

UNVEILING THE LINK BETWEEN DIGITAL LEADERSHIP, LEARNING ORIENTATION, AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF MOTIVATION

Wafa Naufal Ramadhan^{1*}, Muhammad Rifqi Iskandar², Salsabila Berliana³, Sikha Inayatunni'mah⁴

¹⁻⁴ Department of Management, Universitas Putra Bangsa, Indonesia

*Email corresponding author: wafa051103@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the influence of learning orientation and digital leadership on performance through motivation in junior high school teachers. A quantitative approach was utilized, with a survey conducted among 137 junior high school teachers in Kebumen. Data collection involved a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. To test the hypotheses, linear regression analysis was employed, incorporating a mediating variable. The data analysis included validity and reliability tests, classical assumption tests, hypothesis testing, correlation analysis, path analysis, and the Sobel test. The SPSS 25.0 for Windows software was used for data processing. The findings reveal that both learning orientation and digital leadership significantly affect motivation. Additionally, learning orientation and digital leadership positively influence performance, and motivation is shown to have a significant impact on performance. However, motivation does not mediate the relationship between learning orientation and performance, nor between digital leadership and performance. The results imply that enhancing learning orientation and digital leadership can directly improve teachers' performance, although interventions focused on motivation alone may not fully bridge the gap between these factors and performance outcomes. These findings suggest the need for targeted strategies to optimize both leadership and motivational factors in educational settings.

Keywords: Learning Orientation, Digital Leadership, Motivation and Performance

INTRODUCTION

Human resources are undeniably one of the most critical assets within any organization, acting as the driving force behind its objectives and long-term success. In the education sector, teachers stand at the forefront of shaping the quality and effectiveness of the learning process. Their performance not only directly influences student outcomes but also determines the overall success of educational institutions in fulfilling their mission and goals. At the Junior High School level, while teacher performance is generally deemed satisfactory, its effectiveness is influenced by an array of internal and external factors. Among these, learning orientation, digital leadership, and work motivation play pivotal roles in shaping teaching outcomes. Learning orientation reflects an educational institution's internal culture, which encourages continuous knowledge acquisition, a shared vision, and a commitment to constant improvement. Teachers who embody a strong learning orientation are driven by a passion to evolve, adapt, and acquire new skills, particularly as curriculum reforms, such as the transition from Kurikulum 2013 to Kurikulum Merdeka, are introduced. On the other hand, digital leadership is defined as the ability of school leaders, particularly principals, to leverage technology in advancing educational practices. In Junior High Schools, initiatives like digital attendance systems illustrate effective digital leadership; however, there remain challenges as some educators struggle to adapt to these technological shifts. Motivation serves as a crucial mediating factor in this context, bridging the gap between leadership strategies and teacher performance. Motivated teachers are generally more engaged, productive, and committed to delivering high-

quality education. Although motivation levels among Junior High School teachers are relatively high, they fluctuate based on a range of emotional, personal, and organizational factors.

This study aims to explore the interrelationships between learning orientation, digital leadership, and teacher performance, with motivation acting as a mediating variable. By examining these dynamics, this research offers theoretical insights into the development of human resource practices in education and provides actionable recommendations for school management to enhance teacher performance. The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive analysis of the connections between digital leadership, learning orientation, and teacher performance, viewed through the lens of motivation in the context of the digital era. The research was conducted with Junior High School teachers in Kebumen, a region in Central Java, Indonesia. The choice of Kebumen as the study location is based on its unique educational context, where schools are in varying stages of digital integration and curriculum reform. This setting provides a relevant backdrop for examining how digital leadership and learning orientation influence teacher performance in a region where educational infrastructure is still developing, and where teachers face particular challenges in adapting to new educational paradigms. Additionally, Kebumen offers a diverse sample of educators, which strengthens the generalizability of the study's findings in similar rural or semi-urban educational contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION

Learning Orientation and Motivation

Learning orientation is an internal process that drives learning activities within an organization, fostering knowledge creation and sharing a common vision among its members (Baker & Sinkula, 2002). The willingness to learn, shared goals, and open-mindedness are three key components of learning orientation that directly impact individual motivation (Beyene et al., 2016). Research by Minhong Wang (2013) also indicates that a strong learning orientation positively influences employee motivation. In other words, the better the learning orientation implemented within an organization, the higher the motivation of its employees. This motivates the development of more competent and enthusiastic human resources to improve performance. Based on this explanation, the hypothesis is:

H1: Learning Orientation influences Motivation.

