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The Effect of Digital Leadership Style and Employee Well-Being on Employee Performance with Job Satisfaction as an Intervening Variable at the Food Security and Agriculture Office of Binjai City

Florentina Boangmanalu[1], Kiki farida Ferine[2], Abdi Sugiarto[3]
[1,2,3]Universitas Pembangunan Panca Budi, Medan, North Sumatra
Corresponding email: boangmanaluflorentina@gmail.com[1] ,
Author email : kikifarida@dosen.pancabudi.ac.id[1], sugiarto@dosen.pancabudi.ac.id[2]

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ABSTRACT

The increasing integration of digital technology in public-sector organizations has emphasized the importance of digital leadership and employee welfare in improving organizational outcomes. This study aims to examine the effects of digital leadership style and employee welfare on employee performance, with job satisfaction serving as an intervening variable, at the Food Security and Agriculture Office of Binjai City. This research employed a quantitative associative design to analyze both direct and indirect relationships among the variables. The research population consisted of all 40 employees of the institution, and a saturated sampling (census) technique was applied, involving all employees as respondents. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS version 3.3.3. The results reveal that digital leadership style has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction, indicating that leadership practices oriented toward digital adaptation, communication, and technology utilization enhance employees' satisfaction levels. Employee welfare is also found to have a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction, highlighting the importance of adequate compensation, social security, and work facilities in shaping positive employee attitudes. However, digital leadership style does not have a significant direct effect on employee performance. In contrast, employee welfare shows a strong and significant direct influence on employee performance, demonstrating that welfare fulfillment is a dominant factor in improving productivity and work outcomes. Furthermore, job satisfaction does not have a significant effect on employee performance and does not mediate the relationship between digital leadership style and employee performance, nor between employee welfare and employee performance

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed organizational practices and leadership models, particularly within public-sector institutions. Digitalization has reshaped how leaders communicate, make decisions, and guide employees in achieving organizational goals. In this context, digital leadership has emerged as a critical capability, referring to a leader's ability to leverage information technology to influence employees' attitudes, behaviors, and performance while fostering adaptability in an increasingly complex and uncertain environment (López-Figueroa 2025; Wang et al. 2025). For public organizations facing rising demands for transparency, efficiency, and service quality, effective digital leadership is no longer optional but essential.

From a human resource management perspective, employee performance represents a central indicator of organizational effectiveness, especially in government institutions where accountability and public service outcomes are closely scrutinized. Employee performance reflects the extent to which individuals are able to complete their duties effectively, efficiently, and in accordance with established standards and ethical principles (Afandi 2018a; Mangkunegara 2020). Previous studies have demonstrated that leadership style plays a crucial role in shaping employee performance, with digital leadership showing a particularly strong influence in organizations undergoing technological transformation. Hidayat et al. (2023) found that digital leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, both directly and indirectly through job satisfaction. These findings suggest that leadership practices grounded in digital competence and vision can enhance not only task execution but also employees' psychological engagement with their work.

However, the effectiveness of digital leadership cannot be fully understood without considering employees' well-being. Employee well-being is a multidimensional construct encompassing physical, psychological, social, and economic conditions experienced by individuals in the workplace (Diener et al. 2010; Grant et al. 2017). According to the Job Demands–Resources Theory, employee well-being is shaped by the balance between job demands and the resources provided by the organization, such as social support, fair compensation, a healthy work environment, and opportunities for personal growth (Bakker 2023). Employees who experience higher levels of well-being tend to exhibit stronger motivation, resilience, and adaptability, which are essential qualities in digitally transforming organizations (Bakker and de Vries 2021).

In public-sector organizations, employee well-being extends beyond material rewards to include job security, recognition, work–life balance, and a sense of meaningful contribution to public service. When well-being is neglected, employees may experience stress, disengagement, and declining performance, particularly during periods of technological change. Several studies have indicated that employee well-being has a

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significant positive effect on both job satisfaction and performance (Ferine 2023). Nevertheless, empirical research examining well-being within the context of digital leadership in local government institutions remains limited.

Job satisfaction is widely recognized as a key psychological mechanism linking leadership practices and employee well-being to performance outcomes. Job satisfaction refers to an individual's positive emotional response to their job, encompassing aspects such as the nature of the work, compensation, supervision, promotion opportunities, and relationships with colleagues (Afandi 2018b; Saragih and Simarmata 2019). Employees who are satisfied with their jobs are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of commitment, initiative, and performance. Prior empirical evidence suggests that digital leadership can enhance job satisfaction by fostering clear communication, supportive supervision, and meaningful employee involvement, while employee well-being further strengthens satisfaction by reducing stress and promoting positive work experiences (Hidayat et al. 2023; Bakker and de Vries 2021).

