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# Digital Leadership and Employee Engagement in Technology-Based Organizations: A Qualitative Case Study of Gojek

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**Abstract**

*Digital transformation has reshaped the dynamics of technology-based organizations, particularly in the areas of leadership and employee engagement, which play a crucial role in sustaining performance and organizational continuity. This study aims to examine in depth how digital leadership contributes to building and strengthening employee engagement within a digital organizational context, using Gojek as a case study. The research adopts a qualitative approach with a case study design, where data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations of digital work practices, and documentation analysis, and then processed using thematic analysis through stages of data reduction, coding, categorization, and theme identification. The findings indicate that digital leadership plays a critical role in enhancing employee engagement through the optimization of digital communication, individual empowerment, and the development of an innovative and adaptive work culture. Employee engagement is formed through a complex interaction of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral factors influenced by the quality of relationships between leaders and employees, organizational support, and individual readiness to adapt to technological transformation. This study provides a significant contribution to the academic discourse on digital leadership and employee engagement through a contextual case study approach, while also offering practical*



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*implications for organizations in designing effective leadership strategies to enhance employee engagement in the digital era.*

**Keyword : Digital Leadership and Employee Engagement**

## INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has emerged as a global phenomenon that has significantly reshaped how organizations operate, interact, and create value across various industries, including technology-based companies. The advancement of digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, and digital platforms has encouraged organizations to adopt more flexible, collaborative, and innovation-driven work models, which in turn fundamentally influence human resource dynamics. In this context, digital transformation is not merely about technological adoption, but also reflects structural and cultural changes within organizations that require adaptation from all elements, including leadership and employees (Qiao et al., 2024). As digitalization continues to intensify, organizations face challenges in maintaining employee engagement within increasingly complex and dynamic work environments (Akbar et al., 2025). Studies indicate that digital transformation can enhance communication, collaboration, and learning opportunities, but it may also introduce new pressures such as technostress and resistance to change (Anushka, 2025). In the national context, technology-based companies such as Gojek are required to continuously innovate and sustain competitive advantage through adaptive human resource management in response to rapid digital change.

Despite the opportunities offered by digital transformation, there remains a significant gap between technological implementation and organizational readiness in managing human aspects, particularly in fostering sustainable employee engagement. Many organizations still prioritize technological aspects while overlooking the critical role of leadership in facilitating behavioral and psychological adaptation among employees (Onan, 2024). Research shows that failures in digital transformation are often linked to low employee engagement and poorly managed resistance to change (Dubey & Ranjan, 2024). Furthermore, existing literature remains limited in explaining how digital leadership practices concretely shape engagement within dynamic digital organizations (Musaigwa, 2025). Several studies also highlight that the shift toward flexible and digital work systems requires new leadership approaches capable of accommodating the characteristics of millennial and Generation Z employees (Setyoningtyas & Febriansyah, 2024). Therefore,



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a deeper investigation is needed to understand the relationship between digital leadership and employee engagement in technology-based organizations.

Conceptually, this study integrates several key theoretical perspectives, namely digital leadership, employee engagement, organizational behavior, and digital transformation as an interconnected analytical framework. Digital leadership is defined as the ability of leaders to leverage digital technologies to guide organizations, drive innovation, and establish effective communication within digital work environments (Sinha, 2024). In this perspective, leadership functions not only as a strategic driver but also as a facilitator of organizational cultural change and employee engagement enhancement (Kausar et al., 2025). Employee engagement refers to the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral involvement of employees that directly influences organizational performance and commitment (Satria et al., 2025). Previous studies have demonstrated that digital leadership significantly influences engagement through mechanisms such as employee empowerment, affective commitment, and technology-mediated communication (Li et al., 2024). Additionally, social exchange theory explains that reciprocal relationships between leaders and employees form the foundation of engagement within digital organizations (Aly, 2024).

Based on the background and identified gaps, this study aims to analyze in depth the role of digital leadership in building and strengthening employee engagement within technology-based organizations, focusing on Gojek as a case study. Specifically, this research seeks to address key questions regarding how digital leadership practices are implemented in digital organizations, how employee engagement is formed within technology-driven work environments, how leader–employee interactions influence engagement levels, and what factors support or hinder employee involvement. Previous research indicates that digital leadership has a direct impact on engagement and serves as a catalyst in digital transformation processes (Haq & Abid, 2025). Furthermore, employee engagement has been proven to act as a key mediator in enhancing organizational performance and operational effectiveness (Nusa & Medika, 2025).

