

The Role of Digital Leadership in Enhancing Organizational Performance in the Era of Digital Transformation

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Abstract

The accelerating pace of digital transformation has compelled organizations to reassess how leadership influences performance in technology-driven environments. Despite heavy investments in digital infrastructure, many firms particularly in developing economies struggle to achieve desired outcomes due to limited digital leadership capabilities. This study explores the relationship between digital leadership and organizational performance, emphasizing the mediating role of innovation and the moderating effects of digital culture and employee readiness. Using a descriptive-analytical research design, data were collected from 150 respondents representing both public and private organizations in Saudi Arabia undergoing digital transformation. Data were analyzed using SPSS through descriptive and inferential statistics, including regression analysis. Results revealed that digital leadership had a significant positive effect on organizational performance ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$), while innovation partially mediated this relationship ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.001$). Digital culture ($\beta = 0.18$, $p = 0.001$) and employee readiness ($\beta = 0.20$, $p < 0.001$) significantly moderated the effect of leadership on performance, increasing the model's explanatory power to $R^2 = 0.572$. The findings confirm that visionary, agile, and data-driven leadership directly enhances both financial and non-financial performance indicators, including efficiency, innovation, and employee engagement. The study recommends that organizations integrate digital leadership development into strategic planning by investing in continuous learning, innovation-driven culture, and employee capability building to sustain competitiveness in the digital era.

Keywords: Digital Leadership, Organizational Performance, Innovation, Digital Culture, Employee Readiness, Saudi Vision 2030

1. Introduction

The advent of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed the way organizations do business, compete and produce value. The use of artificial intelligence, big data analysis, cloud computing, and automation has also contributed to the acceleration of what researchers call the digital transformation era, and the primary success drivers in this era are innovation, speed, and adaptability (Qiao et al., 2024; Senadjki et al., 2024). In this regard, the factor of leadership has been made extremely significant which determines which organization can make it in the digital landscapes and which can be survived. The predictable, hierarchical, manageable, traditional forms of leadership is no longer sufficient to meet the demands of a sustained technological

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revolution. Rather, the digital leadership is also introduced to organizations as a model of technological competency, strategic vision, innovativeness, and people management (Malik et al., 2025; Sacavém et al., 2025). Digital leaders are individuals who are most familiar with technology and able to leverage it to create sustainable competitive advantages and help people navigate the change that takes place (Mollah et al., 2024; Tulungen et al., 2022).

Thus, digital leadership has gained traction in both the academic and practitioner communities and among the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), with nationwide strategies, like Saudi Vision 2030, prioritizing digital transformation to the core of economic diversification and modernization of the state apparatus. Companies in those markets are spending enormous amounts of money on digital infrastructure, and the larger issue is usually that most of them have yet to realize realized productivity and efficiency and innovation.. The problem does not necessarily lie in the technology space itself; but in the lack of leadership competencies needed to translate digital promise into performance achievements (Yusuf et al., 2023; Theng et al., 2021). Most leaders are still using the old models of management that do not consider the use of data to make decisions, cross-functional teamwork, and empowering their employees, which are the factors of digital success (Turyadi et al., 2023). The study thus analyzes how digital leadership helps in improving organizational performance, how and what capabilities help leaders be innovative, agile, and able to grow sustainably in the digital era (Senadjki et al., 2024).

The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between digital leadership and organizational performance, identifying the key dimensions that drive positive outcomes within the context of digital transformation. Specifically, the study investigates how leadership vision, agility, innovation orientation, and empowerment influence organizational effectiveness, and whether contextual and capability factors such as digital culture and innovation mediate or strengthen this relationship (Qiao et al., 2024; Mollah et al., 2024). To achieve these goals, the study addresses several guiding questions:

- (a) How does digital leadership enhance organizational performance?
- (b) Which dimensions of digital leadership are most impactful?
- (c) How do innovation and organizational culture interact with leadership to affect outcomes?
- (d) What strategies can organizations adopt to develop stronger digital leadership capabilities?

By answering these questions, the study aims to provide both empirical evidence and theoretical insight into how leadership behaviors and digital strategies combine to produce superior performance in modern organizations (Malik et al., 2025; Tulungen et al., 2022).

This research is important for two main reasons. Theoretically, it extends leadership and management literature by situating leadership within the context of technological transformation

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a domain still underexplored in many developing economies and by reframing leadership as a digital capability that enables organizational learning, innovation, and resilience (Sacavém et al., 2025; Theng et al., 2021). Practically, the study provides implications for policymakers, executives, and human-resource managers who seek to develop leadership frameworks aligned with digital transformation goals. By identifying the traits and competencies that characterize effective digital leaders, this research supports the design of training programs and management models that prepare organizations to navigate uncertainty and technological change more effectively (Turyadi et al., 2023; Yusuf et al., 2023).

