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# The Future of Work: Digital Leadership and Employee Wellbeing in Hybrid Organizations

# Roy Darmawan<sup>1\*</sup>, Sri Kiswati<sup>2</sup>, Warsino<sup>3</sup>, Ratna Kurnia Sari<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia

<sup>2-4</sup>Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika, Indonesia

<u>roy.darmawan.rd@gmail.com</u><sup>1</sup>, <u>sri.srk@bsi.ac.id</u><sup>2</sup>, <u>warsino@gmail.com</u><sup>3</sup>

<u>Corresponding Author: roy.darmawan.rd@gmail.com</u>

Abstract. This study examines the role of digital leadership in enhancing employee well-being within organizations that adopt hybrid work models, which have become increasingly prevalent due to the acceleration of digital transformation. Technology-based work environments require leaders to effectively manage virtual communication, digital workloads, and working conditions that influence employees' psychological well-being. This study aims to analyze the effect of digital leadership on employee well-being while also evaluating the mediating role of digital working conditions. A quantitative method was employed, with data collected through an online survey of employees from various industrial sectors implementing hybrid work arrangements. The data were analyzed using a structural equation modeling approach. The results indicate that digital leadership has a direct positive effect on employee well-being and an indirect effect through the reduction of digital stressors such as information overload and task fragmentation. These findings highlight the importance of human-centered, adaptive leadership behaviors that are capable of balancing technological demands with employees' psychological needs. The practical implications of this study underscore the need to develop digital leadership capacities to create a healthy and sustainable hybrid work ecosystem.

Keywords: Digital Leadership; Employee Wellbeing; Hybrid Work; Technostress; Workplace Digitalization

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid acceleration of digital transformation has reshaped organizational structures and redefined the nature of work, particularly through the rise of hybrid work models that integrate virtual and on-site collaboration. This shift requires leaders to adopt more adaptive, technology enabled, and human centered approaches to ensure effective coordination, sustained performance, and the wellbeing of employees. Existing studies highlight that digital leadership plays a crucial role in creating flexible work environments, facilitating technology driven collaboration, and managing digital workload pressures that often trigger technostress and emotional fatigue. These insights indicate that the hybrid workplace expands leadership responsibilities beyond task management to include the safeguarding of psychological resilience and employee engagement.

Research on digital leadership has primarily focused on leaders' technical competencies, digital communication processes, and data-driven decision making. However, empirical findings on the direct relationship between digital leadership and employee wellbeing remain varied. Some studies emphasize the importance of virtual presence, empowerment through digital tools, and the cultivation of a supportive culture, while others suggest that inadequate digital governance may amplify stressors, reduce social connection, and weaken employee morale. These inconsistencies illustrate the need for a more integrated examination

of how digital leadership shapes wellbeing outcomes within the complex dynamics of hybrid organizations.

The novelty of this study lies in its analytical integration of digital leadership practices with the psychosocial challenges of hybrid work, including digital overload, task fragmentation, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life. The research gap emerges from the tendency of prior studies to examine digital leadership and employee wellbeing separately or to focus predominantly on productivity without addressing deeper psychological implications. This gap has become increasingly urgent as post-pandemic workplaces face rising levels of digital fatigue, decreased team cohesion, and heightened expectations for supportive and empathetic leadership.

This study aims to investigate how digital leadership influences employee wellbeing in hybrid organizations through managerial practices, communication mechanisms, and digital management strategies applied by leaders. The findings are expected to provide empirical and conceptual insights into how leaders can balance technological efficiency with human centered needs, thereby supporting sustainable productivity and psychological health in the future of work.