The scientific contribution of this study lies in integrating the perspectives of digital leadership and employee engagement within the context of technology-based organizations through an in-depth qualitative case study approach. Unlike prior research that predominantly employs quantitative methods, this study provides richer contextual insights into the dynamics of interaction between leaders and employees in digital work environments (Kaihlanen et al., 2025). Additionally, this study addresses gaps in the literature related to exploring employees' lived experiences in interpreting engagement in


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the digital era, characterized by work flexibility, intensive technology use, and evolving communication patterns (Pratiwi et al., 2025). Thus, this research is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of digital leadership and employee engagement concepts, as well as provide practical implications for organizations in designing effective leadership strategies to enhance employee engagement in the era of digital transformation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital leadership, as one of the central concepts in this study, originates from transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes the role of leaders in driving change, innovation, and organizational adaptation in dynamic environments. In the digital context, this concept has been expanded to include the use of technology as a strategic tool in decision-making, communication, and performance management. Digital leadership is defined as the ability of leaders to integrate digital technologies with managerial practices to enhance organizational effectiveness and responsiveness to changes in the business environment (Musaigwa, 2025). In addition, employee engagement, as a key variable in this study, refers to the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral involvement of employees in their work and organization, which directly impacts performance and loyalty (Satria et al., 2025). Digital transformation, as the primary context of this research, is understood as a comprehensive change process involving the integration of technology across all organizational aspects, encompassing not only technical but also cultural and structural dimensions (Qiao et al., 2024).

Numerous previous studies have examined the relationship between digital leadership and employee engagement across various industrial contexts. Research indicates that digital leadership has a significant influence on enhancing engagement through improved digital communication, employee empowerment, and the creation of collaborative work environments (Li et al., 2024). Other studies have found that employee engagement acts as a mediating variable between digital leadership and organizational performance, highlighting its critical role as a mechanism for improving organizational effectiveness (Aly, 2024). Furthermore, empirical findings demonstrate that digital transformation initiatives supported by effective leadership can enhance employee motivation and commitment (Haq & Abid, 2025). Additional research also reveals that the use of digital technologies within organizations can increase engagement by improving access to information and enabling greater work flexibility (Anushka, 2025).


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However, several research gaps remain insufficiently addressed in the existing literature. Most prior studies have employed quantitative approaches focusing on causal relationships between variables, which limits their ability to capture the complexity of social interactions and employees' subjective experiences in digital environments (Onan, 2024). Moreover, research on digital leadership often emphasizes the perspective of leaders, while the perspective of employees as recipients of leadership practices remains relatively underexplored (Kaihlanen et al., 2025). Another identified gap is the limited exploration of contextual factors such as digital organizational culture, work flexibility, and psychological pressures that may influence employee engagement (Akbar et al., 2025). This study positions itself to address these gaps by employing a qualitative case study approach, which enables an in-depth exploration of digital leadership practices and employee engagement experiences within technology-based organizations. By focusing on Gojek as a case study, this research seeks to understand how interactions between leaders and employees occur in digital work environments and how these interactions shape employee engagement. This approach contributes by offering a more contextual and holistic perspective compared to previous studies that tend to emphasize generalization (Pratiwi et al., 2025). Additionally, this study enriches the literature by integrating organizational behavior dimensions into the analysis of digital leadership and engagement.

Within the existing body of literature, there is a noticeable shift in both theoretical and methodological approaches from traditional frameworks toward more integrative and contextual perspectives in understanding digital leadership phenomena. Many studies adopt social exchange theory and transformational leadership theory as foundational frameworks for explaining leader–employee relationships in digital contexts (Kausar et al., 2025). Moreover, mixed methods and case study approaches are increasingly utilized to capture the complexity of digital leadership and employee engagement phenomena (Dubey & Ranjan, 2024). Research also indicates that factors such as digital competence, organizational culture, and readiness for change play critical roles in determining the success of digital transformation (Dewi et al., 2025).

