




Employee Performance in the Digital Era: The Role of Transformational Leadership and Employee Involvement

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article history:</i> Received Apr 09 , 2026 Revised Apr 25 , 2026 Accepted May 09, 2026</p> <hr/> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Digital Transformation; Employee Engagement; Employee Performance; Public Sector; Transformational Leadership.</p>	<p>The implementation of the Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE) has intensified the need for public organizations to strengthen employee performance through digital adaptation and effective leadership practices. However, limited studies have examined the mediating role of employee engagement in linking digital transformation and transformational leadership to employee performance within public sector institutions. This study investigates the direct and indirect effects of digital transformation and transformational leadership on employee performance through employee engagement at the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Majalengka Regency. This research employed a quantitative associative approach using a survey method. Data were collected from 180 employees selected through simple random sampling using structured questionnaires with Likert-scale measurements. The data were analyzed using path analysis and the Sobel test with SPSS version 22 to evaluate the mediation effect. The findings indicate that digital transformation and transformational leadership have positive and significant effects on employee engagement and employee performance. Employee engagement also significantly improves employee performance and partially mediates the relationship between digital transformation and performance, as well as transformational leadership and performance. Furthermore, Digital Transformation, Transformational Leadership, and Employee Engagement jointly explain 87.1% of the variance in employee performance (Adjusted R² = 0.871). These findings demonstrate that employee engagement plays a strategic mediating role in strengthening employee performance during digital transformation in public sector organizations. The study contributes to the public management and organizational behavior literature by integrating digital transformation, transformational leadership, and employee engagement into a unified performance model within the government sector.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC license.</i></p> 

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1. INTRODUCTION

The implementation of digital governance in Indonesian public institutions has created significant challenges for employee adaptation, particularly in maintaining performance and work engagement during the transition toward the Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE). The Government of Indonesia established Presidential Regulation Number 95 of 2018 concerning the Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE) to strengthen digital transformation and improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability of public services. The implementation of the Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE) requires government institutions to integrate digital technologies into administrative processes and public service delivery, creating substantial challenges related to employee readiness, work adaptation, and organizational performance.

As a government agency, the Ministry of Religion has a strategic role in improving the quality of services in the religious and educational sectors. In line with the SPBE policy, the Ministry of Religion of Majalengka Regency has implemented various digital applications such as e-Office, Pusaka, EMIS, SIAGA, and SIMPEG to assist electronic-based governance. Yet, effective digital transformation relies not solely on having the right technology, but equally on employees' preparedness to adjust, master novel systems, and actively join the shift.

Digital transformation is not only defined as the process of adopting technology. Vial (2019) emphasized that digital transformation includes fundamental changes in the process of change in performance, and leadership patterns in organizations. Within the public sector context, the digital transformation journey frequently encounters multiple obstacles, including employees' low digital skills and their reluctance to accept new ways of working. Research by Ainurrokhim et al. (2024) indicates that the success of digital transformation in public agencies strongly depends on how prepared staff are and on how well leaders back and guide these changes.

In responding to the complexity of digital transformation, leadership assumes a critical function. Transformational leadership is viewed as a style that can foster constructive change by motivating employees, building shared vision, and encouraging commitment to new ways of working, intellectual stimulation, individualized attention, and developmental support to employees. Bakker et al. (2023) explain that transformational leadership directly affects employee performance through daily behaviors that build trust, increase motivation, and encourage innovation. This leadership style is considered relevant in the digital era because it is able to strengthen employee commitment in facing technology-based changes.

Besides leadership, the success of digital transformation is also shaped by how engaged employees are. According to Schaufeli & Bakker (2004), employee engagement refers to a positive psychological state defined by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Workers with high engagement tend to display energy, enthusiasm, and deep concentration in their tasks, which leads to greater accountability and higher-quality performance. The results of the research by Nursalimah et al. (2025) show that employee involvement contributes positively to increasing productivity and quality of public services. In the context of digital transformation, employee engagement acts as a psychological mechanism that allows employees to adapt effectively to changes in work systems and processes.

Several empirical studies have demonstrated the connection between digital transformation, leadership, and employee involvement in public organizations. These works show that when leaders actively support change and foster a digital culture, employees tend to become more engaged, which in turn strengthens the effectiveness of digital initiatives and organizational performance. Wahyudin et al. (2024) found that the success of digital transformation in government institutions is highly dependent on adaptive leadership and active participation of employees in the implementation of electronic-based systems. In line with that, Novianto (2023) emphasized that organizational readiness and human resource capabilities are key factors in maintaining the sustainability of digital transformation in the public sector.