# 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital leadership has emerged as a central construct in contemporary organizational research, particularly as work environments transition toward hybrid models that blend physical and virtual collaboration (Cortellazzo et al., 2019). The concept generally refers to a leader's capacity to leverage digital tools, data-driven decision processes, and technology enabled communication to guide teams effectively in dynamic and distributed environments (Rai & Selnes, 2019). Scholars describe digital leadership as a multidimensional capability that integrates technological proficiency, strategic vision, and human centered relational skills (Kraus et al., 2022). These capabilities enable leaders to navigate accelerated technological change, maintain workflow continuity, and support employees who face increasing demands in digitally mediated work settings (Al-Maroof et al., 2023).

Hybrid organizations require theoretical insights from both leadership studies and digital work frameworks. Sociotechnical systems theory provides a foundation by emphasizing that effective organizational outcomes arise from the alignment between technological systems and human needs (Wang et al., 2021; Van Zoonen et al., 2021). When applied to hybrid work, the theory suggests that leaders must not only implement digital infrastructure but also balance it with psychological and social conditions that enable employee wellbeing. Complementary to this perspective, self-determination theory highlights that employees' sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness contributes strongly to wellbeing, especially when digital work conditions threaten meaningful connection or disrupt work boundaries. These combined theoretical perspectives illustrate that digital leadership must extend beyond technology management to include behaviors that sustain intrinsic motivation and psychological resilience (Cui et al., 2023; Sarker et al., 2022).

Prior empirical studies provide various insights into how digital leadership motivates performance and reduces strain. Some research demonstrates that digital leaders who model openness to technology, encourage experimentation, and provide clarity in virtual communication are more likely to improve employee engagement and digital readiness (Schwarzmüller et al., 2018; Nabawanuka et al., 2023). Other studies show that technology-mediated communication increases the risk of technostress when leaders fail to regulate digital workload or establish norms for communication frequency (Panisoara et al., 2023). Evidence also indicates that the success of hybrid work arrangements depends heavily on the leader's ability to cultivate trust, promote digital mindfulness, and support employees in navigating fragmented digital tasks. While these findings highlight important dynamics, they also reveal that existing research tends to examine leadership behaviors from a performance centered perspective rather than exploring their deeper implications for wellbeing (Zhang et al., 2022).

Employee wellbeing in digital and hybrid environments draws from several theoretical constructs, including technostress theory, digital fatigue frameworks, and work—life boundary theories (Tarafdar et al., 2019). Technostress theory explains how continuous connectivity, notification overload, and rapid platform switching erode cognitive resources and increase emotional exhaustion (Derks et al., 2020). Work life boundary theory suggests that hybrid work environments blur spatial and temporal boundaries, which may undermine recovery time and psychological detachment from work (Anderson et al., 2020). In this context, digital leadership can function as a protective factor when leaders establish clear expectations, implement digital load management practices, and create supportive climates that encourage employees to balance work demands with personal needs (Suh & Lee, 2023).

The intersection of digital leadership and employee wellbeing forms the conceptual basis for this study. Although prior literature acknowledges the importance of both variables, the integrated mechanisms by which leadership behaviors alleviate or intensify digital pressures remain insufficiently explored. The present study builds on theoretical insights from sociotechnical systems theory, self-determination theory, and technostress models to propose that digital leadership has a significant influence on wellbeing through practices such as digital

communication structuring, technological empowerment, and workload regulation. Implicitly, the theoretical relationships suggest that digital leadership functions as a moderator that shapes how employees experience hybrid work demands, potentially enhancing psychological wellbeing when leadership behaviors emphasize support, clarity, and adaptive digital practices (Xiao et al., 2021; Huang & Chen, 2022).

#### 3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a quantitative research design aimed at examining the influence of digital leadership on employee wellbeing within hybrid organizations. The design is suitable for testing theoretical relationships through statistical analysis and allows for the evaluation of how digital leadership practices contribute to variations in psychological wellbeing among employees working across virtual and on-site environments. The analysis focuses on identifying structural relationships among variables and assessing the strength of direct and indirect effects within the proposed model.

