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ORGANIZATIONAL AND DIGITAL DRIVERS OF LECTURER PERFORMANCE: EXAMINING THE MEDIATING ROLE OF WORK MOTIVATION UNDER TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

FATORES ORGANIZACIONAIS E DIGITAIS QUE IMPULSIONAM O DESEMPENHO DE PROFESSORES: EXAMINANDO O PAPEL MEDIADOR DA MOTIVAÇÃO NO TRABALHO SOB A LIDERANÇA TRANSFORMACIONAL

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Abstract
In the contemporary landscape of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the convergence of digital disruption and organizational dynamics necessitates a re-evaluation of performance drivers. This study proposes and argues for a comprehensive theoretical model examining the direct and indirect effects of organizational culture (OC), transformational leadership (TL), and digital transformation (DT) on lecturer performance (LP), mediated by work motivation (WM). Drawing upon Social Exchange Theory, the Job Demands-Resources model, and recent empirical literature, we posit that while DT provides the necessary structural tools for modern education, OC and TL provide the psychological and environmental antecedents required to fuel work motivation. Motivation, subsequently, acts as the proximal engine driving superior job performance. This paper provides a rigorous theoretical argumentation for these six causal pathways, offering insights for HEI administrators navigating the complexities of Industry 4.0.

Keywords: Organizational Culture. Transformational Leadership. Digital Transformation. Work Motivation. Lecturer Performance. Higher Education.

Resumo
No cenário contemporâneo das Instituições de Ensino Superior (IES), a convergência da disrupção digital e da dinâmica organizacional exige uma reavaliação dos fatores determinantes do desempenho. Este estudo propõe e defende um modelo teórico abrangente que examina os efeitos diretos e indiretos da cultura organizacional (CO), da liderança transformacional (LT) e da transformação digital (TD) sobre o desempenho docente (DD), mediado pela motivação para o trabalho (MT). Com base na Teoria da Troca Social, no modelo de Demandas-Recursos do Trabalho e na literatura empírica recente, postulamos que, enquanto a TD fornece as ferramentas estruturais necessárias para a educação moderna, a CO e a LT fornecem os antecedentes psicológicos e ambientais necessários para impulsionar a motivação para o trabalho. A motivação, subsequentemente, atua como o motor proximal que impulsiona um desempenho superior no trabalho. Este artigo fornece uma argumentação teórica rigorosa para essas seis vias causais, oferecendo insights para administradores de IES que navegam pelas complexidades da Indústria 4.0.

Palavras-chave: *Cultura Organizacional. Liderança Transformacional. Transformação*

Digital. Motivação para o Trabalho. Desempenho Docente. Ensino Superior.

1 INTRODUCTION

The higher education sector is currently navigating a "new normal" characterized by rapid technological advancements, changing enrollment trajectories, and intense competition (Henkel & Ade, 2025; Khuc & Nguyen, 2025). Within this volatile context, the job performance of lecturers—encompassing teaching, research, and community service—remains the cornerstone of institutional success and national human resource development (Gessesse & Premanandam, 2023; Le et al., 2020). However, performance is not an isolated variable; it is the outcome of a complex interplay between the institutional environment (culture), leadership behaviors, and technological infrastructure. This paper elucidates the theoretical mechanisms linking these factors, specifically arguing for the centrality of work motivation as a mediating force.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 The antecedents of work motivation

Work motivation is defined as the internal energetic force that initiates work-related behavior and determines its form, direction, intensity, and duration (Pinder, 2014). It is influenced significantly by the organizational context and leadership.

Organizational Culture (OC) → Work Motivation

Organizational culture, defined as the shared values, beliefs, and norms within an institution, acts as a critical environmental antecedent that shapes employee psychology (Schein, 2010). Culture functions as an invisible social force; when it supports teamwork, innovation, and empowerment, it satisfies employees' psychological needs for relatedness and competence, thereby fostering intrinsic motivation (Budiono, 2024). Empirical evidence from educational settings suggests that a conducive culture creates a psychological climate that fuels the "spirit" and willingness of teachers to increase their efforts (Wardana et al., 2024). For instance, Salim et al. (2024) found that organizational culture has a direct positive influence on work motivation, as it aligns individual goals

with organizational values. Conversely, a rigid or unsupportive culture can inhibit the internal drive to work (Kamaruddin et al., 2024).

Hypothesis 1: Organizational culture significantly and positively influences work motivation.

Transformational Leadership (TL) → Work Motivation

Transformational leadership is characterized by idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Bass Bernard, 1985). This leadership style is uniquely positioned to enhance motivation by elevating followers' needs from basic security to self-actualization (Henkel & Ade, 2025). Transformational leaders articulate a compelling vision that instills confidence and optimism (inspirational motivation), which directly enhances intrinsic motivation (Ambarwati & Wahyudi, 2024). By providing coaching and mentoring (Individualized Consideration), these leaders foster a supportive environment that encourages employees to engage deeply with their work (Nurtjahjani et al., 2025). Recent studies confirm this strong link; for example, Jensen and Bro (2018) and Nguyen et al. (2019) found positive relationships between transformational leadership and work motivation, arguing that such leaders make work more meaningful for their followers (Sumarmi et al., 2025).