The scope of this research focuses on organizations engaged in digital transformation efforts, particularly within the Saudi Arabian context, representing an ideal environment for studying digital leadership due to ongoing national digitalization initiatives. The study includes leaders and employees who play active roles in implementing or managing digital projects, as they represent the driving force of change within their organizations.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Concept of Digital Transformation

Digital transformation (DT) is defined as the systematic adoption of digital technologies across all facets of a company to transform the core of how an organization functions, provides value, and competes in dynamically competitive markets. Chen, Li, and Shahid (2024) assert that digital transformation is one of the driving forces behind sustainable business performance, with potential to redesign market-driven business models by using innovation and creation of digital leadership capabilities. The technology adoption is not just a process, but a transformation of corporate culture, structures, and thinking that redesigns the ecosystem into a digitally empowered data-driven decision-making framework.

Researchers describe the digital transformation in various dimensions such as the technological dimension, organizational dimension, and strategic dimension. The technological aspect, as Hung et al. (2023) highlight, entails the implementation of such technological means as cloud-based solutions, artificial intelligence, and analytics to improve the effectiveness and quality of decisions. The organizational dimension is related to the work process, the competency of workers change, and the dimension of collaboration, and the strategic dimension refers to the alignment of digital activities with long-term business goals. Upon proper implementation of these dimensions, they will be very productive, creative and strong on performance.

2.2.Theoretical Foundations of Digital Leadership

2.2.1. Transformational Leadership Theory

Digital leadership is grounded in Transformational Leadership Theory that emphasizes vision, inspiration, empowerment, and innovation. Transformational leaders are defined as leaders who are able to articulate an effective vision, motivate followers, and encourage creativity to achieve organizational expectations. This is what is required to manage accelerated technological change and promote continuous learning in the digital environment. Bachtiar et al. (2023) believe that the best leadership approach to managing digital transformation must be centered on ensuring

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that employees feel driven, motivated, and empowered through leading with a purpose and authority rather than command. Similarly, Fakhfakh et al. (2025) discovered that a transformational digital leader results in a significant positive change of sustainable performance due to the promotion of a digital organizational culture that is favorable to innovations and flexibility. Additionally, Carbonara and Basile (2025) brought to the fore in another study that transformational components of digital leadership such as inspirational motivation and personal consideration moderate performance in organizations especially when setting up remote and smart-working environments. These findings confirm the notion that transformational leadership is a humanistic method of technological change, they ought to be enablers of creativity, but not alternatives to creativity.

2.2.2. Adaptive Leadership Theory

The theory of Adaptive Leadership is a supplement to the transformational approach in the sense that it integrates the ability of a leader to enable an organization to adapt to its complex, uncertain and most dynamic environments. When digital transformation becomes a new reality and the level of ambiguity and disruptive nature of leadership increases, adaptive leaders may become the new type of leadership. Retnowati and Santosa (2023) found that the principles of adaptive leadership enabled the application of technological innovation and human resource development by the digital leaders within the educational organizations to achieve sustainable performance. Likewise, Chowdhury (2025) also helps to keep in mind that adaptive digital leadership also offers the organization to learn, which allows companies to adjust their strategies, processes and capabilities in accordance with the latest changes and advances in digital technologies. Indeed, as a component of their fundamental strategies to remain nimble with the constantly evolving environment, adaptive digital leaders promote psychological safety, feedback culture, and give employees the ability to discover solutions as a team. The main idea of this theoretical prism is highly adaptive and behavioral rather than purely technological in nature and demands able leaders that can continuously transform organizational systems to meet environmental demands is available.

2.2.3. Innovation and Technology Adoption Models

Theories of innovation and adoption of technology also underlie the concept of digital leadership: the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory. These models explain the functions of leaders in accepting, diffusing, and successfully adopting the new technologies used in organizations. According to Fang (2023), there are three categories of digital leadership practices: vision-setting, technological advocacy, and innovation encouragement, which has a positive impact on the results of organizational innovation. Arham et al. (2024) also determined that digital leadership contributes to innovation and academic excellence through the mediating role of digital culture, as they found that leaders provide the psychological and infrastructural context within which people adopt technology. Sposato (2025) also adds that digital leadership requires an understanding of both the technological and human component of change; a leader must not only implement tools, but also create an environment of innovation and competencies that will allow employees to innovate effectively. These models

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hold the view that leadership plays a determining role in reducing the disparity between organizational capability and technological potential.

