Digital Leadership as a Driver of Performance

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Abstract
This study aims to analyze the effect of Collaborative Culture and Digital Leadership Style on Employee Performance, as well as the role of Teamwork as a mediating variable. The study involved 78 employees as respondents. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that Collaborative Culture and Digital Leadership Style have a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance. Digital Leadership Style also has a positive and significant effect on Teamwork. However, Teamwork does not have a significant direct effect on Employee Performance and does not mediate the influence of Collaborative Culture or Digital Leadership Style on Employee Performance. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening collaborative culture and digital leadership to improve employee performance.

Keywords: Collaborative Culture, Digital Leadership Style, Teamwork, Employee Performance

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Introduction

Leadership in the digital era is not only about the ability to lead individuals and teams but also involves leveraging digital technology in every aspect of organizational processes. Effective leaders today must be able to navigate the complexities of digital change, motivate employees to adapt to new technologies, and steer the organization towards efficiency and sustainable innovation. Digital transformation has become an urgent necessity.

However, digital transformation does not only depend on technology adoption but also on the readiness of human resources to manage that change. Many organizations, including PLN, face challenges in changing their employees' mindsets, behaviors, and skills to align with the demands of the digital era. Therefore, digital leadership style becomes an important factor in ensuring the success of that transformation. Leaders with a digital leadership style can create an innovative work environment, motivate employees to adapt to new technologies, and facilitate collaboration across divisions and functions. According to Avolio et al. (2020), digital leadership style emphasizes not only the use of technology but also the ability to build a collaborative and participative work culture.

In addition to leadership, collaborative culture also plays a strategic role in shaping employee work behavior in the digital era. Collaborative culture emphasizes the importance of cooperation, openness, mutual respect, and active participation among individuals in the organization. According to Schein (2021), collaborative culture creates an environment that supports innovation and shared learning, where every employee feels they have a meaningful contribution to achieving organizational goals. In the context of PLN UP2K Sumut, implementing a collaborative culture is important because complex operational activities require high levels of cross-unit coordination and communication, from distribution network supervision to customer service. A collaborative culture can help employees overcome bureaucratic barriers, strengthen team synergy, and increase work effectiveness. In addition to these two factors, teamwork is a key element in achieving optimal employee performance. Teamwork allows organization members to complement each other, share information, and achieve common targets more efficiently. According to Katzenbach and Smith (2017), effective teams are characterized by open communication, shared responsibility, and collective commitment to organizational goals. In the PLN work situation which demands rapid response to disruptions and efficiency in electricity system management, strong teamwork is a primary factor in supporting employee performance. Teamwork is suspected to play a role as an intervening variable that strengthens the influence between digital leadership style and collaborative culture on employee performance. Meanwhile, employee performance is a primary indicator of organizational success. High performance reflects the effectiveness of task execution and the tangible contribution of employees to achieving company goals. According to Robbins and Judge (2020), performance is influenced by various factors such as leadership, motivation, organizational culture, and teamwork ability. The success of digital transformation in the PLN environment is not only determined by the technology used but also by how far leaders are able to instill collaborative values and build solid teams. The combination of digital leadership style, collaborative culture, and effective teamwork is believed to be able to significantly improve employee performance.

Problem Formulation

1. Does Digital Leadership Style have a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra?
2. Does Collaborative Culture have a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra?
3. Does Digital Leadership Style have a positive and significant effect on Teamwork at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra?

4. Does Collaborative Culture have a positive and significant effect on Teamwork at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra?
5. Does Teamwork have a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra?
6. Does Digital Leadership Style have a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance through Teamwork at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra?
7. Does Collaborative Culture have a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance through Teamwork at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra?

Research Objectives

1. To test and analyze the effect of Digital Leadership Style on Employee Performance at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra.
2. To test and analyze the effect of Collaborative Culture on Employee Performance at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra.
3. To test and analyze the effect of Digital Leadership Style on Teamwork at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra.
4. To test and analyze the effect of Collaborative Culture on Teamwork at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra.
5. To test and analyze the effect of Teamwork on Employee Performance at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra.
6. To test and analyze the positive and significant effect of Digital Leadership Style on Employee Performance through Teamwork at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra.
7. To test and analyze the positive and significant effect of Collaborative Culture on Employee Performance through Teamwork at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra.