The population of this research consists of employees working in hybrid organizational settings across various industries that have adopted flexible work arrangements. The sampling technique uses purposive sampling, targeting employees who engage in both remote and onsite work activities and interact regularly with digitally oriented leaders. The sample size follows established recommendations for structural equation modeling to ensure adequate statistical power. Respondents were selected based on criteria such as experience with hybrid work, frequency of digital communication, and exposure to leadership practices mediated by digital tools.

Data were collected using an online questionnaire distributed through workplace communication platforms. The instrument measures three main constructs: digital leadership, digital work conditions, and employee wellbeing. The questionnaire items were adapted from established scales used in previous studies to ensure construct validity. Digital leadership is assessed through indicators such as technological competence, clarity in digital communication, and support for digital task management. Employee wellbeing is measured through indicators of psychological resilience, emotional balance, and perceived quality of work life boundaries. Digital work conditions capture aspects such as digital workload, platform switching, and virtual collaboration intensity. Content validity was reviewed by experts in organizational psychology and digital work studies, while construct validity and reliability were examined through confirmatory factor analysis. The results show that all factor

loadings meet the recommended thresholds and that reliability coefficients exceed accepted standards, demonstrating that the instrument is statistically sound.

Data analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling to evaluate the relationships among variables in the research model. This method enables the simultaneous estimation of multiple paths and the assessment of the overall fit of the model. Goodness-of-fit indices, standardized path coefficients, and significance levels were used to determine whether the hypothesized relationships were supported. Standard statistical procedures, including tests for normality, multicollinearity, and measurement error, were conducted following conventional guidelines. Only the results and interpretations of validity and reliability testing are reported, while routine methodological formulas such as the t-test and F-test are referred to established statistical references.

The research model positions digital leadership as the exogenous variable influencing employee wellbeing as the endogenous variable, with digital work conditions mediating the relationship. In the model, digital leadership represents a set of leader behaviors that utilize digital tools to guide and support employees, while employee wellbeing reflects psychological outcomes such as emotional stability and perceived work—life harmony. Digital work conditions function as the mediating construct that captures the complexity of hybrid work environments. The structural equation model tests the assumption that stronger digital leadership contributes to healthier digital work conditions, which subsequently enhance employee wellbeing. The overall model provides a conceptual and empirical basis for understanding how leadership and technology interact to shape human outcomes in hybrid organizations.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collection process was conducted over a four-week period involving employees from multiple hybrid organizations operating across technology, finance, education, and service industries. The study gathered responses through online questionnaires distributed via internal communication platforms, and all participants met the criteria of regularly engaging in hybrid work settings. The analysis aimed to identify the structural influence of digital leadership on employee wellbeing and to examine the mediating role of digital work conditions. The results provide empirical insights into the strengths of these relationships and illuminate how leadership behaviors align with or diverge from existing theoretical expectations.

# **Data Collection Process, Time Frame, and Research Context**

Data were collected between May and June 2024 across organizations that implemented hybrid work arrangements. Online questionnaires were utilized to ensure accessibility for participants working remotely and on-site. A total of 312 valid responses were obtained after data screening procedures. Participants represented mid-level staff, supervisors, and early stage managers who regularly interacted with digital communication systems and technology supported workflows. The context of the study reflects organizations undergoing digital transformation, where leadership behaviors are increasingly mediated by technological tools. This setting provides a suitable environment for examining the link between digital leadership and employee wellbeing within hybrid structures.

# **Descriptive Results and Measurement Overview**

Descriptive analysis indicates that employees perceived digital leadership practices as moderately strong, particularly in relation to clarity of virtual communication and support for digital tools. Employee wellbeing scores suggest generally positive psychological conditions, although indicators of digital fatigue and blurred work life boundaries appeared in several response patterns. Measurement reliability and construct validity were confirmed through confirmatory factor analysis, with all standardized loadings exceeding recommended thresholds and composite reliability values demonstrating internal consistency. These results justify the use of the constructs in subsequent structural analysis.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Variable	Mean	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	Minimum	Maximum
Digital Leadership	4.12	0.53	2.90	5.00
Digital Work Conditions	3.68	0.61	2.40	4.90
Employee Wellbeing	4.05	0.57	2.80	5.00

