

Digital Leadership and Job Satisfaction: The Role of Intrinsic Motivation as Mediating Variable

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Abstract. *In order to have a flexible, effective workplace that promotes the psychological health of employees, leaders must be able to use technology into their leadership style. The purpose of this study is to examine how digital leadership affects PT Semen Padang employees' job satisfaction using intrinsic motivation as a mediating factor. 140 respondents were chosen using proportionate random sampling approaches for this quantitative study, which use the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis technique. The study's findings suggest that intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction are positively and significantly impacted by digital leadership. The association between digital leadership and job satisfaction has been shown to be considerably mediated by intrinsic motivation, which likewise has a positive and considerable impact on job satisfaction. The Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which holds that meeting fundamental psychological needs like competence, autonomy, and connectivity can boost intrinsic motivation and eventually lead to greater job satisfaction, is supported by these findings. The study's results highlight how crucial it is for managers to cultivate digital leadership as a tactic for raising worker motivation and job satisfaction, particularly when dealing with the difficulties posed by digital transformation in the industrial workplace.*

Keywords: Digital Leadership, Job Satisfaction, Intrinsic Motivation

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INTRODUCTION

Because job satisfaction is closely linked to employee engagement, loyalty, and productivity, it is a critical component of an organization's success. The term "job satisfaction" describes how happy workers are with many facets of their jobs, which are impacted by the workplace's conditions, relationships with coworkers, and leadership support (Van & Botha, 2014). Technology-savvy leadership is essential in the digital age for fostering a more adaptable and flexible workplace. Effective technology use by leaders can enhance teamwork, communication, and operational effectiveness, all of which eventually affect employee job satisfaction (Wang et al., 2021).

In order to maximize the utilization of digital technology resources and generate value for the organization, digital leadership combines leader competency and culture (Rudito & Sinaga, 2017). According to Augustina et al. (2020), digital leadership is becoming increasingly necessary and a must-have mode for all future leaders. Digital leaders inspire teams to investigate and seize opportunities presented by digital technology, promote cooperation, and enable effective communication.

The subject of this study is PT Semen Padang Indonesia, which is situated in Padang on Jalan Raya Indarung. The first cement firm in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, PT Semen Padang, was founded on March 18, 1910. As one of the biggest businesses in Sumatra with its own digital

system, PT Semen Padang also faces significant obstacles in implementing digital transformation in the face of shifting workplaces that rely more and more on technology.

At PT Semen Padang, digital leadership is not always implemented flawlessly. A lack of knowledge about new technology or digital abilities can make it more difficult to be satisfied with your work. As a result, PT Semen Padang's adoption of technology is hampered by a lack of digital skills and aversion to change. Here is where digital leaders can help excite staff members and encourage them to keep coming up with new ideas (W. A. Sunaryo, 2021). Intrinsic motivation, or the five internal drives that emerge when people believe they have competence and control over their task, is one type of motivation that is highly pertinent in this situation.

Because of the stress and difficulty of adjusting to technology, workers who lack strong intrinsic motivation typically report lower levels of job satisfaction. When it comes to elucidating the elements that impact intrinsic motivation, Ryan's (1995) Self-Determination Theory is highly pertinent. According to this theory, people are inherently active beings with a propensity to grow psychologically and realize their full potential. Positive feedback and acknowledgment of employees' work can boost their sense of competence, which in turn boosts intrinsic motivation, according to digital leaders. Employees that receive the proper digital assistance grow more self-reliant, emotionally invested, and driven to more successfully accomplish company objectives (Li et al., 2024).

By fostering a positive work atmosphere and fostering trust between managers and staff, digital leadership can help workers adjust to the digital world and improve job satisfaction (Al & Farmanesh, 2023). By acknowledging their efforts and involvement, this support also increases employees' intrinsic motivation, which eventually contributes significantly to increased job satisfaction (Kerketta & Shika Chauhan, 2023). The connection between job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, and digital leadership has been supported by a number of earlier studies. According to Sunaryo et al. (2023), motivation and job satisfaction are positively impacted by digital transformational leadership. Hasibuan et al. (2023) shown that motivation plays a crucial role in mediating the relationship between job satisfaction and leadership. Aljummah's research from 2023 further demonstrates the connection between job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation.

