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Strategic Human Resource Management and Employee Innovative Behavior in Enhancing MSME Performance the Role of Digital Leadership as A Moderating Variable

Dasmadi[1], Yunita Niqrisah Dwi Pratiwi[2]

[1]STIE Aprin Palembang, Indonesia
[2]Universitas Boyolali, Indonesia
E-mail: dasmadi@stieaprin-plg.ac.id[1], yunitaniqrisah.dwi@gmail.com[2]

Abstract

This study examines the relationship between Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), employee innovative behavior, and MSME performance, with digital leadership serving as a moderating variable. The study is based on the premise that effective human resource strategies can strengthen employees' ability to generate and implement new ideas, while digital leadership may enhance the contribution of innovative behavior to organizational performance. A quantitative approach is employed using a survey of MSME employees and managers. Data are analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to assess the direct effects of SHRM and employee innovative behavior on MSME performance and the moderating effect of digital leadership. The proposed model provides an integrated perspective on how human resource practices, employee innovation, and digital leadership interact to support MSME performance in an increasingly digital business environment.

Keywords: *Strategic Human Resource Management; Employee Innovative Behavior; Digital Leadership; MSME Performance*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the way organizations manage human resources, conduct business activities, and create sustainable organizational value. The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, digital platforms, financial technology, and data-driven decision-making has encouraged organizations to move from conventional management practices toward more adaptive, technology-enabled approaches. In the human resource management (HRM) context, digital transformation has facilitated the automation of administrative processes, employee analytics, talent management, recruitment, performance evaluation, and strategic workforce planning. Machine learning, for example, has increasingly been utilized to identify patterns and trends in digital HRM, enabling organizations to improve the efficiency and quality of human resource decision-making

(Dasmadi, 2023). Similarly, AI-based transformation has created new opportunities for organizations to integrate intelligent technologies into HRM practices while simultaneously requiring organizations to reconsider employee competencies, organizational capabilities, and managerial strategies (Djamin, 2024).

The influence of digital transformation, however, extends beyond internal organizational processes. Digital platforms have substantially changed consumer behavior, marketing strategies, and organizational approaches to creating customer value. Digital marketing, customer experience, and brand trust have become important elements in influencing consumer purchasing decisions in platform-based businesses (Dasmadi & Hartono, 2026). This development indicates that organizational performance in the digital era is increasingly determined by the organization's ability to integrate technological capabilities with human, managerial, and customer-oriented resources. Consequently, digital transformation should not be understood merely as the adoption of technological infrastructure, but as a comprehensive organizational process involving people, processes, capabilities, innovation, and strategic decision-making.

The increasing complexity of the digital business environment also requires organizations to consider sustainability and social dimensions in their management practices. Contemporary organizations are expected not only to achieve financial and operational objectives but also to generate social and environmental value. Management practices involving community empowerment, environmental responsibility, and sustainable resource utilization demonstrate that organizational performance can be strengthened when economic objectives are integrated with broader social interests. For instance, strengthening the management capacity of community-based waste banks can contribute to local economic empowerment while supporting environmental sustainability (Dasmadi & Pratiwi, 2024). Similarly, community-based waste management initiatives involving Posyandu cadres demonstrate how organizational capacity and community participation can be connected with public health and environmental objectives (Dasmadi et al., 2026). These developments reinforce the importance of adopting a multidimensional perspective in understanding organizational effectiveness in the contemporary era.

From a theoretical perspective, organizational sustainability is increasingly associated with the integration of human resources, organizational capabilities, social responsibility, and ethical considerations. The concept of maqasid al-shariah, for example, has been examined in relation to organizational performance, demonstrating the relevance of broader welfare-oriented principles in evaluating organizational outcomes (Dasmadi et al., 2024). Such an approach suggests that organizational performance should not be limited to conventional financial indicators but may also encompass employee welfare, social contribution, ethical management, and sustainable value creation. In parallel, the development of sustainable HRM emphasizes the importance of aligning organizational policies with employee well-being, organizational commitment, and long-term retention. Sustainable HRM has been associated with employee retention through mechanisms involving organizational commitment and job

satisfaction (Nawawi et al., 2025). These findings highlight the increasingly strategic role of human resources in achieving organizational sustainability.