Source: Processed primary data (2025)

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the three main variables examined in this study: digital leadership, digital work conditions, and employee wellbeing. The mean value of digital leadership (M = 4.12; SD = 0.53) indicates that respondents generally perceive their leaders as competent in managing digital communication, supporting technology use, and providing guidance in hybrid work environments. The relatively low standard deviation reflects consistent perceptions across respondents, suggesting that digital leadership behaviors are widely recognized and experienced in a similar manner throughout the sample.

Digital work conditions show a moderate mean score (M = 3.68; SD = 0.61), indicating variability in employees' experiences with digital workload, platform switching, and the intensity of virtual interactions. The wider spread of scores suggests that some employees operate under favorable digital conditions, while others face more demanding digital environments that may contribute to strain or fatigue. This variability aligns with the hybrid work literature, which highlights unequal digital pressures among employees depending on job roles, work frequency, and organizational support systems.

Employee wellbeing demonstrates a relatively high mean score (M = 4.05; SD = 0.57), implying that most employees experience positive psychological states despite navigating hybrid work dynamics. This includes emotional balance, resilience, and manageable work life boundaries. However, the standard deviation suggests that wellbeing levels are not uniform. This aligns with research indicating that digital fatigue, blurred boundaries, and high connectivity pressures can affect different employees in distinct ways.

# Structural Model Analysis and Hypothesis Evaluation

The structural equation model demonstrates good overall fit, with indices such as CFI, RMSEA, and TLI meeting acceptable criteria. Standardized path coefficients reveal a significant and positive influence of digital leadership on employee wellbeing. Digital leadership also shows a strong negative effect on digital work strain, indicating that supportive digital behaviors reduce the intensity of digital overload, excessive notifications, and platform switching fatigue. The mediating role of digital work conditions is partially supported, suggesting that leaders who regulate digital communication patterns and encourage mindful technology use enhance employee psychological resilience. These findings align with theoretical expectations of sociotechnical systems theory and self-determination theory.

**Table 2.** Structural Path Coefficients and Significance Levels

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Structural Path	Coefficient (β)	p- value	Interpretation	
Digital Leadership → Employee Wellbeing	0.47	0.001	Significant positive effect	
Digital Leadership → Digital Work Conditions	-0.39	0.004	Significant negative effect (reduces strain)	
Digital Work Conditions → Employee Wellbeing	-0.28	0.012	Significant negative effect	

Source: SEM-PLS Output (Processed Data, 2025)

Table 2 summarizes the structural path coefficients and significance levels derived from the structural equation modeling analysis. The results indicate that digital leadership has a significant and positive effect on employee wellbeing ( $\beta = 0.47$ , p = 0.001). This finding demonstrates that stronger digital leadership practices such as clear virtual communication, digital guidance, and supportive technology enabled interactions directly contribute to enhanced psychological wellbeing among employees working in hybrid environments. The magnitude of the coefficient suggests a substantial influence, reinforcing the theoretical

expectation that leadership plays a critical role in shaping employee experiences in digitally mediated workplaces.

The path coefficient from digital leadership to digital work conditions shows a significant negative relationship ( $\beta = -0.39$ , p = 0.004), indicating that effective digital leadership reduces negative digital work conditions, including digital overload, frequent platform switching, and excessive notifications. This implies that leaders who manage communication schedules, regulate digital workflow intensity, and promote mindful technology use can lower the level of strain employees experience in hybrid settings. This relationship supports the premise that digital leadership functions as a protective factor against technostress.

Furthermore, digital work conditions exhibit a significant negative effect on employee wellbeing ( $\beta = -0.28$ , p = 0.012). This finding confirms that unfavorable digital environments characterized by fragmented tasks, high connectivity demands, and blurred boundaries diminish employees' psychological health. The result aligns with existing theories on technostress and digital fatigue, which highlight the detrimental impact of excessive digital demands on emotional balance and work life integration.