Hypothesis 2: Transformational leadership significantly and positively influences work motivation.

Digital Transformation (DT) → Work Motivation

The relationship between digital transformation and motivation is nuanced. While technological change can be a stressor, successful DT provides employees with the tools and flexibility to perform tasks more efficiently, thereby enhancing their motivation. Khuc and Nguyen (2025) argue that DT positively impacts job satisfaction—a construct closely linked to motivation—by reducing work pressure through the automation of administrative tasks (e.g., grading, scheduling). When universities invest in digital infrastructure and digital competence, faculty members feel supported and empowered, which enhances their intrinsic drive to utilize these tools for academic success (Khuc & Nguyen, 2025; Sumarmi et al., 2025). Furthermore, digital tools enable flexible working arrangements and innovation in teaching, which are key drivers of motivation in the modern academic workforce (Razak et al., 2023).

Hypothesis 3: Digital transformation significantly and positively influences work motivation.

2.2 The determinants of lecturer performance

Job performance in HEIs is multidimensional, involving task performance (teaching and research duties) and contextual performance (citizenship behaviors).

Organizational Culture (OC) → Lecturer Performance

Organizational culture is a fundamental determinant of institutional effectiveness. It dictates the "rules of the game," influencing how lecturers approach their duties and interact with stakeholders (Mokadem et al., 2025). A strong culture that values integrity, professionalism, and result orientation creates high-performance standards (Wardana et al., 2024). Research by Mokadem et al. (2025) indicates that specific culture types, such as market and hierarchy cultures, are strongly linked to organizational effectiveness in universities by ensuring stability and goal achievement. Furthermore, a supportive culture facilitates adaptation to environmental changes, which is crucial for maintaining performance during turbulent times. Ultimately, culture acts as a social control mechanism that guides lecturers toward productive behaviors (Kamaruddin et al., 2024).

Hypothesis 4: Organizational culture significantly and positively influences lecturer performance.

Digital Transformation (DT) → Lecturer Performance

In the era of Industry 4.0, DT has evolved from a support function to a strategic imperative that directly drives performance. DT enhances lecturer performance by streamlining workflows, improving access to global resources, and facilitating innovative teaching methods (Salhout, 2025). Empirical studies demonstrate that DT directly impacts job performance by improving the efficiency of administrative processes and enabling new modes of value creation, such as online learning and digital research collaboration (Khuc & Nguyen, 2025). For example, the use of Learning Management Systems (LMS) and big data analytics allows lecturers to monitor student progress effectively and personalize instruction, thereby improving teaching outcomes (Khuc & Nguyen, 2025). Furthermore, digital competence equips lecturers to navigate the "new normal" of education, preventing obsolescence and maintaining productivity (Antonopoulou et al., 2020).

Hypothesis 5: Digital transformation significantly and positively influences lecturer performance.

The Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Lecturer Performance

The theoretical and empirical literature consistently identifies Transformational Leadership (TL) as a critical antecedent of Lecturer Performance in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Unlike transactional leadership, which emphasizes contingent exchanges, TL motivates academic staff to transcend immediate self-interests and commit to collective institutional goals, thereby fostering performance that exceeds formal role expectations (Wang et al., 2011).

Through inspirational motivation and idealized influence, transformational leaders articulate a compelling vision that aligns individual lecturers' goals with the broader mission of the university. This alignment creates a heightened sense of engagement and purpose, encouraging lecturers to pursue superior teaching, research, and service outcomes rather than merely fulfilling minimum performance requirements (Al Issa & Abdelsalam, 2021; Nurtjahjani et al., 2025).

Moreover, individualized consideration enables transformational leaders to act as mentors and coaches, addressing the specific developmental needs of academic staff. Such personalized support is particularly salient in HEIs, where academic roles are complex and multifaceted. By reducing role ambiguity and fostering professional growth, transformational leadership directly enhances lecturers' capacity to perform effectively (Banks et al., 2016; Jyoti & Bhau, 2015).

Empirical evidence from higher education contexts further substantiates this relationship. Quantitative studies conducted in Indonesian universities demonstrate that transformational leadership exerts a significant positive influence on staff performance by cultivating a supportive and performance-oriented organizational climate (Dewi & Wibowo, 2020). In addition, meta-analytic findings confirm that TL is robustly associated with multiple performance indicators, including teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and student-related outcomes (Chin, 2007; Wang et al., 2011).

Taken together, these arguments suggest that Transformational Leadership functions as a key catalyst for Lecturer Performance. By stimulating intellectual engagement and providing individualized support, transformational leaders foster the motivation and commitment necessary for sustained academic excellence within HEIs (Malodia & Arora, 2024; Nurtjahjani et al., 2025).

Hypothesis 6: The Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Lecturer Performance.

