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THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL LEADERSHIP AND ETHICAL LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AT THE LANGSA CITY DPR OFFICE WITH INNOVATIVE WORK BEHAVIOR AS MEDIATION VARIABLE

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of digital leadership and ethical leadership on employee performance with innovative work behavior as a mediating variable at the Langsa City DPR Office. The study used a quantitative approach with a survey method. The entire population consisting of 70 employees, namely 33 Civil Servants and 37 Government Employees with Work Agreements, was sampled through a saturated sampling technique. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire distributed directly on April 1-30, 2026, then analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling with the help of SmartPLS. The test results show that digital leadership has a positive and significant effect on innovative work behavior and employee performance. Innovative work behavior also has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Conversely, ethical leadership does not have a significant effect on innovative work behavior or employee performance. Innovative work behavior partially mediates the effect of digital leadership on employee performance, but does not mediate the effect of ethical leadership. These findings demonstrate the importance of strengthening leaders' digital competence, assisting in the use of technology, and supporting employee innovation. The application of ethical values must be maintained to support trust and the quality of work relationships within the organization.

Keywords: digital leadership; ethical leadership; employee performance; innovative work behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation is changing the way organizations manage information, perform work, and provide services to stakeholders. In public sector organizations, these changes require adjustments to administrative processes and employees' ability to use technology to support task performance. Technology utilization is not simply understood as providing applications or replacing manual documents with electronic ones. Its success is also related to the leadership's ability to guide change, explain the benefits of new systems, and help employees overcome work-related obstacles. Turyadi et al. (2023) position digital leadership as a crucial component in improving employee performance and organizational success, while Benitez et al. (2022) link it to digitalization capabilities and innovation performance.

Digital leadership refers to a leader's ability to direct the use of digital technology to support organizational goals. In practice, leaders need to help employees understand the opportunities and risks of technology, develop learning habits, and reduce resistance to change. This role is relevant for government agencies because carrying out administrative tasks requires accurate information, coordination, and timely completion of work. Erhan et al. (2022) explain the relationship between digital leadership and innovative work behavior, so technological development must also be viewed in light of the accompanying behavioral changes.

In addition to digital competence, leadership quality in public organizations is related to integrity, fairness, and responsibility. Ethical leadership emphasizes ethical behavior in carrying out work, making decisions, and building relationships with employees. Trustworthy leadership that is open to subordinates' opinions is expected to create a work environment that supports participation. In a study by Ahmed Iqbal et al. (2020), ethical leadership was linked to innovative work behavior through individual attributes. Liu et al. (2023) also examined this relationship

by considering psychological safety and work engagement. Innovative work behavior is a relevant link between leadership and work outcomes. Employees who strive to find alternative solutions to problems, propose improvements, and develop ideas can help organizations adapt their work processes. Innovation in public administration does not always take the form of major changes, but can emerge through improvements in how documents are managed, coordinated, or completed tasks. Hadi et al. (2020) link innovative behavior with employee performance, while Sagbas et al. (2023) examine the mediating role of innovative behavior in the relationship between digital leadership and performance.

These issues were identified in the Langsa City House of Representatives (DPR) office. As an organization supporting institutional activities, this office requires effective administrative processes, orderly document management, and employee adaptability to digital systems. Based on preliminary interviews with the head of the general affairs department, the use of technology in administration has not been optimal. Correspondence activities directed towards using digital applications still encounter system disruptions. These disruptions hamper the smooth running of administrative processes and make work completion less effective.

A preliminary interview with a civil servant also revealed issues with task allocation and reward allocation. The division of labor was deemed not to fully consider employees' educational backgrounds and competencies. Furthermore, a reward system that differentiates high-performing employees from those with suboptimal performance was not yet in place. This situation was seen as potentially impacting employee motivation, perceptions of fairness, and willingness to develop new work methods. Therefore, performance issues in the research area were not only related to application constraints, but also to how leaders provide direction, treat employees, and provide support for improving work processes.

Previous research used in this study shows that the relationship between digital leadership and performance has not yielded consistent findings. Gehan and Yulianti (2024) found that digital leadership did not have a significant direct impact on employee performance, although it did influence innovative work behavior. Meanwhile, Sagbas et al. (2023) demonstrated the importance of innovative behavior as a mediator between digital leadership and performance. Yulianti and Maharani (2024) also examined creativity and innovative work behavior in the relationship between digital leadership and performance. These differing findings justify reexamining the same relationship in local government environments, which have their own work processes and institutional characteristics.

Studies on ethical leadership also provide a basis for testing in this context. Shafique et al. (2020), Liu et al. (2023), and Abuzaid et al. (2024) position ethical leadership in relation to creativity or innovative work behavior through different mechanisms. The results of these studies do not necessarily explain the conditions of employees at the Langsa City House of Representatives (DPR) Office. This study focuses on the combination of digital leadership and ethical leadership in a single model, with innovative work behavior as a mediator and employee performance as the outcome variable. Joint testing is necessary to understand the contribution of each leadership form and its related mechanisms to employee performance within the research object.