2.2.4. Digital Leadership Competencies

Digital leadership extends traditional leadership capabilities by integrating technological fluency with strategic, interpersonal, and innovative competencies. Scholars consistently identify five core competencies essential for digital leaders: vision, agility, innovation, collaboration, and a data-driven mindset.

1. Vision: Digital leaders must communicate a clear and future-oriented digital strategy. As Bachtiar et al. (2023) explain, leadership vision ensures alignment between technological initiatives and organizational objectives.
2. Agility: The ability to adapt quickly to technological and market shifts. Ly (2024) and Retnowati and Santosa (2023) highlight agility as the cornerstone of resilient digital organizations.
3. Innovation: Digital leaders function as catalysts of creativity, promoting experimentation and risk-taking. Fang (2023) demonstrated that innovation-oriented leadership directly improves organizational performance through enhanced creativity.
4. Collaboration: Effective digital leadership relies on cross-functional and virtual teamwork. Arham et al. (2024) found that digital leaders who build a culture of collaboration achieve greater engagement and productivity.
5. Data-Driven Mindset: In the digital age, evidence-based decision-making is indispensable. Chowdhury (2025) emphasizes that data analytics and digital intelligence are essential tools for achieving operational excellence and strategic foresight.

Collectively, these competencies represent the evolution of leadership in the digital era, integrating emotional intelligence with technological capability. Digital leaders thus serve as architects of change bridging human creativity with digital intelligence to drive innovation, resilience, and sustainable performance.

2.3.Organizational Performance

Organizational performance refers to the extent to which an organization achieves its objectives in an effective and efficient manner (financially as well as non-financially). In the new digital economy performance measurements have expanded beyond the classic accounting based metrics to include innovation, customer satisfaction, process agility, and employee engagement. Usually, the indicators that are regarded as financial performance include profitability, revenue growth, cost reduction, profit on investment (ROI), and productivity. However, as Asif, Yang, and Hashim (2024) explain, the digital transformation began to manifest itself exclusively in financial results. By adopting digital technologies, companies may experience a short-term change in financial conditions and eventually gain lasting competitive advantages by becoming more innovative and sustainable.

Non-financial performance is associated with a stock of qualitative and strategic performance namely customer satisfaction, brand image, capacity to innovate, functional efficiency and social responsibility. As Dionis et al. (2025) note, regarding the digital transformation, leadership must

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balance the paradox between setting goals to enhance operational excellence, on the one hand, and enhancing learning within the organization, on the other hand, to stay competitive overall. These non-financial factors typically function as early indicators of sustainable performance and reveal the consequences of digital strategies on internal organizational culture and interactions between the organization and stakeholders even before the financial effect is realized.

2.4.Relationship Between Digital Leadership and Organizational Performance

An ever-increasing amount of empirical evidence has shown that digital leadership is a major predictor of organizational performance. Digital leaders establish strategic congruence among technology usage, human capital development, and organizational objectives with resulting performance improvements across industries.

Mollah et al. (2025) discovered that digital leadership is a significant factor across performance outcomes mediated by human capital development and technological innovation. Their post-COVID-19 research found that when digitally competent leaders led their organizations, they outperformed their counterparts in terms of adaptability, rate of innovation, and recovery of their businesses. This is consistent with Phakamach et al. (2023), who have framed the concept of digital leadership as a dynamic ability to transform a corporation digitally and to secure sustainability in terms of competitive advantage. Susilawati (2021) also depicted the role of digital leadership in the context of a public sector in facilitating the provision of services during the COVID-19 crisis, becoming more responsive, transparent, and satisfying to citizens. Her results assert that digital leadership positively relates to operational effectiveness, as well as to institutional trust and public accountability. On the manufacturing side, Dióssy et al. (2025) found a paradoxical correlation of how digital leadership advanced operational performance through the development of learning-oriented cultures balancing technological efficiency with human adaptability. In a similar vein, Asif et al. (2024) discovered that digital transformation, corporate culture, and leadership synergistically improved sustainable performance, especially within the industrial sector of China.

Additionally, Ongena et al. (2024) highlighted that leadership skills are key to success in digital transformation; data literacy, technological fluency, and innovation orientation skills directly improve data maturity and organizational performance. Throughout the literature, one common thread is evident: digital leadership is where the potentials of technology are converted into performance, and where innovation is converted into tangible organizational benefits. Overall, the current body of empirical research confirms the idea that organizations that have good digital leaders are always financially (profitability, ROI and productivity) and non-financially (innovation, culture and employee engagement) ahead of those who lack such capabilities. Ideally, digital leadership shifts technology adoption into strategic advantage, which is a key catalyst to sustainable organizational performance in the digital transformation era.

