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**THE EFFECT OF DIGITALIZATION AND DIGITAL LEADERSHIP STYLE  
THROUGH ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT MEDIATION ON EMPLOYEE  
PERFORMANCE AT PT. PLN (PERSERO) UP3 SITUBONDO**



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**Abstract**

The rapid advancement of digital technology necessitates organizational transformation, compelling state-owned enterprises like PT PLN (Persero) to adopt digital services such as the Yanbung Mobile application. However, its implementation at UP3 Situbondo has yielded inconsistent employee performance outcomes, highlighting a gap in understanding the precise mechanisms at play. This study aims to analyze the effect of digitalization implementation and digital leadership style on employee performance, with organizational commitment as a mediating variable. Using an explanatory quantitative design, data was collected via questionnaires from all 81 Customer Connection Service Officers at PT PLN UP3 Situbondo. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling with the Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach. The results indicate that digital leadership style has a significant positive direct effect on employee performance. While digitalization implementation significantly increases organizational commitment, it does not directly improve performance. Furthermore, organizational commitment does not significantly affect performance nor mediate the relationships between the independent variables and performance. These findings underscore the paramount importance of competent digital leadership over mere technological adoption in driving performance during digital transformation.

**Keywords:** Digitalization, Digital Leadership, Organizational Commitment, Employee Performance

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology and the internet has fundamentally changed how consumers assess the quality of products or services. This shift presents a significant challenge for companies across various sectors to maintain customer trust. In response, many organizations are undertaking digital transformations to enhance operational efficiency and deliver added value through information technology. As the provider of electricity services throughout Indonesia, PT PLN (Persero) faces a similar situation. Amid rising consumer expectations for practical, fast, satisfying, and accessible services, PLN is compelled to digitally transform its customer service systems. Digital transformation has become an imperative, driven by the principle of 'adapt or be left behind' (Zaki, 2019). This process requires not only the adoption of new technologies but also changes in organizational culture, processes, and strategy to remain relevant.

Digital transformation is fundamentally about utilizing digital technologies to alter operations, business models, and customer interactions. A key element for its successful realization is human resource readiness, possessing skills in digital information technology. Furthermore, digital leadership, the ability of management to leverage data for decision-making plays a crucial role in ensuring organizational goals are met in the digital era. However, research indicates varied impacts of digitalization (Khalid & Meyer, 2023). While some studies show it enhances efficiency, flexibility, and employee satisfaction when implemented effectively, other findings suggest it can lead to psychological pressure, information overload, and work stress due to constant connectivity and rapid changes. Similarly, research on digital leadership highlights its potential to foster innovation and commitment, yet some studies suggest its impact on performance may not be direct without mediating factors like organizational commitment.

PT PLN UP3 Situbondo, in line with the company's national transformation aspirations focusing on being customer-focused, innovative, lean, and green, has implemented the Yanbung Mobile application (Yu et al., 2020). This application digitizes the new customer connection service process, aiming to accelerate service and improve customer satisfaction by allowing registrations via the New PLN Mobile app and streamlining work orders for field officers. Following a central directive mandating its use starting August 2021, UP3 Situbondo adopted this system. Data from 2021 on new customer additions and connection days across its customer service units (ULP) shows a decrease in the Average Service Connection Time (HPL) from January to July 2021. However, performance became inconsistent in the second semester (August-December 2021), with HPL increasing again. This inconsistency coincided with the mandatory rollout of the Yanbung Mobile application.

The implementation of digitalization in customer connection services at UP3 Situbondo revealed several field challenges. These include internet connectivity issues (blank spots) in parts of Situbondo and Bondowoso regencies, forcing officers to work offline. Additionally, some officers lacked mastery of the new application, and there was insufficient coaching from unit leaders due to a lack of understanding and engagement. Beyond technical issues, digitalization introduced psychological challenges for employees, such as feeling disturbed by excessive digital communication, pressure from an 'always-on' mode, and fragmented time due to constant task switching (Akinlabi et al., 2025). These obstacles

present an opportunity to investigate how supporting factors like leadership and commitment can optimize digital transformation outcomes.