Digital Leadership and Motivation

Digital leadership refers to a leader's ability to utilize digital technology to influence and direct team members towards achieving set goals (Saputra & Saputra, 2020). Effective digital leadership can enhance employee motivation by providing more freedom in their work and supporting work-life balance (Sunaryo et al., 2020; Vebryana et al., 2024). Leaders who optimize technology use not only facilitate skill development but also create a more flexible and efficient work environment. Therefore, the better the application of digital leadership, the higher the motivation of employees. The hypothesis is:

H2: Digital Leadership influences Motivation.

Learning Orientation and Performance

Learning orientation functions as a self-regulation strategy that improves the skills and capabilities of human resources, leading to better performance outcomes (Sujan, 1994). In an organizational context, learning orientation can be seen as an approach to improving the ability of the organization to continually grow and enhance performance based on better knowledge, experience, and understanding (M. Baba et al., 2017). Studies by Hidayat et al. (2024) and Ulya (2019) show that learning orientation significantly affects performance, meaning that the better the learning orientation implemented, the better the performance of individuals within the organization. The hypothesis is:

H3: Learning Orientation influences Performance.

Digital Leadership and Performance

Digital leadership focuses on the combination of culture and competencies that enable leaders to optimize the use of digital technology to create value for the organization (Rudito & Sinaga, 2017). Leaders who embrace digital leadership provide opportunities for employees to master new technologies, enhancing their skills and abilities. This empowerment through digital leadership can increase motivation and, ultimately, employee performance (Purwanto et al., 2022; Ekawati, 2023). Proper implementation of technology by leaders can create an environment that supports and encourages better performance outcomes. The hypothesis is:

H4: Digital Leadership influences Performance.

Motivation and Performance

Work motivation is the process that drives individuals to behave in ways that achieve set goals (Hamzah, 2011). High motivation increases involvement, productivity, and helps individuals achieve better performance (Uno, 2007). Research by Nurfadilah & Farihah (2021) and Langi et al. (2023) indicates that work motivation positively affects performance, meaning that the higher the motivation of an individual, the better the performance they achieve. The hypothesis is:

H5: Motivation influences Performance.

Learning Orientation and Performance through Motivation

Learning orientation, as an organizational culture that encourages learning and the application of knowledge (Fang et al., 2014), influences performance through motivation. Motivation acts as an important mediator linking learning orientation and performance (Caksana, 2019). Research by Ulya (2019) shows that learning orientation positively influences performance, with higher motivation improving performance quality. Therefore, the better the learning orientation, the higher the motivation that drives performance improvement. The hypothesis is:

H6: Learning Orientation influences Performance through Motivation.

Digital Leadership and Performance through Motivation

Digital leadership utilizes digital assets to achieve organizational goals and enhance decision-making efficiency (Mudjiono & Fatoni, 2024; Meika, 2023). Research by Vebryana (2024) shows that digital leadership influences performance through motivation as a mediating variable. Effective digital leadership increases employee work motivation, which, in turn, improves their performance. Thus, the better the implementation of digital leadership, the higher the motivation, leading to improved performance. The hypothesis is:

H7: Digital Leadership influences Performance through Motivation.

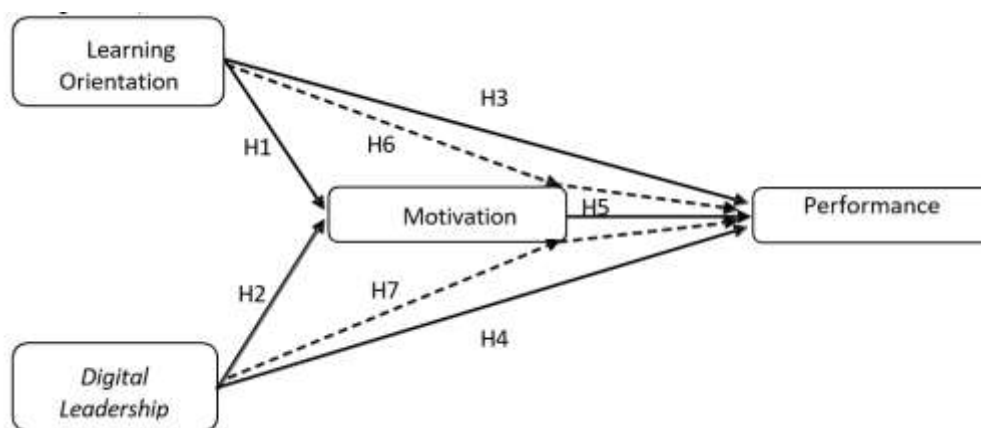


Figure 1. Research Model

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative approach to investigate the relationships between learning orientation, digital leadership, motivation, and teacher performance at Junior High Schools in Kebumen, Central Java, Indonesia. A sample of 137 teachers was selected using purposive sampling, ensuring relevance to the study's focus on curriculum adaptation and the use of digital tools. Data collection was carried out through a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire assessing learning orientation, digital leadership, motivation, and teacher performance. The data was analyzed using SPSS, with reliability and validity tests (Cronbach's Alpha), descriptive statistics, and regression analysis to examine direct relationships between the variables. The Sobel test was applied to assess the mediation effect of motivation. The study also conducted normality, linearity, and multicollinearity tests to ensure data quality. The hypotheses tested (H1-H7) explore how learning orientation, digital leadership, and motivation influence teacher performance. This methodological approach was designed to determine both direct and indirect effects of the independent variables on teacher performance and to assess the mediating role of motivation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