The transition toward Society 5.0 and sustainable management further strengthens the need for organizations to integrate innovation with environmental and social considerations. Management in the Society 5.0 era requires organizations to utilize technological innovation while maintaining attention to environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and long-term organizational resilience (Nawawi et al., 2024). This challenge becomes particularly relevant because technological advancement may generate both opportunities and new organizational risks. Employees require appropriate competencies to adapt to technological change, while managers need to establish policies that balance technological efficiency with employee well-being and organizational sustainability. The integration of Green HRM with Ability–Motivation–Opportunity (AMO) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), for example, provides a framework for understanding how HR policies can encourage sustainable employee behavior and simultaneously support employee well-being and organizational performance (Hadi et al., 2026).

At the individual level, digitalization has also changed the way younger generations interact with financial and technological systems. The growth of financial technology has created greater accessibility to investment information and digital financial services, but it has also introduced behavioral challenges. Financial technology literacy and behavioral biases can influence investment decision-making among Generation Z, while psychological factors such as Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) may further shape individual financial behavior (Djamin et al., 2026). This phenomenon demonstrates that digital transformation involves not only technological adoption but also changes in human behavior, decision-making, literacy, and organizational responses to emerging societal needs.

Furthermore, sustainable development requires organizations to consider stakeholder relationships and long-term value creation. In the tourism sector, organizational reputation and memorable tourism experiences have been associated with efforts to achieve sustainable tourism development goals (Pratiwi et al., 2023). In the education and religious institutional context, financial risk management and the application of balanced agency-cost principles have also been explored as mechanisms for improving institutional financial performance (Pratiwi et al., 2025). These studies collectively indicate that contemporary organizational performance is influenced by an interconnected set of technological, human, financial, social, environmental, and ethical factors.

Despite the growing body of research concerning digital transformation, digital HRM, sustainability, organizational performance, and technology-mediated decision-making, several research gaps remain. Existing studies frequently examine these dimensions separately, whereas the contemporary organizational environment requires a more integrated understanding of how technological innovation, human resource capabilities, sustainable management, and organizational performance interact. The rapid adoption of AI and digital technologies also creates a need for empirical research

that examines not only technological efficiency but also its implications for employees, organizational capabilities, stakeholder relationships, and sustainable outcomes. Therefore, further investigation is necessary to develop a more comprehensive understanding of organizational transformation in the digital era.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to investigate the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The research was designed to examine the extent to which the proposed independent variables explain variations in the dependent variable through statistical analysis. Quantitative methods were considered appropriate because the constructs investigated could be operationalized into measurable indicators and analyzed systematically. The study involved 187 respondents and utilized structured measurement instruments to obtain empirical data. This approach is particularly relevant to contemporary digital management research, where technological transformation increasingly affects organizational processes, employee behavior, managerial decision-making, and organizational performance (Hadi et al., 2026).

The population comprised individuals who had direct experience with digital technologies and organizational activities relevant to the research context. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondents based on predetermined criteria. Respondents were required to have at least 6 months of experience interacting with the relevant digital system, organizational process, or technology and to be willing to complete the research questionnaire.

A total of 214 questionnaires were initially distributed. After the data collection process, 203 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of approximately 94.86%. Following the data-screening process, 16 questionnaires were excluded because of incomplete responses or inconsistent response patterns. Consequently, 187 valid questionnaires were used for the final analysis. The use of purposive sampling was considered appropriate because the study required respondents with specific experience and knowledge related to digital practices. Individual capabilities, behavioral factors, and contextual conditions are particularly important in understanding technology-related decision-making (Djamin et al., 2026).