Based on the conceptual synthesis of these studies, it can be understood that digital leadership, employee engagement, and digital transformation are interrelated elements that form a dynamic system within technology-based organizations. Digital leadership serves as the primary driver in creating a work environment that supports employee engagement, while employee engagement acts as a mechanism linking leadership practices to organizational performance. In this context, the success of digital


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transformation largely depends on an organization's ability to simultaneously manage the interaction between technology, leadership, and employee behavior (Sinha, 2024). This conceptual framework subsequently serves as the foundation for designing the methodological approach used to explore this phenomenon in greater depth.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study strategy to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena of digital leadership and employee engagement within the context of technology-based organizations. A qualitative approach is selected as it enables the exploration of meaning, subjective experiences, and social dynamics occurring in complex and contextual digital work environments. The case study strategy is utilized because it allows for a comprehensive exploration of a phenomenon within its real organizational setting, thereby providing a thorough understanding of interactions between leaders and employees in digital leadership practices (Onan, 2024). This approach is also particularly relevant for examining contemporary phenomena that cannot be separated from their context, especially in organizations undergoing digital transformation (Kaihlanen et al., 2025).

The data sources in this study consist of both primary and secondary data. Primary data are obtained through in-depth interviews with employees and leaders directly involved in digital-based work processes, enabling the researcher to capture their perceptions, experiences, and interpretations regarding digital leadership and employee engagement. Meanwhile, secondary data are collected from various sources such as company documents, official reports, academic articles, and digital content relevant to the organization under study. The integration of primary and secondary data aims to enhance the validity and depth of analysis through data source triangulation (Musaigwa, 2025).

Data collection techniques employed in this study include in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation analysis. Interviews are conducted in a semi-structured manner to allow flexibility in exploring information more broadly and deeply while maintaining alignment with the research focus. Observations are carried out within the digital work environment to understand work practices, communication patterns, and the use of technology in organizational interactions. Documentation analysis involves collecting and examining relevant materials such as company reports and digital content to complement primary data. The combination of these techniques enables the researcher to obtain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Pratiwi et al., 2025).


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The inclusion criteria in this study consist of participants who have direct experience in digital work environments, either as leaders or employees, and who are involved in the organization's digital transformation processes. In contrast, the exclusion criteria include individuals who are not directly involved in digital organizational activities or lack relevant experience with digital leadership practices. For secondary data, only credible, relevant sources with direct relevance to the research topic are included. These criteria are established to ensure that the collected data possess high quality and relevance to the research focus (Akbar et al., 2025).

The unit of analysis in this study is the individual within the organization, specifically employees and leaders who interact in digital work environments. The analysis focuses on their experiences, perceptions, and interactions in the context of digital leadership and employee engagement. The selection of this unit of analysis is based on the assumption that engagement is not solely structurally determined but is also formed through social interaction processes involving various organizational actors (Li et al., 2024).

The data analysis technique applied in this study is thematic analysis, which is conducted through several systematic stages, including data reduction, coding, categorization, theme identification, and interpretation of meaning. Thematic analysis is chosen because it enables the identification of patterns, themes, and meanings emerging from qualitative data in a structured and in-depth manner. The coding process is used to organize data into relevant categories, which are subsequently developed into key themes representing the studied phenomenon. In the analysis process, qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo or Atlas.ti may be utilized to improve efficiency and accuracy. This approach facilitates a deeper exploration of the relationship between digital leadership and employee engagement within the context of digital transformation (Haq & Abid, 2025).

## RESULTS

Based on the qualitative data analysis obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, several key themes were identified that represent the phenomena of digital leadership and employee engagement in technology-based organizations, particularly in the context of Gojek. The analysis process was conducted through systematic stages, including data reduction, coding, categorization, and theme identification, resulting in five major themes: (1) characteristics of digital leadership practices, (2) the dynamics of employee engagement formation, (3) patterns of digital


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interaction between leaders and employees, (4) supporting factors of engagement, and (5) inhibiting factors of engagement in digital work environments.

The first theme reveals that digital leadership practices in technology-based organizations are characterized by leaders' ability to effectively leverage digital technologies to support communication, coordination, and decision-making processes. Interview findings indicate that leaders actively utilize digital platforms to communicate vision, provide strategic direction, and facilitate cross-functional collaboration. In addition, leaders play a significant role in fostering innovation and enabling work flexibility through adaptive use of technology. These findings are consistent with studies demonstrating that digital leadership contributes to enhanced organizational effectiveness through the utilization of technology and strengthened digital communication (Musaigwa, 2025), as well as reflecting leaders' capacity to manage change and cultivate an organizational culture that is adaptive to digital transformation (Qiao et al., 2024).