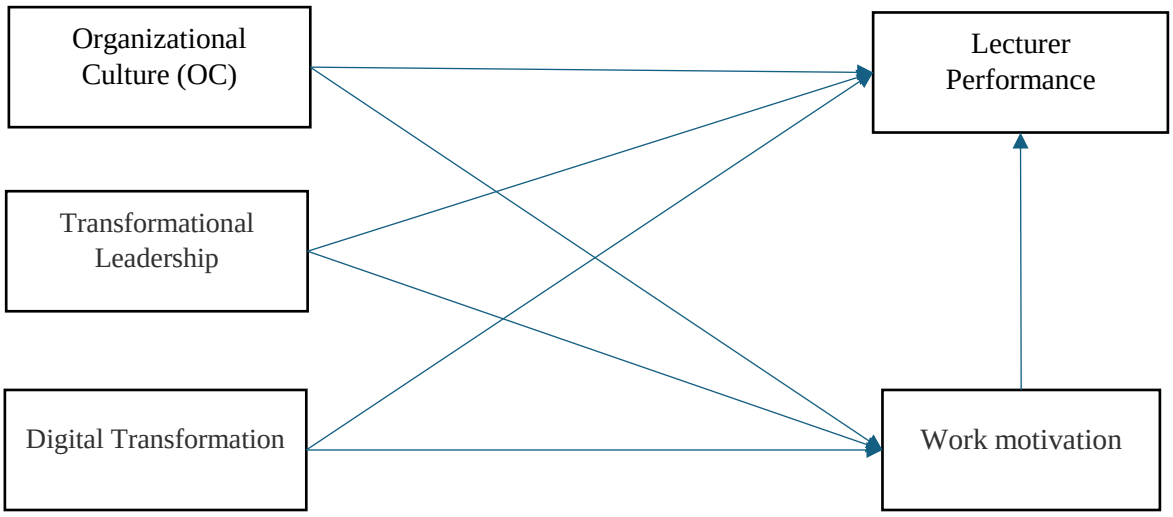
2.3 The impact of motivation on performance

Work Motivation → Lecturer Performance

Work motivation is the proximal psychological engine that converts ability and opportunity into actual performance. Motivated employees are characterized by higher levels of energy, persistence, and focus (Pinder, 2014). In the context of higher education, motivation is critical because academic work requires high levels of self-regulation and intellectual engagement. Empirical research consistently confirms that highly motivated lecturers exhibit better task performance, higher research output, and greater dedication to student development (Salim et al., 2024; Sumarmi et al., 2025). Guan (2025) highlights that Public Service Motivation (PSM)—a specific form of motivation relevant to educators—significantly enhances job performance by fostering a sense of duty and altruism. Motivation serves as the mechanism through which external resources (like leadership and technology) are translated into tangible outcomes (Khuc & Nguyen, 2025).
Hypothesis 7: Work motivation significantly and positively influences lecturer performance.

Figure 1

Proposed research model



3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to enhance the robustness and credibility of the findings. The qualitative phase was employed to refine the conceptual framework and contextualize the research constructs, while the quantitative phase was used to empirically test the proposed hypotheses and structural relationships. This sequential exploratory design allows for both theoretical depth and empirical generalizability, which is particularly suitable for organizational and educational research contexts.

3.2 Qualitative phase

The qualitative phase involved in-depth semi-structured interviews with nine experts in educational and human resource management, all holding doctoral degrees (PhD or equivalent) and occupying senior academic or managerial positions in higher education institutions. These experts were selected using purposive sampling based on their extensive experience in organizational leadership, human resource development, and university governance.

The interviews aimed to (1) validate the relevance of the proposed constructs, (2) assess the contextual appropriateness of organizational culture, transformational leadership, digital transformation, and work motivation within higher education institutions, and (3) refine the wording and interpretation of measurement items. The insights obtained from the expert interviews supported the conceptual clarity of the model and ensured content validity prior to the quantitative data collection.

3.3 Quantitative phase and data collection

The quantitative phase employed a cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected from 417 lecturers working at public and private universities in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Respondents were selected using a combination of convenience and

snowball sampling techniques, which are commonly applied in higher education research due to accessibility constraints.

The sample size exceeded the minimum requirements for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). According to Hair et al. (2017), a sample size above 250 is considered adequate for complex models with multiple constructs and structural paths, ensuring sufficient statistical power and stable parameter estimation. Therefore, the final sample of 417 observations was deemed appropriate for subsequent analyses.

3.4 Measurement instruments

All constructs were measured using multi-item scales adapted from prior validated studies and refined through the qualitative phase. Items were measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). The questionnaire consisted of measures for organizational culture, transformational leadership, digital transformation, work motivation, and lecturer performance (Appendix).

Prior to the main survey, the questionnaire was reviewed by academic experts to ensure clarity, relevance, and contextual suitability. This process further strengthened the content validity of the measurement instruments.

