

THE INFLUENCE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP, DIGITAL COMPETENCE, AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ON THE PERFORMANCE OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AT THE PANAI TENGAH SUBDISTRICT OFFICE

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Abstract. Employee performance in public sector organizations is increasingly influenced by leadership practices, digital capabilities, and employee involvement, particularly in the context of rapid digital transformation. Subdistrict offices, as the frontline of public services, are required to adapt to technological changes while maintaining effective organizational management. This study aims to examine the effect of transformational leadership, digital competence, and employee engagement on employee performance at the Panai Tengah Subdistrict Office. A quantitative research approach was employed using a survey method. Data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to employees of the Panai Tengah Subdistrict Office, with a total of 80 respondents involved in this study. The collected data were analyzed using multiple linear regression analysis, including partial tests, simultaneous tests, and coefficient of determination analysis. The results of the study reveal that, partially, transformational leadership does not have a significant effect on employee performance, indicating that leadership practices implemented in the organization have not yet directly influenced individual performance outcomes. Employee engagement, which was measured through internal communication, also does not show a significant effect on employee performance, suggesting that existing communication patterns have not fully encouraged active participation and commitment among employees. In contrast, digital competence has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, demonstrating that employees' ability to utilize digital technology, manage information, and operate digital tools effectively plays a crucial role in enhancing work productivity and performance quality. Simultaneously, transformational leadership, digital competence, and employee engagement have a significant effect on employee performance. The coefficient of determination indicates that a large proportion of employee performance variation can be explained by the independent variables examined in this study. These findings imply that strengthening digital competence, supported by effective leadership and improved employee engagement, is essential for improving employee performance in public sector organizations.

Keywords: transformational leadership, digital competence, employee engagement, employee performance.

I. INTRODUCTION

Organizational development in the digital era requires continuous improvements in employee performance through various dimensions, including employee engagement, digital competence, communication practices, and adaptation to evolving work cultures. The increasingly competitive business environment compels organizations to optimize their human resources in order to respond effectively to rapid changes. In this context, employee performance depends not only on technical capabilities but also on employees' level of engagement, their ability to utilize digital technologies, and the quality of internal communication within the organization. This phenomenon is evident across various industries, including medium-sized enterprises such as *Commanditaire Vennootschap* (CV), which require adaptive and productive employees to support digitalized business operations.

Employee performance in modern organizations cannot be separated from the ability of human resources to adapt to digital transformation. Numerous studies have identified digital

competence as a key determinant of work effectiveness. Emilia and Soemaryani (2025) and Larasshati and Priyastiwi (2024) found that digital competence significantly influences employee performance, particularly in occupations requiring intensive use of information technology. Pahlan et al. (2025) emphasized that digital competence should be supported by an adaptive organizational culture to improve the performance of human resource managers, while Mursalim (2025) demonstrated that digital transformation enhances employee performance by strengthening digital capabilities.

In addition to digital competence, employee engagement has received increasing attention because of its direct relationship with organizational commitment, motivation, and job performance. Employees who are emotionally and cognitively engaged tend to demonstrate superior work performance. Alamsyah and Ardiana (2025) explained that employee engagement directly contributes to improved performance in industrial organizations. Likewise, Galu et al. (2025), Sandrawati and Aprianti (2025), and Wenas et al. (2025)

reported that employee engagement significantly enhances performance by increasing job satisfaction and work motivation. Even within the creative industry, Ahyat and Hamdi (2024) argued that employee engagement strengthens work efficiency through greater dedication and a supportive working environment.

Internal communication is another important factor determining how effectively organizational objectives are translated into employees' actions. Open, transparent, and effective communication promotes better coordination and facilitates productive collaboration. Handayani et al. (2024) found that intensive internal communication significantly improves employee performance when supported by effective teamwork. Similarly, Alamsyah and Ardiana (2025) reported that effective internal communication enhances employee performance by providing clear work instructions and ensuring alignment with organizational goals. In digitally oriented organizations, internal communication also functions as a catalyst for innovation and integrated work processes.

Transformational leadership is also widely recognized as an important determinant of employee performance because visionary leaders inspire motivation, creativity, and organizational commitment. Previous studies conducted by Fikri et al. (2025), Saputra and Fadhilah (2025), and Trimulyana (2025) demonstrated that transformational leadership strengthens organizational performance in the digital era. Likewise, Suratno (2024) explained that effective leadership directly improves employee performance by fostering inspiration and empowerment. Although transformational leadership is not the primary focus of the present study, these findings suggest that employee performance is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by multiple organizational factors.