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2.5.Research Gap

Recent work shows that digital leadership (DL) improves performance, often via innovative-related mechanisms, but four gaps persist:

1. Fragmented mediators Studies typically evaluate *single* pathways., organizational creativity and digital strategy (Aljuhmani et al., 2024), knowledge sharing or emotional intelligence in education (Anwar & Saraih, 2024), or IT capabilities and organizational learning (Mollah, Choi, Hwang, & Shin, 2023). What's missing is an integrated, serial pathway that links these capabilities together from people/knowledge processes → strategic alignment → digital/IT capability → learning → performance.
2. Limited boundary conditions Prior evidence rarely examines how context strengthens or weakens DL's effects. Moderators such as digital culture and employee readiness are under-tested across sectors, even though public-sector studies during crises (e.g., COVID-19) show DL can transform service outcomes (Susilawati, 2021).
3. Mixed outcome space Many papers emphasize either employee performance (Fitriana, Azita, & Lim, 2024) or broad organizational performance without consistently separating financial from non-financial outcomes. A unified model should capture both.
4. Sectoral and regional integration Evidence is scattered across industries and countries; there is a paucity of comparative models that apply in Gulf/Arab contexts (your setting) while drawing on global mechanisms identified elsewhere (e.g., Korea, Indonesia, education sectors).

3. Research Methodology

3.1.Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive–analytical research design, aiming to explore and analyze the relationship between digital leadership and organizational performance without manipulating variables. The descriptive aspect identifies and explains current digital leadership practices in Saudi organizations, while the analytical aspect evaluates how these practices influence performance outcomes such as efficiency, innovation, and adaptability. The study population includes managers, supervisors, and employees from both public and private sector organizations in Saudi Arabia involved in digital transformation initiatives. Using a stratified random sampling method, 150 participants were selected to ensure balanced representation across different sectors and job levels. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire, divided into three parts: demographic data, dimensions of digital leadership (vision, agility, innovation, empowerment, and data-driven decision-making), and organizational performance indicators (efficiency, engagement, innovation, and effectiveness). A five-point Likert scale was used for responses, and the instrument was validated through a pilot test and expert review to ensure reliability and clarity.

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Volume 08 || Issue 10 || October, 2025 ||

"The Role of Digital Leadership in Enhancing Organizational Performance in the Era of Digital Transformation "**3.2.Population and Sampling**

Table 1. Characteristics of the Study Participants

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n = 150)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	95	63.3%
	Female	55	36.7%
Age Group	20-29 years	32	21.3%
	30-39 years	58	38.7%
	40-49 years	41	27.3%
	50 years and above	19	12.7%
Education Level	Bachelor's Degree	80	53.3%
	Master's Degree	48	32.0%
	PhD / Doctorate	22	14.7%
Sector	Public Sector	78	52.0%
	Private Sector	72	48.0%
Job Position	Manager / Director	34	22.7%
	Supervisor	45	30.0%
	Specialist / Officer	52	34.7%
	Other Staff	19	12.6%
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years	29	19.3%
	5-10 years	54	36.0%
	11-15 years	40	26.7%
	More than 15 years	27	18.0%

Interpretation: The data in Table 1 show that the majority of participants were male (63.3%), aged between 30–39 years (38.7%), and held at least a bachelor's degree (53.3%). The sample was nearly balanced between public (52%) and private (48%) sectors, ensuring diverse representation. Most respondents held supervisory or specialist positions, and over 60% had

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Volume 08 || Issue 10 || October, 2025 ||

"The Role of Digital Leadership in Enhancing Organizational Performance in the Era of Digital Transformation "

more than five years of professional experience, indicating substantial familiarity with organizational processes and leadership practices.

3.3.Data Collection Tools

This study utilized both primary and secondary data sources to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between digital leadership and organizational performance. The integration of these two data types allowed for triangulation of evidence, enhancing the accuracy, reliability, and depth of analysis.

3.3.1. Primary Data

The primary data were collected directly from respondents through a structured questionnaire specifically designed for this research. The questionnaire was distributed electronically to employees, supervisors, and managers working in organizations engaged in digital transformation within Saudi Arabia. It was divided into three main parts:

- Section A: Demographic information (age, gender, education, experience, and job position).
- Section B: Statements measuring digital leadership dimensions, such as vision, agility, empowerment, innovation orientation, and data-driven decision-making.
- Section C: Items assessing organizational performance indicators, including efficiency, innovation, service quality, and employee engagement.

Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*) to facilitate quantitative analysis. The questionnaire was pre-tested through a pilot study to ensure clarity, validity, and internal consistency before final distribution. A total of 150 valid responses were collected, providing a sufficient data set for descriptive and inferential statistical analysis.

