging AI for things like translating materials into local languages or fusing in features for persons with disability demonstrates this inclusive part. While AI helps with efficiency and working smarter, it's also amplifying our empathy by encouraging us to feel into the shoes of others and interact as they prefer.

This consciousness and deliberate work towards our 'soul work' is part of well-being.

Navigating the Risks and Realities of Digital Transformation

Joy Igbinedion: *From a programmatic perspective, how has the increasing use of digital tools and AI changed the way LEAP Africa works, and what risks and ethical dilemmas have emerged?*

Joy Godwin: Technology allows us to reach more people and communities, including those we previously couldn't. However, using AI for designing interventions or writing reports is risky, especially since we work with young people whose nature is ever-evolving. Relying on AI risks doing the "usual". A research study conducted by Harvard Business School¹ shows that humans, not AI, have novel ideas; AI remixes existing ones. Leaning on AI for programme design means losing touch with human voices and the African context in our work. On the positive side, AI offers a practical, step-by-step approach to achieving ideas, whereas humans with novel ideas may lack a realistic way to execute them. Combining human novel ideas with AI's practical approach is what is truly helpful.

Understanding the Employee and Participant Experience: From Screen Fatigue to Mental Strain

Joy Igbinedion: *What digital health and safety concerns have been observed among programme participants or teams, particularly related to screen fatigue, online engagement, or automation?*

Oluwaseyi Simeon: Prolonged screen time has direct health implications. People experience eye strain and cannot stay glued to the screen for too long, which is why participants' videos might go off during virtual calls. Another problem is zoning out or distraction when focusing on something for too long, reducing the impact of sessions. This is different from physical sessions. A major challenge is inequality or the digital

¹ Boussioux, L., Lane, J. N., Zhang, M., Jacimovic, V., & Lakhani, K. R. (2024). [The crowdless future? Generative AI and creative problem solving](#) (Harvard Business School Working Paper No. 24-005). Harvard Business School.

divide, where different situations create an unbalanced landscape for participation, such as issues with devices or network problems.

Joy Igbiniedion: *How do AI systems and digital overload affect our mental wellbeing, focus, or intellectual creativity in the non-profit sector?*

Abisoye Ajose: Being overly dependent on AI can negatively impact mental health. It can reduce creativity; if AI is always the go-to for tasks like drafting emails, it can diminish an employee's creativity and the human touch in their work output. Digital overload from various platforms and constant notifications is distracting and diverts attention, elongating the time needed to complete tasks. This can also lead to stress, anxiety, headaches, and strain from prolonged screen focus.

Balancing Productivity and Protection in an Always-On Culture

Joy Igbiniedion: *Digital work offers flexibility, right? You can work from home, from the office, but it also blurs boundaries. How can we balance productivity with protection regarding burnout, the always-on culture, and digital fatigue?*

Joy Godwin: Intentionality is key. We must master setting boundaries for being online 24/7 and be okay with them. Normalising rest is important; don't feel guilty for not responding to messages outside work hours. The concept of Deep Work, as in Carl Newport's book, involves blocking out time from distractions like WhatsApp and phone calls to zone in on work. We should be fine with being unavailable during this time.

Oluwaseyi Simeon: Digital work can lead to burnout or inefficiency if not managed. It's crucial to measure what needs to be done within a time period. Use tools like To Do and assign specific times for tasks. Discipline is needed both to ensure work time is used for work and to be accountable to personal stakeholders like family. We should also help colleagues stay accountable, for example, by

scheduling emails to arrive during work hours instead of sending them outside those times.

Abisoye Ajose: Balancing productivity and avoiding burnout starts with effective time management. Ensure your workspace, even at home, is free of distractions. Set aside time for deep work and minimise distractions. Respect boundaries, including your own, by not working beyond a set time. Deliver tasks to others on time to avoid putting pressure on team members. Having consciousness and consideration that our work influences others helps minimise burnout.

Embedding Digital Wellness Through Policy and Practice

Joy Igbiniedion: *What kind of policies or systems can help us embed digital wellness and staff health and safety into our daily workflows without stifling innovation?*

Joy Godwin: Simple policies can be effective. Bringing back initiatives like "no laptop days" and "no meeting days," which were previously super productive, should be considered. Regular 'how are you?' check-ins, focused purely on well-being rather than project deadlines or culture issues, are also needed. There is a need for an organisational AI guideline. This guideline should not prohibit AI use but discourage simple copy-pasting, encouraging staff to add their 'humanness'. It should also address how to cite AI use.

AI and the Future of Impact-Driven Engagement

Joy Igbiniedion: *How can AI reshape how we engage young people and communities, and what should we be mindful of to ensure safety, trust and ethics remain central in those engagements?*

Oluwaseyi Simeon: AI can translate content into different languages, simplify processes, reduce costs, and save time. However, impact work requires a level of personal engagement and a human touch that constituents need to feel. We cannot completely depend on AI; for example, replacing human

mentoring with chatbots would miss the emotional nuances provided by human conversation. While AI can amplify and simplify processes, we must not become so dependent that all interventions are deployed solely through AI. Doing so risks losing the major, emotionally dependent aspect of our work: impact.

Strategies for Maintaining Mental Clarity and Emotional Well-being

Joy Igbiniedion: *What strategies can help maintain mental clarity, focus, and emotional well-being when working with AI-enhanced systems or even working under pressure from AI-enhanced systems?*

Abisoye Ajose: Setting clear digital boundaries for AI use is a key strategy. Avoid being overly dependent on AI and intentionally take time to think creatively and ideate independently. Engaging intentionally with people and taking time off screens to connect with colleagues for human interaction is important. Another strategy is practicing emotional hygiene. After a long day, decongest your mind by taking a walk, getting fresh air, or sightseeing. This helps refresh the mind and provides new strength. Journaling thoughts and experiences can also be beneficial. These simple activities can help reset your focus and reduce mental fatigue.

Bold Actions for a Safer, More Ethical Digital Future

Joy Igbiniedion: *Looking ahead, what bold action can LEAP Africa and other youth-serving organisations take to foster a culture of safety, ethics, and well-being as digital and AI tool use deepens?*

Abisoye Ajose: Setting up a committee or involving volunteers to establish a structure for AI safety guidelines can significantly foster a culture of safety. Additionally, maintaining continuous awareness through newsletters and internal communication channels is essential to share safety practices with employees.

Oluwaseyi Simeon: Fostering a sense of community ('peer learning') is vital. When colleagues discover new practices, information, or ethical concerns, sharing them and having conversations creates awareness. This sense of community will significantly help foster safety, ethics, and well-being as AI interaction deepens.

Joy Godwin: A bold action could be incorporating digital awareness into Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Staff could be graded on their digital awareness, perhaps measured by factors like respecting boundaries and not disturbing others after hours. Making this part of accountability helps prevent issues like working into weekends.

As digitalisation and AI continue to reshape the workplace, organisations should ensure that data security and safety protocols are put in place in order to proactively prevent harm. Embracing Digitalisation and AI innovations is no longer optional, it is essential for building safer, smarter, and more resilient work environments.