The relationships among employee engagement, digital competence, and internal communication have been widely supported by empirical evidence. Heslina and Syahrani (2021) reported that employee engagement and human resource competence have strong positive effects on employee performance in technology-based organizations. Baharrudin et al. (2021) similarly found that digital competence and employee engagement significantly improve performance in government institutions. Furthermore, Saragih et al. (2025) demonstrated that leadership and technology utilization enhance lecturers' performance, reinforcing the argument that digitalization has become an important driver of organizational performance in contemporary workplaces.

Despite the growing body of literature, studies integrating the three key variables—employee engagement, digital competence, and internal communication—into a single model explaining employee performance remain relatively limited, particularly within small and medium-sized enterprises such as *Commanditaire Vennootschap* (CV), which differ substantially from government institutions and technology-based companies. Most previous research has focused on sectors such as e-commerce, public administration, education, or large corporations. Comparatively little attention has been given to understanding how these factors influence employee performance within small and medium-sized enterprises,

despite their distinct organizational structures, working environments, and management practices.

Moreover, previous studies have generally examined only partial relationships, such as the influence of digital competence on employee performance or the relationship between employee engagement and performance, without considering the integrative role of internal communication. In practice, internal communication serves as an essential mechanism that connects employee engagement and digital competence with the effective execution of daily work activities. This research gap highlights the need for a more comprehensive investigation that simultaneously examines these three variables within a specific organizational context.

The urgency of this study has increased as organizations operating in the digital era are required to adapt rapidly in order to maintain productivity and competitive advantage. Small and medium-sized enterprises across various regions, including companies such as CV Berkas Utama Perkasa, trading companies, and family-owned businesses, frequently encounter challenges related to uneven employee competencies, low levels of engagement, and ineffective internal communication. Understanding the determinants of employee performance will enable organizations to formulate evidence-based strategies aimed at improving organizational effectiveness and employee productivity.

Based on the foregoing discussion, examining the influence of employee engagement, digital competence, and internal communication on employee performance is both relevant and necessary. This study is expected to contribute theoretically by enriching the human resource management literature in the context of digital transformation. In addition, it offers practical implications for organizations, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, by providing insights into the development of more effective, sustainable, and technology-responsive human resource management strategies.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement refers to a psychological state in which employees develop emotional, cognitive, and physical attachment to their work, leading them to commit themselves to achieving optimal performance. Employees who are actively engaged demonstrate enthusiasm, a strong sense of belonging, and a willingness to exert extra effort in accomplishing organizational goals. Alamsyah and Ardiana (2025) explained that employee engagement is a significant factor that directly contributes to improved employee performance through enhanced motivation. Similarly, Galu et al. (2025) and Sandrawati and Aprianti (2025) reported that employee engagement positively influences performance by increasing job satisfaction and employees' readiness to perform their duties. Within the creative industry, employee engagement has also been shown to strengthen work efficiency and productivity (Ahyat & Hamdi, 2024), highlighting its importance as a key determinant of organizational performance.

The dimensions of employee engagement generally consist of vigor, dedication, and absorption, as proposed in the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). Vigor reflects employees' energy, resilience, and willingness to invest effort in their work. Dedication measures employees' enthusiasm, inspiration, and sense of pride in their jobs. Absorption refers to the extent to

which employees become fully immersed in their work, often experiencing a loss of awareness of time. Other commonly used indicators include organizational commitment, work motivation, and willingness to exert discretionary effort (Galu et al., 2025; Wenas et al., 2025). These dimensions provide an appropriate framework for assessing employee engagement within organizational settings.

Digital Competence

Digital competence refers to employees' ability to understand, utilize, and manage digital technologies to support work processes effectively. It encompasses technical capabilities, digital literacy, digital innovation, and the ability to adapt to technology-based systems. Emilia and Soemaryani (2025) identified digital competence as a critical determinant of employee performance within public sector organizations. Likewise, Larasshati and Priyastivi (2024) found that higher levels of digital competence are associated with better employee performance in modern organizations. Mursalim (2025) and Pahlani et al. (2025) further emphasized that digital competence serves as a key catalyst for transforming human resource capabilities in the digital era.