Literature Review

Self Determination Theory

The self-determination theory, a motivational theory that examines the distinctions between intrinsic and extrinsic drive, was created by Ryan & Deci in 1985. The natural inclination to carry out a task or activity for its own sake is known as intrinsic motivation. According to this view, an individual's intrinsic motivation is primarily driven by their basic psychological needs. SDT highlights three fundamental needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—that are necessary to inspire people to perform at their best and find fulfillment in their work (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Employees are more likely to be intrinsically motivated when these three demands are satisfied, which improves their level of job satisfaction (Deci et al., 2017).

SDT can explain how technology impacts job satisfaction in the context of implementing digital technologies. Job satisfaction will rise if technology encourages independence, gives workers chances to grow (competence), and upholds positive social connections (connectedness). However, job satisfaction may suffer if technology really diminishes social connection, inhibits autonomy, or makes workers feel less capable because they find it difficult to adapt.

SDT can explain how technology affects job satisfaction. If technology supports autonomy, gives employees opportunities to develop (competence), and maintains good social relationships (connectedness), then job satisfaction will increase. However, if technology limits autonomy, makes employees feel less competent because they have difficulty adapting, or reduces social interaction, then job satisfaction can decrease.

Job Satisfaction

Handoko (2016) defines job satisfaction as an employee's opinion of their work, which may be positive or negative. Certain aspects of their employment may make employees feel content, while others may not. An assessment of their working conditions leads to job satisfaction. Contented workers are more likely to like their occupations, which improves their performance. When workers feel valued and receive compensation that is in line with their output, they are said to be happy in their jobs (Indra & Rialmi, 2022). Affandi (2018) asserts that factors such as the work itself, pay, managers, and coworkers are indications of employee job satisfaction.

Digital Leadership

According to Magesa & Joanthan (2019), digital leadership is leadership that possesses a number of traits and actions required to steer an organization's digital transformation process. Because it allows leaders to alter the company's operations, establish a culture that encourages change, and create the overall business plan, this leadership style is essential in digital transformation (Türk, 2023). In the age of digital leadership, Zhu (2015) outlined five essential traits that a leader needs to possess: a leader who is innovative, full of ideas, has a global perspective, is constantly interested, and intelligent.

Intrinsic Motivation

According to Gümüşluoglu & Ilsev (2009), intrinsic motivation is the drive that comes from within a person to do specific tasks in order to fulfill personal goals and wants rather than because of outside influences. Because they are content with their work and are not under pressure from other sources or rewards, employees who possess a high level of intrinsic motivation are more likely to strive for and perform at their best. Hasibuan (2008) asserts that a number of elements, including accountability, recognition, the task itself, and growth and advancement, affect intrinsic motivation. Based on the theory used, the conceptual framework, and findings from various previous studies, the researcher formulated the following hypotheses:

Digital leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction at PT Semen Padang

Digital leadership is said to have an influence because the higher the digital capabilities of leaders, the more it can increase employee job satisfaction (Mandayanti, 2024). With the implementation of effective digital leadership, company leaders can be more responsive to employee needs, speed up communication flows, and create a more efficient and collaborative work environment (Subiyanto et al. 2024). This in turn will increase employee job satisfaction, because they feel that there is technological support that makes work easier, as well as the ability of leaders to utilize technology to provide solutions to daily operational challenges.

Digital leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee intrinsic motivation at PT Semen Padang

Leadership is an important factor that will influence intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 2017). Leaders who are able to utilize technology effectively to facilitate communication, collaboration, and employee development can create a more transparent and participatory work environment (Subiyanto et al., 2024). According to Cheng et al. (2023), leaders who are open to innovation and provide positive feedback help employees feel appreciated for their contributions, so that their intrinsic motivation increases because they see meaning and purpose in the work they do.