Literature Review Employee Performance

According to Ramadhan (2021), employee performance reflects the effectiveness and efficiency of employees in carrying out tasks and their contribution to achieving organizational goals. Employee performance is the level of achievement of tasks, responsibilities, and targets set by the organization. According to Robbins & Judge (2020): employee performance is the measurable work results produced by individuals according to their responsibilities in the organization..

Indicators of Employee Performance

According to Ramadhan (2021), indicators of Employee Performance are:

1. Quality of work, conformity of work results with established standards.
2. Quantity of work, amount of work completed in a certain period.
3. Discipline, compliance with organizational rules and procedures.
4. Initiative, ability to take proactive steps in completing tasks.
5. Cooperation, ability to work together with colleagues to achieve goals.

Factors Affecting Employee Performance

According to Ramadhan (2021), factors affecting **employee performance** include several main aspects, namely:

1. Ability, includes employee competence, knowledge, and skills in carrying out tasks.
2. Motivation, internal or external drive that makes employees strive to achieve work targets.
3. Work discipline, level of employee compliance with organizational regulations and provisions.
4. Work environment, physical and non-physical workplace conditions that affect comfort and productivity.
5. Leadership, style and ability of leaders in directing, guiding, and motivating subordinates.

6. Compensation, form of appreciation given by the organization for employee contributions in their work.

Digital Leadership Style

According to Putra & Sari, 2021, digital leadership style is the ability of a leader to utilize digital technology to facilitate communication, collaboration, innovation, and decision-making in the organization so as to encourage employee performance. According to Solis (2019), digital leadership includes the leader's ability to integrate technology, build an innovative culture, and lead digital transformation across the organization.

Indicators of Digital Leadership Style

According to Putra & Sari (2021), indicators of Digital Leadership Style are:

1. Digital vision, leader's ability to set the direction of the organization's digital transformation.
2. Technology utilization, use of technology to support work processes.
3. Digital communication, leveraging digital platforms for effective communication.
4. Innovation and adaptation, encouraging employees to adapt to new technologies.
5. Data-driven decision-making, using digital data for decision-making.

Collaborative Culture

According to Denison & Mishra (2016), collaborative culture is an important factor for creating team synergy, increasing motivation, and driving organizational innovation. According to Schein (2021), collaborative culture is defined as an organizational environment that emphasizes participation, cross-team cooperation, and joint decision-making.

Indicators of Collaborative Culture

According to Schein (2022), indicators of Collaborative Culture are:

1. Information openness, employees are free to share knowledge and information.
2. Cross-divisional cooperation, coordination and collaboration between departments.
3. Mutual respect and trust, building healthy interpersonal relationships.
4. Active participation, encouraging employees to contribute to decision-making.
5. Shared learning, sharing experiences and best practices in the team.

Teamwork

According to Robbins & Judge (2020): teamwork includes effective communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution to improve team performance.

According to Katzenbach & Smith (2017): teamwork is coordinative behavior among team members who support each other and are responsible for achieving common goals.

Indicators of Teamwork

Based on Katzenbach & Smith, 2017:

1. Coordination, ability to organize tasks among team members.
2. Effective communication, exchanging information clearly with each other.
3. Mutual support, providing assistance and support among team members.
4. Conflict resolution, constructively addressing differences of opinion.
5. Commitment to goals, focus on achieving team results.