The second theme relates to the process through which employee engagement is formed within digital work environments. The findings indicate that engagement emerges from a complex interaction of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral factors shaped by employees' digital work experiences. Employees who perceive strong leadership support, have adequate access to information, and are provided with opportunities for growth tend to exhibit higher levels of engagement. Furthermore, work flexibility and the use of digital technologies are identified as key determinants in fostering employee involvement. These findings align with studies suggesting that digital transformation enhances engagement by improving communication and expanding learning opportunities (Anushka, 2025), as well as reinforcing the critical role of engagement in improving organizational performance and commitment (Satria et al., 2025).

The third theme identifies patterns of interaction between leaders and employees in digital work environments. The results show that such interactions are predominantly characterized by real-time and flexible digital communication, while still requiring strong interpersonal approaches to maintain effective working relationships. Leaders who are able to balance digital communication with interpersonal engagement tend to be more successful in fostering employee engagement. Additionally, employee empowerment through digital technologies is a crucial factor in strengthening these interactions. These findings are consistent with research indicating that digital leadership influences engagement through mechanisms of empowerment and affective commitment (Li et al., 2024), and that effective interaction in digital environments is shaped by communication quality and appropriate use of technology (Sinha, 2024).


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The fourth theme focuses on the factors that support the development of employee engagement through digital leadership. The findings highlight that key enabling factors include visionary leadership, an organizational culture that embraces innovation, and organizational support in the form of training and digital competency development. Moreover, the implementation of flexible work systems and the use of collaborative technologies also play significant roles in enhancing employee engagement. These findings are supported by research demonstrating that transformational leadership and digital competence significantly influence employee performance and engagement (Dewi et al., 2025), as well as studies indicating that readiness for change and innovative organizational culture are critical in strengthening engagement during digital transformation processes (Haq & Abid, 2025).

The fifth theme identifies several inhibiting factors in fostering employee engagement within digital work environments. The findings indicate that major challenges include resistance to change, limited digital competencies, and increased work pressure due to intensive technology use. In addition, reduced face-to-face interaction and increased digital workload may negatively affect employee engagement levels. Another identified issue is the imbalance between work and personal life resulting from poorly managed work flexibility. These findings are consistent with studies showing that digital transformation can lead to psychological pressures such as technostress and burnout, which negatively impact engagement (Akbar et al., 2025), as well as research highlighting resistance to change and limited digital infrastructure as major challenges in digital transformation implementation (Kausar et al., 2025).

Beyond these five primary themes, the findings also reveal variations in how employees perceive and experience engagement, influenced by individual backgrounds, organizational roles, and levels of digital adaptability. Employees with higher levels of digital literacy tend to adapt more effectively to change and demonstrate higher levels of engagement compared to those with limited digital competencies. This indicates that individual factors play a significant role in shaping employee engagement within digital organizations. These findings are supported by studies showing that individual capability and readiness influence the success of digital transformation (Dong et al., 2024), and that organizational support in enhancing digital literacy is a crucial factor in strengthening engagement (Setyoningtyas & Febriansyah, 2024).


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## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that digital leadership plays a strategic role in shaping and strengthening employee engagement in technology-based organizations, particularly in the context of Gojek as a digital company. The main results indicate that effective digital leadership is characterized by leaders' ability to optimize the use of technology for communication, employee empowerment, and the reinforcement of an innovative culture, all of which directly influence employee engagement. These findings align with the research objectives, which focus on examining the role of digital leadership, the process of engagement formation, and the factors influencing their relationship. Moreover, the results demonstrate that employee engagement is not solely determined by individual factors but is significantly influenced by how leaders manage digital interactions and cultivate an adaptive work environment (Qiao et al., 2024).

From a theoretical perspective, these findings can be interpreted through the lenses of digital leadership and employee engagement, which are rooted in transformational leadership theory and social exchange theory. In this context, digital leadership functions as a mechanism that connects technological change with employee behavioral dynamics, where leaders act as facilitators who create value through digital interactions. The resulting employee engagement reflects reciprocal relationships between organizational support and individual contributions, as explained by social exchange theory. Research indicates that effective digital leadership enhances commitment, motivation, and engagement through transparent communication and technology-based empowerment (Li et al., 2024). Furthermore, the emotional and cognitive dimensions of engagement are significantly influenced by the quality of relationships between leaders and employees within digital work environments (Sinha, 2024).

