

## **Enhancing Employee Performance Through E-Leadership: A Mediation Analysis of Motivation and Trust**

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**ABSTRACT:** Employee performance is a critical factor in determining the success of a company. However, many organizations experience a decline in performance during times of crisis. In situations where physical interaction is limited, one effective approach to enhancing employee performance is through the implementation of e-leadership. This study aims to explore the influence of e-leadership on employee performance, with a specific focus on the mediating roles of motivation and trust. The research was conducted among 128 production employees at PT. Asia Pacific Fibers, Kendal, Central Java, Indonesia. Data were collected using a questionnaire, supported by interviews and documentation. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results of this study provide empirical evidence that e-leadership is a significant predictor of employee performance, both directly and indirectly through motivation and trust. These findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of digital leadership dynamics, particularly in the post-pandemic era where virtual collaboration has become more prevalent.

**KEYWORDS:** e-leadership; employee performance; mediation analysis; Motivation; Trust

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Employee performance plays a pivotal role in determining the success and sustainability of any business organization. As the primary drivers of productivity, innovation, and service quality, employees significantly influence an organization's ability to achieve its strategic goals and maintain a competitive advantage. High-performing employees not only contribute to operational efficiency but also enhance customer satisfaction and organizational reputation. In today's rapidly changing business environment, where adaptability and responsiveness are crucial, the effectiveness of human capital has become even more critical. Consequently, understanding the factors that influence employee performance is essential for managers and decision-makers seeking to improve organizational outcomes and ensure long-term growth. Siddiqui (2020) further emphasizes that organizational success largely depends on the performance of its employees.

According to Ángeles López-Cabarcos et al. (2022), employee performance can be approached through leadership behavior. Positive leadership contributes not only to enhanced employee performance but also to overall business outcomes. Employee performance is a critical element that cannot be overlooked in achieving organizational success. However, many companies experience a decline in performance during times of crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, has limited physical interactions between leaders and employees in the workplace. One strategic approach to improving employee performance under such conditions is the implementation of e-leadership.

Electronic leadership (e-leadership) has emerged as a critical organizational practice during the COVID-19 crisis, prompted by the sudden shift to teleworking and remote operations across numerous organizations. E-leadership refers to leadership behaviors and competencies that support and facilitate remote work and the performance of virtual teams. The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the widespread adoption of remote work as a preventive measure to maintain social distancing and mitigate the spread of the virus. This situation significantly transformed work practices, particularly accelerating the development of work-from-home and other remote work arrangements. According to Contreras, Baykal and Abid (2020), the effective implementation of teleworking requires comprehensive support from the organization, technological infrastructure, and the broader social system, particularly through the application of e-leadership practices. During crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, e-leadership becomes essential in adapting to rapid change, prioritizing employee well-being, setting clear

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performance goals, supporting remote workers, and ensuring effective communication and feedback (Mourão and Legentil, 2021). E-leadership has also been found to sustain employee engagement and productivity during crises by enhancing motivation to work from home (Ariffin et al., 2023). As remote and virtual work environments become a permanent component of the new normal, e-leadership is likely to remain a vital aspect of organizational leadership. Its role in maintaining productivity, ensuring clear communication, and providing support during challenging times underscores its long-term strategic value.

This study aims to examine the influence of e-leadership on employee performance, with motivation and trust serving as mediating variables. Motivation is a critical factor that drives individuals to perform better in their work. Research by Alkashami (2021) highlights that work motivation-including achievement, recognition, working conditions, and compensation-significantly affects employee performance. Employees who are motivated by rewards, opportunities, meaningful work, job security, and salary are more likely to excel in their roles. Higher levels of motivation are consistently associated with improved job performance. Similarly, a study by Sukiyah et al. (2021) confirms that work motivation has a significant impact on employee performance. Therefore, motivation may serve as a crucial mediating factor that bridges the relationship between e-leadership and employee performance.

Another important factor in enhancing employee performance is trust. When employees trust their leaders, they are more likely to engage in collaborative work, take initiative, and exhibit greater loyalty to the organization. Trust fosters a positive work environment in which employees feel safe, valued, and supported in their roles. In the context of virtual work settings, e-leadership practices can foster trust by ensuring clear communication, providing consistent support, and demonstrating integrity. Setiawan & Ekhsan (2020) emphasize that trust is a critical component in the relationship between leaders and subordinates. Their findings suggest that trust has a positive and significant influence on employee performance. Moreover, the study indicates that servant leadership positively and significantly affects employee performance through the mediating role of trust. These findings highlight the strategic importance of building trust in leadership, particularly in remote or digital work environments where physical presence is limited.