Despite the growing body of literature on digital leadership, employee well-being, and job satisfaction, existing findings remain fragmented and context-dependent. Most previous studies have focused on private-sector organizations or large corporations with advanced digital infrastructure. In contrast, empirical investigations within local government institutions are still scarce. Public-sector organizations often operate under bureaucratic structures, limited resources, and resistance to change, which may alter how digital leadership and well-being initiatives are implemented and perceived by employees (Winarno et al. 2024). Consequently, findings from private-sector contexts may not be fully transferable to local government settings.

Preliminary observations conducted at the Food Security and Agriculture Office of Binjai City indicate several challenges related to digital leadership and employee well-being. Employees face increasing demands to adapt to digital systems while dealing with administrative complexity, limited organizational support, and constraints in facilities that support psychological and social well-being. These conditions were perceived to influence employees' job satisfaction and, ultimately, their performance. Some employees reported heightened stress levels and reduced motivation during periods of intensive digital adaptation, suggesting that job satisfaction may play a crucial mediating role in translating leadership and well-being into performance outcomes.

These empirical phenomena highlight a clear research gap concerning the simultaneous examination of digital leadership and employee well-being as antecedents of employee performance, with job satisfaction as an intervening variable, within a local government context. Without a comprehensive understanding of these relationships, digital transformation initiatives in public institutions may fail to achieve their intended performance improvements and may even undermine employee well-being.

Based on these considerations, this study seeks to investigate the effect of digital leadership and employee well-being on employee performance, with job satisfaction

serving as an intervening variable, at the Food Security and Agriculture Office of Binjai City. The study aims to provide empirical evidence that enriches the literature on digital leadership and public-sector human resource management, while offering practical insights for policymakers and organizational leaders in designing leadership strategies and well-being programs that support sustainable employee performance in the digital era.

Method

This study employed a quantitative associative research design aimed at examining the relationships among multiple variables (Ning Wahyuni and Rindrayani 2025). The research framework was developed to analyze both direct and indirect effects among the constructs. Digital leadership (X1) and employee well-being (X2) were specified as exogenous variables, employee performance (Y) as the endogenous variable, and job satisfaction (Z) as the intervening variable. This approach was selected to provide empirical evidence regarding the structural relationships among leadership, well-being, psychological outcomes, and performance within a public-sector organizational context.

The study was conducted at the Food Security and Agriculture Office of Binjai City, located at Jl. Jenderal Sudirman No. 6, Binjai City, Indonesia. Data collection was carried out over a four-month period, from September to December 2025, allowing adequate time for questionnaire distribution, respondent participation, and data verification.

The research population consisted of all employees working at the Food Security and Agriculture Office of Binjai City, totaling 40 individuals. Population refers to the entire group of subjects or objects possessing specific characteristics relevant to the research problem and serving as the basis for data collection and generalization (Mushofa et al. 2024). Given the relatively small population size, this study employed a saturated sampling (census) technique, in which all members of the population were included as research respondents. Consequently, the final sample comprised all 40 employees.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure digital leadership, employee well-being, job satisfaction, and employee performance. Quantitative data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS), implemented with SmartPLS version 3.3.3. This analytical technique was chosen due to its suitability for small sample sizes and its ability to test complex mediation models within a single integrated framework.

The measurement model (outer model) was evaluated through validity and reliability testing. Validity testing was conducted to ensure that each questionnaire item accurately measured the intended construct, as a valid instrument must be capable of capturing the concept it is designed to assess (Sugiarto et al. 2024). Reliability testing was performed to examine the consistency and stability of the measurement instruments. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, with values greater than 0.70 indicating acceptable reliability (Cheung 2024).

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The structural model (inner model) was analyzed to examine the hypothesized relationships among the latent constructs (Hair et al. 2021). Model evaluation included the coefficient of determination (R^2) to assess the extent to which exogenous variables explained variance in the endogenous variable. The Stone–Geisser Q^2 test was employed to evaluate predictive relevance, with values greater than zero indicating that the model possessed adequate predictive capability (Fauzi 2022).

Hypothesis testing was conducted using a bootstrapping procedure, in which relationships were considered statistically significant when the t-statistic exceeded 1.96 at a 5% significance level (Hair et al. 2021). Path coefficients were examined to determine the direction and strength of relationships, with positive values indicating positive associations and negative values indicating inverse relationships. Finally, overall model fit was assessed using the Normed Fit Index (NFI), where values approaching 1 indicated a good fit between the proposed research model and the observed data (Hair et al. 2022).