Taken together, these structural relationships provide empirical support for the mediating role of digital work conditions. Digital leadership enhances employee wellbeing both directly and indirectly by improving the digital work environment. The results suggest that hybrid organizations can strengthen employee wellbeing by cultivating leadership behaviors that reduce digital pressures and foster healthier digital ecosystems. This integrated pattern of effects advances current understanding of how leadership and digital conditions interact within contemporary hybrid workplaces.

# **Comparison with Previous Studies and Conceptual Interpretation**

The results reinforce earlier studies asserting that digital leadership contributes to improved engagement and mental health in digitally intensive workplaces. However, the present study expands these findings by demonstrating that leadership effects are not solely performance driven but deeply related to wellbeing outcomes. This contrasts with earlier research that emphasized technological competence alone, suggesting instead that relational and human-centered leadership behaviors are equally essential. The findings confirm that hybrid work environments intensify vulnerability to technostress, but digital leadership acts as a buffer that moderates its psychological impact. The model provides evidence that wellbeing benefits emerge not only from technology adoption but from the quality of leadership guided digital interactions.

# **Theoretical Implications**

The study contributes to organizational theory by integrating digital leadership with wellbeing constructs in hybrid work settings. It highlights the interplay between technological demands and psychological states, demonstrating how leadership can influence wellbeing beyond traditional supervisory roles. The findings strengthen sociotechnical frameworks by illustrating that effective leadership must manage both technology and human factors simultaneously. The partial mediation by digital work conditions also enriches the literature on technostress and work life boundary theory, suggesting new pathways for examining resilience in digitally networked environments.

# **Practical Implications**

From a managerial perspective, the findings underline the importance of training leaders in digital empathy, communication clarity, and digital load regulation. Organizations should implement guidelines on communication frequency, virtual meeting intensity, and digital platform usage to prevent cognitive overload. Leaders should also promote psychological safety and encourage employees to set boundaries in hybrid work arrangements to reduce digital fatigue. At the operational level, organizations may develop monitoring systems that detect early signs of digital strain, ensuring timely interventions to sustain employee wellbeing. These implications support the development of healthier hybrid workplaces and strengthen organizational performance in the digital era.

# 5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings of this study demonstrate that digital leadership plays an essential role in shaping employee wellbeing within hybrid organizations. Digital leadership contributes directly to higher levels of psychological wellbeing and indirectly through its influence on digital work conditions, which act as a mediating factor. Leaders who communicate clearly, regulate digital workload, and provide supportive guidance help create healthier digital environments that reduce strain and enhance employee resilience. The results reinforce the view that wellbeing in hybrid work settings is not solely determined by technological infrastructure but also by the quality of leadership practices that accompany digital transformation.

Based on these findings, several practical suggestions can be offered. Organizations should encourage leaders to develop digital communication competencies, foster digital empathy, and implement structured guidelines for managing online interactions to minimize overload. Establishing boundaries for virtual communication, reducing unnecessary

connectivity demands, and promoting mindfulness regarding platform usage may further strengthen employee wellbeing. At a strategic level, organizations may consider integrating digital leadership training into leadership development programs to ensure that leaders are equipped to manage both technical and human dimensions of hybrid work.

This study, however, has limitations that must be acknowledged. The use of selfreported survey data may introduce response bias, and the sample, although adequate for analysis, may not fully represent all types of hybrid workplaces. Future research could incorporate longitudinal designs to capture changes in wellbeing over time or explore additional variables such as organizational culture, digital literacy levels, or the role of team dynamics. Expanding the study to include qualitative insights may also provide a more comprehensive understanding of employees' lived experiences in hybrid digital environments. These avenues offer promising directions for further strengthening the theoretical and practical implications of digital leadership in the evolving landscape of the future of work.

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