The dimensions of digital competence include digital literacy, digital skills, digital communication, problem-solving, and digital security awareness. Digital literacy measures employees' ability to critically evaluate and understand digital information. Digital skills refer to the ability to operate digital devices and work-related software effectively. Digital communication assesses employees' ability to communicate through digital platforms. Problem-solving evaluates employees' capacity to utilize technology to complete work-related tasks efficiently. Digital security awareness measures employees' understanding of data security principles and safe technology usage (Handayani et al., 2024; Tatli et al., 2023; Heidari et al., 2021). These dimensions are widely used to evaluate employees' digital readiness and their ability to support organizational performance.

Internal Communication

Internal communication refers to the process of transmitting information, instructions, and organizational messages among different units within an organization to facilitate effective coordination. Effective internal communication enables a clear, transparent, and two-way flow of information, thereby fostering collaboration and organizational effectiveness. Handayani et al. (2024) reported that intensive internal communication significantly improves employee performance by creating shared understanding during task execution. Similarly, Alamsyah and Ardiana (2025) demonstrated that internal communication has a significant positive effect on employee performance because it ensures alignment between organizational objectives and employees' actions. Other studies have also emphasized that effective communication supports digital transformation and enhances human resource performance (Pham et al., 2025).

The dimensions of internal communication include clarity, accuracy, timeliness, openness, and feedback. Clarity evaluates the extent to which organizational messages are communicated clearly to employees. Accuracy measures the precision and

reliability of information, minimizing misunderstandings. Timeliness assesses whether information is delivered promptly to support work activities. Openness refers to transparency and opportunities for dialogue between supervisors and employees. Feedback measures the extent to which organizations provide constructive responses regarding employee performance and communication-related issues. These dimensions are commonly used to assess the effectiveness of organizational communication (Alamsyah & Ardiana, 2025; Handayani et al., 2024).

Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to the level of work accomplishment achieved by employees in carrying out their assigned duties and responsibilities. Performance encompasses not only the achievement of quantitative targets but also work quality, timeliness, initiative, teamwork, and compliance with organizational procedures. Fikri et al. (2025) argued that employee performance can be enhanced through transformational leadership that motivates employees and encourages innovation. Likewise, Galu et al. (2025) and Sujadi et al. (2025) explained that employee performance is influenced by employee engagement, the work environment, motivation, and employee competence. Saragih et al. (2025) further emphasized that technological capabilities and leadership contribute significantly to improving the performance of academic staff and employees in educational institutions.

The dimensions of employee performance commonly include quality of work, quantity of work, timeliness, cooperation, initiative, and dependability. Quality of work assesses the standard and accuracy of employees' work outputs. Quantity of work measures the amount of work completed within a specified period. Timeliness evaluates employees' ability to complete assigned tasks within established deadlines. Cooperation reflects employees' ability to work effectively with colleagues. Initiative measures employees' creativity and willingness to perform beyond their basic job responsibilities. Dependability represents employees' reliability, responsibility, and work discipline (Galu et al., 2025; Sujadi et al., 2025; Fikri et al., 2025). These dimensions provide an appropriate framework for evaluating employee performance in contemporary organizational settings.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research approach to examine the causal relationships among employee engagement, digital competence, internal communication, and employee performance. According to Sugiyono (2017), quantitative research is appropriate for testing theories through the measurement of variables using numerical data and statistical analysis. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, in which data were collected at a single point in time to provide an objective representation of the respondents' current conditions. The research was conducted at the Panai Tengah Subdistrict Office, an organization that requires a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing employee performance in the digital era.

The study population consisted of all employees working at the Panai Tengah Subdistrict Office, totaling 21 employees. Given the relatively small population size, a saturated sampling (census sampling) technique was employed, whereby all members of the population were included as research respondents. Consequently, the sample comprised all 21 employees of the Panai Tengah Subdistrict Office. The use of saturated sampling was intended to obtain a comprehensive and accurate representation of the characteristics and conditions of the employees because the entire population participated in the study. Therefore, this sampling technique was considered appropriate and effective for research involving a limited population while enhancing the accuracy and validity of the research findings.

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale, which was developed according to the indicators of the research variables, namely employee engagement, digital competence, internal communication, and employee performance. Sugiyono (2017) argued that questionnaires are effective instruments for obtaining standardized, objective, and statistically analyzable data. In addition to the questionnaire, documentation techniques were employed to collect secondary data, including organizational structure, the number of employees, and information related to the work environment. Prior to the main survey, a pilot test was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the research instrument, ensuring that the collected data were appropriate for further statistical analysis.