Results and Discussion

Evaluation of the Measurement Model (Outer Model)

The measurement model was evaluated using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) algorithm in SmartPLS version 3.0 to assess construct validity and reliability. Convergent validity was examined through the outer loading values of reflective indicators. In applied social science research, indicator loadings above 0.60 are considered acceptable (Ghozali and Latan, 2015).

Table 1. Outer Loading

Indicators	Outer Loading	Remarks
Digital Leadership (X1)		
GP.1	0,976	Valid
GP.2	0,987	Valid
GP.3	0,990	Valid
GP.4	0,986	Valid
GP.5	0,973	Valid
Employee Welfare (X2)		
KSP.1	0.943	Valid
KSP.2	0,963	Valid
KSP.3	0,921	Valid
KSP.4	0,897	Valid
KSP.5	0,924	Valid
Job Satisfaction (Z)		
KK.1	0,976	Valid
KK.2	0,985	Valid
KK.3	0,986	Valid
KK.4	0,978	Valid
KK.5	0,895	Valid

Indicators	Outer Loading	Remarks
Employee Performance (Y)		
KP.1	0,958	Valid
KP.2	0,955	Valid
KP.3	0,953	Valid
KP.4	0,928	Valid
KP.5	0,895	Valid
KP.6	0,932	Valid
KP.7	0,921	Valid
KP.8	0,877	Valid
KP.9	0,860	Valid

Source : Output Smart PLS, 2025

As shown in Table 1, all indicators exhibit outer loading values exceeding 0.60, indicating that each indicator adequately represents its corresponding construct. These results confirm satisfactory convergent validity for all constructs in the measurement model.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using cross-loading analysis to ensure that each indicator loads higher on its associated construct than on other constructs.

Tabel 2 ***Discriminant Validity***

Indicators	Digital Leadership (X1)	Job Satisfaction (Z)	Employee Welfare (X2)	Employee Performance (Y)
GP.1	**0,976**	0,976	0,958	0,946
GP.2	**0,987**	0,985	0,973	0,958
GP.3	**0,990**	0,986	0,971	0,955
GP.4	**0,986**	0,978	0,971	0,946
GP.5	**0,973**	0,966	0,955	0,923
KK.1	0,976	**0,976**	0,958	0,946
KK.2	0,987	**0,985**	0,973	0,958
KK.3	0,990	**0,986**	0,971	0,955
KK.4	0,986	**0,978**	0,971	0,946
KK.5	0,856	**0,895**	0,897	0,857
KP.1	0,987	0,985	0,973	**0,958**
KP.2	0,990	0,986	0,971	**0,955**
KP.3	0,963	0,961	0,958	**0,953**
KP.4	0,949	0,952	0,963	**0,928**
KP.5	0,919	0,912	0,921	**0,895**

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KP.6	0,831	0,844	0,874	**0,932**
KP.7	0,811	0,821	0,834	**0,921**
KP.8	0,728	0,746	0,765	**0,877**
KP.9	0,727	0,745	0,760	**0,860**
KSP.1	0,951	0,949	**0,943**	0,930
KSP.2	0,949	0,952	**0,963**	0,928
KSP.3	0,919	0,912	**0,921**	0,895
KSP.4	0,866	0,873	**0,897**	0,892
KSP.5	0,881	0,910	**0,924**	0,883

Source: Output Smart PLS, 2025

The cross-loading results demonstrate that all indicators load highest on their respective latent constructs compared to other constructs. This finding confirms that Digital Leadership, Employee Welfare, Job Satisfaction, and Employee Performance are empirically distinct and meet the criteria for discriminant validity.

Construct Reliability

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE).

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Digital Leadership (X1)	0.991	0.993	0.965
Employee Welfare (X2)	0.961	0.970	0.865
Job Satisfaction (Z)	0.981	0.985	0.931
Employee Performance (Y)	0.977	0.980	0.847

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

All constructs achieved Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values above 0.70, while AVE values exceeded 0.50, confirming that the measurement model satisfies reliability and validity requirements.

Evaluation of the Structural Model (Inner Model)

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) was examined to assess the explanatory power of the structural model.

Table 4. R-Square Results

Variable	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Job Satisfaction (Z)	0.995	0.994
Employee Performance (Y)	0.950	0.946

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

The adjusted R^2 value of 0.994 indicates that Digital Leadership and Employee Welfare jointly explain 99.4% of the variance in Job Satisfaction. Meanwhile, 94.6% of the variance in Employee Performance is explained by the model, indicating very strong explanatory power.

Model Fit

Model fit was evaluated using SRMR and the Normed Fit Index (NFI).