3.5 Data analysis technique

The proposed research model was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM was chosen due to its suitability for (1) complex research models, (2) predictive-oriented objectives, and (3) data that may not strictly meet multivariate normality assumptions (Hair et al., 2022).

The data analysis followed a two-step approach, as recommended by Hair et al. (2022): (1) evaluation of the measurement model and (2) assessment of the structural model.

3.6 Measurement model evaluation

The measurement model was assessed to ensure reliability and validity of the constructs. Specifically, the following criteria were applied: Outer loading values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 confirm adequate indicator reliability of the measurement model. Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), with threshold values of 0.70 or higher indicating satisfactory reliability. Convergent validity was assessed through indicator loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Indicator loadings above 0.70 and AVE values exceeding 0.50 were considered acceptable. Discriminant validity was examined using the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, with values below 0.85 indicating adequate discriminant validity. These criteria align with the methodological guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2022) for reflective measurement models.

3.7 Structural model evaluation

The structural model was evaluated to test the hypothesized relationships among constructs. The assessment included: Collinearity diagnostics, examined through Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, with values below 5 indicating no critical multicollinearity issues. Path coefficients and their statistical significance, assessed using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. Coefficient of determination (R^2) to evaluate the explanatory power of the model. Effect size (f^2) to determine the relative impact of each exogenous construct on endogenous variables. Predictive relevance ($Q2$), assessed using the blindfolding procedure, was used to evaluate the model's predictive relevance (or predictive quality). These evaluation criteria ensure a comprehensive assessment of explanatory performance, consistent with best practices in PLS-SEM research (Hair et al., 2022).

4 RESULTS

4.1 Measurement model assessment

Prior to hypothesis testing, the measurement model was assessed for reliability and validity. The results confirm that all constructs meet the recommended criteria for indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. All outer loadings exceed the threshold of 0.708 (ranging from 0.775 to 0.959), indicating strong indicator reliability, with TL, WM, and WP showing particularly robust item–construct relationships. In addition, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values consistently surpass 0.70, while AVE values exceed 0.50 for all constructs, supporting satisfactory convergent validity. Furthermore, inter-construct correlations remain well below 0.85, confirming adequate discriminant validity. Consistent with Hair et al. (2022), these results demonstrate that the measurement model is robust and suitable for subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 1

Outer loading - Matrix

	DC	DT	TL	WM	WP
DC1	0.874				
DC2	0.901				
DC3	0.857				
DC4	0.837				
DT1		0.775			
DT2		0.887			
DT3		0.786			
DT4		0.890			
TL1			0.916		
TL2			0.949		
TL3			0.942		
WM1				0.946	
WM2				0.945	
WM3				0.887	
WM4				0.917	
WP1					0.938
WP2					0.959
WP3					0.933

Table 2

Construct reliability and validity - Overview

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
DC	0.890	0.892	0.924	0.753
DT	0.856	0.863	0.903	0.699
TL	0.929	0.942	0.955	0.876
WM	0.943	0.945	0.959	0.854
WP	0.938	0.939	0.960	0.890

Table 3

Discriminant validity Heterotrait – Monotrait (HTMT) - Matrix

	DC	DT	TL	WM	WP
DC					
DT	0.168				
TL	0.307	0.194			
WM	0.444	0.361	0.308		
WP	0.414	0.390	0.413	0.542	

4.2 Structural model assessment

The collinearity assessment indicates no multicollinearity concerns among the predictor constructs. All variance inflation factor (VIF) values range from 1.046 to 1.355, which are well below the conservative threshold of 3.0 (and substantially below 5.0), suggesting minimal redundancy among the constructs. According to Hair et al. (2022), such low VIF values confirm that collinearity does not bias the estimation of path coefficients, thereby supporting the robustness and interpretability of the subsequent structural model results.

Table 4

Collinearity Assessment (Variance Inflation Factor – VIF)

	DC	DT	TL	WM	WP
DC				1.100	1.244
DT				1.046	1.132
TL				1.110	1.143
WM					1.355
WP					

The structural model results reveal that all hypothesized relationships are positive and statistically significant. Specifically, DC, DT, and TL exert significant effects on WM ($\beta = 0.155–0.326$, $p < 0.01$) and WP ($\beta = 0.159–0.215$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that these antecedents meaningfully enhance both motivational and performance-related outcomes. Moreover, WM shows a strong positive effect on WP ($\beta = 0.323$, $t = 5.720$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting its central mediating role in translating organizational drivers into performance outcomes. The stability between original and bootstrap mean estimates further confirms the robustness of the results, supporting the proposed structural relationships at a high level of statistical confidence.