Job performance refers to the outcomes achieved by an individual in completing assigned tasks, encompassing the quality and quantity of output as well as reliability in execution. An individual who performs well is expected to demonstrate high performance and generate effective results (Colquitt, 2015; Wiratama and Sintaasih, 2020). This concept emphasizes that performance is essentially a set of employee behaviors that contribute to the achievement of organizational goals. Based on this theoretical perspective, the present study includes leadership style, work motivation, work discipline, and employee performance as the key variables to be examined, given their interrelated nature. It is anticipated that effective leadership and strong work motivation will enhance employee performance, while work discipline is expected to further support employees in achieving higher levels of performance.

Studies by Wolor et al. (2022), Alim et al. (2023), and Alkashami (2021) have found that e-leadership has a significant positive influence on employee performance. However, these findings contrast with the results of a study by Febri Yoga et al. (2023), which indicated that e-leadership did not strengthen the relationship between work discipline and employee performance. In light of these conflicting results, the present study seeks to re-evaluate the effect of e-leadership on employee performance, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of its role in organizational contexts.

Distinct from previous studies, this research incorporates two mediating variables, motivation and trust, which function as intermediaries in the relationship between e-leadership and employee performance within a company operating in the textile industry, specifically in the polyester sector. There remains a notable gap in the literature regarding the direct linkage between e-leadership and employee performance, particularly with respect to the mediating roles of motivation and trust. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap and contribute to a deeper understanding of how e-leadership can effectively enhance employee performance through these psychological mechanisms.

The novelty of this study lies in its conceptualization of the mediating roles of motivation and trust in the relationship between e-leadership and employee performance, with the aim of generating accurate, objective, and comprehensive findings relevant to the research focus. The primary objective of this study is to explore the influence of e-leadership on employee performance, with particular emphasis on the mediating effects of motivation and trust. By examining these relationships, the study seeks to contribute valuable insights into the significance of e-leadership in enhancing employee performance and to offer practical guidance for organizations in effectively leveraging digital leadership practices.

Based on the background, the researcher formulates the following research hypotheses:

H1: E-leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee motivation.

H2: E-leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee trust.

H3: E-leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

H4: Employee motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

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H5: Employee trust has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

H6: Employee motivation mediates the effect of e-leadership on employee performance.

H7: Employee trust mediates the effect of e-leadership on employee performance.

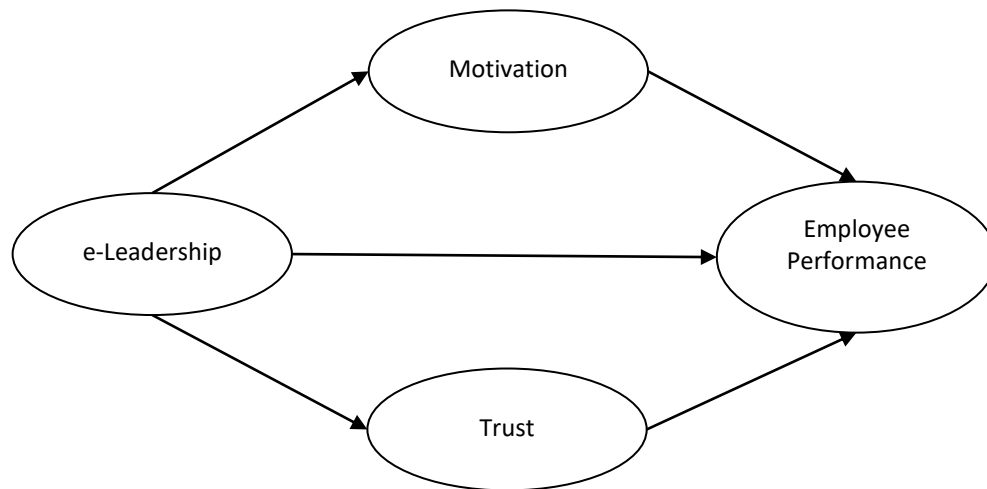


Figure 1. Research Framework

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

The research was conducted using a quantitative approach with a causal-associative design. Primary data were obtained directly from questionnaires distributed by the researcher. Meanwhile, secondary data in this study were gathered through documentation review. The sample consists of 128 employees from the production department of PT. Asia Pacific Fibers, Kendal, Central Java. Data collection techniques involved the use of questionnaires, supported by interviews and documentation. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software.