Employee performance is a key indicator in the effectiveness of a public organization which is not only measured by the achievement of formal tasks, but also by contextual contributions and adaptability to change. Koopmans (2014) stated that employee performance consists of task performance, contextual performance, and adaptive performance, which are very relevant in facing the demands of bureaucratic digitalization. In addition, Al Mehrzi & Singh (2016) stated that employee performance is influenced by a combination of leadership factors, motivation, and a supportive work environment.

Although numerous studies have explored how digital transformation and transformational leadership affect employee performance, they tend to analyze these factors in isolation. Research that simultaneously brings together employee engagement as a mediating mechanism between digital transformation, transformational leadership, and employee performance particularly within public-sector settings such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Majalengka Regency remains relatively scarce. In addition, the human-oriented approach to digital transformation as proposed by Abhari (2025) has not been widely adopted in public sector research. This gap shows the need for further research to understand how technology and leadership factors simultaneously affect employee engagement and performance in the context of digital transformation in government agencies.

Hypotheses Development, Digital transformation in public organizations involves more than deploying digital tools; it also reshapes work processes, routines, and employee behavior (Vial, 2019). Well-integrated digital systems can increase efficiency, transparency, and role clarity, creating a more supportive work environment. Organizational factors such as the work setting, procedures, and managerial practices strongly influence employee engagement (Anitha, 2014). From the Social Exchange perspective, investing in digital platforms signals organizational support, which fosters a sense of obligation among employees to respond with greater commitment and higher involvement. Evidence shows that electronic-based government systems can raise employee participation and that digitized workflows enhance engagement by clarifying expectations and improving task effectiveness (Wahyudin et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2024). Thus, the first hypothesis is formulated as: H1: Digital transformation has a positive effect on employee engagement.

Transformational leadership affects engagement by providing inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). This leadership style cultivates a climate where employees feel recognized and psychologically supported, encouraging deeper cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in their work. Positive leadership and managerial practices are key antecedents of engagement because they strengthen employees' emotional and cognitive attachment to their roles (Anitha, 2014). Within Social Exchange Theory, transformational behaviors are perceived as social investments that demonstrate care and trust, prompting employees to reciprocate through higher work engagement. Studies indicate that this leadership style fosters a supportive work climate and enhances intrinsic motivation (Grah et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2019), and other research confirms that engagement mediates the link between transformational leadership and performance outcomes (Buil et al., 2019). Consequently, the second hypothesis is: H2: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on employee engagement.

Digital transformation directly improves employee performance by increasing the speed, accuracy, and efficiency of task completion. From the Resource Based View, digital technologies are seen as strategic resources that enhance individual performance when effectively embedded in organizational workflows (Matt et al., 2015). In public organizations, this means that digital tools help staff deliver services more reliably and responsively. Accordingly, the third hypothesis is: H3: Digital transformation has a positive effect on employee performance.

Transformational leadership is also closely associated with higher employee performance. Leaders who inspire vision, encourage innovation, and provide personalized

support can strengthen motivation, commitment, and proactive behavior. Research in public-sector contexts shows that transformational leadership improves performance through psychological empowerment and greater work effectiveness (Hidayat & Hilmiana, 2020; Hoch et al., 2018; Putri Maharani et al., 2025). Therefore, the fourth hypothesis is: H4: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on employee performance.

Employee engagement reflects a positive psychological state characterized by energy, dedication, and absorption in work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Engaged employees demonstrate stronger commitment, responsibility, and effort in carrying out their duties. Meta-analytic findings indicate that engagement has a positive and significant impact on both task performance and contextual performance (Christian et al., 2011). On this basis, the fifth hypothesis is: H5: Employee engagement has a positive effect on employee performance.

Employee engagement is further positioned as a mediating mechanism that links digital transformation and transformational leadership to employee performance. Supportive digital systems and empowering leadership act as organizational resources that heighten work engagement. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory, increased engagement is interpreted as employees' reciprocal response to perceived support from the organization and their leaders. Recent studies highlight engagement as a key factor in the success of digital transformation (Ainurrokhim et al., 2024) and show that it mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and performance outcomes (Buil et al., 2019). Hence, the final hypotheses are: H6: Employee engagement mediates the effect of digital transformation on employee performance, and H7: Employee engagement mediates the effect of transformational leadership on employee performance.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a quantitative method with an associative design to investigate how digital transformation, transformational leadership, employee engagement, and employee performance are interrelated. This study examines the relationship between digital transformation and employee performance.

The research was carried out at the Ministry of Religion of Majalengka Regency, Indonesia. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of Majalengka Regency was selected due to ongoing challenges in employee adaptation and work engagement during the implementation of SPBE-based digital services, despite the institution's increasing digitalization initiatives.