Based on these problems, this study aims to analyze the influence of digital leadership and ethical leadership on innovative work behavior and employee performance, examine the influence of innovative work behavior on performance, and examine its mediating role in both leadership-performance relationships. This focus resulted in seven relationships tested through a single research model. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the study of leadership, innovation, and human resource management in the public sector. Practically, the results are expected to be used as considerations in improving technological assistance, supporting employee ideas, and developing performance management at the Langsa City DPR Office.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Leadership

Digital leadership is a leader's ability to integrate leadership with the use of technology to support work implementation and organizational change. Its role includes providing direction, developing employee understanding, managing resistance, and creating an environment open to innovation. Erhan et al. (2022) link digital leadership to innovative work behavior, while Turyadi et al. (2023) emphasize its relevance to improving performance. In government organizations, this capability is necessary for the use of digital systems to truly assist administrative processes and employee coordination.

Digital leaders not only provide or use technological tools but also explain the risks, benefits, and opportunities of their use. This study focuses on leaders' abilities to build employee awareness and understanding, guide technology implementation, reduce resistance to change, and share knowledge about technological

opportunities. Benitez et al. (2022) demonstrate the importance of digital leadership capabilities in developing innovation performance through platform digitalization.

Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership places moral values, honesty, fairness, integrity, and caring as the basis for a leader's actions and decision-making. Leaders serve as role models through the alignment of behavior, decisions, and ethical standards applied to employees. Ahmed Iqbal et al. (2020) explain the link between ethical leadership and innovative behavior through individual attributes. Liu et al. (2023) outline the role of psychological safety and work engagement in this relationship.

In the context of the Langsa City House of Representatives (DPRD) office, ethical leadership is related to the willingness to listen to opinions, address violations of ethical standards, carry out work ethically, make fair decisions, and build trust. These values are relevant to the responsibility of civil servants to maintain professionalism and the public interest. Testing is necessary to determine whether perceptions of leaders' ethical behavior are also related to employee innovation and performance.

Innovative Work Behavior

Innovative work behavior is an employee's activity in seeking opportunities for improvement, generating ideas, gaining support, and implementing ideas that benefit their work. Innovation extends beyond the ability to convey ideas; it also encompasses efforts to translate them into improved processes or work methods. In government, this can take the form of simplifying procedures, utilizing technology, and resolving administrative issues more effectively. Erhan et al. (2022) positioned this behavior in the relationship between digital leadership and employee responses to change.

The operationalization of the constructs in this study refers to support for innovation and resource availability, referencing Scott and Bruce (1994) and Ahmed Iqbal et al. (2020). Measurement items include creativity, problem-solving, openness to change, support for idea development, resources, and time. This framework demonstrates that implementing innovation requires opportunities and a supportive work environment. Sagbas et al. (2023) also position innovative behavior as a mechanism explaining the relationship between digital leadership and job performance.

Employee Performance

Employee performance demonstrates an individual's success in carrying out tasks and responsibilities according to organizational standards and goals. This achievement relates to work completion, timeliness, quality of output, responsiveness to problems, and mastery of job knowledge. Sagbas et al. (2023) discuss performance as a result of fulfilling work obligations, which can be influenced by leadership and innovative behavior. In public organizations, individual achievement also supports the smooth running of administrative services and the implementation of institutional functions.

This study measures performance through five aspects: timely task completion, target achievement, quality standard achievement, speed of problem response, and job knowledge. These aspects focus on both results and employee readiness to perform tasks. Kartoyo et al. (2023) link digital transformational leadership, knowledge management, innovative behavior, and performance. This relationship provides the basis for assessing employee performance, along with leadership support and the ability to innovate in their work.

Hypothesis Development

Digital leadership is thought to encourage innovative work behavior because leaders provide direction, support technology use, and create learning opportunities. Erhan et al. (2022) found a positive relationship between digital leadership and innovative work behavior. Similar support was provided by Susanti and Ardi (2022) through their discussion of digital transformational leadership and organizational support. Ethical leadership is also thought to support innovation through fair treatment, trust, and the courage to express ideas, as discussed by Ahmed Iqbal et al . (2020) and Liu et al. (2023). Based on this, this study examines the influence of each leadership form on innovative work behavior.

Innovative work behavior is thought to improve performance because employees strive to find more effective ways of working and adapt task completion to the problems they face. Hadi et al. (2020) link innovative behavior to employee performance. Yulianti and Maharani (2024) also incorporate innovative work behavior into their explanation of the relationship between digital leadership and performance. In the public sector, Pham et al. (2024)

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demonstrate the relevance of innovative behavior to job performance. This relationship forms the basis for testing the influence of innovative work behavior on employee performance at the Langsa City DPR Office.