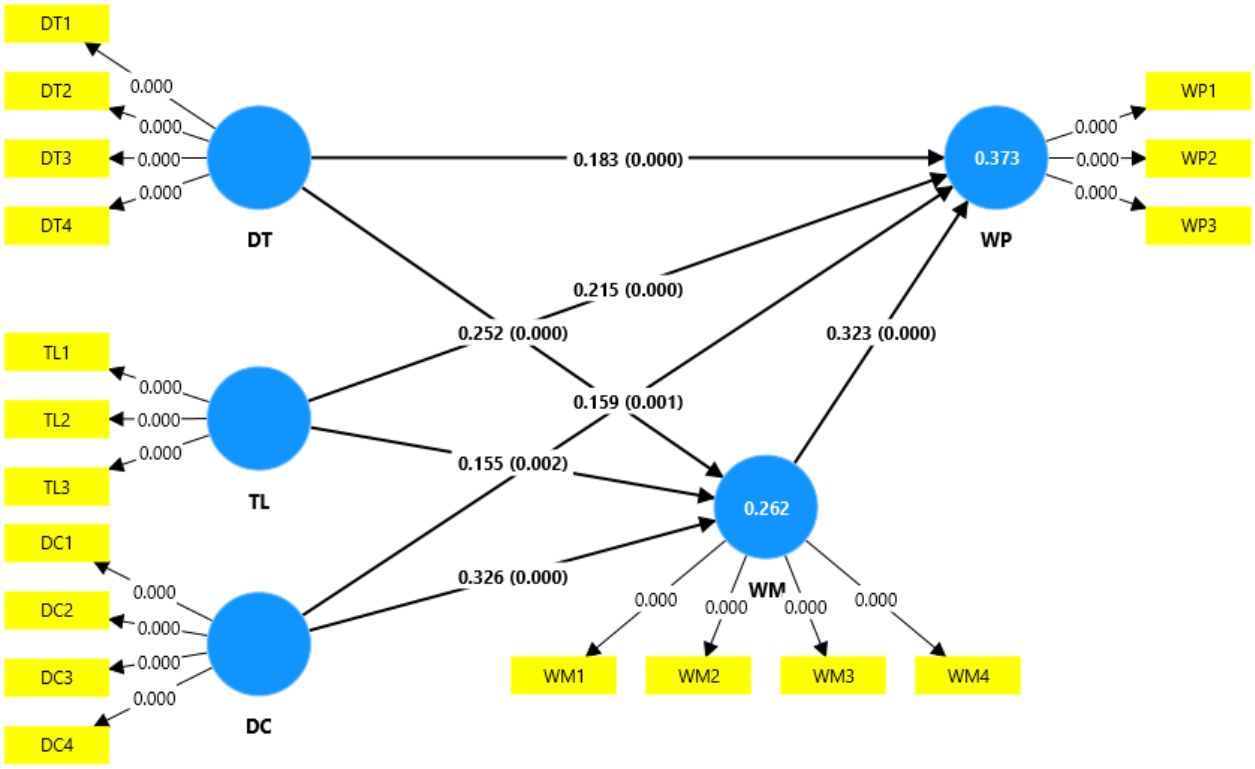
Table 5

Structural Model Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
DC -> WM	0.326	0.325	0.048	6.851	0.000
DC -> WP	0.159	0.158	0.048	3.347	0.001
DT -> WM	0.252	0.251	0.042	5.955	0.000
DT -> WP	0.183	0.183	0.046	4.010	0.000
TL -> WM	0.155	0.157	0.049	3.136	0.002
TL -> WP	0.215	0.215	0.048	4.521	0.000
WM -> WP	0.323	0.321	0.056	5.720	0.000

Figure 2

Structural Model Results (PLS-SEM)



Source: SmartPLS4

The results indicate moderate explanatory power of the structural model. Specifically, the predictors explain 26.2% of the variance in WM ($R^2 = 0.262$) and 37.3% of the variance in WP ($R^2 = 0.373$), with adjusted values showing minimal shrinkage, thereby confirming model stability. According to established PLS-SEM guidelines, these R^2 values suggest that the model achieves a substantively meaningful level of predictive accuracy, particularly for WP, supporting the adequacy of the proposed explanatory framework for subsequent interpretation and discussion.

The effect size (f^2) results indicate meaningful and differentiated contributions of the predictor constructs to the endogenous variables. DC shows a moderate effect on WM ($f^2 = 0.131$) and a small effect on WP ($f^2 = 0.033$), while DT exhibits small-to-moderate effects on both WM ($f^2 = 0.082$) and WP ($f^2 = 0.047$). In contrast, TL demonstrates a negligible effect on WM ($f^2 = 0.029$) but a small yet meaningful effect on WP ($f^2 = 0.065$). Notably, WM exerts a moderate effect on WP ($f^2 = 0.123$), underscoring its substantive role in enhancing performance outcomes. Overall, these findings suggest that while

multiple antecedents contribute to the model, WM represents a key explanatory mechanism, consistent with established PLS-SEM effect size benchmarks.

