

# Transformational Leadership and Innovative Work Behavior in Police Organizations: The Mediating Roles of Digital Competence and Digital Culture

*Innovative Work  
Behavior in Police  
Organizations*

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## ABSTRACT

*Digital transformation demands greater innovation capacity in public sector organizations. The rapid development of digital technology and the increasing complexity of public service demands require police organizations to adapt through stronger innovation capabilities, digital readiness, and supportive leadership. However, continues to face challenges such as uneven digital skills, weak dissemination of digital training outcomes, hierarchical barriers, and limited motivation toward innovation. These conditions indicate the need for leadership that is capable of inspiring change and fostering an innovative climate. This study examines the effect of transformational leadership on innovative work behavior with digital competence and digital culture as mediating variables. This study employs a quantitative research method. Using transformational leadership theory, Kurt Lewin's Change Theory, and Expectancy Theory. The research also addresses the inconsistency of previous findings regarding the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using PLS-SEM. The results are expected to demonstrate that transformational leadership positively influences innovative work behavior, both directly and indirectly, through digital competence and digital culture. This study contributes theoretically to human resource management literature and provides practical insights for police organizations seeking to strengthen innovation and digital transformation.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed organizational operations globally, including in public institutions such as law enforcement. Police organizations are increasingly expected to operate with transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and innovation to meet evolving public expectations (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2018). In Indonesia, the Indonesian National Police has implemented programs like Precision Policing, emphasizing predictive, responsible, and transparent policing. These initiatives require officers to adopt digital tools, enhance technological competencies, and engage in Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) to improve service quality and organizational performance (Bass, 1990; Breevaart et al., 2014).

Transformational leadership plays a critical role in driving innovation in police organizations. Leaders with transformational qualities inspire personnel to go beyond personal interests, stimulate intellectual growth, and foster shared organizational goals (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Edison et al., 2017; Siagan, 2023). Such leadership encourages officers to embrace new digital tools, challenge outdated routines, and actively participate in IWB, which involves generating, promoting, and implementing novel ideas to enhance processes and outcomes. Previous studies indicate that transformational leadership can

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significantly influence IWB, though results vary across organizational contexts, particularly in hierarchical institutions such as the police (Haspemi et al., 2023; Saif et al., 2024).

Despite the recognized importance of leadership, innovation in police institutions, including Batu District Police (*Kepolisian Resor/Polres*), remains uneven. Key challenges include disparities in digital competence, inconsistent training outcomes, hierarchical organizational culture, and insufficiently embedded digital culture (Blyznyuk, 2018; Abhari et al., 2021; Elisnawati et al., 2023). Officers often struggle to use digital tools effectively, rely on manual processes, or perceive technology as a burden rather than an enabler. These factors highlight the need for transformational leadership that can foster digital readiness, encourage experimentation, and institutionalize innovative practices (Kane et al., 2015; Oberer, 2018; Weritz et al., 2020).

Digital competence and digital culture are critical mediators between leadership and IWB. Digital competence refers to the ability to use technology effectively, manage information, solve digital problems, and adapt to emerging technologies (Blyznyuk, 2018; Antonietti et al., 2022). Digital culture, defined as shared values, norms, and practices supporting digital adoption, motivates personnel to explore technological solutions, collaborate digitally, and embrace continuous improvement (Deuze, 2006; Abhari et al., 2021). Transformational leaders can strengthen both competence and culture by modeling digital behaviors, emphasizing the strategic value of innovation, and recognizing creative contributions (Abbas et al., 2024; Dewi, 2024).

Although research highlights the role of transformational leadership, digital competence, and digital culture in fostering IWB, findings remain inconsistent. Some studies suggest that leadership's influence is stronger when personnel possess high digital competence, while others report minimal mediating effects (Ahmed et al., 2024; Elbably & Zayed, 2025). Moreover, most studies focus on corporate or educational settings, making generalization to hierarchical, regulation-bound police institutions uncertain. *Polres Batu* provides a suitable context to examine these dynamics, as digital initiatives exist but innovative practices remain fragmented. Officers' engagement in IWB depends on both personal digital skills and the organizational culture, yet transformational leadership is not consistently applied across all units (Frankowska & Rzeczycki, 2020; Haspemi et al., 2023).

This study addresses a research gap by investigating how transformational leadership influences IWB in *Polres Batu*, with digital competence and digital culture as mediating variables. Understanding these relationships is essential for guiding leadership development, designing effective training programs, and fostering a culture that supports innovation, ultimately improving service quality and organizational adaptability. Integrating transformational leadership theory, Lewin's Change Theory, and Expectancy Theory provides a comprehensive framework to explain how leadership, skills, and culture collectively shape innovative behavior in police organizations (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Saif et al., 2024).