The direct influence of digital leadership on performance is based on the leader's ability to facilitate communication, coordination, and use of technology in the workplace. Topcuoglu et al. (2023) discussed the role of digital leadership in job performance. However, Gehan and Yulianti (2024) did not find a significant direct influence on employee performance, so this relationship needs to be retested in a different organizational context. Meanwhile, ethical leadership is thought to be related to performance through role modeling, fairness, and responsibility, which encourage employees to carry out their obligations professionally. This study examines both direct relationships in a single model.

Innovative work behavior is then positioned as a mediator. Digital leadership can be related to performance by encouraging employees to seek and implement new ways of working. Sagbas et al. (2023) and Gehan and Yulianti (2024) support the relevance of this pathway. In ethical leadership, support for ideas and fair treatment are expected to encourage innovation, which in turn is related to performance. Abuzaid et al. (2024) show that the relationship between ethical leadership and innovative behavior involves individual and job conditions. Therefore, the mediating role needs to be empirically tested across both pathways, without assuming the same results.

Based on this relationship, seven research hypotheses are formulated as follows.

H1: Digital leadership influences innovative work behavior.
H2: Ethical leadership influences innovative work behavior.
H3: Innovative work behavior influences employee performance.
H4: Digital leadership influences employee performance.
H5: Ethical leadership influences employee performance.
H6: Innovative work behavior mediates the influence of digital leadership on employee performance.
H7: Innovative work behavior mediates the influence of ethical leadership on employee performance.

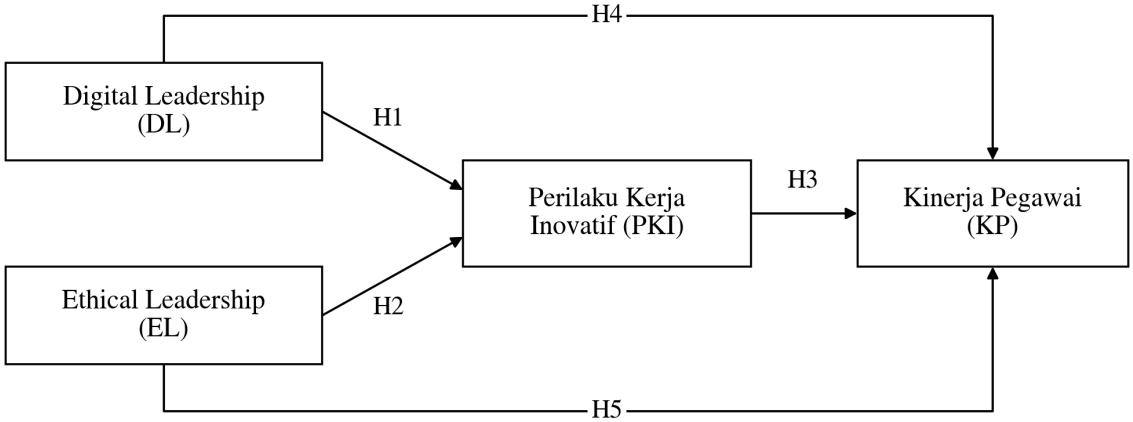

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the research
Description: H1-H5 are direct relationships; H6 and H7 test the indirect influence through innovative work behavior.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research design and data collection

This study used a quantitative approach with a survey method on employees of the DPR Office in Langsa City, Aceh. The study population consisted of 70 employees, consisting of 33 Civil Servants and 37 Government Employees with Work Agreements. All members of the population were selected as respondents using a saturated sampling technique. This technique was chosen considering the total population size that could be reached comprehensively, so that the study included all employees who met the specified population coverage. Part-time PPPK employees were not included. The definition of population, sample, and questionnaire use refers to the discussion of research methods by Sekaran and Bougie (2019).

Primary data were collected through printed questionnaires distributed in person from April 1–30, 2026. Researchers visited the research sites, explained the purpose of data collection and instructions for completion, and collected respondents' responses for analysis. The questionnaire introduction stated that the data would be used for academic purposes and that respondents' identities and responses would be kept confidential. The study also utilized secondary data in the form of relevant literature and journals. Preliminary interviews were used to identify issues within the research object, while model testing was based on quantitative data from the questionnaire.

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Each statement was measured using a five-level Likert scale, namely strongly disagree with a score of 1, disagree with a score of 2, neutral with a score of 3, agree with a score of 4, and strongly agree with a score of 5. The answers were then scored and summarized for descriptive analysis and testing of relationships between variables. Digital leadership and ethical leadership were designated as exogenous variables, employee performance as an endogenous variable, and innovative work behavior as a mediating variable.

Operationalization of variables and analysis techniques

The initial instrument consisted of 24 statements, including five items on digital leadership, five items on ethical leadership, nine items on innovative work behavior, and five items on employee performance. All constructs were treated as reflective constructs. The operational summary in Table 1 maintains the scope of indicators used in the questionnaire. Specifically for innovative work behavior, the instrument covers aspects of creativity and problem-solving, along with organizational support, resources, and time for idea development. Therefore, its interpretation follows the scope of measurement used in this study.