Conceptual Framework

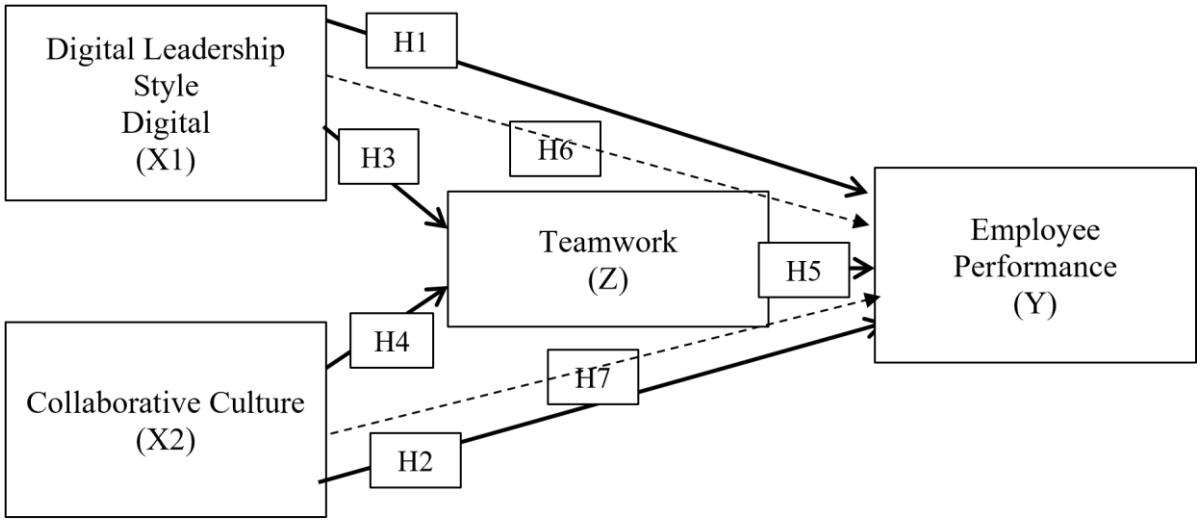

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Hypotheses

1. Digital Leadership Style has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra.
2. Collaborative Culture has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra.
3. Digital Leadership Style has a positive and significant effect on Teamwork at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra.
4. Collaborative Culture has a positive and significant effect on Teamwork at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra.
5. Teamwork has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra.
6. Digital Leadership Style has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance through Teamwork at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra.
7. Collaborative Culture has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance through Teamwork at PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra.

Research Type

According to Sugiyono (2019), quantitative research is research based on the philosophy of positivism, used to examine a specific population or sample, with data collection using research instruments, and data analysis is statistical to test predetermined hypotheses.

Research Time and Place

This research was conducted at PT PLN (Persero) Unit Pelaksana Pengatur Ketenagalistrikan (UP2K) North Sumatra, located at Jl. K.L. Yos Sudarso No. 284, Glugur Kota, Kecamatan Medan Barat, Kota Medan, North Sumatra. The research was conducted from November 2025 to December 2025.

Population and Sample

According to Sugiyono (2019), population is the generalization area consisting of objects or subjects that have certain qualities and characteristics determined by researchers to be studied and then conclusions are drawn. The total population in this study was 78 employees.

According to Sugiyono (2019), a sample is part of the number and characteristics possessed by that population. If the population is large and it is impossible for the researcher to study the entire population, then the researcher can use a sample taken from that population. In this study, the population is only 78 employees, so the entire population was used as the research sample. Thus, this study uses a saturated sampling technique. Therefore, the sample in this study is all 78 employees of PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra, who are also the entire research population.

Data Collection Technique

The data collection technique used in this study is a questionnaire. In this study, the questionnaire was prepared using a Likert scale, where respondents were asked to provide answers based on their level of agreement with each statement related to the research variables.

Research Data Sources

According to Riduwan (2020), primary data is data obtained directly from the first source in the field by researchers through research instruments such as questionnaires, interviews, or observations. In this study, primary data was obtained through questionnaires distributed to 78 employees of PT PLN (Persero) UP2K North Sumatra, who were the research respondents.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis in this study was performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) assisted by SmartPLS 3.0 software. According to Ghozali & Latan (2019), SmartPLS is a variance-based application used to estimate structural models (inner model) and measurement models (outer model). This model combines multiple regression analysis and factor analysis approaches to explain the causal relationships between latent variables.