The e-leadership variable is measured by adopting the measurement model proposed by Purnomo, Tejasukmana and Juniarti (2021). The motivation variable is measured using Maslow's motivation theory model (Healy, 2016). The trust variable is measured based on the model developed by Qomariah (2020). The employee performance variable is measured using the model proposed by Robbins and Judge (2016). The operationalization of these variables is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Operasionalisasi Variabel

| Variables                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Indicators              | Items                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>E-Leadership</b><br><i>E-leadership refers to leaders who guide individuals remotely to accomplish tasks in order to achieve organizational goals. They utilize new technologies to enhance their performance.</i><br>(Daswin, 2023) | Communications skill    | Communicates information clearly through digital media.                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Social skill            | Capable of building harmonious relationships with subordinates through communication technology.<br>Actively works to create a positive work environment in the digital space. |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Team building skill     | Able to build and maintain team collaboration through digital tools.<br>Capable of maintaining team morale despite only meeting virtually.                                     |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Change management skill | Effectively manages change using technology.<br>Frequently adapts new technologies to enhance team performance.                                                                |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Technological skill     | Demonstrates leadership proficiency in mastering the technologies used within the organization.<br>Provides adequate training on the use of necessary digital tools.           |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Trustworthiness         | Trusts the leader's ability to make fair decisions and communicate them through online platforms.<br>Exhibits integrity in their actions through digital platforms.            |
| <b>Motivation</b><br><i>Motivation is the reason for people's actions, willingness</i>                                                                                                                                                  | Physiological Needs     | The salary and benefits received are sufficient to meet basic needs.<br>Adequate rest time is provided during work hours.                                                      |

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| Variables                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Indicators               | Items                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>and goals</i> (Vincent & Kumar, 2019)                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Safety Needs             | Feels secure from the threat of layoffs or job loss.<br>Receives health insurance and social protection benefits from the company.                                       |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Social Needs             | Feels safe in the workplace, which positively influences motivation.<br>Feels accepted and valued within the work environment.                                           |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Esteem Needs             | Receives recognition or acknowledgment from superiors.<br>Has opportunities for promotion or career advancement based on performance.                                    |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Self-Actualization Needs | Encounters new challenges in the job that encourage continuous learning.<br>Has opportunities to develop skills and capabilities.                                        |
| <b>Trust</b><br><i>The relationship that exists between individuals, as well as between individuals and a system, in which one party accepts a vulnerable position and believes the other will act for the benefit for their interests</i> (Yuan et al., 2023) | Integrity                | The leader is consistent in words and actions, and upholds moral and ethical values.                                                                                     |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Competence               | The leader possesses sufficient competence to lead the organization.                                                                                                     |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Consistency              | The leader consistently demonstrates appropriate behavior across various work situations.                                                                                |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Loyalty                  | The leader shows strong commitment and loyalty to the team, organization, or company.                                                                                    |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Openness                 | The leader is open to feedback and suggestions from employees.                                                                                                           |
| <b>Employee Performance</b><br><i>Performance is the work results in terms of quality and quantity achieved by an employee in carrying out his duties in accordance with the responsibilities given to the employee.</i> (Mangkunegara, 2016)                  | Quality of Work          | Able to complete tasks with satisfactory results.<br>Performs work in accordance with established standards.<br>Capable of completing tasks free from defects or errors. |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Quantity                 | Able to work at a fast pace without compromising quality.<br>Capable of completing tasks even under pressure.                                                            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Timeliness               | Manages work time effectively to complete tasks on schedule.<br>Works efficiently by utilizing available resources.                                                      |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Effectiveness            | Able to complete tasks in the most effective manner.<br>Continuously seeks ways to improve work productivity.<br>Completes tasks without the need for close supervision. |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Independence             | Demonstrates initiative in completing tasks without waiting for instructions.<br>Does not rely on coworkers to complete assigned tasks.                                  |