The observed phenomenon at PLN UP3 Situbondo indicates a potential link between the organizational push for digitalization, its implementation challenges, and inconsistent employee performance (as measured by HPL). While organizational commitment is often cited as a positive driver for performance, evidence suggests digitalization pressures can sometimes weaken it. Digital leadership is recognized as vital for transformation success, yet its direct effect on performance may be ambiguous without considering mediating mechanisms. Previous research on the impact of digitalization on performance also shows inconsistent results. Furthermore, studies specifically exploring digital leadership within state-owned utility companies like PLN are still scarce (Olphin et al., 2025). Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by examining the influence of digitalization application and digital leadership style on employee performance, with organizational commitment as a mediating variable, within the specific context of PT PLN UP3 Situbondo.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Digitalization Implementation**

Digitalization implementation involves adopting digital technologies to transform organizational operations, business models, and value creation, requiring changes in culture, processes, and strategy to improve efficiency and competitiveness. Research on digital transformation projects in firms like ABB, CNH Industrial, and Vodafone highlights the importance of aligning strategy formulation with implementation to successfully renovate business models and extract value (Correani et al., 2020). Manufacturing firms often face challenges in orchestrating competencies, assets, and data, with many focusing on efficiency gains rather than growth, indicating a need for agile organizational structures to fully benefit from digitalization (Björkdahl, 2020). Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) experience particular difficulties due to internal resistance and cultural factors, emphasizing the role of top management commitment, middle management involvement, and employee training in overcoming barriers (Kassem et al., 2024). In the public sector, digital transformation improves service efficiency and citizen engagement but must address inclusivity, accessibility, and data security concerns to avoid marginalizing certain groups (Di Giulio & Vecchi, 2023; Latupeirissa et al., 2024). Overall, successful digitalization depends not only on technology adoption but also on strategic alignment, organizational culture, human resource readiness, and process excellence (Martinez, 2019).

### **Digital Leadership Style**

Digital leadership is recognized as a critical capability for guiding organizational digital transformation by combining technological competence with transformational leadership qualities. Effective digital leaders exhibit strategic vision, adaptability, and foster a culture of learning and experimentation, which are essential for managing change and optimizing technology use to achieve strategic goals (Schiuma et al., 2024; Tagscherer & Carbon, 2023). Research identifies multiple leadership characteristics in the digital context, including being digital strategists, culturalists, and organizational agilists, highlighting the multifaceted nature of digital leadership roles (McCarthy et al., 2021). Digital leadership positively influences innovation performance and employee innovative behavior by

promoting platform digitization and digital skills, which enhance organizational agility and engagement (AlNuaimi et al., 2022). The human-centric and soft skills aspects, such as empathy, humility, and coaching, are increasingly important alongside digital savviness, especially for middle managers navigating digital transformation (Henderikx & Stoffers, 2022). Overall, digital leadership is a key enabler of successful digital transformation, requiring a blend of visionary, strategic, and interpersonal competencies to drive continuous innovation and organizational evolution in the digital era (Müller et al., 2024).

### **Organizational Commitment**

Organizational commitment is a multidimensional construct involving affective (emotional attachment), continuance (cost of leaving), and normative (obligation) components, which strongly influence employee retention, job satisfaction, and performance. Key antecedents include leadership support, job satisfaction, perceived organizational support, work environment, and relationships with colleagues, all of which contribute to higher commitment levels (Fantahun et al., 2023; Hasan et al., 2021). In healthcare settings, especially among nurses, job satisfaction and age are significant predictors of organizational commitment, highlighting the importance of tailored interventions like mentoring and stress management to enhance commitment (Şimşekli et al., 2025; Worku et al., 2025). Affective and normative commitments positively impact job performance, mediated by motivation internalization, while economic and opportunity commitments show less or negative effects (Zhao et al., 2025). In contexts like Lean manufacturing and digital transformation, affective commitment is crucial for embracing change and sustaining performance improvements, emphasizing the role of management practices that foster emotional attachment to the organization (Benkarim & Imbeau, 2021). Despite its importance, research gaps remain in culturally sensitive models and measurement tools, suggesting future studies should explore these areas to better understand and leverage organizational commitment globally (Pandya, 2025).

### **Employee Performance**

Employee performance is influenced by multiple factors including individual skills, motivation, leadership, organizational culture, and environmental conditions, all of which contribute to fulfilling job responsibilities effectively and aligning with organizational goals (Triansyah et al., 2023). Measurement of employee performance often involves evaluating quality, quantity, timeliness, and increasingly, innovation and collaboration, with performance management systems playing a critical role in setting goals, providing feedback, and recognizing achievements (Sagar & Haque, 2025; Vuong & Nguyen, 2022). Research highlights that supportive supervisor relationships, incentives, career development, and emotional intelligence significantly enhance employee performance, with career development showing particularly strong effects (Simbolon et al., 2025). Mental health and work stress also impact performance, especially during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, although leadership styles may not always moderate these effects significantly (Chen et al., 2022). Advances in unbiased performance evaluation using machine learning consider external social, physical, and economic factors to provide fair assessments that aid in ethical decision-making regarding promotions and training (Nayem & Uddin, 2024). Overall, high employee performance is a product of integrated individual capabilities, supportive organizational structures, and effective management practices that drive productivity and strategic success (Indrayani et al., 2023).