Data Analysis Stages with SmartPLS

1. Evaluation of the Measurement Model (Outer Model) This stage aims to assess the validity and reliability of indicators towards the construct.
   a. Convergent Validity
   b. Discriminant Validity
   c. Construct Reliability
2. Evaluation of the Structural Model (Inner Model) Used to test the relationships between latent variables.
   a. R-Square (R^2) Value
   b. Q-Square (Q^2) Value
   c. Path Coefficient

Results and Discussion Outer Model Analysis Convergent Validity

Based on the results for outer loading, it shows that some indicators have loading below 0.60 and are not significant. The structural model in this study is shown in the following figure:

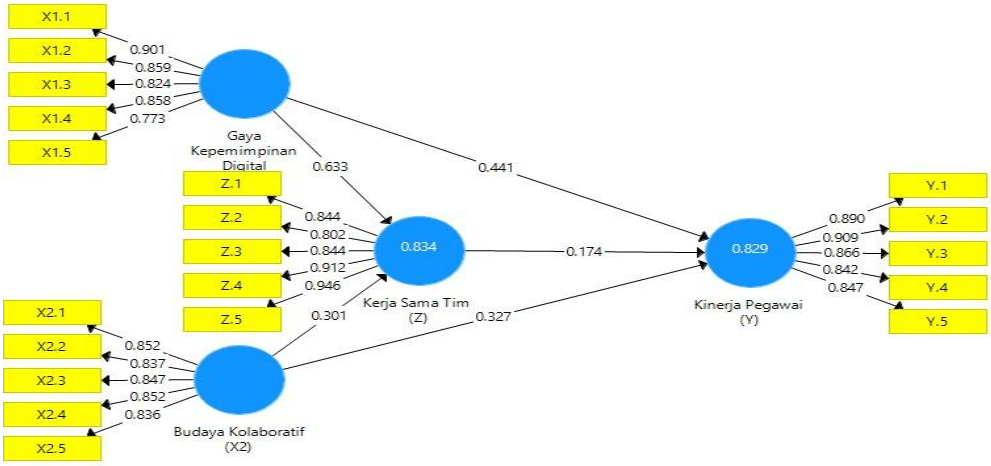

Figure 2. Outer Model

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3

In this study, there is an equation and that equation consists of two substructures for substructure 1

Z = b1X1 + b2X2 + e1

Z = 0,633 + 0,301 + e1

For substructure 2

Y = b3X1 + b4X2 + b5Z + e2

Y = 0,441 + 0,327 + 0,174 + e2

Table 1. Outer Loadings

	Collaborative Culture (X2)	Digital Leadership StyleDigital_(X1)	Teamwork _(Z)	Employee Performance _(Y)
X1.1		0,901		
X1.2		0,859		
X1.3		0,824		
X1.4		0,858		
X1.5		0,773		
X2.1	0,852			
X2.2	0,837			
X2.3	0,847			
X2.4	0,852			
X2.5	0,836			
Y.1				0,890
Y.2				0,909
Y.3				0,866
Y.4				0,842
Y.5				0,847
Z.1			0,844	
Z.2			0,802	
Z.3			0,844	

Z.4			**0,912**	
Z.5			**0,946**	

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3

Based on Table 1, all indicators of the variables Digital Leadership Style (X1), Collaborative Culture (X2), Teamwork (Z), and Employee Performance (Y) show high outer loadings values, which are above 0.70. This indicates that each indicator is able to represent its variable construct well. The highest outer loadings value is found in indicator Z.5 (0.946) of the Teamwork variable, while the lowest value is in X1.5 (0.773) of the Digital Leadership Style variable. Thus, all indicators are proven valid and suitable for further analysis in this study.