Table 1. Operationalization of research variables

Variables	Position	Coverage of indicators in the instrument	Initial item
Digital leadership	Exogenous X_1	Understanding technology risks; understanding the use of technology for work processes; ethics in using technology; reducing concerns and resistance; sharing knowledge about technology opportunities.	5
Ethical leadership	Exogenous X_2	Listening to employee opinions; reprimanding ethical violations; carrying out work ethically; making fair decisions; being trustworthy.	5
Innovative work behavior	Mediator Z	Encouragement and reward of creativity; problem solving; openness to change; assistance in developing ideas; resources; time; limited funds; opportunities from management to develop ideas.	9
Employee performance	Endogenous Y	Timely completion of tasks; achievement of targets; fulfillment of quality standards; response to problems; job knowledge.	5

Source: operational definition and research questionnaire. The number of items indicates the initial instrument before the evaluation of the measurement model.

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the help of SmartPLS software. The analysis included measurement and structural models. Evaluation of the measurement model was conducted through outer loading, average variance extracted (AVE), discriminant validity, Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability. The benchmarks used in this study were an outer loading of more than 0.70, an AVE of more than 0.50, and a reliability coefficient of at least 0.70. Discriminant validity was examined through cross-loading, the Fornell-Larcker criterion, and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). This assessment was used to ensure that the indicators represent their constructs and that the constructs can be distinguished from each other (Ghozali & Latan, 2019; Hair et al., 2022).

Structural model evaluation used the coefficient of determination R^2, adjusted R^2, predictive relevance Q^2, effect size f^2, and model fit reported through SRMR and NFI. The study also reported PLS-Predict as supporting information for predictive ability. Hypothesis testing was conducted using a bootstrapping procedure to obtain path coefficients, t-values, and p-values. The relationship was declared significant if the p-value was less than 0.05. An evaluation of indirect effects was conducted to assess whether innovative work behavior bridges the relationship between digital leadership or ethical leadership and employee performance.

The determination of mediation considers the significance of direct and indirect effects simultaneously. A significant indirect effect combined with a direct effect that remains significant is interpreted as partial mediation. If the indirect effect is insignificant, the mediator's role in the tested relationship is not proven. The assessment framework follows the PLS-SEM approach used in the study (Hair et al., 2022). Descriptive results, measurement model evaluation, and structural testing are interpreted as complementary components, so that respondents' average ratings are not used as a substitute for evidence of significant relationships between variables.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent characteristics

The study included 70 employees at the Langsa City House of Representatives (DPR) Office. Respondent profiles showed diversity in age, education, employment status, and work unit. The 26-35 age group constituted the largest group at 40%, followed by the 36-45 age group at 39%. In terms of education, the majority of respondents had a bachelor's degree (63%), while 24% had a diploma and 13% had a high school or equivalent. This profile provides context for employees assessing leadership practices and work execution within the organization, without being used as a differentiating variable in model testing.

Table 2. Characteristics of research respondents

Characteristics	Category	Percentage
Age	18-25 years old	7%
	26-35 years old	40%
	36-45 years old	39%
	Over 46 years	14%
last education	High school/equivalent	13%
	Diploma D3	24%
	Bachelor degree	63%
Employment status	civil servant	47%
	PPPK	53%
Work unit	General Affair	53%
	Financial department	27%
	Secretariat	18%
	Other	2%

Source: data processing results, 2026. Percentages follow the presentation of respondent profiles in the research results; number of respondents 70 people.

There were 33 civil servants and 37 PPPK employees. Percentage-wise, these two groups comprised 47% and 53% of respondents, respectively. Based on work units, 53% of respondents came from the General Affairs Division, 27% from the Finance Division, 18% from the Secretariat, and 2% from other categories. The dominance of the General Affairs Division provides context that the majority of assessments relate to administrative work and institutional operational support. These differences in status and work units are still treated as a reflection of respondent characteristics; the study does not report testing for differences in path coefficients between these groups.

Descriptive statistics of variables

Descriptive results indicate that respondents' assessments of the four variables were high. Digital leadership and ethical leadership each achieved an average of 4.56, employee performance 4.51, and innovative work behavior 4.44. These scores reflect respondents' assessments of the instrument items, thus primarily explaining perceptions of leadership and work conditions. A high average for a variable does not necessarily indicate that the variable has a significant influence on other variables. The influence between variables is then determined through structural model testing.

Table 3. Summary of descriptive statistics of variables

Variables	Initial item	Average	Highest grain	Lowest grain
Digital leadership	5	4.56	DL5 = 4.62	DL1 = 4.52
Ethical leadership	5	4.56	EL5 = 4.71	EL3 = 4.47
Employee performance	5	4.51	KP1 = 4.64	KP5 = 4.41
Innovative work behavior	9	4.44	PKI9 = 4.52	PKI8 = 4.20

Source: data processing results, 2026. Descriptive statistics of innovative work behavior still include the initial nine items, including PKI8 which was then eliminated in the evaluation of the measurement model.