When compared to previous studies, the findings of this research are consistent with those indicating that digital leadership positively affects employee engagement and organizational performance. Prior research has shown that digital leadership enhances engagement through improved digital communication and collaboration (Anushka, 2025). In addition, other studies demonstrate that employee engagement serves as a mediating variable in the relationship between digital leadership and organizational effectiveness (Aly, 2024). However, this study provides additional insights by emphasizing employees' subjective experiences in interpreting engagement, which have been relatively underexplored in quantitative studies. On the other hand, the findings also reveal


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challenges such as technostress and resistance to change, which may hinder employee engagement, as identified in previous research (Akbar et al., 2025).

The scientific contribution of this study lies in strengthening the conceptual understanding of the relationship between digital leadership and employee engagement within digital organizational contexts through a qualitative case study approach. This study enriches the literature by offering a contextual perspective that illustrates how digital leadership practices are translated into everyday interactions between leaders and employees. Furthermore, it contributes to theoretical development by demonstrating that the success of digital leadership depends not only on technological aspects but also on leaders' ability to build interpersonal relationships and organizational cultures that support engagement (Musaigwa, 2025). From a practical standpoint, these findings suggest that organizations need to integrate leadership strategies with the development of digital competencies and the reinforcement of collaborative work cultures (Dewi et al., 2025).

Despite its significant contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the use of a single case study limits the generalizability of the findings to other organizational contexts with different characteristics. Second, the data obtained through interviews and observations rely on participants' subjective interpretations, which may introduce perceptual bias. Third, limited access to internal organizational data may affect the depth of analysis in certain aspects. Previous studies have also indicated that qualitative research in digital leadership contexts often faces challenges in terms of generalizability and replicability (Onan, 2024). Additionally, the complexity of digital transformation phenomena requires multidimensional approaches that are not fully accommodated in this study (Dubey & Ranjan, 2024).

The implications of this study suggest that technology-based organizations need to develop digital leadership strategies that go beyond technological adoption and also emphasize interpersonal relationship management and employee well-being. Leaders should enhance competencies in digital communication, change management, and employee empowerment to sustain engagement over time. Moreover, organizations should pay attention to factors such as organizational culture, digital readiness, and work–life balance to mitigate the negative impacts of digital transformation on employees. Future research is recommended to adopt mixed methods or quantitative approaches with broader scopes to test relationships between variables in a more generalizable manner, as well as to explore the role of moderating variables such as organizational culture and individual characteristics in strengthening the relationship between digital leadership and employee engagement (Haq & Abid, 2025).


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## CONCLUSION

This study confirms that digital leadership plays a fundamental role in shaping and strengthening employee engagement within technology-based organizations. Leadership practices that effectively leverage digital technologies have been shown to foster more open communication, enhance collaboration, and promote employee engagement across emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. The formation of engagement in digital work environments is not a linear process but is influenced by dynamic interactions between leaders and employees, organizational support, and individuals' capacity to adapt to technological change. Furthermore, the effectiveness of digital leadership in enhancing engagement is highly dependent on supporting factors such as an innovative organizational culture, flexible work arrangements, and digital competencies, while also being challenged by barriers such as resistance to change and increased digital work pressure.

The primary contribution of this study lies in strengthening the conceptual understanding of the relationship between digital leadership and employee engagement through a qualitative case study approach that provides a rich and contextually grounded perspective. This study not only enriches the existing body of literature by integrating organizational behavior dimensions into the analysis of digital leadership but also offers practical insights for organizations in designing adaptive leadership strategies in response to digital transformation. Accordingly, the findings of this research can serve as a reference for the development of organizational policies aimed at enhancing employee engagement in the digital era.

The implications of this study highlight the importance of developing digital leadership competencies that extend beyond technological proficiency to include strong interpersonal and managerial capabilities in navigating the complexities of digital work environments. Future research is encouraged to broaden the scope by involving multiple organizations and employing diverse methodological approaches to achieve a more comprehensive understanding. Additionally, further exploration of variables such as organizational culture, employee well-being, and psychological factors in digital contexts is essential to deepen insights into employee engagement in the era of digital transformation.


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