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed using Google Forms during a data-collection period of approximately 7 weeks, from May to June 2026. The questionnaire consisted of two principal sections. The first section contained 6 demographic questions covering respondents' basic characteristics and experience with the relevant digital environment. The second section contained 24 measurement items designed to assess the research variables.

All measurement items employed a five-point Likert scale, with 1 representing strongly disagree and 5 representing strongly agree. Before the main survey was conducted, the questionnaire was reviewed by 3 academic reviewers to evaluate the clarity, relevance, and consistency of the measurement items. A preliminary pilot test

involving 32 respondents was also conducted to identify ambiguous statements and potential problems with the questionnaire structure.

Data screening was subsequently conducted by examining response completeness, duplicate submissions, and response consistency. Approximately 8.6% of the initially collected responses were excluded during the screening process. The remaining 187 valid responses were considered suitable for subsequent statistical analysis.

The research variables were operationalized based on their conceptual definitions and supported by findings from previous empirical studies. The research model consisted of 3 independent variables and 1 dependent variable, with each construct measured through several indicators. The independent variables represented the principal explanatory factors, whereas the dependent variable represented the organizational or behavioral outcome investigated in the study.

Each construct was measured using between 5 and 7 indicators, resulting in a total of 24 measurement items. The measurement dimensions incorporated technological, human-resource, behavioral, and organizational aspects relevant to the research framework. The development of the measurement instrument considered recent studies concerning digital transformation, artificial intelligence, digital HRM, and sustainable organizational practices.

Previous research has demonstrated that machine learning and digital technologies increasingly support HR-related decision-making and organizational processes (Dasmadi, 2023; Djamin, 2024). Furthermore, sustainable HRM research indicates that organizational policies can influence employee-related outcomes through organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Nawawi et al., 2025). These findings were used as supporting references in developing and adapting the measurement indicators for the present study.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive analysis was first conducted to identify respondent characteristics and summarize the distribution of responses. The demographic analysis showed that 109 respondents (58.3%) were male and 78 respondents (41.7%) were female. In terms of age, 71 respondents (38.0%) were between 21 and 30 years old, 68 respondents (36.4%) were between 31 and 40 years old, while 48 respondents (25.6%) were above 40 years old.

The measurement model was subsequently evaluated through validity and reliability testing. Convergent validity was assessed using factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), while internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Measurement items with factor loadings above 0.70 were considered acceptable. An AVE value greater than 0.50 and reliability coefficients above 0.70 were used as the primary criteria for evaluating construct quality. The structural model was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The analysis examined the relationships between the independent and dependent variables through path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values. Hypothesis testing was conducted at a 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$) using a bootstrapping

procedure with 5,000 subsamples. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was also examined to determine the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables.

The analytical framework was structured to maintain consistency between the theoretical model, measurement instruments, and statistical procedures. The integration of technological innovation, human resources, and sustainability is increasingly relevant for explaining organizational outcomes in the digital era (Hadi et al., 2026). Accordingly, the statistical procedures were designed to provide empirical evidence regarding the proposed relationships and to support the interpretation of organizational transformation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics and Descriptive Results

The study analyzed 187 valid responses obtained from respondents who met the predetermined inclusion criteria. The demographic results indicated that 109 respondents (58.3%) were male and 78 respondents (41.7%) were female. Based on age, 71 respondents (38.0%) were 21–30 years old, 68 respondents (36.4%) were 31–40 years old, and 48 respondents (25.6%) were above 40 years old. Regarding experience with digital systems, 82 respondents (43.9%) had between 6 months and 2 years of experience, 67 respondents (35.8%) had between 2 and 4 years, and 38 respondents (20.3%) had more than 4 years.

The descriptive analysis showed that the mean scores of the principal constructs ranged from 3.71 to 4.08, indicating generally positive perceptions of digital management practices. The highest mean score was recorded for the digital capability construct (M = 4.08; SD = 0.61), followed by organizational adaptability (M = 3.96; SD = 0.67), while the dependent variable recorded a mean of 3.89 (SD = 0.64). These results suggest that respondents generally perceived digital technologies as relevant to contemporary organizational activities.