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs an explanatory quantitative research design to examine the influence of Digitalization Implementation ( $X_1$ ) and Digital Leadership Style ( $X_2$ ) on Employee Performance ( $Y$ ), with Organizational Commitment ( $Z$ ) as a mediating variable. The research location is PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Situbondo, focusing on the 81 Customer Connection Service Officers as the population. Given the manageable population size, a census sampling technique is used, meaning all 81 officers are included as respondents. Primary data is collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, designed to measure the four latent variables based on established theoretical indicators. This approach allows for the systematic collection of data to test the proposed causal relationships within the specified organizational context.

Data analysis is conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach, utilizing SmartPLS 3 software. This method is chosen for its suitability for predictive research models and its ability to handle complex relationships with smaller sample sizes without strict distributional assumptions. The analysis proceeds in two main stages. First, the *outer model* (measurement model) is assessed to ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs through tests of convergent validity (factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted) and discriminant validity. Second, the *inner model* (structural model) is evaluated to test the hypothesized paths. This involves examining path coefficients, coefficients of determination ( $R^2$ ), and predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ). The significance of the direct effects and the mediating role of Organizational Commitment is tested using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS 3 to obtain t-statistics and p-values.

### Research Hypothesis

This study aims to analyze the influence of responsiveness, empathy, and interpersonal communication on customer satisfaction in telecommunication services. Based on the review of the literature and previous research, the hypothesis proposed in this study is as follows:

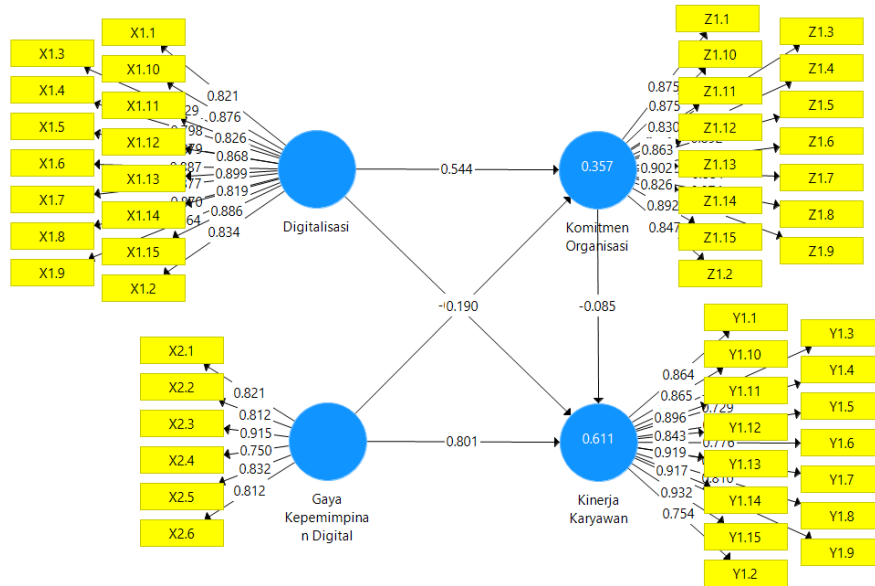
- H1: Digitalization  $\rightarrow$  Employee Performance
- H2: Digitalization  $\rightarrow$  Organizational Commitment.
- H3: Digital Leadership Style  $\rightarrow$  Employee Performance.
- H4: Digital Leadership Style  $\rightarrow$  Organizational Commitment.
- H5: Organizational Commitment  $\rightarrow$  Employee Performance.
- H6: Digitalization  $\rightarrow$  Organizational Commitment  $\rightarrow$  Employee Performance
- H7: Digital Leadership Style  $\rightarrow$  Organizational Commitment  $\rightarrow$  Employee Performance

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the empirical findings and subsequent discussion derived from the data analysis conducted to test the proposed hypotheses. The analysis, employing Structural Equation Modeling with the Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach via SmartPLS 3 software, yielded results that illuminate the complex relationships between digitalization implementation, digital leadership style, organizational commitment, and employee performance within the operational context of PT PLN UP3 Situbondo. The assessment of both the measurement and structural models confirmed the validity and

reliability of the constructs, providing a robust foundation for interpreting the path coefficients and their statistical significance as summarized in Table 1. The following discussion systematically interprets these results, linking them to existing theoretical frameworks and the specific conditions observed in the field.