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In digital leadership, the highest score was found in DL5, concerning leaders sharing experiences and knowledge about technological opportunities, with an average score of 4.62. The indicator for reducing concerns or resistance to new technologies received an average score of 4.58. Meanwhile, DL1, concerning understanding the risks of technology use, had an average score of 4.52. This pattern indicates that respondents positively assess leadership direction regarding technological opportunities, while understanding risks remains an aspect that requires attention. These descriptive results relate to the organization's need to provide explanations and guidance in the use of digital work systems.

In ethical leadership, the trust in superiors indicator (EL5) achieved the highest average score of 4.71. The reprimand for ethical violations indicator (EL3) achieved an average score of 4.60, while ethical work performance indicator (EL3) achieved an average score of 4.47. Respondents generally gave positive assessments of leadership integrity and behavior. However, these descriptive assessments need to be distinguished from the results of the study of the relationship between ethical leadership and innovation and performance.

Employee performance received the highest score for timely task completion (KP1), which was 4.64. Fulfillment of quality standards received an average of 4.55 and target achievement was 4.52. Response to problems at 4.44 and job knowledge at 4.41 indicated relatively lower aspects, although still considered high. In innovative work behavior, the opportunity from leaders to develop ideas during work hours (PKI9) received an average of 4.52, followed by the availability of time to pursue creative ideas at 4.51. The item on limited funds or PKI8 had an average of 4.20. Because PKI8 is a statement regarding financial constraints, its meaning should be read according to the wording of the item, not directly equated with high support for innovation.

Evaluation of measurement models

Initial testing showed that the PKI8 indicator had an outer loading of 0.653, below the 0.70 benchmark used in the study. This indicator was then eliminated, and the measurement model was retested. In the second stage, all retained indicators had outer loadings greater than 0.70. Thus, the final measurement model consisted of 23 indicators: five digital leadership indicators, five ethical leadership indicators, five employee performance indicators, and eight innovative work behavior indicators.

Table 4. Convergent validity and construct reliability

Construct	Final point	Loading range	AVE	Alpha	CR
Digital leadership	5	0.880-0.946	0.840	0.952	0.959
Ethical leadership	5	0.829-0.884	0.731	0.908	0.916
Employee performance	5	0.730-0.887	0.697	0.892	0.910
Innovative work behavior	8	0.782-0.899	0.696	0.937	0.939

Source: data processing results, 2026. Alpha = Cronbach's alpha; CR = composite reliability as reported in the research results.

Digital leadership has a loading range of 0.880-0.946, ethical leadership 0.829-0.884, employee performance 0.730-0.887, and innovative work behavior 0.782-0.899. The AVE values for each construct were 0.840; 0.731; 0.697; and 0.696, respectively, thus all exceeding the 0.50 benchmark. These results indicate the fulfillment of convergent validity according to the criteria used. Cronbach's alpha values ranged between 0.892 and 0.952, while the reported composite reliability ranged between 0.910 and 0.959. All values exceeded 0.70 and supported the internal consistency of the indicators used to measure the constructs (Ghozali & Latan, 2019; Hair et al., 2022).

Discriminant validity was examined to ensure that conceptually related constructs could still be distinguished in the measurements. The square root of the AVE based on the Fornell-Larcker criteria was 0.916 for digital leadership, 0.855 for ethical leadership, 0.835 for employee performance, and 0.834 for innovative work behavior. In the test table, the diagonal values were greater than the correlations of each construct with other constructs. This result is supported by the HTMT values, which were all less than 0.85. The HTMT summary in Table 5 shows that the closest relationship exists between digital leadership and innovative work behavior, but is still below the reference used.

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Table 5. Discriminant validity based on HTMT

Construct pair	HTML	Reference
Digital leadership and ethical leadership	0.738	< 0.85
Digital leadership and employee performance	0.511	< 0.85
Ethical leadership and employee performance	0.498	< 0.85
Digital leadership and innovative work behavior	0.787	< 0.85
Ethical leadership and innovative work behavior	0.700	< 0.85
Employee performance and innovative work behavior	0.723	< 0.85

Source: data processing results, 2026.

Structural model evaluation

The coefficient of determination indicates that the model explains 46.8% of the variation in employee performance, with an R^2 of 0.468 and an adjusted R^2 of 0.444. For innovative work behavior, an R^2 of 0.593 and an adjusted R^2 of 0.581 indicate that digital leadership and ethical leadership together explain 59.3% of the variation in the construct. These results illustrate the model's explanatory power for two endogenous variables, not the percentage of performance change directly generated by a single variable. Variations outside the model remain, opening up room for further research.

Table 6. Coefficient of determination and predictive relevance

Endogenous constructs	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Q^2
Employee performance	0.468	0.444	0.193
Innovative work behavior	0.593	0.581	0.558

Source: data processing results, 2026.