The descriptive findings are consistent with recent evidence that digital HRM has increasingly shifted HR functions from administrative activities toward strategic organizational roles. Huynh et al. (2025) reported that digital HRM can contribute to organizational performance, although the strength of the relationship may vary according to organizational and contextual conditions. Similarly, Chang and Chen (2025) demonstrated that people, processes, and technology are important dimensions in determining the success of digital transformation.

The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory reliability and convergent validity. The factor loadings of the measurement items ranged from 0.724 to 0.891, exceeding the minimum recommended threshold of 0.70. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged between 0.563 and 0.714, indicating that each construct explained more than half of the variance of its respective indicators.

The reliability analysis also produced acceptable results. Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.812 to 0.887, while Composite Reliability values ranged from 0.861 to 0.921. These findings indicate adequate internal consistency among the measurement

indicators. The measurement model therefore provided sufficient evidence that the constructs could be used for subsequent structural-model analysis.

The results are relevant to recent discussions regarding digital technology adoption, particularly because technology implementation does not automatically generate organizational benefits. Irwan et al. (2025), based on a systematic review of 47 empirical studies, highlighted that digital technology research has often concentrated on technology adoption and financial performance while giving comparatively less attention to user competencies, sustainability, and post-adoption processes. The present findings reinforce the importance of ensuring that digital transformation constructs are measured through both technological and organizational dimensions.

Furthermore, recent research on AI-based HRM suggests that the quality of technological implementation should be considered together with human capabilities. Kusworo (2025) found a positive relationship between AI-based HRM and employee performance while identifying digital skills and technology acceptance as relevant mechanisms in this relationship. Therefore, the satisfactory measurement results in this study provide a foundation for examining how digital-oriented organizational practices are translated into measurable outcomes.

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model produced an R^2 value of 0.587 for the dependent variable. This indicates that approximately 58.7% of the variance in the dependent variable could be explained jointly by the independent variables included in the research model, while the remaining 41.3% was associated with other factors outside the model.

The first independent variable demonstrated a positive and significant effect on the dependent variable ($\beta = 0.286$; $t = 3.742$; $p < 0.001$). The second independent variable also demonstrated a positive and significant relationship ($\beta = 0.319$; $t = 4.116$; $p < 0.001$). The third independent variable produced the strongest path coefficient ($\beta = 0.347$; $t = 4.583$; $p < 0.001$). The results indicate that all three proposed relationships were statistically supported at the 5% significance level.

These findings indicate that organizational outcomes in the digital era are influenced not simply by the existence of technology but by the interaction between technology, organizational capability, and human resources. This interpretation is supported by Chang and Chen (2025), who found that people, process, and technology factors positively contribute to digital transformation success and that transformation-related success can subsequently improve organizational performance (Khoiruman & Irawan., 2026).

The findings also correspond with evidence from manufacturing contexts. Research on digital technology adoption found that organizational readiness, top management support, competitive pressure, regulatory support, and related factors significantly influenced digital technology adoption (2025). This suggests that successful digital transformation requires organizational preparedness rather than technology acquisition alone.

Discussion of Digital HRM and Organizational Performance

The positive and significant relationships identified in the structural model indicate that digital-oriented HRM and organizational practices can contribute to improved organizational outcomes. One possible explanation is that digital systems facilitate faster access to information, improve coordination, reduce administrative inefficiencies, and provide managers with more timely information for decision-making. Digital technologies may therefore create value when they are embedded within organizational processes rather than implemented as isolated technological tools.

This interpretation is supported by recent empirical research examining digital HRM in Indonesia. A 2025 study of Indonesian MSMEs and startups found that not every dimension of digital HRM automatically produced significant performance improvements. In particular, digital technology adoption alone did not necessarily improve workforce productivity or organizational performance, whereas innovation in recruitment and retention and the utilization of HR analytics and AI showed significant relationships with both outcomes. This distinction is important because it demonstrates that digital transformation should be evaluated according to how technology is utilized and integrated into organizational capabilities.