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. The analytical procedures included preliminary data processing (editing, coding, and data cleaning), validity testing using Pearson's correlation coefficient, and reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha to evaluate the internal consistency of the research instrument. Subsequently, classical assumption tests—including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests—were performed as prerequisites for multiple linear regression analysis. The research hypotheses were tested using multiple linear regression analysis to determine the extent to which employee engagement, digital competence, and internal communication influence employee performance. According to Umar (2011), multiple linear regression is an appropriate statistical technique for examining the simultaneous effects of two or more independent variables on a single dependent variable. Accordingly, this method enables the identification of the dominant factors influencing employee performance and provides robust empirical evidence regarding the determinants of employee performance within the Panai Tengah Subdistrict Office.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The t-test was conducted to examine the partial effect of each independent variable on employee performance at the Panai Tengah Subdistrict Office. The results indicate that transformational leadership obtained a t-value of -0.124 with a significance level of 0.824. Since the significance value exceeds the 0.05 threshold, transformational leadership does not have a statistically significant effect on employee performance. Therefore, the hypothesis proposing that

transformational leadership positively influences employee performance is rejected.

The digital competence variable produced a t-value of 3.412 with a significance level of 0.030, which is below the 0.05 significance level. This result indicates that digital competence has a positive and statistically significant effect on employee performance. The finding suggests that employees possessing stronger digital capabilities are more capable of performing their duties effectively, thereby improving organizational performance. Accordingly, the hypothesis concerning the positive influence of digital competence is supported.

t-Test Results

Table 1. Results of the t-Test

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t-value	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	-2.035	2.773	—	-0.734	0.465	—	—
Transformational Leadership	-0.017	0.151	-0.013	-0.124	0.824	0.283	3.539
Digital Competence	0.398	0.167	0.334	3.412	0.030	0.183	5.474
Internal Communication	0.147	0.119	0.160	1.240	0.219	0.215	4.648

Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

Source: Processed primary data (2026).

Furthermore, the t-test results for internal communication, which represents employee involvement in organizational communication, yielded a t-value of 1.240 with a significance level of 0.219. Since the significance value exceeds 0.05, internal communication does not have a statistically significant effect on employee performance. Consequently, the corresponding hypothesis is rejected.

F-Test Results

Table 2. Results of the F-Test (ANOVA)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1474.763	4	448.691	71.065	0.000
Residual	541.187	75	7.216		
Total	2015.950	79			

Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

Predictors: Transformational Leadership, Digital Competence, and Internal Communication.

Source: Processed primary data (2026).

The F-test was conducted to determine the simultaneous effects of transformational leadership, digital competence, and internal communication on employee performance at the Panai Tengah Subdistrict Office. The ANOVA results show an F-value of 71.065 with a significance level of 0.000. Since the significance value is below 0.05, the three independent variables jointly have a statistically significant effect on employee performance. Therefore, the hypothesis proposing that transformational leadership, digital competence, and

internal communication simultaneously influence employee performance is accepted.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Table 3. Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
0.752	0.832	0.717	2.686	2.682

Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

Predictors: Transformational Leadership, Digital Competence, and Internal Communication.

Source: Processed primary data (2026).

The coefficient of determination indicates an R Square value of 0.832, meaning that transformational leadership, digital competence, and internal communication collectively explain 83.2% of the variation in employee performance at the Panai Tengah Subdistrict Office. The remaining 16.8% is explained by other variables outside the scope of this study.

The Adjusted R Square value of 0.717 indicates that, after adjusting for the number of independent variables included in the model, these variables account for 71.7% of the variation in employee performance. Moreover, the correlation coefficient ($R = 0.752$) indicates a strong relationship between the independent variables and employee performance. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.682 further suggests that no autocorrelation exists in the regression model, indicating that the model is appropriate for hypothesis testing.

The findings reveal that transformational leadership does not have a statistically significant effect on employee performance at the Panai Tengah Subdistrict Office. This result suggests that the transformational leadership style implemented within the organization has not yet directly improved employee performance. One possible explanation is the bureaucratic nature of public sector organizations, where opportunities for innovation, inspiration, and employee empowerment—the defining characteristics of transformational leadership—remain relatively limited. This finding contrasts with those reported by Fikri et al. (2025), Trimulyana (2025), Saputra and Fadhillah (2025), and Suratno (2024), who found that transformational leadership positively influences employee performance, particularly in private-sector organizations and innovation-driven environments. However, the present finding supports the arguments of Vinolia (2023) and Saragih et al. (2025), who suggested that the effectiveness of transformational leadership may diminish when employees are not adequately prepared for organizational change or when adaptive work systems are lacking.