The Q^2 value of 0.193 for employee performance and 0.558 for innovative work behavior indicates that both have predictive relevance because they are positive. This predictive evaluation complements the R^2 information regarding the model's ability to explain endogenous constructs. In the reported PLS-Predict results, the PLS-SEM prediction error is lower than the linear comparator for most indicators. This information supports predictive ability, but should be read in conjunction with the overall model evaluation. The predictive ability assessment is not used to replace path significance testing or to state that all relationships in the model have been proven.

The model fit evaluation yielded a SRMR of 0.086 and an NFI of 0.608. The SRMR value slightly exceeded the 0.08 benchmark, while the NFI remained below the 0.90 benchmark used in the study. According to the model evaluation description, these results indicate that the model fit does not fully meet the goodness-of-fit criteria and is categorized as adequate or marginal. Therefore, interpreting structural influences requires considering these fit limitations, along with the results of validity, reliability, and predictive relevance.

Direct effect testing

The bootstrapping results in Table 7 show three positive and significant direct relationships and two insignificant relationships. The numbering of the hypotheses follows the order of relationship development in the research model. Digital leadership has a positive effect on innovative work behavior with a coefficient of 0.583, a t-value of 4.717, and a p-value of 0.000. Thus, H1 is supported. Ethical leadership has a positive coefficient of 0.244 on innovative work behavior, but the p-value of 0.070 exceeds 0.05, so H2 is not supported. The positive direction of the coefficient in the last relationship is not accompanied by evidence of significance at the specified test level.

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Table 7. Testing of direct influence and effect size

H	Connection	β	t	p	f²	Decision
H1	Digital leadership → innovative work behavior	0.583	4,717	0,000	0.422	Supported
H2	Ethical leadership → innovative work behavior	0.244	1,813	0.070	0.084	Not supported
H3	Innovative work behavior → employee performance	0.773	5,005	0,000	0.394	Supported
H4	Digital leadership → employee performance	0.333	2,029	0.042	0.004	Supported
H5	Ethical leadership → employee performance	0.218	1,297	0.195	0.001	Not supported

Source: results of direct influence and effect size testing, 2026. The p-value = 0.000 is a software rounding display and is read as $p < 0.001$. β = path coefficient.

Innovative work behavior has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, with a coefficient of 0.773, a t-value of 5.005, and a p-value of 0.000, thus H3 is supported. Digital leadership also has a positive and significant effect on employee performance with a coefficient of 0.333, a t-value of 2.029, and a p-value of 0.042, thus H4 is supported. Conversely, ethical leadership has a coefficient of 0.218, a t-value of 1.297, and a p-value of 0.195 on employee performance. The final result shows that H5 is not supported. Thus, the empirical support found in this test is mainly in the relationship between digital leadership, innovative work behavior, and employee performance.

The reported effect sizes show the largest contribution to the relationship between digital leadership and innovative work behavior, with an f^2 of 0.422, and innovative work behavior and employee performance of 0.394. The f^2 value of ethical leadership on innovative work behavior of 0.084 indicates a smaller contribution. The f^2 values of digital leadership and ethical leadership on employee performance are 0.004 and 0.001, respectively. These effect sizes are the result of different evaluations of the path coefficient significance test. Therefore, the significance of the relationship is not equated with the magnitude of the additional explanatory power of the endogenous construct.

Testing the mediating role of innovative work behavior

An indirect effect test was conducted to assess the role of innovative work behavior in the relationship between the two forms of leadership and employee performance. The results in Table 8 indicate that the indirect effect of digital leadership through innovative work behavior has a coefficient of 0.410, a t-value of 2.969, and a p-value of 0.003. Thus, H6 is supported. Because the test results also show a significant direct effect of digital leadership on employee performance, the study interprets this mediation role as partial mediation. This means that the relationship between digital leadership and performance is explained through the direct pathway and through innovative work behavior.

Table 8. Testing of indirect effects

H	Mediation path	β	t	p	Decision
H6	Digital leadership → innovative work behavior → employee performance	0.410	2,969	0.003	Supported; partial mediation
H7	Ethical leadership → innovative work behavior → employee performance	0.183	1,742	0.082	Not supported

Source: results of indirect influence testing, 2026. The coefficient values follow the testing table in the study.

The indirect effect of ethical leadership on employee performance through innovative work behavior has a coefficient of 0.183, a t-value of 1.742, and a p-value of 0.082. This value does not meet the 0.05 significance level, so H7 is not supported. Innovative work behavior has not been proven to be a mediator in the relationship between ethical leadership and performance in this study. These results are consistent with the insignificant relationship between ethical leadership and innovative work behavior and employee performance. The difference in the results of the two mediation pathways shows that the mechanisms supported by digital leadership do not automatically apply to ethical leadership in the same context and measurement.