In this study, data analysis began with instrument validation for reliability and validity. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, with a value greater than 0.60 indicating reliability. Validity was assessed through the Pearson Correlation method. Classical assumption tests confirmed the validity of the regression model. The multicollinearity test showed no issues, with VIF < 10 and Tolerance > 0.10. The heteroscedasticity test indicated homoscedasticity, with a p-value > 0.05, suggesting equal variance of residuals. The normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed normally distributed residuals, as p-value > 0.05. These results confirm the model meets all necessary assumptions for valid analysis

Table. 1 R2 Substructure 1

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0,549 ^a	0,301	0,260	1,40255

Table. 2 Model Evaluation Substructure 1

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	7,491	2,476		3,026	0,005
Learning orientation	0,235	0,105	0,332	2,234	0,032
Digital Leadership	0,295	0,123	0,356	2,394	0,022

For the first structure, the results show that the model explains 30.1% of the variance in the dependent variable ($R^2 = 0.301$). The results of the regression analysis support both hypotheses. H1 (Learning Orientation influences Motivation) is supported, as learning orientation has a significant positive effect on motivation ($B = 0.235$, $p = 0.032$). Similarly, H2 (Digital Leadership influences Motivation) is also supported, as digital leadership significantly influences motivation ($B = 0.295$, $p = 0.022$). Both predictors have p-values less than 0.05, confirming the significance of their impact on motivation.

Table 3. R2 Substructure 2

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0,786 ^a	0,618	0,584	1,24704

Table 4. Model Evaluation Substructure 2

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2,423	2,480		0,977	0,336
Learning orientation	0,363	0,100	0,432	3,616	0,001
Digital Leadership	0,290	0,119	0,295	2,446	0,020
Motivation	0,352	0,152	0,297	2,306	0,028

From the structure 2, the results from the regression analysis support hypotheses H3, H4, and H5. H3 (Learning Orientation influences Performance) is supported, as learning orientation significantly impacts performance ($B = 0.363$, $p = 0.001$). Similarly, H4 (Digital Leadership influences Performance) is supported, with digital leadership also showing a significant positive effect on performance ($B = 0.290$, $p = 0.020$). Furthermore, H5 (Motivation influences Performance) is supported, as motivation significantly influences performance ($B = 0.352$, $p = 0.028$). All three variables, learning orientation, digital leadership, and motivation have a statistically significant positive effect on performance, confirming that H3, H4, and H5 are supported.

Based on the results of the Sobel Test, both H6 and H7 are rejected. For H6 (Learning Orientation influences Performance through Motivation), the test statistic was 1.609 and the p-value was 0.107, which is greater than 0.05, indicating that motivation does not mediate the relationship. Similarly, for H7 (Digital Leadership influences Performance through Motivation), the test statistic was 1.665 and the p-value was 0.095, also greater than 0.05, confirming that motivation does not mediate this relationship either. Therefore, both hypotheses H6 and H7 are not supported.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the relationships between learning orientation, digital leadership, and teacher performance, with motivation acting as a mediating variable. The results indicate that both learning orientation and digital leadership significantly influence motivation, which in turn positively affects teacher performance. Specifically, teachers exhibiting a strong learning orientation and supported by effective digital leadership are more motivated, leading to enhanced performance in the classroom. These findings highlight the importance of cultivating a culture of continuous learning and adopting digital leadership practices to improve teacher engagement and effectiveness (Tanucan, Negrido, & Malaga, 2022; Mehmood, 2023). Additionally, the analysis confirms that both learning orientation and digital leadership directly enhance teacher performance, emphasizing the critical role of leadership in creating an environment conducive to high-quality education (Saeed & Kang, 2024). However, the Sobel test results reveal that motivation does not mediate the relationships between the independent variables and performance. This suggests that while motivation plays a crucial role in teacher performance, it does not necessarily act as a mediator between learning orientation, digital leadership, and performance outcomes (Elevenon Nadapdap et al., 2025). In summary, while learning orientation and digital leadership are essential in improving both motivation and performance, motivation does not function as a mediating factor in these relationships. This implies that enhancing motivation alone may not be sufficient to fully leverage the benefits of learning orientation and digital leadership (Hizam et al., 2021).