**Figure 1.**  
**The Oval Picture**



**Table 1**  
**Loading Factor**

Variabel	Loading Factor	Description
X1	>0.708	Valid
X2	>0.708	Valid
Z1	>0.708	Valid
Y1	>0.708	Valid

**Table 2**  
**Loading Factor**

Variabel	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Description
X1	0.733	Valid
X2	0.681	Valid
Z1	0.751	Valid
Y1	0.696	Valid

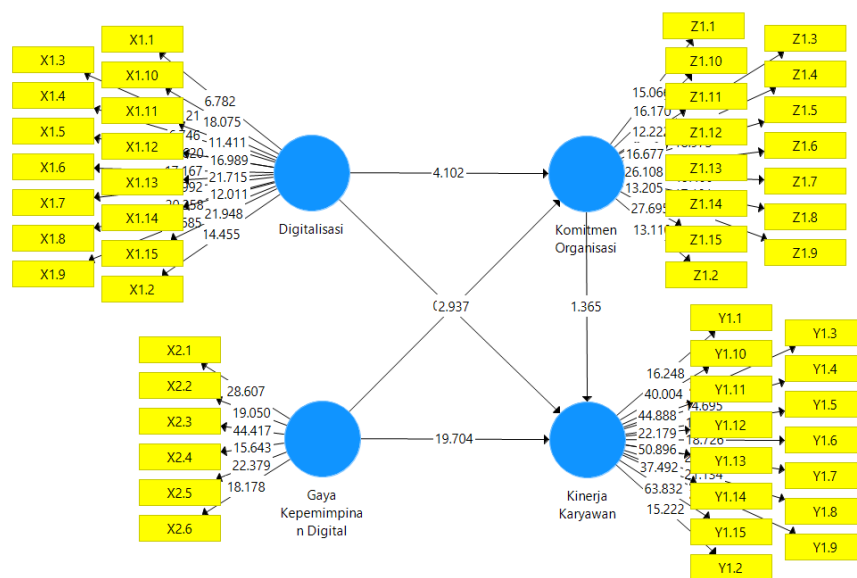
**Tabel 3**  
**Fornell Lacker**

Variabel	X1	X2	Z1	Y1
X <sub>1</sub>	0.856			
X <sub>2</sub>	0.121	0.825		
Z <sub>1</sub>	-0.006	0.772	0.834	
Y <sub>1</sub>	0.567	0.256	0.088	0.866

**Tabel 4**  
**Composite Reliability**

Variabel	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability
X <sub>1</sub>	0.974	0.976	0.976
X <sub>2</sub>	0.906	0.916	0.927
Z <sub>1</sub>	0.968	0.969	0.972
Y <sub>1</sub>	0.976	0.977	0.978

**Figure 2.**  
**The Oval Picture**



**Table 5.**  
**Significance Test of Direct and Indirect Effects**

Variabel	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
Digitalization → Employee Performance	-0.055	-0.056	0.055	1.007	0.314
Digitalization → Organizational Commitment	0.544	0.537	0.130	4.178	0.000
Digital Leadership Style → Employee Performance	0.801	0.806	0.042	19.104	0.000
Digital Leadership Style → Organizational Commitment	0.190	0.191	0.068	2.782	0.006
Organizational Commitment → Employee Performance	-0.085	-0.083	0.061	1.405	0.161
Digitalization → Organizational Commitment → Employee Performance	-0.046	-0.045	0.037	1.261	0.208
Digital Leadership Style → Organizational Commitment → Employee Performance	-0.016	-0.016	0.013	1.248	0.213

Source: Data processed by the author, 2026

**H1: Digitalization → Employee Performance**

**Result: Not Supported.**

The direct effect of digitalization on employee performance is not statistically significant (Path = -0.055, p = 0.314). This finding suggests that the mere implementation of digital systems does not automatically translate into improved employee performance. While digital tools may enhance operational efficiency, their effectiveness largely depends on employee readiness, digital literacy, and organizational support structures. In contexts where digital transformation is not accompanied by adequate training or change management, employees may experience confusion or resistance, thereby limiting performance gains. This result indicates that digitalization alone is insufficient as a performance driver without complementary human and managerial factors.