Discriminat Validity

The next test is to test discriminant validity; this test aims to determine whether a reflective indicator is a good measure for its construct based on the principle that indicators correlate highly with their construct. The table shows the cross-loading results from the discriminant validity test as follows:

Table 2. Discriminant Validity

	Collaborative Culture (X2)	Digital Leadership StyleDigital_(X1)	Teamwork _(Z)	Employee Performance _(Y)
X1.1	0,797	0,901	0,859	0,811
X1.2	0,747	0,859	0,766	0,811
X1.3	0,707	0,824	0,738	0,768
X1.4	0,794	0,858	0,765	0,747
X1.5	0,758	0,773	0,675	0,610
X2.1	0,852	0,716	0,684	0,734
X2.2	0,837	0,771	0,779	0,808
X2.3	0,847	0,793	0,802	0,756
X2.4	0,852	0,767	0,690	0,673
X2.5	0,836	0,748	0,709	0,714
Y.1	0,728	0,717	0,693	0,890
Y.2	0,774	0,790	0,804	0,909
Y.3	0,791	0,812	0,739	0,866
Y.4	0,701	0,771	0,699	0,842
Y.5	0,809	0,789	0,789	0,847
Z.1	0,780	0,759	0,844	0,658
Z.2	0,670	0,675	0,802	0,633
Z.3	0,706	0,761	0,844	0,763
Z.4	0,763	0,851	0,912	0,823
Z.5	0,862	0,873	0,946	0,832

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3

Based on Table 2 regarding Discriminant Validity, all indicators show loading values that are higher on their respective constructs compared to other constructs. Specifically, the highest

value is seen in indicator Z.5 (0.946) for the Teamwork variable, while indicators with relatively low values across other constructs still show clear separation between variables. Thus, all variables in this study can be distinguished from each other validly.

Composite reliability

The next test determines the reliability value with composite reliability of the indicator blocks measuring the construct. A construct value is said to be reliable if the composite reliability value is above 0.60. A construct is stated as reliable if the Cronbach's alpha value is above 0.7. The following table shows the loading values for the research variable constructs produced by running the Smart PLS program in the next table:

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Collaborative Culture (X2)	**0,900**	**0,926**	**0,714**
Digital Leadership StyleDigital_(X1)	**0,899**	**0,925**	**0,713**
Teamwork _(Z)	**0,920**	**0,940**	**0,759**
Employee Performance _(Y)	**0,920**	**0,940**	**0,759**

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3

Based on Table 3 regarding Construct Reliability and Validity, all variables show Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability values above 0.70, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above 0.50. This indicates that each construct has high reliability and good convergent validity. Specifically, the Teamwork (Z) and Employee Performance (Y) variables have the highest reliability and AVE values (0.940 and 0.759), indicating very consistent construct measurement.

Inner Model Analysis

Evaluation of the structural model (inner model) is conducted to ensure the built structural model is robust and accurate. The analysis stages performed in the structural model evaluation are seen from several indicators, namely:

Coefficient of Determination (R2)

Based on data processing that has been carried out using SmartPLS 3.0 program, the following R Square values are obtained:

Table 4. R Square Results

	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Teamwork _(Z)	0,834	0,830
Employee Performance _(Y)	0,829	0,822

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3

Based on Table 4 regarding R Square Results, the Teamwork (Z) variable has an R Square value of 0.834 (Adjusted R^2 = 0.830), indicating that 83.4% of Teamwork variation can be explained by the independent variables in the model. Meanwhile, the Employee Performance (Y) variable has an R Square value of 0.829 (Adjusted R^2 = 0.822), which means 82.9% of

Employee Performance variation is explained by the independent variables. Overall, these high R Square values indicate good predictive ability of the model.

Hypothesis Testing

After assessing the inner model, the next step is to evaluate the relationships between latent constructs as hypothesized in this study. Hypothesis testing in this study is performed by looking at T-Statistics and P-Values. The hypothesis is stated as accepted if the T-Statistics value > 1.96 and P-Values < 0.05. The following are the Path Coefficients results for direct effects:

Table 5. Path Coefficients (Direct Effects)