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### I. Respondents Profile

Respondent characteristics based on demographics are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 128)**

| Variable       | Category           | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|----------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Gender         | Male               | 105           | 82.0           |
|                | Female             | 23            | 18.0           |
| Age            | 20–24              | 8             | 6.25           |
|                | 25–29              | 16            | 12.5           |
|                | 30–34              | 17            | 13.28          |
|                | 35–39              | 12            | 9.38           |
|                | 40–44              | 19            | 14.84          |
|                | 45–49              | 30            | 23.44          |
|                | 50–54              | 23            | 17.97          |
|                | 55–59              | 3             | 2.34           |
| Marital Status | Married            | 104           | 81.0           |
|                | Single             | 24            | 19.0           |
| Education      | Junior High School | 3             | 2.0            |
|                | Senior High School | 67            | 52.0           |
|                | Diploma            | 17            | 13.0           |

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|                |                   |    |       |
|----------------|-------------------|----|-------|
| Tenure (years) | Bachelor's Degree | 38 | 30.0  |
|                | Postgraduate      | 3  | 2.0   |
|                | 1–5               | 24 | 18.75 |
|                | 6–10              | 24 | 18.75 |
|                | 11–15             | 25 | 19.53 |
|                | 16–20             | 11 | 8.59  |
|                | 21–25             | 10 | 7.81  |
|                | 26–30             | 28 | 21.88 |
|                | 31–35             | 6  | 4.69  |

Note. Percentages may not total exactly 100 due to rounding.

Most of the respondents were male, accounting for 82% (n = 105) of the total sample, while female respondents represented only 18% (n = 23). Respondents were distributed across various age groups, with the largest proportion falling within the 45–49 age range (23.44%), followed by those aged 50–54 (17.97%) and 40–44 (14.84%). The least represented age group was 55–59, comprising only 2.34% of the total sample. This suggests that most respondents were in the mature working age category, particularly between the ages of 40 and 54. Most of the participants were married, constituting 81% (n = 104) of the total, while only 19% (n = 24) were single. This may reflect the age distribution of the respondents, as most were above the age of 40. In terms of educational attainment, most respondents had completed Senior High School (52%), followed by those holding a bachelor's degree (30%) and a Diploma (13%). A small percentage had attained Postgraduate education (2%) or completed only Junior High School (2%). These figures indicate a relatively moderate to high level of educational background among the participants. Regarding years of service, the highest proportion of respondents had between 26–30 years of tenure (21.88%), followed by those with 11–15 years (19.53%) and 6–10 years (18.75%). The lowest representation came from those with 31–35 years of service (4.69%). This suggests that most respondents had substantial work experience, particularly more than a decade.

### II. Validity and Reliability

The researcher employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to test the proposed research model. This analytical approach is considered relatively novel in the context of data analysis within the social sciences (Chin et al., 2020). The outer model analysis in PLS pertains to the measurement model, which links latent variables with their respective indicators. The primary objective of the outer model is to assess the validity and reliability of the indicators used to represent the latent constructs.

**Table 3. Validity and Reliability**

| Variables    | items | OL    | CA    | rho_A | CR    | AVE   |
|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| e-leadership | El1   | 0.700 | 0.935 | 0.939 | 0.944 | 0.607 |
|              | el2   | 0.741 |       |       |       |       |
|              | el3   | 0.814 |       |       |       |       |
|              | el4   | 0.823 |       |       |       |       |
|              | el5   | 0.769 |       |       |       |       |
|              | el6   | 0.822 |       |       |       |       |
|              | el7   | 0.817 |       |       |       |       |
|              | el8   | 0.826 |       |       |       |       |
|              | el9   | 0.756 |       |       |       |       |
|              | el10  | 0.710 |       |       |       |       |
|              | el11  | 0.780 |       |       |       |       |
| Motivation   | mo1   | 0.778 | 0.901 | 0.909 | 0.921 | 0.625 |
|              | mo3   | 0.756 |       |       |       |       |
|              | mo5   | 0.836 |       |       |       |       |
|              | mo7   | 0.835 |       |       |       |       |
|              | mo8   | 0.782 |       |       |       |       |
|              | mo9   | 0.778 |       |       |       |       |

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|                      |      |       |       |       |       |       |
|----------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|                      | mo10 | 0.763 |       |       |       |       |
| Trust                | tr1  | 0.893 | 0.918 | 0.921 | 0.939 | 0.754 |
|                      | tr2  | 0.885 |       |       |       |       |
|                      | tr3  | 0.913 |       |       |       |       |
|                      | tr4  | 0.838 |       |       |       |       |
|                      | tr5  | 0.810 |       |       |       |       |
| Employee Performance | ep1  | 0.776 | 0.916 | 0.927 | 0.931 | 0.629 |
|                      | ep2  | 0.864 |       |       |       |       |
|                      | ep3  | 0.838 |       |       |       |       |
|                      | ep4  | 0.821 |       |       |       |       |
|                      | ep5  | 0.737 |       |       |       |       |
|                      | ep6  | 0.747 |       |       |       |       |
|                      | ep8  | 0.770 |       |       |       |       |
|                      | ep9  | 0.781 |       |       |       |       |