Table 5. Model Fit

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.062	0.062
NFI	0.702	0.702

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

The SRMR value below 0.08 and the NFI value approaching 1 indicate that the model demonstrates an acceptable level of goodness of fit and is suitable for hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted using bootstrapping procedures. Hypotheses were accepted when the t-statistic exceeded 1.96 and the p-value was below 0.05.

Table 6. Path Coefficients (Direct Effects)

Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	Result
Digital Leadership → Job Satisfaction	0.686	12.648	0.000	Accepted
Digital Leadership → Employee Performance	0.132	0.228	0.821	Rejected
Job Satisfaction → Employee Performance	0.027	0.039	0.969	Rejected
Employee Welfare → Job Satisfaction	0.315	5.757	0.000	Accepted
Employee Welfare → Employee Performance	0.818	2.244	0.030	Accepted

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

Based on Table 6, the results of the path coefficient analysis (direct effects) indicate that Digital Leadership (X1) has a positive and significant effect on Job Satisfaction (Z). This relationship is supported by a T-statistic value of 12.648, which exceeds the critical threshold of 1.96, and a p-value of 0.000, which is below the significance level of 0.05. In

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addition, the path coefficient (original sample) of 0.686 demonstrates a strong and positive direction of influence. Accordingly, the hypothesis stating that digital leadership positively and significantly affects job satisfaction is accepted. This finding implies that more effective implementation of digital leadership—such as the utilization of information technology, digital communication, and data-driven decision-making—leads to higher levels of employee job satisfaction.

In contrast, the effect of Digital Leadership (X1) on Employee Performance (Y) shows a path coefficient of 0.132, with a T-statistic of 0.228 and a p-value of 0.821. Since the T-statistic is below 1.96 and the p-value exceeds 0.05, this relationship is not statistically significant. Therefore, the hypothesis proposing a positive and significant direct effect of digital leadership on employee performance is rejected. This result suggests that although digital leadership can enhance job satisfaction, it does not directly translate into improved employee performance.

Further analysis reveals that Job Satisfaction (Z) does not have a significant effect on Employee Performance (Y). This is indicated by a path coefficient of 0.027, a T-statistic of 0.039, and a p-value of 0.969. These findings demonstrate that job satisfaction alone is insufficient to directly improve employee performance. In the context of public-sector organizations, this condition suggests that employee performance is more strongly influenced by structural factors and formal work systems rather than by subjective perceptions of satisfaction.

Meanwhile, Employee Welfare (X2) is found to have a positive and significant effect on Job Satisfaction (Z), as reflected by a path coefficient of 0.315, a T-statistic of 5.757, and a p-value of 0.000. Consequently, the hypothesis stating that employee welfare positively and significantly affects job satisfaction is accepted. This finding indicates that adequate welfare provisions—such as compensation, social security, and work facilities play a substantial role in enhancing employees' job satisfaction.

Unlike the other variables, Employee Welfare (X2) also exerts a positive and significant direct effect on Employee Performance (Y). This relationship is supported by a path coefficient of 0.818, a T-statistic of 2.244, and a p-value of 0.030. Thus, the hypothesis regarding the positive and significant influence of employee welfare on performance is accepted. This result suggests that employees who perceive themselves as being well supported tend to demonstrate higher work motivation, loyalty, and productivity, which directly contribute to improved performance outcomes.

Overall, the direct effect analysis indicates that Digital Leadership (X1) and Employee Welfare (X2) significantly influence Job Satisfaction (Z). However, only Employee Welfare (X2) is shown to have a significant direct impact on Employee Performance (Y), while Digital Leadership (X1) and Job Satisfaction (Z) do not exhibit significant direct effects on performance. These findings suggest that Job Satisfaction may still serve as a potential intervening variable, particularly in the relationships between

digital leadership, employee welfare, and employee performance, and therefore warrants further examination through indirect effect (mediation) analysis.

Table 7. Indirect Effects

Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	Result
Digital Leadership → Job Satisfaction → Employee Performance	0.018	0.041	0.968	Rejected
Employee Welfare → Job Satisfaction → Employee Performance	0.008	0.036	0.971	Rejected

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

Based on Table 7. the results of the indirect effect analysis indicate that Job Satisfaction (Z) does not function as an intervening variable in the relationship between Digital Leadership Style (X1) and Employee Welfare (X2) on Employee Performance (Y).

The indirect effect of Digital Leadership Style (X1) on Employee Performance (Y) through Job Satisfaction (Z) shows an Original Sample value of 0.018, with a T-statistic of 0.041 (< 1.96) and a P-value of 0.968 (> 0.05). These results demonstrate that the indirect effect is not statistically significant. Therefore, Job Satisfaction is unable to mediate the relationship between digital leadership style and employee performance, and the hypothesis proposing an indirect effect of digital leadership style on employee performance through job satisfaction is rejected.