This study's population consists of all State Civil Apparatus (ASN) and Government Employees with Employment Agreements (PPPK) working in the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Majalengka Regency, totaling 290 employees. Respondents were selected using a simple random sampling approach based on the employee list provided by the institution. The sample size was calculated using the Slovin formula with a margin of error of 5 percent. To account for potential incomplete or unusable responses, a total of 200 questionnaires were distributed to employees of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Majalengka Regency, of which 180 were returned and deemed valid, resulting in a response rate of 90%. Eligible respondents were permanent employees who had been actively involved in SPBE-related administrative and service activities for at least one year.

Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire employing a five-point Likert scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 indicating "strongly agree." The collected data were processed and analyzed using SPSS version 22. To verify that each item correctly reflects its intended concept, construct validity was assessed using corrected item-total correlation, with coefficients above 0.30 considered acceptable at a significance level of 0.05. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, where values exceeding 0.70 indicated satisfactory internal consistency. Prior to hypothesis testing, the data were

evaluated through validity and reliability checks, as well as classical assumption tests, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity assessments.

The hypotheses were tested through path analysis using two regression equations. The analytical framework was developed in two stages to examine both direct and mediated relationships among the study variables. The first model analyzes the associations between digital transformation, transformational leadership, and employee engagement, while the second model examines the relationships between digital transformation, transformational leadership, employee engagement, and employee performance within the proposed mediation framework. Furthermore, the mediating function of employee engagement was examined using the Sobel test to determine whether the indirect effects among these variables are statistically significant. The Sobel test was employed to examine mediation effects because the study utilized a path analysis framework with normally distributed data and an adequate sample size

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Respondent Overview

Table 1. Respondents Demographics

Characteristics	Categories	Number (People)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	116	64.4
	Female	64	35.6
Age	< 25 years	19	10.6
	25–35 years	92	51.1
	36–45 years	54	30.0
	46–60 years	15	8.3
Tenure	< 5 years	28	15.6
	5–10 years	119	66.1
	> 10 years	33	18.3
Work Unit	STAND	30	16.7
	COUNTRY	1	0.6
	BIMAS	4	2.2
	PONTREN	2	1.1
	PENMAD	2	1.1
	HAJJ	2	1.1
	ZAWA	1	0.6
	SUPERVISOR	28	15.6
	EXTENSION WORKER	110	61.1
Total Respondents		180	100

Based on Table 1, the respondent profile indicates that most participants were male, while the largest age group was between 25 and 35 years old. This demographic distribution reflects the workforce composition within the institution during the implementation of digital transformation initiatives. In addition, the dominance of respondents with a working period of 5-10 years indicates that employees have an adequate understanding of organizational work procedures and systems.

The respondents were drawn from both the Extension and Administration work units, with Extension Workers constituting the largest proportion of the sample. This distribution reflects the composition of employees involved in organizational and public service activities within the institution. Thus, the characteristics of respondents in this study provide an adequate basis for further analysis related to employee engagement variables and employee performance.

3.2 Validity and reliability tests

The instrument's validity and reliability were tested to ensure accurate and consistent measurement before hypothesis testing. Validity was checked using Pearson correlation and reliability using Cronbach's Alpha, with the results summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Validity Test Results

Variable	Statement	R	Significance	Status
Digital Transformation (X1)	X1_1	0.818	0.000	Valid
	X1_2	0.810	0.000	Valid
	X1_3	0.860	0.000	Valid
	X1_4	0.844	0.000	Valid
	X1_5	0.812	0.000	Valid
	X1_6	0.869	0.000	Valid
	X1_7	0.817	0.000	Valid
	X1_8	0.800	0.000	Valid
Transformational Leadership (X2)	X2_1	0.815	0.000	Valid
	X2_2	0.798	0.000	Valid
	X2_3	0.813	0.000	Valid
	X2_4	0.820	0.000	Valid
	X2_5	0.803	0.000	Valid
	X2_6	0.801	0.000	Valid
	X2_7	0.810	0.000	Valid
	X2_8	0.815	0.000	Valid
Employee Engagement (Z)	Z1	0.828	0.000	Valid
	Z2	0.859	0.000	Valid
	Z3	0.804	0.000	Valid
	Z4	0.802	0.000	Valid
	Z5	0.823	0.000	Valid
	Z6	0.810	0.000	Valid
	Z7	0.835	0.000	Valid
	Z8	0.802	0.000	Valid
Employee Performance (Y)	Y1	0.799	0.000	Valid
	Y2	0.841	0.000	Valid
	Y3	0.827	0.000	Valid
	Y4	0.810	0.000	Valid
	Y5	0.808	0.000	Valid
	Y6	0.823	0.000	Valid
	Y7	0.839	0.000	Valid
	Y8	0.852	0.000	Valid