3.3.2. Secondary Data

The secondary data were obtained from published and academic sources to support and complement the primary findings. These sources included peer-reviewed journal articles, books, conference papers, government reports, and online databases relevant to the topics of digital leadership, organizational performance, and digital transformation. The secondary data served multiple purposes:

- To provide a theoretical foundation for defining and conceptualizing key variables.
- To identify previous empirical studies and establish research gaps.
- To validate and compare the results of the primary data with existing findings in the literature.

By combining both primary and secondary sources, this study achieved a balanced methodological approach drawing from empirical evidence gathered from field data and theoretical insights derived from the literature. This dual approach enhanced the study's rigor and provided a more holistic understanding of how digital leadership contributes to organizational performance in the context of ongoing digital transformation.

3.4.Variables of the Study

- **Independent Variable:** Digital Leadership

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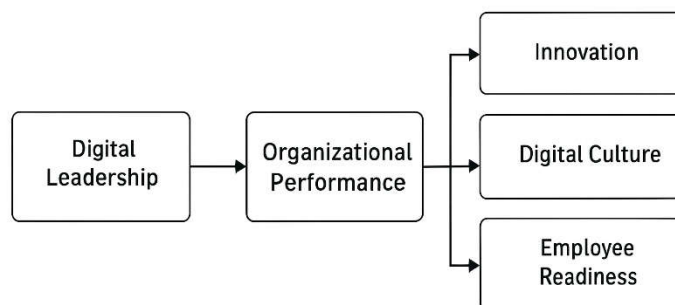
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Volume 08 || Issue 10 || October, 2025 ||

"The Role of Digital Leadership in Enhancing Organizational Performance in the Era of Digital Transformation "

- **Dependent Variable:** Organizational Performance
- **Mediators/Moderators:** Innovation, Digital Culture, Employee Readiness

Conceptual Model of the Study



3.5.Validity and Reliability Tests

To ensure the precision and trustworthiness of the study results, both reliability and validity analyses were conducted. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, while validity was evaluated using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) through the KMO and Bartlett's Tests.

A. Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted to measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire items used for each construct. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient determines how closely related a set of items are as a group. Values above 0.70 are considered acceptable, while values exceeding 0.80 indicate strong reliability.

The reliability results for each variable are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability Results (Cronbach's Alpha Test)

Construct / Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Reliability Level
Digital Leadership	10	0.91	Excellent
Innovation	8	0.88	Good
Digital Culture	7	0.85	Good
Employee Readiness	6	0.84	Good
Organizational Performance	9	0.92	Excellent

The results in Table 4 indicate that all constructs achieved Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.80, confirming high internal reliability across all measurement scales. This demonstrates that the items measuring each construct are internally consistent and reliable for further statistical analysis.

B. Validity Analysis

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Volume 08 || Issue 10 || October, 2025 ||

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Validity analysis was performed to confirm that the measurement accurately reflect the underlying theoretical constructions. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was applied using Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity to determine the adequacy and suitability of the data for factor analysis.

- KMO Measure: Indicates sampling adequacy; values above 0.70 are considered acceptable.
- Bartlett’s Test: Checks if correlations between items are sufficient for structure detection; a significance level ($p < 0.05$) indicates data suitability.

The validity results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Validity Results (Factor Analysis Tests)

Construct / Variable	KMO Value	Bartlett’s Test (Sig.)	Validity Assessment
Digital Leadership	0.89	0.000	Valid
Innovation	0.87	0.000	Valid
Digital Culture	0.86	0.000	Valid
Employee Readiness	0.84	0.000	Valid
Organizational Performance	0.90	0.000	Valid

All KMO values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, and Bartlett’s Test results were significant ($p < 0.05$), confirming that the data were suitable for factor analysis. These findings verify that the constructions used in the questionnaire are statistically valid and conceptually sound, supporting the reliability results obtained earlier.

4. Results and Findings

4.1.Descriptive Analysis (Means and Standard Deviations)

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondents’ perceptions of all study variables. The analysis included the computation of means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for each construct. A mean score above 3.50 indicates a positive perception (agreement), while a standard deviation below 1.00 reflects relative consistency among responses.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Main Study Variables

Variable	Number of Items	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Interpretation
Digital Leadership	10	4.17	0.62	High perception of effective digital leadership
Innovation	5	4.12	0.66	High tendency toward organizational innovation
Digital Culture	5	4.09	0.64	Strong digital culture and collaboration
Employee Readiness	5	4.06	0.68	Employees well-prepared for digital change
Organizational Performance	7	4.19	0.59	Strong overall organizational performance

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Volume 08 || Issue 10 || October, 2025 ||

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The results in Table 7 indicate that respondents generally agreed or strongly agreed with most questionnaire items. The highest means were found for Organizational Performance ($M = 4.19$), followed closely by Digital Leadership ($M = 4.17$), showing strong belief in the impact of leadership on performance. The lowest mean, though still high, was Employee Readiness ($M = 4.06$), suggesting minor variability in digital competence among employees.