The SEM results from a business communication perspective indicate that digitalization has not yet functioned as an effective communication medium in enhancing employee performance. The implementation of digital systems without a clear, persuasive, and participatory internal communication strategy may lead to message distortion, miscommunication, and a low level of understanding of organizational objectives (Kunaifi & Syam, 2021). In this context, technology merely serves as a channel rather than a meaning-enhancing element in the business communication process. Therefore, the effectiveness of digitalization is highly dependent on the quality of managerial communication, clarity of instructions, two-way feedback, and leaders' ability to consistently communicate the values and benefits of change to employees.

**H2: Digitalization → Organizational Commitment**

**Result: Supported.**

The relationship between digitalization and organizational commitment is positive and statistically significant (Path = 0.544, p = 0.000). This strong effect highlights that digital

transformation initiatives can enhance employees' emotional attachment and sense of belonging to the organization. The availability of modern digital systems signals organizational progressiveness, transparency, and long-term orientation, which in turn fosters trust and commitment among employees. When digitalization simplifies work processes and improves communication, employees are more likely to perceive the organization as supportive and adaptive, reinforcing their commitment.

From a company image perspective, the significant positive relationship between digitalization and organizational commitment indicates that digital transformation strengthens how employees perceive the organization's identity and reputation. The adoption of advanced digital systems projects an image of professionalism, innovation, and future readiness, which enhances employees' pride in being part of the organization. This positive internal image fosters emotional attachment and loyalty, as employees associate digitalization with transparency, efficiency, and managerial competence (Kunaifi & Qomariyah, 2021). Consequently, a strong company image shaped by digital initiatives not only reinforces trust but also positions the organization as credible and progressive, thereby deepening employees' organizational commitment.

### **H3: Digital Leadership Style → Employee Performance**

#### **Result: Supported.**

Digital leadership style has a highly significant positive effect on employee performance (Path = 0.801,  $p = 0.000$ ). This substantial coefficient underscores the critical role of leaders who effectively integrate digital competencies with strategic vision and supportive leadership behaviors. Digital leaders who encourage innovation, provide clear direction in technology use, and empower employees to leverage digital tools create an environment conducive to high performance. The finding confirms that leadership quality, particularly in navigating digital change, is a decisive determinant of employee effectiveness.

From a spiritual leadership perspective, the highly significant positive effect of digital leadership on employee performance indicates that leadership effectiveness extends beyond technical competence to the cultivation of meaning, values, and purpose in digital transformation. Leaders who integrate digital vision with spiritual values—such as integrity, trust, altruistic care, and shared purpose—are able to inspire intrinsic motivation among employees. By framing digital change as a collective mission rather than merely a technological shift, spiritual digital leaders foster inner commitment, resilience, and responsibility (Rosyid et al., 2021). This value-based guidance strengthens employees' sense of calling and membership, which ultimately translates into higher performance and sustained engagement in digitally driven work environments.

### **H4: Digital Leadership Style → Organizational Commitment**

#### **Result: Supported.**

The effect of digital leadership style on organizational commitment is positive and statistically significant (Path = 0.190,  $p = 0.006$ ). This result indicates that leaders who demonstrate digital awareness and adaptability contribute to stronger employee commitment. By guiding employees through digital transformation and reducing uncertainty associated with technological change, digital leaders foster psychological safety and trust. Consequently, employees develop a stronger emotional bond with the organization, viewing leadership as competent and future-oriented.

From a leadership perspective, the significant positive effect of digital leadership style on organizational commitment demonstrates that leadership behavior plays a crucial role in shaping employees' attachment to the organization. Leaders who exhibit digital awareness, adaptability, and decisiveness provide clear direction during periods of technological change, thereby reducing ambiguity and resistance. Such leadership strengthens trust and credibility, as employees perceive their leaders as competent and forward-looking (Kunaifi et al., 2023). As a result, employees are more willing to align themselves with organizational goals, develop emotional attachment, and sustain their commitment, particularly in environments characterized by rapid digital transformation.

#### **H5: Organizational Commitment → Employee Performance**

##### **Result: Not Supported.**

The direct influence of organizational commitment on employee performance is not statistically significant (Path =  $-0.085$ ,  $p = 0.161$ ). This finding suggests that higher levels of commitment do not necessarily lead to improved performance outcomes. Although committed employees may exhibit loyalty and intention to stay, performance may still be constrained by structural, technological, or competency-related factors. This result implies that commitment alone is insufficient to drive performance unless supported by effective leadership, clear performance systems, and adequate resources.