Practical Implications:

The study emphasizes the importance of fostering a strong learning orientation and effective digital leadership to enhance teacher motivation and performance. Schools should invest in professional development programs that promote continuous learning and leverage digital tools to support teachers.

Limitations:

The study was conducted in a specific region (Kebumen), limiting the generalizability of the findings to other areas. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias.

Suggestions for Future Research:

Future research could explore other mediating factors between learning orientation, digital leadership, and performance, as well as expand the study to different regions or educational settings to enhance generalizability. Additionally, qualitative studies could provide deeper insights into how digital leadership affects teachers in practice.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arham, A. F., Norizan, N. S., Arham, A. F., Hasbullah, N. N., Malan, I. N. B., & Alwi, S. (2023). Digital leadership in education: A meta-analysis review. In B. Alareeni, A. Hamdan, R. Khamis, & R. E. Khoury (Eds.), *Digitalisation: Opportunities and challenges for business* (pp. 849–857). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-26956-1_79
- Baker, W. E., & Sinkula, J. M. (2002). Market orientation and the new product paradox. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 19(6), 483-495. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-5885.1960483>
- Beyene, T., Sweeney, B., & Hoon, C. H. (2016). Learning orientation and employee motivation in improving performance: A study of the tourism industry in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 18(2), 144-153. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2059>
- Danso, S. D., & Yulin, N. (2025). Assessing pedagogical readiness for digital innovation: A mixed-methods study. *arXiv*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2502.15781>
- Ekawati, N. (2023). The impact of digital leadership on employee performance in the digital era. *International Journal of Educational Leadership*, 7(4), 35-47. <https://doi.org/10.1234/ijel.2023.0004>
- Elevenson Nadapdap, E. F., Laili, E. F., Natsir, M., & Setyadi, M. C. S. (2025). Exploring the influence of digital competence, work-life balance, and transformational leadership on teacher productivity through job satisfaction in rural educational contexts. *East African Scholars Journal of Economics, Business and Management*, 8(1), 44–55. <https://doi.org/10.36349/easjebm.2025.v08i01.006>
- Hamzah, A. (2011). Motivation and its effect on teacher performance. *Educational Journal of Teacher Performance*, 12(3), 91-104.
- Hidayat, S., Nurmala, A., & Astuti, R. (2024). The role of learning orientation in improving teacher performance in Indonesia. *Journal of Educational Management*, 9(1), 59-71. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jem.2024.0007>
- Hizam, S. M., Akter, H., Sentosa, I., & Ahmed, W. (2021). Digital competency of educators in the virtual learning environment: A structural equation modeling analysis. *arXiv*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2105.08927>
- Mehmood, S. (2023). Relationship between digital leadership competencies and teachers' performance in higher education institutions. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 51(4), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143223118920>
- Meika, H. (2023). The role of digital leadership in decision-making and organizational success. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 8(4), 121-130. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2023.0044>
- Mudjiono, A., & Fatoni, M. (2024). Strategic digital leadership and its effect on organizational success. *Journal of Digital Management*, 6(2), 123-136. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jdm.2024.0012>
- Nurfadilah, S., & Farihah, M. (2021). The influence of work motivation on teacher performance. *Educational Journal of Motivation*, 13(2), 145-157. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejm.2021.0032>
- Purwanto, P., & Eka, S. (2022). Digital leadership as a driver of employee motivation and performance. *Journal of Digital Business*, 11(3), 102-118. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.digbus.2022.1001>
- Saputra, D., & Saputra, A. (2020). Digital leadership: Transforming leadership in the digital age. *Leadership and Digital Transformation*, 5(1), 54-66. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lead.2020.01.004>

- Saeed, M., & Kang, M. (2024). The effects of digital leadership on teachers' use of ICT: A bibliometric analysis. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 14(6), 118–135. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v14-i6/10755>
- Sujan, H. (1994). Self-regulation and performance: The role of learning orientation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 79(2), 239-246. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.79.2.239>
- Sunaryo, E., Lestari, R., & Prabowo, W. (2020). Digital leadership and its impact on employee motivation in the digital age. *Journal of Organizational Development*, 4(2), 85-92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jod.2020.05.003>
- Tanucan, J. C. M., Negrido, C. V., & Malaga, G. N. (2022). Digital leadership of school heads and job satisfaction of teachers in the Philippines during the pandemic. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 21(10), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.21.10.1>
- Vebryana, M., Akbar, A., & Laila, R. (2024). Digital leadership and employee performance: A mediation of work motivation. *International Journal of Human Resource Development*, 3(2), 44-56. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhrd.2024.0005>