**Source:** Primary data, Processed (2024)

Notes: OL=Outer Loading; CA=Cronbach's Alpha; CR=Composite Reliability; AVE=Average Variance Extracted

The results of the measurement model evaluation indicate that all constructs exhibit adequate levels of validity and reliability. Convergent validity is confirmed through the outer loading (OL) values, where all indicators meet the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Chin & Newsted, 1999). Furthermore, the average variance extracted (AVE) values for all constructs—e-leadership (0.607), motivation (0.625), trust (0.754), and employee performance (0.629)—are above the minimum criterion of 0.50, indicating that each construct explains more than 50% of the variance of its indicators (Yew et al., 2022).

In terms of internal consistency reliability, all constructs show excellent results. The composite reliability (CR) values range from 0.921 to 0.944, exceeding the recommended cut-off of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2021; Haji-Othman & Yusuff, 2022). Similarly, both Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and rho-A values for all constructs are above 0.90, which further supports the reliability of the measurement instruments. These results confirm that the measurement model has satisfactory levels of both validity and reliability and is therefore suitable for further structural model analysis.

### III. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted to examine the relationships between variables. Bootstrapping was performed at a significance level of 0.05. The model fit was assessed using the root mean square residual (RMSR), with values below 0.10 indicating a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1998). The calculated Q-Square values for all variables were greater than zero, suggesting that the model has good predictive relevance (Chin et al., 2020; Hair et al., 2021).

**Table 4. Quality of model and fit indices**

| Variables            | R <sup>2</sup> | Q <sup>2</sup> | SRMR  |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|-------|
| Employee Performance | 0,450          | 0.267          | 0.081 |
| Motivation           | 0,490          | 0.285          |       |
| Trust                | 0,423          | 0.331          |       |

**Source:** smatpls output, processed (2025)

Next, a hypothesis test is conducted, which is shown in detail in the Path Coefficient Table. The conclusion whether to accept or reject the hypothesis is made by comparing the T-statistic and P Values. The hypothesis is accepted if the T-statistic value is >1.96 or P Values <0.05.

**Table 5. Path Coefficient**

| No | Path                               | β     | T Statistics | P Values | Supported |
|----|------------------------------------|-------|--------------|----------|-----------|
| H4 | Motivation -> Employee Performance | 0,251 | 2,096        | 0,037    | Yes       |
| H5 | Trust -> Employee Performance      | 0,310 | 2,503        | 0,013    | Yes       |

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|    |                                                    |       |        |       |         |
|----|----------------------------------------------------|-------|--------|-------|---------|
| H3 | e-Leadership -> Employee Performance               | 0,184 | 2,071  | 0,039 | Yes     |
| H1 | e-Leadership -> Motivation                         | 0,700 | 13,759 | 0,000 | Yes     |
| H2 | e-Leadership -> Trust                              | 0,651 | 11,883 | 0,000 | Yes     |
| H6 | e-Leadership -> Motivation -> Employee Performance | 0,176 | 2,067  | 0,039 | Partial |
| H7 | e-Leadership -> Trust -> Employee Performance      | 0,202 | 2,381  | 0,018 | Partial |

Source: smatpls output, processed (2025)

The results of the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) analysis demonstrate that all proposed hypotheses are supported by the data. Specifically, e-Leadership strongly and significantly affects both Motivation ( $\beta = 0.700$ ,  $t = 13.759$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and Trust ( $\beta = 0.651$ ,  $t = 11.883$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), validating H1 and H2 respectively.

Furthermore, motivation has a significant positive effect on Employee Performance ( $\beta = 0.251$ ,  $t = 2.096$ ,  $p = 0.037$ ), supporting H4. Similarly, Trust significantly influences Employee Performance ( $\beta = 0.310$ ,  $t = 2.503$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ), confirming H5. H3 is also supported, indicating that e-Leadership positively impacts Employee Performance ( $\beta = 0.184$ ,  $t = 2.071$ ,  $p = 0.039$ ).