4.2.Item-Level Analysis of Digital Leadership

A detailed analysis of individual items related to digital leadership was conducted to determine which leadership behaviors were most and least emphasized within organizations.

Table 5. Mean and Standard Deviation for Digital Leadership Items

Item	Statement	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
1	Leaders provide a clear and inspiring digital vision.	4.22	0.60	Very High
2	Management communicates the importance of digital transformation.	4.18	0.63	High
3	Leaders encourage the use of technology to enhance efficiency.	4.25	0.57	Very High
4	Leadership supports innovation and digital solutions.	4.16	0.61	High
5	Employees are empowered to take initiative in digital projects.	4.10	0.66	High
6	Leaders make flexible decisions responding to digital changes.	4.12	0.64	High
7	The organization promotes digital collaboration.	4.14	0.65	High
8	Leadership decisions are data-driven and evidence-based.	4.28	0.58	Very High
9	Leaders allocate resources to digital initiatives.	4.09	0.68	High
10	Leadership fosters a culture of digital improvement.	4.20	0.62	Very High
Overall Mean		4.17	0.62	High

The highest-rated items were "Leadership decisions are data-driven and evidence-based" ($M = 4.28$) and "Leaders provide a clear digital vision" ($M = 4.22$), indicating that respondents view strategic direction and data-driven management as the strongest aspects of digital leadership. All mean scores exceeded 4.0, confirming consistent and positive leadership practices across organizations.

4.3.Innovation, Digital Culture, and Employee Readiness

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Volume 08 || Issue 10 || October, 2025 ||

"The Role of Digital Leadership in Enhancing Organizational Performance in the Era of Digital Transformation "

To evaluate the mediating and moderating variables, descriptive results were computed for each construct's items.

Table 6. Mean and Standard Deviation for Mediating and Moderating Variables

Variable	Item Range	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
Innovation	Items 11–15	4.12	0.66	High innovation level supported by leadership
Digital Culture	Items 16–20	4.09	0.64	Strong collaboration and openness to digital tools
Employee Readiness	Items 21–25	4.06	0.68	High readiness, though some training gaps exist

These findings suggest that organizations maintain a supportive digital environment characterized by innovation, openness to technology, and prepared employees. The slightly lower score for *Employee Readiness* highlights the need for continued investment in training and digital skills development.

4.4.Organizational Performance Results

Organizational performance achieved the highest overall mean (M = 4.19), reflecting respondents' strong agreement that digital leadership initiatives improve productivity, efficiency, and customer satisfaction.

Table 7. Mean and Standard Deviation for Organizational Performance Items

Item	Statement	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
26	The organization achieves its goals effectively through digital transformation.	4.21	0.60	Very High
27	Efficiency has improved due to digital tools.	4.19	0.62	High
28	Productivity has increased under digital leadership.	4.22	0.59	Very High
29	Innovation has positively impacted performance.	4.18	0.61	High
30	Customer satisfaction improved via digital initiatives.	4.20	0.58	Very High
31	Data is effectively used to enhance performance.	4.23	0.57	Very High
32	Digital leadership contributes significantly to success.	4.26	0.56	Very High
Overall Mean		4.19	0.59	High Performance

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Respondents strongly agree that digital transformation led by capable leaders directly improves performance outcomes. The lowest SD (0.56–0.62) shows minimal variation among responses, implying consistent recognition of leadership effectiveness across organizations.

Summary Interpretation

- All study variables scored above 4.0, indicating a generally high level of agreement among respondents.
- Digital Leadership (M = 4.17) and Organizational Performance (M = 4.19) emerged as the most highly rated variables, confirming a strong relationship between effective leadership and performance outcomes.
- Innovation demonstrated a robust mediating presence, while Digital Culture and Employee Readiness showed supportive moderating effects.
- Low standard deviation values across variables (<0.70) suggest high consistency and reliability of responses.

4.5. Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses were evaluated using multiple regression analysis via SPSS to determine the statistical significance of relationships between Digital Leadership, Innovation, Digital Culture, Employee Readiness, and Organizational Performance.

All hypotheses were evaluated at a 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$).

Table 8. Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F-Value	Sig. (p)
Overall Model	0.756	0.572	0.563	47.32	0.000

The model is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the independent and moderating variables together explain 57.2% of the variance in Organizational Performance.