Table 3 shows that all 32 items used in this study yield a statistically significant total item correlation at the 5% level (Sig. < 0.05). This indicates that each statement effectively captures its underlying construct, confirming that all items are valid for measuring the variables under investigation. Next, internal consistency of the instrument was evaluated through reliability testing. As displayed in Table , every research variable records a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient higher than the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70. This outcome verifies that the measurement scales are reliable and can be confidently used in the remaining stages of data analysis.

Table 3. Results of the Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Digital Transformation	0,935
Transformational Leadership	0,925
Employee Engagement	0,931
Employee Performance	0,933

Moreover, the Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs exceed the widely accepted minimum threshold of 0.70. This suggests that the measurement scales demonstrate strong internal consistency, confirming that the instrument is reliable and appropriate for subsequent statistical analysis.

3.3 Classical Assumption Test Results

Table 4. Normality, Multicollinearity and Heteroskedality test results

Test Type	Indicator	Criteria	Results	Conclusion
Normality Test	Kolmogorov–Smirnov (Asymp. Sig.)	Sig. > 0.05	0.200	Data are normally distributed
Multicollinearity Test	Tolerance	> 0.10	> 0.10	No multicollinearity
	VIF (Digital Transformation)	< 10	4.033	Meet assumptions
	VIF (Transformational Leadership)	< 10	4.857	Meet assumptions
	VIF (Employee Engagement)	< 10	3.743	Meet assumptions
Heteroscedasticity Test	Significance (Sig.)	Sig. > 0.05	> 0.05	No heteroscedasticity

Classical assumption tests are performed before hypothesis testing to ensure that the regression model meets statistical requirements. The normality test (Kolmogorov–Smirnov, Asymp. Sig. = 0.200 > 0.05) shows normally distributed data. Multicollinearity tests reveal tolerance > 0.10 and VIF < 10 for all independent variables, indicating no multicollinearity. The heteroscedasticity test shows a significance above 0.05, meaning no heteroscedasticity exists. Thus, the regression model meets all classical assumptions and is suitable for further analysis.

3.4 Regression Analysis Results (Model 1)

Regression analysis in Model 1 was conducted to test the influence of Digital Transformation and Transformational Leadership on Employee Engagement.

Table 5. Regression Results of Digital Transformation and Transformational Leadership on Employee Engagement

Independent Variables	b	t	Sig.
Digital Transformation (X1)	0,319	4,299	0,000
Transformational Leadership (X2)	0,568	7,643	0,000
Adjusted R ²	0,730		

Table 5 displays Model 1 results, indicating that both Digital Transformation and Transformational Leadership positively and significantly affect Employee Engagement. Digital Transformation has a coefficient of 0.319 ($t = 4.299$, $p < 0.05$), while Transformational Leadership has a coefficient of 0.568 ($t = 7.643$, $p < 0.05$), jointly explaining 73% of the variation in engagement (Adjusted R² = 0.730). Hence, H1 and H2 are supported.

3.5 Model 2 Regression Results

Regression analysis in Model 2 was conducted to test the influence of Digital Transformation, Transformational Leadership, and Employee Engagement on Employee Performance.

Table 6. Regression Results of Digital Transformation, Transformational Leadership, and Employee Engagement on Employee Performance

Independent Variables	b	t	Sig.
Digital Transformation (X1)	0,296	5,918	0,000
Transformational Leadership (X2)	0,393	6,872	0,000
Employee Engagement (W)	0,243	5,113	0,000
Adjusted R ²	0,871		

Table 6 shows that Digital Transformation, Transformational Leadership, and Employee Engagement all positively and significantly affect Employee Performance,

collectively explaining 87.1% of its variance (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.871$), so H3, H4, and H5 are accepted.

3.5 Sobel Test

Table 7. Sobel Test Results for the Mediating Role of Employee Engagement

Mediation Relationship	Z count	Sig.	Conclusion
X1 → Z → Y	3,315	0,000	Significant mediation
X2 → Z → Y	4,288	0,000	Significant mediation

Table 7 presents the Sobel test, confirming that employee engagement significantly mediates the effect of digital transformation on employee performance ($Z = 3.315$, $p < 0.05$) and also the effect of transformational leadership on performance ($Z = 4.288$, $p < 0.05$), with part of the leadership impact running through engagement. Therefore, H6 and H7 are accepted.