Mediation analysis reveals that Motivation partially mediates the relationship between e-Leadership and Employee Performance ( $\beta = 0.176$ ,  $t = 2.067$ ,  $p = 0.039$ ), as indicated in H6. Likewise, Trust also serves as a partial mediator in the relationship between e-Leadership and Employee Performance ( $\beta = 0.202$ ,  $t = 2.381$ ,  $p = 0.018$ ), supporting H7.

The findings confirm that all proposed hypotheses are supported, either directly or indirectly. Each relationship is grounded in well-established theories, thereby offering both theoretical and practical contributions. These findings highlight the central role of e-Leadership in enhancing employee motivation and trust, which in turn contribute to improved employee performance.

The positive and significant relationship between motivation and employee performance ( $\beta = 0.251$ ,  $p = 0.037$ ) supports the principles of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Miller et al., 1988). This theory emphasizes that when individuals are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated, they tend to engage more deeply with their work, leading to improved performance outcomes. The result indicates that motivated employees exhibit higher levels of productivity, commitment, and work quality.

The positive influence of trust on employee performance ( $\beta = 0.310$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ) is aligned with the framework of Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964; Smyth & Zimba, 2019). SET posits that trust facilitates reciprocal behaviours and mutual obligations within organizational relationships. Employees who trust their leaders are more likely to respond with discretionary efforts that enhance individual and collective performance. This finding reaffirms the role of psychological safety in organizational success.

The direct positive impact of e-leadership on employee performance ( $\beta = 0.184$ ,  $p = 0.039$ ) reflects the relevance of Transformational Leadership Theory (Avolio & Bass, 1995; Deng et al., 2023) in digital environments. Despite the challenges of remote and virtual workspaces, transformational leaders who leverage technology effectively can still inspire, support, and empower employees. These leaders stimulate innovation, provide meaningful feedback, and recognize accomplishments, thereby enhancing performance even without face-to-face interaction.

Furthermore, the strong and significant association between e-leadership and motivation ( $\beta = 0.700$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) reinforces the view that transformational e-leaders can foster intrinsic motivation. By articulating a compelling vision, setting clear expectations, and encouraging autonomy, leaders can create a motivating work climate that drives employee engagement. This finding further validates the integration of SDT with leadership models in digitally mediated settings.

Likewise, the significant relationship between e-leadership and trust ( $\beta = 0.651$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) underscores the importance of effective digital communication in building relational trust. Drawing upon Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory (Chen et al., 2024; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Ming Di et al., 2023), this result indicates that high-quality exchanges between leaders and employees, even through virtual channels, can build strong bonds of trust. Responsiveness, clarity, and consistency are key elements of trust development in e-leadership contexts.

The analysis also reveals partial mediation effects of both motivation and trust. Specifically, motivation partially mediates the relationship between e-leadership and employee performance ( $\beta = 0.176$ ,  $p = 0.039$ ), suggesting that leaders influence performance not only directly but also by shaping employees' motivational states. This aligns with SDT and transformational leadership literature, which assert that motivation is a powerful mechanism through which leadership affects outcomes.

In addition, trust partially mediates the influence of e-leadership on employee performance ( $\beta = 0.202$ ,  $p = 0.018$ ), reaffirming the centrality of trust as a relational resource in the workplace. According to SET and LMX Theory, trust serves as a psychological bridge that translates leadership behaviours into high performance. When leaders establish credibility and integrity, employees reciprocate with increased efforts and loyalty.

### IV. CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to investigate the impact of e-leadership on employee performance, as well as the mediating roles of motivation and trust. The findings confirm that all proposed hypotheses are supported, either directly or indirectly. Each relationship is grounded in well-established theories, thereby offering both theoretical and practical contributions. In conclusion, the results of this study provide empirical evidence that e-leadership is a significant predictor of employee performance, both directly and indirectly through motivation and trust. These findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of digital leadership dynamics, particularly in the post-pandemic era where virtual collaboration has become more prevalent. Future research should explore additional mediating or moderating variables, such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, or digital literacy, to deepen the understanding of how e-leadership influences employee performance. Longitudinal studies are recommended to examine how motivation and trust evolve over time under digital leadership. Moreover, expanding the research across various industries and cultural contexts can enhance the generalizability of the findings. Employing qualitative or mixed-methods approaches may also uncover contextual nuances, while investigating technology-specific leadership behaviours can offer insights into emerging trends in digital leadership practices.

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