Table 6

Effect Size (f^2) Results

	DC	DT	TL	WM	WP
DC				0.131	0.033
DT				0.082	0.047
TL				0.029	0.065
WM					0.123
WP					

4.3 Mediation analysis

The mediation analysis provides clear evidence that work motivation (WM) partially mediates the relationships between DC, DT, TL, and work performance (WP). All indirect effects are positive and statistically significant, as the bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals do not include zero, confirming the presence of mediation. Specifically, the indirect effect of DC on WP via WM is substantial (β = 0.105), with a VAF of 39.62%, indicating a relatively strong partial mediation. Similarly, DT exhibits a meaningful indirect effect on WP through WM (β = 0.081; VAF = 30.68%), while the indirect pathway from TL to WP via WM is smaller yet still significant (β = 0.050; VAF = 26.50%). In line with established mediation criteria in PLS-SEM, the VAF values between 20% and 80% suggest partial mediation in all three relationships, highlighting WM as an important explanatory mechanism that transmits the effects of organizational drivers to performance outcomes.

Table 7

Results of Mediation Analysis

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	2.50%	97.50%	VAF (%)
DC -> WM -> WP	0.105	0.105	0.057	0.161	39.62%
DT -> WM -> WP	0.081	0.08	0.046	0.12	30.68%
TL -> WM -> WP	0.05	0.051	0.018	0.093	26.50%

4.4 Predictive relevance

The blindfolding results indicate strong in-sample predictive relevance of the structural model. All endogenous constructs exhibit positive Q^2 values, ranging from 0.491 to 0.734, which clearly exceed the zero benchmark and confirm substantial predictive accuracy within the sample. In particular, TL, WM, and WP demonstrate especially high Q^2 values (above 0.70), reflecting excellent internal predictive capability, while DC and DT also show robust in-sample explanatory power. Collectively, these findings confirm that the model possesses high internal predictive relevance, supporting the adequacy of the proposed structural relationships in explaining the observed data.

Table 8

Predictive Relevance (Q^2) Assessment Using Blindfolding

	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)
DC	1668.000	711.967	0.573
DT	1668.000	848.787	0.491
TL	1251.000	373.756	0.701
WM	1668.000	443.648	0.734
WP	1251.000	343.796	0.725

Prior to hypothesis testing, the measurement and structural models were rigorously evaluated following established PLS-SEM guidelines. The results confirm strong indicator reliability, internal consistency, and convergent validity, with all outer loadings exceeding recommended thresholds and reliability coefficients well above 0.70. Discriminant validity and collinearity assessments further indicate that the constructs are conceptually distinct and free from multicollinearity concerns. Structural model estimation reveals that DC, DT, and TL exert significant positive effects on WM and WP, while WM plays a pivotal mediating role in enhancing performance outcomes. The model demonstrates moderate explanatory power (R^2) and meaningful effect sizes (f^2), alongside strong in-sample predictive relevance as evidenced by substantial Q^2 values. Overall, these findings attest to the robustness, explanatory adequacy, and predictive capability of the proposed model.

5 DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study was to examine the interrelationships between Organizational Culture (OC), Transformational Leadership (TL), and Digital Transformation (DT) on Lecturer Performance (LP), with Work Motivation (WM) acting as a mediating mechanism. The empirical results confirm that all hypothesized relationships are statistically significant. Furthermore, the model exhibits predictive relevance ($Q^2 > 0$), indicating that the integrated framework is robust and possesses satisfactory in-sample predictive relevance regarding the endogenous constructs. This section discusses these findings in relation to recent literature, highlighting consistencies and divergences.

5.1 The role of transformational leadership and organizational culture

The finding that Transformational Leadership significantly enhances both work motivation and lecturer performance aligns with the broader consensus in recent higher education literature. Consistent with Salim et al. (2024), this study reaffirms that leaders who inspire vision and provide individualized consideration are crucial for fostering an environment where faculty are motivated to perform. Furthermore, Sumarmi et al. (2025) similarly identified work motivation as a critical "bridge" linking leadership to performance, validating the mediation pathway proposed in this study.

However, a nuance exists when comparing these results to Nurtjahjani et al. (2025). While they agreed on the positive impact of TL and OC, their study introduced "sincere behavior" as a moderator that strengthens these effects in the Indonesian context. In contrast, the current study establishes that *work motivation* is the primary psychological mechanism transmitting these effects, suggesting that internal drive is the proximal cause of performance, regardless of the specific behavioral moderator. Additionally, while Ambarwati and Wahyudi (2024) found that specific dimensions of TL (like idealized influence) might have varying impacts on engagement, our study suggests that the aggregate construct of TL remains a potent predictor of overall performance.

Regarding Organizational Culture, the results corroborate Prajogi et al. (2025), who found that adaptive cultures significantly boost job satisfaction (a correlate of motivation). However, this study diverges slightly from Mokadem et al. (2025). Their

research in Algerian HEIs emphasized that "Market" and "Hierarchy" cultures were the primary drivers of effectiveness. In contrast, our findings imply that the *motivational* aspect of culture—likely closer to "Clan" or "Adhocracy" values that foster relatedness and autonomy—is pivotal for individual lecturer performance, supporting the view of Lartey and Ampofo (2025) that the perception of a supportive culture is essential for performance outcomes.