	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (| O/STDEV |)	P Values	Results
Collaborative Culture (X2) -> Teamwork _(Z)	0,301	2,715	**0,003**	**Accepted**
Collaborative Culture (X2) -> Employee Performance _(Y)	0,327	2,644	**0,004**	**Accepted**
Digital Leadership StyleDigital_(X1) -> Teamwork _(Z)	0,633	5,824	**0,000**	**Accepted**
Digital Leadership StyleDigital_(X1) -> Employee Performance _(Y)	0,441	2,947	**0,002**	**Accepted**
Teamwork _(Z) -> Employee Performance _(Y)	0,174	1,328	**0,092**	**Rejected**

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3

1. Collaborative Culture on Teamwork has a path coefficient of 0.301 with T-statistic 2.715 and p-value 0.003, showing a positive and significant effect. Hypothesis accepted, meaning Collaborative Culture contributes to increasing Teamwork.
2. Collaborative Culture on Employee Performance shows a coefficient of 0.327, T-statistic 2.644, and p-value 0.004, meaning its effect is positive and significant. Hypothesis accepted, so Collaborative Culture also increases Employee Performance.
3. Digital Leadership Style on Teamwork has a coefficient of 0.633 with T-statistic 5.824 and p-value 0.000, indicating a positive and very significant effect. Hypothesis accepted, meaning Digital Leadership Style significantly influences Teamwork.
4. Digital Leadership Style on Employee Performance shows a coefficient of 0.441, T-statistic 2.947, and p-value 0.002, meaning its effect is positive and significant. Hypothesis accepted, showing Digital Leadership Style improves Employee Performance.
5. Teamwork on Employee Performance has a coefficient of 0.174 with T-statistic 1.328 and p-value 0.092, showing a non-significant effect. Hypothesis rejected, so Teamwork does not have a significant direct effect on Employee Performance in this model. **Table 6.** Path Coefficients (Indirect Effects)

	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (| O/STDEV |)	P Values	Results
Collaborative Culture (X2) -> Teamwork _(Z) -> Employee Performance _(Y)	0,052	1,191	**0,117**	**Rejected**

Digital Leadership StyleDigital_(X1) -> Teamwork _(Z) -> Employee Performance _(Y)	0,110	1,246	**0,107**	**Rejected**

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3

6. Collaborative Culture through Teamwork on Employee Performance has a coefficient of 0.052 with T-statistic 1.191 and p-value 0.117, showing a non-significant effect. Hypothesis rejected, meaning Teamwork does not mediate the effect of Collaborative Culture on Employee Performance.
7. Digital Leadership Style through Teamwork on Employee Performance has a coefficient of 0.110, T-statistic 1.246, and p-value 0.107, which also shows a non-significant effect. Hypothesis rejected, so Teamwork does not mediate the effect of Digital Leadership Style on Employee Performance.

Conclusion

1. Collaborative Culture has a positive and significant effect on Teamwork, showing Collaborative Culture can improve Teamwork.
2. Collaborative Culture has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance, so Collaborative Culture also directly increases Employee Performance.
3. Digital Leadership Style has a positive and very significant effect on Teamwork, indicating the important role of digital leadership in improving Teamwork.
4. Digital Leadership Style has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance, so digital leadership style also directly improves employee performance.
5. Teamwork does not have a significant effect on Employee Performance, so the hypothesis of its direct effect is rejected.
6. Teamwork does not mediate the effect of Collaborative Culture on Employee Performance, because the indirect effect is not significant.
7. Teamwork does not mediate the effect of Digital Leadership Style on Employee Performance, because the indirect effect is also not significant.

Suggestions

1. Organizations are advised to continue developing Collaborative Culture within teams to create good cooperation and improve employee performance.
2. Improving Digital Leadership Style needs to be a management focus, for example through digital leadership training, utilization of communication technology, and data-based decision-making.
3. Although Teamwork was not proven to mediate significantly, strengthening coordination and synergy among employees remains important to support work effectiveness and a positive organizational culture.
4. It is recommended to conduct research with a broader sample or in different sectors to test the generalization of findings regarding the influence of Collaborative Culture and Digital Leadership Style on Employee Performance.
5. Future research can explore the role of other mediators or moderators besides Teamwork, such as internal communication or organizational innovation, because Teamwork in this study was not proven to be a significant mediator.

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