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Digital Leadership and the Formation of Innovative Work Behavior

The effect of digital leadership on innovative work behavior shows a coefficient of 0.583 with a t-value of 4.717 and $p < 0.001$. These findings support a positive relationship between leadership's ability to direct technology use and employee innovative behavior. In the context of the Langsa City DPR Office, clear direction regarding technology, explanation of benefits, and reduced resistance to change can help employees see opportunities for job improvement. These results align with Erhan et al. (2022), who explain the relationship between digital leadership and innovative work behavior.

This relationship demonstrates the importance of leadership in incorporating technology into the learning and problem-solving process. Employees need an understanding of how to use the system and the opportunity to develop ideas that align with job requirements. Benitez et al. (2022) demonstrated that digital leadership capabilities are related to innovation performance through platform digitization. Susanti and Ardi (2022) also identified organizational support as a key explanation for innovative behavior. The findings of this study are consistent with the notion that technology availability must be accompanied by human resource management and a work environment that supports innovation.

This interpretation is relevant to the administrative application issues raised in the preliminary interviews. Technical glitches can limit the system's usefulness, while leadership support helps employees understand its use and opportunities for improvement. However, this study did not examine application glitches or technical support as standalone variables. They serve as context for understanding the results, not as additional factors with statistical evidence. Consistent with Kartoyo et al. (2023), attention to innovative knowledge and behavior remains essential when digital leadership is geared toward supporting changes in work practices.

Ethical Leadership and Innovative Work Behavior and Employee Performance

Ethical leadership has a positive coefficient of 0.244 on innovative work behavior, but the p-value of 0.070 does not meet the 5% significance level. The direct relationship with employee performance is also positive, with a coefficient of 0.218 and a p-value of 0.195. Therefore, the two hypotheses regarding the direct effect of ethical leadership have not received statistical support in this model. These results should be interpreted within the context and dimensions of the study, without being interpreted as evidence that ethical leadership has no value to the organization.

The findings regarding innovative work behavior differ from those of Ahmed Iqbal et al. (2020) and Liu et al. (2023), who explained the relationship between ethical leadership and innovation through individual attributes, psychological safety, and work engagement. Abuzaid et al. (2024) also outlined the involvement of psychological empowerment, job crafting, proactive personality, and individual-organization fit. This comparison suggests that the relationship between ethical leadership and innovation may involve processes or supporting conditions not fully captured in this research model.

The research discussion posits bureaucratic characteristics as one possible explanation. In jobs with strong procedures and formalization, employees may be more focused on compliance with applicable regulations. Fair treatment from leaders does not necessarily provide space for experimentation or the implementation of new ideas. This explanation is interpretive because the level of formalization, autonomy, and psychological safety were not tested as separate constructs. Therefore, the research results are insufficient to establish any one of these factors as the cause of the insignificant relationship.

In relation to performance, the application of honesty, fairness, and exemplary conduct remains essential to maintaining a responsible work environment. However, achieving targets and resolving administrative issues also require skills, technological support, and opportunities to improve work processes. The implication of these findings is to integrate ethical leadership with more direct support for task execution. Reinforcement of ethical values remains, while performance improvement measures are tailored to employees' operational needs. Initial interview information regarding task allocation and reward systems provides a practical rationale for reviewing the application of fairness in the workplace. This review is a follow-up to organizational management, not a conclusion that these two issues explain the statistical results.

Innovative Work Behavior and Employee Performance

Innovative work behavior is positively and significantly related to employee performance, with a coefficient of 0.773, a t-value of 5.005, and $p < 0.001$. These results support the view that employees who develop ideas and seek improvements in their work tend to demonstrate better work performance. In administrative practice, the ability

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to solve problems differently and respond to the need for change can help employees improve the quality of results and the accuracy of task completion.

These findings align with those of Sagbas et al. (2023), who identified innovative behavior as a crucial factor in job performance, and Pham et al. (2024) in the context of the Vietnamese public sector. Hadi et al. (2020) also linked innovative behavior to employee performance. The similarity in the direction of these relationships demonstrates the relevance of job improvement efforts in different organizational environments, although the magnitude of their influence and the conditions under which they are implemented cannot be directly compared. The results from the Langsa City DPR Office remain evidence tied to the research object.

The contribution of innovative behavior can be understood through the courage to propose solutions and implement work methods that are more appropriate to the problems faced. Shafique et al. (2020) explain the relationship between creativity and organizational innovation, while Yulianti and Maharani (2024) place creativity and innovative work behavior within the relationship between digital leadership and performance. In this study, this discussion supports the need to pay attention to employee ideas and the conditions that enable their implementation. Given that measuring innovative behavior also includes support and resources, providing opportunities, time, and assistance in developing ideas is a relevant part of organizational follow-up. Employees who submit ideas need to receive feedback to determine the feasibility of their implementation. This kind of support maintains the link between idea development and job requirements, so that innovation remains directed toward improving task execution and the quality of results.