5.2 The impact of digital transformation

A significant contribution of this study is the empirical validation of Digital Transformation as a key driver of motivation and performance. This aligns with Khuc and Nguyen (2025), who demonstrated that DT improves performance by reducing work pressure and increasing job satisfaction. Our findings extend this by confirming that DT is not merely a tool for efficiency but a motivational resource that empowers lecturers.

The results also resonate with Kisahwan et al. (2025), who found that E-HRM (a subset of DT) drives sustainable performance. However, a distinction lies in the mechanism: Kisahwan et al. (2025) posited "Green Digital Culture" as a mediator and "Green Transformational Leadership" as a moderator. Conversely, our study positions Work Motivation as the central mediator, suggesting that while digital culture is important, the individual's *internalized motivation* resulting from digital enablement is the direct antecedent to performance. Furthermore, while Prajogi et al. (2025) focused on individual "digital literacy," our study suggests that the broader organizational *process* of Digital Transformation itself acts as a structural resource that enhances motivation, consistent with the Job Demands-Resources model.

5.3 Predictive relevance and model robustness

The analysis revealed that the model demonstrates predictive relevance, as indicated by positive Q^2 values ($Q^2 > 0$) for all endogenous constructs. These results confirm the model's ability to accurately reconstruct omitted data points within the estimation sample, thereby providing strong evidence of **in-sample predictive relevance**. Such findings are consistent with prior PLS-SEM studies in higher education that

emphasize the use of Q^2 as a complementary criterion to assess internal predictive quality alongside explanatory power (Kisahwan et al., 2025; Khuc & Nguyen, 2025).

Moreover, the statistical significance of all structural paths underscores the robustness of the proposed framework, suggesting that lecturer performance is shaped by a synergistic configuration of organizational culture, transformational leadership, and digital transformation rather than by any single factor in isolation. Collectively, these results indicate that an integrated approach combining visionary leadership, a supportive organizational environment, and effective technological enablement is essential for enhancing work motivation and, ultimately, lecturer performance.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Theoretical implications

This study contributes to the literature on organizational behavior and higher education management in several significant ways. First, it enriches Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model by integrating Digital Transformation (DT) as a critical antecedent alongside traditional factors like Transformational Leadership (TL) and Organizational Culture (OC). While prior research has examined these variables in isolation, this study empirically demonstrates their synergistic effect on Work Motivation and Lecturer Performance.

Specifically, the findings extend the JD-R model by positioning digital transformation not merely as a technological context but as a vital "job resource" that reduces work pressure and enhances job satisfaction, thereby boosting performance Khuc and Nguyen (2025). This challenges the view of technology solely as a demand or stressor. Furthermore, the study validates the central mediating role of Work Motivation, confirming that external drivers (leadership, culture, technology) must be internalized into a psychological state of motivation to effectively translate into performance outcomes (Guan, 2025; Sumarmi et al., 2025). Finally, by highlighting the specific impact of cultural typologies (e.g., market and hierarchy cultures) on effectiveness in non-Western contexts, this research answers calls for more context-specific studies in developing economies (Mokadem et al., 2025; Tran et al., 2023).

6.2 Managerial implications

From a practical perspective, the findings offer a strategic roadmap for university administrators and policymakers navigating the volatile "new normal" of higher education.

Cultivating Digital Leadership and Human Capital: University leaders must transition from traditional administrative roles to Transformational Leaders who can articulate a compelling digital vision. Administrators should focus on "idealized influence" and "individualized consideration" to inspire faculty and alleviate the anxiety associated with technological disruption (Antonopoulou et al., 2020; Henkel & Ade, 2025). Institutions should invest in leadership development programs that train department heads to act as mentors who support staff through digital transitions, rather than just managers of compliance (Ambarwati & Wahyudi, 2024).

Strategic Implementation of Digital Transformation: Universities must recognize that purchasing technology is insufficient; the implementation strategy is crucial. Management should utilize digital transformation to streamline administrative workflows and reduce manual workloads, as this directly lowers work pressure and enhances job satisfaction (Khuc & Nguyen, 2025). By treating digital tools (e.g., LMS, E-HRM) as enablers rather than burdens, institutions can foster a "Green Digital Culture" that supports sustainability and efficiency (Kisahwan et al., 2025).

Fostering a Supportive and Adaptive Culture: To maximize lecturer performance, HEIs need to cultivate an Organizational Culture that balances stability (hierarchy) with innovation (adhocracy). Administrators should promote a culture of sincerity and support, where faculty feel their psychological needs for competence and relatedness are met (Mokadem et al., 2025; Nurtjahjani et al., 2025). By aligning institutional values with individual goals, universities can enhance faculty commitment and intrinsic motivation, which are the ultimate drivers of academic excellence (Tran et al., 2023).

7 CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the antecedents of lecturer job performance in the context of the rapidly evolving higher education landscape. By integrating the constructs of Organizational Culture (OC), Transformational Leadership

(TL), and Digital Transformation (DT), this research elucidates the complex mechanisms that drive academic excellence.