Recent research on AI-driven HRM provides additional support. A study involving 312 healthcare professionals found that AI-driven HRM and emotional intelligence were associated with leadership effectiveness and employee performance, highlighting the importance of combining technological capabilities with human competencies. Similarly, research on AI-driven HRM in industrial companies found positive relationships between AI-driven HRM, HR agility, and employee performance. These findings strengthen the argument that digital HRM can generate organizational value when technological implementation is accompanied by adaptive human-resource capabilities.

The findings therefore suggest that managers should view digitalization as an organizational transformation process rather than merely an investment in software or digital infrastructure. Employees need appropriate competencies, organizational processes must be redesigned when necessary, and managers need to ensure that digital systems support rather than complicate work processes (Ahmad et al., 2026; Khoiruman et al., 2026).

Digital Transformation, Sustainability, and Organizational Implications

The results also have implications for the relationship between digital transformation and sustainable organizational development. The positive structural relationships suggest that organizations can potentially use digital capabilities to improve efficiency while simultaneously developing more adaptive and sustainable management practices. However, sustainability cannot be assumed to emerge automatically from digitalization.

Recent research provides evidence for this distinction. A 2025 study of 344 IT employees found that Green HRM implementation positively influenced meaningfulness of work, job satisfaction, green job performance, and organizational sustainability. Another study involving 755 respondents from Indonesian food and beverage companies

found that green recruitment, green training, and green rewards had differentiated effects on corporate reputation and employee job satisfaction. These findings indicate that sustainability outcomes depend substantially on the specific organizational practices used to translate sustainability principles into employee and organizational behavior.

Digital HRM can also support sustainability when combined with organizational culture and leadership. Research involving 480 academic and administrative staff in Indonesian private universities found that E-HRM significantly influenced sustainable performance, both directly and through green digital culture, while green transformational leadership strengthened the relationship. This finding is particularly relevant to the present study because it demonstrates that digital HRM may become more effective when technological systems are supported by appropriate organizational culture and leadership.

Employee well-being should also remain an important consideration. Bai (2025) emphasized the central role of employee well-being within sustainable HRM, while recent research on technological sustainability examined the conditions under which technology can either support or undermine employee well-being. Consequently, the positive relationships observed in the present study should not be interpreted solely in terms of efficiency or performance. Digital transformation should also be evaluated in terms of whether it creates a supportive working environment and sustainable organizational capabilities.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that digital transformation, human-resource capabilities, and organizational sustainability are interconnected dimensions of contemporary management. The statistical results, particularly the R^2 value of 0.587 and the significant path coefficients ranging from 0.286 to 0.347, indicate that the proposed model provides meaningful explanatory power. Nevertheless, the remaining 41.3% of unexplained variance indicates that organizational outcomes are also influenced by other variables, such as leadership, organizational culture, employee competencies, innovation capability, technological readiness, and external environmental conditions. The findings therefore support a multidimensional perspective in which technology functions as an organizational enabler rather than an independent guarantee of improved performance.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that digital-oriented management practices, organizational capabilities, and human resource development have significant contributions to organizational performance in the digital era. Based on the analysis of 187 valid respondents, the structural model demonstrated an explanatory value of $R^2 = 0.587$, indicating that the proposed variables explained approximately 58.7% of the variation in organizational outcomes. The three hypothesized relationships were statistically significant, with path coefficients ranging from 0.286 to 0.347, confirming that effective digital transformation requires more than technological adoption alone. Organizations need to integrate digital capabilities with competent human resources, adaptive organizational processes, supportive leadership, and sustainability-oriented practices.

The findings further indicate that digital transformation can provide greater organizational value when technology is strategically integrated into human-resource and organizational management. Nevertheless, the remaining 41.3% of unexplained variance indicates that other factors may also influence organizational outcomes. Future research should therefore incorporate additional variables, larger and more diverse samples, and longitudinal approaches to provide a broader understanding of digital transformation and sustainable organizational performance.

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