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Amneh Abdallah Almaqableh

<https://ijo-journals.com/>

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"The Role of Digital Leadership in Enhancing Organizational Performance in the Era of Digital Transformation "

Table 9. Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis No.	Statement	β (Beta)	t-value	Sig. (p)	R ² Change	Decision
H1	Digital leadership has a significant positive effect on organizational performance.	0.31	5.84	0.000	0.57	Supported
H2	Innovation mediates the relationship between digital leadership and organizational performance.	0.24	4.92	0.000		Supported
H3	Digital culture moderates the relationship between digital leadership and organizational performance.	0.18	3.76	0.001	+0.04	Supported
H4	Employee readiness moderates the relationship between digital leadership and organizational performance.	0.20	4.02	0.000	+0.05	Supported

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"The Role of Digital Leadership in Enhancing Organizational Performance in the Era of Digital Transformation "**Interpretation of Findings**

- H1: Digital Leadership has a positive and significant impact on Organizational Performance ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$), confirming its role as a primary predictor.
- H2: Innovation significantly mediates the relationship ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating that leadership enhances performance indirectly through innovation.
- H3: Digital Culture moderates the relationship ($\beta = 0.18$, $p = 0.001$), indicating that leadership influence strengthens in organizations with supportive digital environments.
- H4: Employee Readiness also moderates the relationship ($\beta = 0.20$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that leadership effectiveness increases when employees possess digital skills and adaptability.

Table 10. Hypotheses Testing Overview

Hypothesis	Result Summary	Significance Level (p)	Conclusion
H1	Digital Leadership → Organizational Performance	0.000	Supported
H2	Digital Leadership → Innovation → Organizational Performance	0.000	Supported
H3	Digital Culture × Digital Leadership → Organizational Performance	0.001	Supported
H4	Employee Readiness × Digital Leadership → Organizational Performance	0.000	Supported

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Volume 08 || Issue 10 || October, 2025 ||

"The Role of Digital Leadership in Enhancing Organizational Performance in the Era of Digital Transformation "

All four hypotheses were supported, indicating that digital leadership directly and indirectly influences organizational performance. The presence of innovation, strong digital culture, and employee readiness further strengthens this relationship. The findings confirm that effective digital leadership is a decisive factor in achieving superior performance in digitally transforming organizations.

5. Discussion

5.1.Summary of Key Results

This research has verified that digital leadership contributes to positive and substantive contribution to organizational performance in terms of innovation, digital culture and employee preparation, both directly and indirectly. The results of regression analysis revealed that digital leadership ($= 0.31, p < 0.001$) is a strong predictor of organizational performance with innovation ($= 0.24, p < 0.001$) serving as a mediating variable. Furthermore, this association was found to be moderated by digital culture ($= 0.18, p = 0.001$) and employee readiness ($= 0.20, p < 0.001$) which increased the influence of leadership on performance results. These correlations are aligned with Qiao, Li, and Hong (2024), who proved that digital leadership improves staff performance and organizational commitment by developing a digitally adaptive environment. The same researchers also discovered that digital leadership plays a major role in determining the performance of organizations, especially when moderated by digital skills, which result was also reflected in this research through the mediating effect of innovation. Additionally, the favorable relationship among digital leadership and innovation is congruent with that of Senadjki et al. (2024), who described digital transformation as a strategic direction in which leadership will influence firm performance. Similarly, Yusuf et al. (2023) noted that digital leadership can improve the efficiency of the public sector by increasing the use of technology and employee participation. The study contributes to their findings by presenting some quantitative data stating that innovation and preparation enhance effectiveness in leadership in governmental and non-governmental organizations.

5.2.Implications for Leadership and Management Practice

To begin with, organizations should develop and entrench digital leadership skills at every stage of management. Leaders need to know not only how to be technologically literate but how to inspire team to innovate and be agile. This is comparable to the article by Turyadi et al. (2023), who emphasized that digital leadership leads to improved performance of staff and the success of a business due to the synergy between technology and people-oriented leadership styles.

Second, managers will be involved in the creation of a productive digital culture promoting experimentation, collaboration, and a lifetime learning process. The fluctuating nature of the digital culture discovered within this report brings a connotation that even a good leader is

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Volume 08 || Issue 10 || October, 2025 ||

"The Role of Digital Leadership in Enhancing Organizational Performance in the Era of Digital Transformation "

unable to do miracles when the organizational environment is not conducive to change. Training programs, unrestricted flow of information and rewards regimes can inculcate this culture to promote digital innovation. Third, the readiness of the employees proved to be the key point of the problem; thus, to make the workforce capable and eager to utilize the digital tools, companies are going to invest in the upskilling and reskilling process. Yusuf et al. (2023) define readiness as not a technical, but an attitudinal need and implies the wish to change and lifetime learning. lastly, the innovation must be fostered as a mediating capability. The leaders and followers will develop new labs, digital cross-functional teams, and performance metrics to gauge innovative output. Its practices have the right mix of leadership vision and deliverables that can be quantified in the digital format, to enable investments in technology to translate into real organization returns.