The study further demonstrates that digital competence has a positive and statistically significant effect on employee performance. This finding indicates that employees' ability to operate digital technologies, manage digital information, and effectively utilize work-related applications substantially enhances productivity and work quality. The result is consistent with previous studies by Emilia and Soemaryani (2025), Larasshati and Priyastiwati (2024), and Handayani et al. (2024), all of which identified digital competence as a critical determinant of employee performance, particularly within

public sector organizations. Furthermore, Baharrudin et al. (2021), Al-Kharabsheh et al. (2022), and Tatli et al. (2023) emphasized that digital competence has become a key factor in improving individual effectiveness and organizational performance in the era of digital transformation. Accordingly, the present findings reinforce the importance of strengthening employees' digital capabilities to improve organizational performance.

The results also indicate that internal communication does not significantly influence employee performance. Although communication mechanisms have been established within the organization, they appear insufficient to generate the level of employee engagement necessary to improve performance directly. This may be attributed to communication practices that remain predominantly formal and administrative, thereby limiting employees' active participation, dedication, and organizational commitment. These findings differ from those of Alamsyah and Ardiana (2025), Galu et al. (2025), Sandrawati and Aprianti (2025), and Wenas et al. (2025), who found significant positive relationships between employee engagement and performance. Nevertheless, the findings are consistent with Boccoli et al. (2023), who argued that employee engagement is highly contextual and influenced by organizational culture, work environment, and managerial support.

The simultaneous analysis demonstrates that transformational leadership, digital competence, and internal communication collectively have a significant effect on employee performance at the Panai Tengah Subdistrict Office. Although not all independent variables are individually significant, their combined influence contributes substantially to employee performance. This finding is consistent with those reported by Heslina and Syahrini (2021), Lidia and Aliya (2025), and Julianti et al. (2025), who concluded that employee performance is determined by the interaction among leadership, competence, and employee engagement.

The relatively high coefficient of determination further indicates that a substantial proportion of employee performance can be explained by transformational leadership, digital competence, and internal communication. This finding suggests that improving employee performance within the Panai Tengah Subdistrict Office depends largely on employees' digital readiness, effective leadership support, and efficient communication systems that foster employee engagement. The results reinforce previous findings by Mursalim (2025), Pahlan et al. (2025), and Pham et al. (2025), who emphasized the importance of the synergy among leadership, digital competence, and employee engagement in enhancing organizational performance in the era of digital transformation.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the data analysis and discussion regarding the influence of transformational leadership, digital competence, and employee engagement on employee performance at the Panai Tengah Subdistrict Office, this study concludes that transformational leadership does not have a statistically significant effect on employee performance. This finding indicates that the implementation of transformational

leadership within the Panai Tengah Subdistrict Office has not yet produced a direct improvement in employee performance, which may be attributed to the bureaucratic characteristics of public sector organizations that remain predominantly administrative and formal.

Digital competence was found to have a positive and statistically significant effect on employee performance. This finding demonstrates that employees' ability to utilize digital technologies, manage information, and effectively operate work-related applications plays a crucial role in improving both the quality and productivity of their work. Therefore, digital competence represents a key factor in enhancing employee performance in the era of digital transformation, particularly within public sector organizations.

Employee engagement, which in this study was represented through internal communication, was not found to have a statistically significant effect on employee performance. This result suggests that the existing internal communication practices have not yet been sufficient to foster optimal employee engagement, thereby limiting their direct contribution to performance improvement. This condition may be attributed to communication practices that remain largely one-way and formal, resulting in limited employee participation and a relatively weak sense of organizational belonging.

Simultaneously, transformational leadership, digital competence, and employee engagement were found to have a significant combined effect on employee performance at the Panai Tengah Subdistrict Office. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination indicates that a substantial proportion of the variation in employee performance can be explained by these three variables, while the remaining variation is attributable to factors beyond the scope of the present study. Therefore, improving employee performance requires a synergistic approach that integrates effective leadership, the continuous development of digital competence, and the strengthening of employee engagement within the organization.

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