Intrinsic motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction at PT Semen Padang

As explained by Ayalew (2021), there is a positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction. This is because intrinsic motivation can increase feelings of

involvement and meaning in work, which in turn contributes to higher levels of satisfaction. When employees feel motivated by internal factors, they tend to be more satisfied with their work because the work itself provides the expected rewards, not just in terms of material or external rewards (Singh, 2016)

Digital leadership has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction mediated by employee intrinsic motivation at PT Semen Padang

Hasibuan et al. (2023) showed that intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between digital leadership and job satisfaction. Effective digital leadership encourages employee intrinsic motivation by fulfilling basic psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as explained in Self-Determination Theory (SDT). This theory states that when these basic psychological needs are met, employees tend to be more intrinsically motivated, which increases their engagement and job satisfaction (R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2000).

METHODS

In order to evaluate the causal association between digital leadership (an independent variable), intrinsic motivation (a mediating variable), and work satisfaction (a dependent variable), this study used a quantitative causality approach. From a total population of 1428 permanent employees of PT Semen Padang, this sample was selected using the proportional random sampling technique. This technique was chosen because it can ensure that each department at PT Semen Padang is represented proportionally. Based on the Representative formula from Hair et al., (2014) the number of samples is the number of indicators X 10, in this study there are 14 indicators so the total sample is 140 samples. The validity and reliability of the research tool were assessed once it was assembled using pertinent theories and indicators. The research questionnaire was created using a Likert scale and questions taken from a number of earlier studies published in respectable journals. There are fourteen question items in the job satisfaction variable sourced from research conducted by Churchill et al. (1974), six question items in the digital leadership variable from an article written by Mollah et al., (2023), and six question items in the intrinsic motivation variable based on an article written by Kuvaas et al., (2017). Both the measurement model (construct validity and reliability) and the structural model (relationships between variables and hypothesis testing) were analyzed using the Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique via the SmartPLS 4 application. The mediating role of intrinsic motivation in the association between job satisfaction and digital leadership is also examined in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Description

140 permanent employees of PT Semen Padang, distributed across 18 departments, participated in this survey as respondents. Proportional random sample methods were used to choose the participants. More than half of the respondents had a bachelor's degree and had worked for the company for more than ten years, showing a fairly high level of experience in the workplace. The majority of respondents were male and fell within the productive age range of 41 to 55 years. These traits demonstrate that respondents are well-versed in organizational settings and capable of offering unbiased evaluations of the study's primary focal areas of digital leadership, intrinsic motivation, and work satisfaction.

Variable Description

The Job Satisfaction variable among PT Semen Padang employees recorded a TCR score of 81.07%, which falls into the high category. The Digital Leadership variable among PT Semen Padang employees recorded TCR score of 85.95%, which falls into the high category. The Intrinsic Motivation variable among PT Semen Padang employees recorded TCR score of 82.21%, which falls into the high category.

Outer Model

Validity test

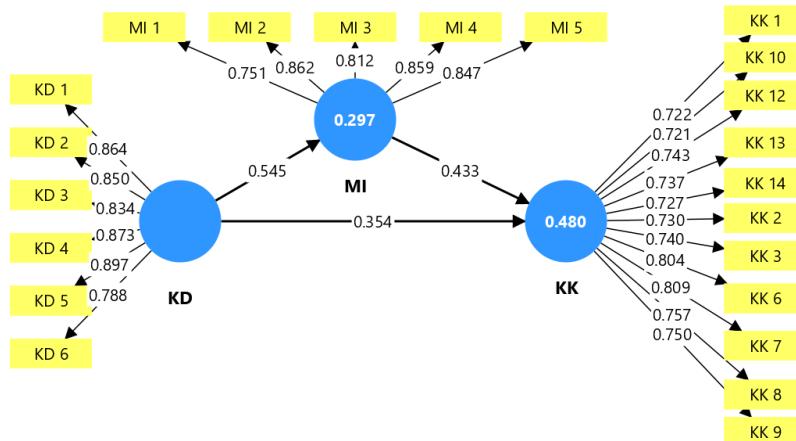


Figure 1. Outer Model

Source: Smart PLS 4, Year 2025

According to Hair et al., (2010), indicators with outer loading values below 0.7 can be considered for deletion. After eliminating indicators that failed the validity test, specifically KK4, KK4, KK11, and MI6, it can be inferred from the above image that all items of each variable satisfy the convergent validity test because the analysis's loading factor value falls between 0.7 and 0.9. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value can be used in addition to the Loading Factor value to assess the reliability of research data. The validity test findings utilizing the AVE value are as follows:

Table 1. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
KD	0.725
KK	0.562
MI	0.684

Source: Smart PLS 4, Year 2025

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that each variable has an AVE value above 0.5. A variable can be said to be valid if it has an AVE value > 0.5 (Ghozali & Latan, 2015). Therefore, it can be concluded that each variable in this study has good convergent validity and can be accepted because it has a loading factor value > 0.7 and an AVE value > 0.5 . In addition, to test the validity of the discriminant, it can also be tested using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion which states that the square root value of AVE of a variable must be greater than the correlation between other variables. The Fornell-Larcker Criterion value from this study can be seen in the table below:

Table 2. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	KD	KK	MI
KD	0.852		
KK	0.590	0.750	
MI	0.545	0.626	0.827

Source: Smart PLS 4, Year 2025

Based on the table above, the AVE square root value of each variable is greater than the correlation value between variables, so it can be concluded that this study has good discriminant validity.

Reliability Test

Table 3. Reliability Test

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)
KD	0.924	0.926	0.941
KK	0.922	0.924	0.934
MI	0.884	0.889	0.915

Source: Smart PLS 4, Year 2025

The ideal Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values have values above 0.7, the closer to 1, the better the reliability. Based on the table above, the value of composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha for all variables is above 0.7, so it can be concluded that all variables in this study are reliable or in accordance with the criteria.

Inner Model

Table 4. Inner Model

	R-square	R-square adjusted
KK	0.480	0.472
MI	0.297	0.292

Source: Smart PLS 4, Year 2025

The KK (Job Satisfaction) variable has an R² value of 0.480, according to the R-square values in the above table. This indicates that 48% of the variance in work satisfaction can be accounted for by the digital leadership variable, with the remaining portion being influenced by variables not included in the model. The model is fairly stable, as evidenced by the adjusted R-square value of 0.472, which shows an adjustment to the number of predictors in the model and stays near the R² value. The digital leadership variable in the study accounts for 29.7% of the variance in intrinsic motivation, with the remaining portion being influenced by factors outside the model, according to the MI (Intrinsic Motivation) variable's R² value of 0.297. These findings indicate that there are other factors that contribute to employee intrinsic motivation, such as individual psychological conditions, personal values, and deeper needs for autonomy. In contrast to job satisfaction, which can be directly influenced by leadership actions, intrinsic motivation is a more stable and personal condition, requiring a long-term approach and consistent work environment support.

Even if the digital leadership impact on intrinsic motivation is less pronounced than that on work satisfaction, the model is still highly viable, as evidenced by the adjusted R-square value of 0.292, which also displays a minor adjustment that is consistent with R². One reason why the relationship between digital leadership and job satisfaction is stronger than intrinsic motivation is that digital leadership, through the use of technology and efficient communication patterns, directly affects external aspects of the job, such as ease of completing tasks, role clarity, and access to resources. Meanwhile, intrinsic motivation is rooted in the fulfillment of basic psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as explained in Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Furthermore, this study did not account for potential confounding variables or external influences, such as organizational culture, employee demographics, or the broader industry environment, all of which can significantly shape levels of satisfaction and motivation.

Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis testing is carried out by comparing the T table value with the T statistic value generated from the bootstrapping test results in Smart-PLS 4 program.

Table 5 Direct Effect Hypothesis Test

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
KD -> KK	0.354	0.361	0.059	6.026	0.000
KD -> MI	0.545	0.550	0.074	7.405	0.000
MI -> KK	0.433	0.429	0.076	5.724	0.000

Source: Smart PLS 4, Year 2025

Testing Hypothesis 1 (Digital leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction at PT Semen Padang). The digital leadership variable with the job satisfaction variable has a path coefficient value of 0.354 and a t-statistic of 6.026. So hypothesis 1 can be accepted because digital leadership is proven to have a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction. Testing Hypothesis 2 (Digital leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee intrinsic motivation at PT Semen Padang). The digital leadership variable with the intrinsic motivation variable has a path coefficient value of 0.545 and a t-statistic of 7.405. So hypothesis 2 can be accepted because digital leadership is proven to have a positive and significant effect on intrinsic motivation. Testing Hypothesis 3 (Intrinsic motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction at PT Semen Padang). The intrinsic motivation variable with job satisfaction has a path coefficient value of 0.433 and a t-statistic of 5.724. So hypothesis 3 can be accepted because intrinsic motivation is proven to have a positive and significant influence on job satisfaction.