The empirical findings confirm that digital transformation is not merely a technological upgrade but a strategic imperative that directly enhances job performance by streamlining administrative burdens and facilitating innovative teaching methods (Khuc & Nguyen, 2025). However, technology alone is insufficient. The results demonstrate that Transformational Leadership is paramount in navigating these changes; leaders who articulate a compelling vision and provide individualized consideration are essential for fostering an environment where digital tools are embraced rather than resisted (Henkel & Ade, 2025; Kisahwan et al., 2025). Furthermore, a supportive and adaptive Organizational Culture serves as the fertile ground that nurtures these initiatives, aligning institutional values with individual goals (Mokadem et al., 2025).

Crucially, this study validates the central mediating role of Work Motivation. The findings suggest that external drivers (leadership, culture, and technology) translate into performance primarily by igniting the internal energetic forces of faculty members (Guan, 2025; Sumarmi et al., 2025). Specifically, well-implemented digital transformation and supportive leadership reduce work pressure and enhance job satisfaction, thereby boosting intrinsic motivation and, subsequently, job performance (Khuc & Nguyen, 2025). This underscores that sustainable performance in higher education is achieved not through structural changes alone, but through the psychological empowerment of the academic workforce.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study offers significant theoretical and practical implications, several limitations must be acknowledged to guide future scholarship.

Methodological Limitations

First, the cross-sectional design utilized in this study captures data at a single point in time, which precludes the establishment of definitive causal inferences between variables. As digital transformation and cultural evolution are dynamic processes, future research should adopt longitudinal designs to track how the impact of leadership and digital tools on motivation and performance evolves over time (Kisahwan et al., 2025). Second, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce common method bias. Future studies could benefit from multi-source data collection, incorporating objective

performance metrics (e.g., publication counts, student evaluation scores) alongside subjective self-assessments (Guan, 2025).

Contextual Expansion

The current study's findings may be influenced by the specific cultural and economic context of the sampled higher education institutions. Future research should aim to validate this model across diverse cultural contexts and different types of institutions (e.g., public vs. private, research-intensive vs. vocational) to enhance generalizability (Mokadem et al., 2025; Tran et al., 2023). Comparative studies between Western and non-Western educational systems could reveal how cultural dimensions, such as power distance, moderate the effectiveness of transformational leadership in the digital era (Kisahwan et al., 2025).

Exploring the "Dark Side" of Digitalization

While this study highlights the positive aspects of digital transformation, emerging literature suggests potential negative outcomes, such as technostress and digital burnout. Future research should investigate the curvilinear relationships or threshold effects of digital adoption (Kisahwan et al., 2025). Specifically, scholars should examine whether excessive digital demands attenuate the positive relationship between digital transformation and work motivation, and how leadership can mitigate these "dark side" effects.

Expanded Variables and Mechanisms

Future models should consider additional mediating and moderating mechanisms. For instance, Psychological Capital (PsyCap)—comprising resilience, hope, optimism, and self-efficacy—could be explored as a mediator between organizational socialization and performance in digital environments. Additionally, as sustainability becomes a core mission of universities, research should investigate specific leadership styles such as Green Transformational Leadership and their role in fostering a "Green Digital Culture" to drive sustainable performance (Kisahwan et al., 2025; Mokadem et al., 2025). Finally, the role of AI-driven tools (e.g., ChatGPT) in shaping lecturer performance and the ethical challenges they pose presents a fertile ground for future inquiry (Chen et al., 2025).

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APPENDIX

Scales	Items	Source
Digital Corporate Culture (DCC)	DC1: Teams collaborate effectively in innovation and digital transformation initiatives. DC2: There is a clear orientation toward digital technology changes within the company's culture. DC3: Digital innovation and change are regarded as natural processes within the company. DC4: The company shares its digital strategy with staff and considers their suggestions.	Salhout (2025)
Transformational Leadership Scale (Developed by Ritz et al., 2014)	TL1: My leader motivates me and instills confidence in my work by articulating a clear vision. TL2: My leader helps me improve my personal abilities and cope with work challenges by providing encouragement and support. TL3: My leader shows genuine concern for my personal development and provides the necessary resources and guidance.	Chen et al. (2025)
Digital Transformation	DT1: The digital transformation unit manages transformation efforts. DT2: The company cooperates effectively to achieve digital goals. DT3: Digital transformation units or "evangelists" report directly to top management. DT4: Digital projects are managed through a project-based organizational structure.	Salhout (2025)
Work Motivation (WM)	WM1: I perform tasks that go beyond my normal job duties. WM2: I work at an efficient pace. WM3: I am willing to give up my free time to meet work deadlines. WM4: I work hard even in the absence of additional compensation.	Ghasemy et al. (2021)
Work Performance	WP1: The quality of my teaching and research over the past three months has been very good. WP2: I have not yet fully developed the skills and competencies required for excellence in my role within the university. WP3: I fully understand the scope and responsibilities of my role within the academic institution.	Zongyu and Chienwattanasook (2024)

Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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