Similarly, the indirect effect of Employee Welfare (X2) on Employee Performance (Y) through Job Satisfaction (Z) also yields non-significant results, with an Original Sample value of 0.008, a T-statistic of 0.036 (< 1.96), and a P-value of 0.971 (> 0.05). The extremely small path coefficient indicates that the mediating pathway contributes only minimally. Consequently, Job Satisfaction does not serve as an intervening variable in the relationship between employee welfare and employee performance, leading to the rejection of the corresponding hypothesis.

Overall, the findings of the indirect effect analysis confirm that Job Satisfaction (Z) does not mediate the relationships between Digital Leadership Style (X1) and Employee Welfare (X2) on Employee Performance (Y). These findings suggest that although digital leadership style and employee welfare significantly influence job satisfaction, such satisfaction is not sufficient to transmit their effects in a meaningful way toward improving employee performance.

Thus, within the context of this study conducted at the Department of Food Security and Agriculture of Binjai City, Job Satisfaction plays a role more as a consequential variable rather than an intervening variable. In other words, improvements in job satisfaction driven by digital leadership and employee welfare do not automatically translate into enhanced employee performance. Therefore, efforts to improve employee performance should focus on other strategies that have a direct impact, such as

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strengthening work systems, implementing digital-based performance evaluations, and enhancing the effectiveness of task execution and employee responsibilities.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the structural model (inner model) analysis using the SEM-PLS approach, as well as the preceding discussion, several conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. Digital Leadership Style has a positive and significant effect on Employee Job Satisfaction.
   The hypothesis testing results show a T-statistic of 12.648 (> 1.96) and a P-value of 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating that the hypothesis is accepted. The strong path coefficient (β = 0.686) suggests that the implementation of digital leadership that is adaptive, communicative, and technology-oriented is capable of enhancing employee job satisfaction. Employees feel more supported, facilitated, and assisted in carrying out their tasks when leadership is practiced in a digital and responsive manner.
2. Digital Leadership Style does not have a significant direct effect on Employee Performance.
   The analysis indicates a T-statistic of 0.228 (< 1.96) and a P-value of 0.821 (> 0.05); therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. Although the path coefficient shows a positive direction (β = 0.132), digital leadership has not been able to directly improve employee performance. This finding suggests that employee performance in government organizations is more strongly influenced by technical factors, regulatory frameworks, and formal work systems rather than leadership style alone.
3. Employee Welfare has a positive and significant effect on Employee Job Satisfaction.
   The test results reveal a T-statistic of 5.757 (> 1.96) and a P-value of 0.000 (< 0.05), leading to the acceptance of the hypothesis. The path coefficient (β = 0.315) indicates that higher levels of employee welfare—covering compensation, social security, and work facilities—are associated with higher levels of job satisfaction.
4. Employee Welfare has a positive and significant direct effect on Employee Performance.
   The results show a T-statistic of 2.244 (> 1.96) and a P-value of 0.030 (< 0.05), indicating that the hypothesis is accepted. The relatively high path coefficient (β = 0.818) demonstrates that employee welfare is a dominant factor that directly enhances employee performance. This finding implies that the fulfillment of employee welfare not only affects psychological well-being but also serves as a direct driver of productivity and performance achievement.
5. Job Satisfaction does not have a significant effect on Employee Performance.
   The analysis yields a T-statistic of 0.039 (< 1.96) and a P-value of 0.969 (> 0.05), resulting in the rejection of the hypothesis. This finding indicates that employees' perceived job satisfaction does not necessarily lead to improved performance. In the

context of government organizations, employee performance appears to be more strongly determined by structural elements such as systems, procedures, work targets, and formal performance evaluation mechanisms.

6. Job Satisfaction does not mediate the relationship between Digital Leadership Style and Employee Performance.
   The indirect effect test shows a T-statistic of 0.041 (< 1.96) and a P-value of 0.968 (> 0.05). Therefore, Job Satisfaction does not function as an intervening variable in the relationship between digital leadership style and employee performance. This indicates that the influence of digital leadership on performance does not occur through the mechanism of job satisfaction.
7. Job Satisfaction does not mediate the relationship between Employee Welfare and Employee Performance.
   A T-statistic of 0.036 (< 1.96) and a P-value of 0.971 (> 0.05) indicate that the indirect effect of employee welfare on performance through job satisfaction is not significant. This finding confirms that employee welfare is more effective in improving performance through a direct effect, rather than indirectly through job satisfaction as a mediating variable.

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