Table 6 Indirect Effect Hypothesis Test

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
KD -> MI -> KK	0.236	0.235	0.048	4.955	0.000

Hypothesis Testing 4 (Digital leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction mediated by employee Intrinsic Motivation at PT Semen Padang). The three variables show a path coefficient value of 0.236 and a t-statistic of 4.955. This means that intrinsic motivation has a significant role as a mediator in the relationship between digital leadership and job satisfaction. This study shows that job satisfaction is positively and significantly impacted by digital leadership. It may be inferred that PT Semen Padang employees' job satisfaction can rise when executives at the company use effective digital leadership practices. The results are in line with study by Sunaryo et al. (2023), which shown that job satisfaction is positively and significantly impacted by digital leadership. A competent digital leader must be able to give clear instructions, assist staff in understanding hazards, and accurately and effectively explain how to use technology (Mollah et al., 2023). This is consistent with a 2017 study by Kuvaas et al. that found businesses that invest in digital leadership are more likely to succeed than those that don't.

The study also comes to the conclusion that increasing employees' intrinsic motivation is a significant function of digital leadership. At PT. Hexa Dental Indonesia in Bogor, research by Sunaryo (2021) revealed that employee motivation is greatly impacted by digital leadership styles. Furthermore, a study by Jensen & Bro (2018) demonstrated that transformational leadership significantly and favorably affects workers' intrinsic motivation. Additionally, this study demonstrates that job satisfaction is favorably and significantly impacted by intrinsic motivation. According to a study by Aljumah (2023), intrinsic motivation plays a critical role in raising employee job satisfaction. The results highlight that intrinsic elements like performance, responsibility, and the nature of the work itself have an impact on job satisfaction in addition to extrinsic factors like pay.

Ryan & Deci (2000) established the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which holds that intrinsic motivation has a major impact on job satisfaction because it is intimately linked to the satisfying of three fundamental psychological needs: social relatedness, competence, and autonomy. Additionally, this study demonstrates that job satisfaction is much enhanced by digital leadership, especially when intrinsic motivation plays a mediating role. Employees that are intrinsically motivated are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs. This is consistent with a meta-analysis that found that positive leadership philosophies, like transformational and empowering leadership, are highly linked to higher levels of intrinsic motivation in workers (Xue et al., 2022). This is further supported by a study by Ibragimov & Kadagidze (2024), which demonstrates that digital leaders who can foster a demanding but encouraging work environment can increase employees' intrinsic motivation, particularly in the face of digital transformation, which frequently causes stress and uncertainty among staff members.

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions can be made in light of the data analysis and debate that have been explained: 1) Employee job satisfaction at PT Semen Padang is positively and significantly impacted by digital leadership. This implies that PT Semen Padang personnel will be more satisfied with their jobs the better and more successfully each leader applies digital leadership; 2) Employee intrinsic motivation at PT Semen Padang is positively and significantly impacted by digital leadership. This demonstrates that PT Semen Padang employees experience higher levels of internal motivation the more effectively digital leadership is used to support employee self-development; 3) intrinsic motivation has a favorable and noteworthy impact on PT Semen Padang employees' job satisfaction. PT Semen Padang employees are more satisfied with their work when they are internally motivated; 4) Intrinsic motivation can significantly mediate the effect of digital leadership on job satisfaction, meaning that digital leaders can indirectly increase employee job satisfaction by boosting intrinsic motivation.

SUGGESTION

According to the study's findings, PT Semen Padang staff members should take the initiative to take advantage of digital leadership chances to boost job satisfaction and career advancement. They should also cultivate intrinsic motivation by seeing their work as a way to advance personally. Workers are also expected to enhance their technology proficiency, actively participate in the digitization process, and keep open lines of contact with coworkers and superiors. It is advised that future researchers take into account the usage of more complex mediating variables and include additional variables such organizational culture, work-life balance, or organizational support. To make the results more applicable and generalizable, the study's scope can also be extended to other industrial sectors.

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