From a human capital perspective, the non-significant effect of organizational commitment on employee performance indicates that commitment alone does not automatically translate into productive capability. While committed employees may demonstrate loyalty and retention, performance outcomes are strongly shaped by the quality of skills, competencies, and knowledge embedded within the workforce. Without sufficient training, technological proficiency, and performance-oriented systems, human capital potential remains underutilized (Soleh et al., 2024). This finding underscores that organizational commitment must be complemented by continuous human capital development, clear role design, and resource support to effectively convert employee attachment into measurable performance achievements.

#### **H6: Digitalization → Organizational Commitment → Employee Performance**

##### **Result: Not Supported.**

The mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between digitalization and employee performance is not statistically significant (Indirect Path =  $-0.046$ ,  $p = 0.208$ ). This indicates that while digitalization strengthens organizational commitment, such commitment does not translate into enhanced performance. The absence of mediation suggests that digital initiatives may improve attitudes without producing tangible behavioral outcomes unless reinforced by leadership practices and performance-oriented mechanisms.

From the perspective of work ethics and entrepreneurial spirit, the non-significant mediating role of organizational commitment indicates that positive attitudes toward the organization are insufficient to drive performance without strong ethical discipline and entrepreneurial orientation. Digitalization may foster a sense of belonging, yet performance improvement requires internalized values such as responsibility, initiative, innovation, and achievement motivation (Kunaifi et al., 2025). Without a strong work ethic and entrepreneurial mindset—characterized by proactiveness, accountability, and result orientation—organizational commitment remains attitudinal rather than behavioral. This

finding highlights that ethical work values and entrepreneurial spirit are essential catalysts for transforming digital adoption and commitment into concrete performance outcomes.

**H7: Digital Leadership Style → Organizational Commitment → Employee Performance**

**Result: Not Supported.**

The indirect effect of digital leadership style on employee performance through organizational commitment is not statistically significant (Indirect Path =  $-0.016$ ,  $p = 0.213$ ). Although digital leadership directly improves both commitment and performance, organizational commitment does not function as an effective mediating variable. This finding implies that the impact of digital leadership on performance operates primarily through direct mechanisms such as motivation, guidance, and capability development rather than through attitudinal commitment alone.

From the perspective of motivation and technology, the non-significant mediating role of organizational commitment indicates that digital leadership influences employee performance mainly through direct motivational and technological pathways. Digital leaders enhance performance by stimulating intrinsic motivation, providing real-time guidance, and facilitating effective use of digital tools rather than relying on employees' attitudinal attachment to the organization (Zhao et al., 2025). This suggests that technology-enabled leadership strengthens performance when it directly supports skill development, autonomy, and task efficiency. Consequently, motivational mechanisms and technological competence serve as more immediate drivers of performance outcomes than organizational commitment in digitally driven work environments.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that while digitalization implementation significantly strengthens organizational commitment, it does not directly enhance employee performance at PT PLN UP3 Situbondo. Conversely, digital leadership style exerts a strong and direct positive influence on both employee performance and organizational commitment. Interestingly, organizational commitment itself does not directly improve performance, nor does it mediate the relationships between digitalization and performance or between digital leadership and performance. These findings challenge conventional assumptions that technological adoption automatically boosts performance and that commitment is a primary driver of productivity. Theoretically, this research enriches the digital transformation literature by highlighting the pivotal, direct role of digital leadership over and above mere technological implementation. It also introduces nuance by showing that in certain organizational contexts, affective commitment may not translate into performance gains without complementary structural and motivational support, suggesting the need for more complex models that incorporate moderating variables such as digital literacy, resource adequacy, and performance management systems.

Practically, the study underscores that for state-owned enterprises like PLN undergoing digital transformation, investing in developing digital leadership capabilities is more critical for performance outcomes than the digital tools themselves. Managers should focus on becoming digitally savvy, visionary, and supportive leaders who can guide employees through change, reduce uncertainty, and directly motivate performance. Organizations should pair digital rollouts with comprehensive change management,

continuous training, and clear performance mechanisms to ensure that enhanced commitment translates into tangible results. Future research should explore this model in different industrial contexts and incorporate additional mediating or moderating variables, such as individual digital competence, perceived organizational support, or job autonomy, to better explain the indirect pathways through which digitalization ultimately affects performance. Additionally, longitudinal designs could capture how these relationships evolve as digital transformation initiatives mature..

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