3.6 Discussion

The results of this study indicate that digital transformation and transformational leadership have a significant and strategic influence on enhancing employee engagement and performance within public sector organizations. These findings suggest that technology integration and inspiring leadership behavior are strategic factors in facing the demands of digitizing public services, especially in the context of bureaucratic reform.

The positive impact of digital transformation on engagement suggests that a digitally enabled work environment contributes to more efficient, transparent, and structured workflows. This enhances role clarity and simplifies task execution, making employees more willing to participate actively in their work. These results are consistent with Wahyudin et al. (2024) and Yang et al. (2024), who argue that electronicbased government systems can raise participation and involvement in the public sector. Furthermore, Nguyen (2025) highlights that employee involvement in technologydriven changes is crucial for boosting adaptability and performance amid organizational shifts.

Beyond technological factors, transformational leadership through inspiring employees, encouraging new ways of thinking, and paying attention to individual needs plays a significant role in strengthening employee engagement, particularly in public sector organizations characterized by hierarchical and rule-bound bureaucratic structures. Such leaders foster a supportive climate where employees feel recognized and respected, leading to greater dedication and commitment. These outcomes align with studies showing that transformational leadership builds engagement through positive psychological pathways. At the same time, research by Grah et al. (2024) and Sutanto et al. (2025) underlines that adaptive and inclusive leadership styles can uplift engagement by creating an environment that encourages employee growth and active participation.

The results of this study also show that digital transformation and transformational leadership have a direct effect on employee performance. Digital transformation allows for the acceleration of administrative processes, improved work coordination, and efficiency in task execution. Meanwhile, transformational leadership encourages performance improvement through the formation of a clear vision, providing support, and strengthening employee work motivation. These findings are consistent with research, as well as showing that technology and leadership factors are important determinants of employee performance in public organizations. These findings reinforce the concept of work engagement put forward by the results of a meta-analysis that confirms that work engagement is an important predictor of individual performance in various organizations (Christian et al., 2011; Hidayat & Hilmiana, 2020; Hoch et al., 2018; Nguyen, 2025).

The central finding of this study is that employee engagement plays a partial mediating role in the relationships between digital transformation and employee performance, as well as between transformational leadership and employee performance.

This indicates that both digital transformation and transformational leadership influence employee performance not only directly, but also indirectly through the enhancement of employee engagement, while their direct effects remain significant. From a managerial perspective, this implies that initiatives related to digital transformation and leadership development in public sector organizations will be more effective when they are accompanied by efforts to strengthen employee engagement. In the context of rigid bureaucratic environments, fostering employees' psychological attachment, motivation, and involvement in work becomes a crucial mechanism for translating organizational changes into improved performance outcomes (Wardana et al., 2024; Wardani et al., 2025).

From a theoretical standpoint, this study advances the literature on public-sector human resource management and organizational behavior by highlighting that human factors remain crucial to the success of technology-driven organizational change. The findings broaden the perspective that digital transformation should not be understood purely as a technical upgrade, but also as a social and psychological process shaped by the interplay of technology, leadership, and employee engagement.

From a practical perspective, the results of this study have implications for Public Administrators, especially the Ministry of Religion of Majalengka Regency. The implementation of digital transformation needs to be accompanied by efforts to increase employee involvement through effective training, mentoring, and communication of change. In addition, organizational leaders need to develop transformational leadership styles that are adaptive, build trust, and encourage active employee participation. By paying attention to employee involvement as a mediating factor, public organizations can ensure that digitalization and leadership policies have an optimal impact on improving employee performance in a sustainable manner.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that digital transformation and transformational leadership both play significant roles in shaping employee performance, with employee engagement functioning as a partial mediating variable. This indicates that while both factors have a direct effect on employee performance, their influence is strengthened when employees demonstrate higher levels of engagement, including greater work involvement, commitment, and responsiveness to organizational change. Among the examined variables, transformational leadership demonstrates a relatively stronger contribution in fostering employee engagement compared to digital transformation, particularly in the context of public sector organizations characterized by bureaucratic structures and ongoing SPBE implementation. These findings highlight that technological modernization alone is insufficient without leadership practices that encourage employee readiness, trust, and commitment to change. The study contributes to the literature by reinforcing the role of employee engagement as a key mediating mechanism that connects digital transformation and leadership practices to performance outcomes in public sector settings. However, the findings are limited to the research setting of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Majalengka Regency, which may affect generalizability to other institutional contexts. This research has limitations in the use of cross-sectional data and the object of research is limited to one government agency. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to adopt a longitudinal design, broaden the scope to include other publicsector agencies, and incorporate additional variables such in the context of digital transformation

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