The Influence of Digital Leadership on Performance and the Role of Mediating

Digital leadership has a positive and significant direct effect on employee performance, with a coefficient of 0.333 and a p-value of 0.042. These results indicate that digital leadership is related to performance even though innovative work behavior has been included in the model. The ability to direct the use of technology can facilitate communication, coordination, and access to information at work. This finding aligns with Topcuoglu et al.'s (2023) and Turyadi et al.'s (2023) discussion regarding the role of digital leadership in employee performance.

The indirect effect through innovative work behavior was also significant. The test results reported a coefficient of 0.410, a t-value of 2.969, and a p-value of 0.003. Because the direct path remained significant, the mediation role in the study was declared partial. This means that the relationship between digital leadership and performance is explained through both the direct path and innovative work behavior. This pattern aligns with Sagbas et al. (2023). Compared to the findings of Gehan and Yulianti (2024), who found no significant direct effect, these results demonstrate a different pattern of relationships when tested in the public organizations studied.

Substantively, leaders who support the use of technology can assist with routine work while encouraging employees to find more effective solutions. Innovative behavior is one process that links this support to work performance. This explanation aligns with the relationship between digital leadership and innovation in Erhan et al. (2022), as well as the relationship between innovation and performance in Pham et al. (2024). At the organizational level, Mollah et al. (2024) discuss the relationship between digital leadership, transformation, innovation, and sustainable financial performance. This study provides context for organizational digitalization without equating financial performance with individual performance in this study.

A different pattern was found for ethical leadership. The indirect coefficient through innovative work behavior of 0.183 had a p-value of 0.082, indicating that mediation did not receive statistical support. This finding is consistent with the weak support for the relationship between ethical leadership and innovative behavior in the model. The determination of the absence of mediation was based on the results of the indirect effect test. Therefore, the study has not shown that innovative behavior is a mechanism explaining the relationship between ethical leadership and employee performance in this context.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the research clarifies that the two forms of leadership do not exhibit the same pattern of relationships when examined alongside innovative work behavior and employee performance. Evidence from the Langsa City House of Representatives Office supports the role of digital leadership and partial mediation of innovative behavior, while the ethical leadership pathway has not yet received statistical support. This contribution is contextual and enriches the discussion of leadership in public organizations. These findings do not negate the conceptual relevance of ethics, but rather demonstrate the need to understand the conditions that link leadership values to work behavior and outcomes.

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Practically, leaders need to strengthen digital competencies through training, clear communication, and mentoring on system use. This capability development should go hand in hand with evaluations of administrative applications, particularly correspondence and document management, and adequate technical support. This follow-up is in line with the initial issues identified through preliminary interviews. Socialization of system changes should also explain their benefits to their work so that employees understand the purpose of using the technology and receive assistance when facing difficulties.

Organizations can support innovative work behavior by providing evaluation forums, idea discussions, opportunities for knowledge sharing, and spaces to propose process improvements. Employee ideas need to be followed up with implementation support tailored to job requirements. Objective reward systems can take the form of recognition, training opportunities, career development, or the assignment of strategic responsibilities. Implementation should maintain fairness, open communication, and trust between leaders and employees. Employees should also actively learn digital work systems, participate in training, and use technology as needed. In daily operations, innovation can be directed toward finding solutions to recurring obstacles, submitting proposals to leaders, and improving ineffective work practices. This direction maintains the link between digital capability development, innovative behavior, and employee professional responsibility.

CONCLUSION

A study of 70 employees at the Langsa City House of Representatives (DPR) Office showed that digital leadership had a positive and significant effect on innovative work behavior and employee performance. Innovative work behavior also had a positive and significant effect on performance. Conversely, ethical leadership showed no significant effect on innovative work behavior or employee performance at the 0.05 significance level. Thus, the research findings support the role of digital leadership in directing technology utilization and encouraging behaviors related to improving the quality of work performance.

Innovative work behavior partially mediates the effect of digital leadership on employee performance, while the mediation of the relationship between ethical leadership and performance was not proven significant. This conclusion places employee innovation as a crucial mechanism in the relationship between digital leadership and work outcomes. The model explains 46.8% of the variation in employee performance and 59.3% of the variation in innovative work behavior. Although the constructs meet the measurement criteria used, the model's marginal fit requires consideration in interpreting the findings. The research findings relate to the employees and the organizational context of the study.

Practically, leaders need to strengthen digital competency through training, clear communication, and mentoring in technology use. Improvements in technical support for administrative applications, particularly correspondence and document management, are necessary to ensure technology supports smooth work processes. Employees also need a space to express ideas, discuss challenges, explore work process improvements, and receive objective recognition for performance and innovation. The values of honesty, fairness, integrity, and responsibility must be maintained, even though the influence of ethical leadership is not yet significant in this model.

Future research is recommended to expand the scope to other government agencies to allow for comparison of results across different contexts. Model development could consider digital competency, organizational culture, and job satisfaction, as proposed in this study. The addition of these variables is expected to help explain performance variations not yet captured in the model and clarify the conditions that support the relationship between leadership, innovative behavior, and employee task execution.

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