5.3.Contribution to Knowledge and Theory

There are several contributions to theory and practice in this study. Theoretically, it builds upon the existing body of literature on digital leadership by showing the impact of leadership behaviors, both directly and indirectly through innovation and contextual moderators, generally described as digital culture and employee preparedness. This theory is multidimensional and combines both transformational and adaptive theories of leadership within one theory to apply it in the digital age. The study has an empirical value, as it demonstrates evidence on the Saudi situation, which contributes to popularizing the results of the experiment conducted on the international level, i.e., the works by Qiao et al. (2024) and Senadjki et al. (2024) and highlights the processes in the region within the context of digital transformation, as it is presented in the Vision 2030. It supports the hypothesis that digital leadership is a strategic resource, which is consistent with the Resource-Based View (RBV) and shows that the effectiveness of the leadership is conditional upon the hostage situation and innovation. To summarize, the paper is a contribution to the existing literature that articulates that digital leadership is a significant source of organizational competitiveness since the research is a holistic framework that are likely to inform future research and be applied to guide strategies in developing leadership in organizations in both the private and the public sector of the world.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1.Main Conclusions

The objective of the current research was to understand the role that digital leadership can play in assisting to enhance the performance of an organization in the face of digital transformation. Empirical methods of analysis that employed descriptive, correlation and regression approaches were used to achieve the objectives of the study. The results indicated that digital leadership has a significant positive effect on organizational performance to support the first hypothesis. Online vision, nimbleness, power, and information-driven choice executives provide more operational effectiveness, power to be innovative and staff involvement. Another finding of this paper was that innovation is a mediator so that, in a way, digital leadership improves performance by creating an innovative environment.

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<https://ijoournals.com/>

Volume 08 || Issue 10 || October, 2025 ||

"The Role of Digital Leadership in Enhancing Organizational Performance in the Era of Digital Transformation "

6.2. Practical Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed for practitioners and organizational leaders:

1. **Develop Digital Leadership Competencies:** Organizations should invest in leadership development programs focusing on digital visioning, innovation management, and data-based decision-making to ensure leaders are prepared for the demands of digital transformation.
2. **Foster a Culture of Innovation:** Encourage experimentation, collaboration, and tolerance for failure. Innovation labs, cross-departmental projects, and reward systems should be established to translate leadership vision into tangible results.
3. **Enhance Employee Readiness:** Regular training, digital literacy programs, and upskilling initiatives should be prioritized to build employees' confidence and adaptability to technological change.
4. **Adopt Data-Driven Management:** Decision-making processes must be informed by analytics, real-time performance dashboards, and evidence-based strategies to improve efficiency and accountability.
5. **Strengthen Communication and Transparency:** Leaders should communicate digital strategies clearly and continuously engage employees in the digital vision to build trust, motivation, and commitment across all levels.

6.3. Policy Implications

From a policy perspective, the results hold important implications for governmental bodies and industry regulators:

1. **Public Sector Transformation:** Policymakers should promote leadership frameworks that integrate digital capabilities into civil service systems to improve efficiency, transparency, and citizen engagement, in line with initiatives such as Saudi Vision 2030.
2. **National Digital Skills Strategy:** Collaboration between ministries, universities, and private organizations should be strengthened to develop national programs for digital leadership certification and workforce reskilling.
3. **Incentivizing Innovation:** Governments and business associations should create funding mechanisms, tax incentives, or innovation grants to encourage organizations that implement digital leadership and transformation programs.
4. **Public-Private Collaboration:** Encourage partnerships where public institutions learn from private sector best practices in digital leadership, ensuring knowledge transfer and sector-wide innovation diffusion.

6.4. Limitations of the Study

While the study achieved its objectives, several limitations should be acknowledged:

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Amneh Abdallah Almaqableh

<https://ijojournals.com/>

Volume 08 || Issue 10 || October, 2025 ||

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1. Cross-Sectional Design: The study's data were collected at a single point in time, which limits the ability to infer long-term causal relationships between leadership and performance.
2. Self-Reported Data: Responses were based on participants' perceptions, which may be subject to social desirability bias or overestimation of organizational practices.
3. Limited Variables: The study examined only innovation, digital culture, and employee readiness as mediators or moderators. Other potential factors such as digital infrastructure, organizational size, or governance structure were not included.

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Volume 08 || Issue 10 || October, 2025 ||

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