This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how transformational leadership influences innovative work behavior through digital competence and digital culture among members of *Polres Batu*. By identifying the mechanisms through which leadership drives innovation, the study offers insights that can guide strategic improvements in human resources, digital literacy development, and organizational culture enhancement. Such efforts are crucial for ensuring that police organizations remain adaptive, responsive, and effective in an increasingly digital world.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

### **The Effect of Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership can be understood as a leadership approach in which leaders are able to inspire, motivate, and intellectually stimulate their followers to achieve performance that goes beyond standard expectations. According to Bass and Avolio (1994), this leadership style is characterized by four main dimensions: idealized influence,

inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Through these dimensions, transformational leaders are able to strengthen employees' intrinsic motivation, encourage creativity, and increase openness toward organizational change and innovation (Zhang, 2024; Muftiyanto & Jatmika, 2025). In public-sector contexts, including police organizations, transformational leadership has been shown to play an important role in enhancing organizational performance, adaptability, and innovative capacity (Wart, 2014). Nevertheless, empirical findings regarding its impact on innovative work behavior are not entirely consistent. Fu and Tan (2025) report that while many studies show a positive relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior, others find weak or non-significant effects, suggesting the need for further investigation.

Both theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence indicate that transformational leadership can influence innovative work behavior either directly or indirectly through various supporting factors (Pieterse et al., 2010; Afsar & Umrani, 2020). Innovative work behavior refers to a series of employee actions that involve generating new ideas, promoting those ideas to others, and implementing them in practice to improve work processes or outcomes (Janssen, 2000; Putra & Syahrul, 2023). Such behavior is crucial for organizational survival in dynamic and uncertain environments, as it enables organizations to continuously adapt and improve. Prior research also emphasizes that innovative work behavior does not emerge in isolation but is shaped by multiple factors, including leadership style, individual competence, motivation, and the prevailing organizational culture (Jong & Hartog, 2010).

H1: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on innovative work behavior.

H2: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on digital competence.

H3: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on digital culture.

### **The Effect of Digital Competence on Innovative Work Behavior**

In public-sector organizations, innovative work behavior plays an important role in improving service quality, supporting digital transformation initiatives, and enhancing overall organizational effectiveness (Hughes et al., 2018; Gunawan & Widodo, 2021). Nevertheless, variations in findings from previous studies suggest that the relationship between innovation, leadership, and digital factors is not yet fully understood. This indicates the need for further investigation into how leadership styles and digital-related capabilities interact to shape innovative behavior, particularly within highly hierarchical environments such as police organizations, where formal structures and rigid procedures may influence employees' willingness to innovate.

Digital competence refers to an individual's capability to effectively use digital technologies, manage and evaluate information, communicate through digital platforms, and resolve technology-related problems (Carretero et al., 2017; Pundissing et al., 2025). Within organizational contexts, a high level of digital competence has been shown to improve work efficiency, strengthen analytical and problem-solving skills, and support innovative activities (van Laar et al., 2017). Employees who possess strong digital competence tend to be more confident in experimenting with new technologies and digital solutions, which in turn enhances their innovative work behavior (Huu et al., 2023). Moreover, digital competence increases employees' readiness and capacity to translate creative ideas into practical applications, functioning as a cognitive enabler that facilitates the successful implementation of innovation.

H4: Digital competence has a positive effect on innovative work behavior.

### **The Effect of Digital Culture on Innovative Work Behavior**

Digital culture reflects shared organizational values, norms, and practices that support and facilitate digital transformation within an organization (Westerman et al., 2014). A strong digital culture encourages openness to change, cross-functional collaboration,

experimentation, and continuous learning, enabling organizations to adapt more effectively to technological developments and environmental changes (Chanias et al., 2019; Martín & Vela, 2020). In government and policing environments, the presence of a supportive digital culture is particularly important, as it contributes to increased transparency, stronger procedural accountability, and greater responsiveness to public needs through the effective use of digital systems and data-driven processes (Criado & Gil-García, 2019).

Moreover, digital culture shapes an organizational climate that legitimizes experimentation, reduces resistance to change, and minimizes fear of failure when adopting new technologies or innovative work practices (Kane et al., 2015). However, prior empirical findings reveal inconsistencies in the strength of the relationship between digital culture and innovative outcomes across different sectors and organizational contexts. These variations suggest that the impact of digital culture may depend on institutional characteristics, such as organizational structure and leadership style. Therefore, it is necessary to further examine these relationships in the context of Polres Batu, where digital transformation and innovation have become strategic priorities but their implementation and outcomes may vary across organizational units.

H5: Digital culture has a positive effect on innovative work behavior.

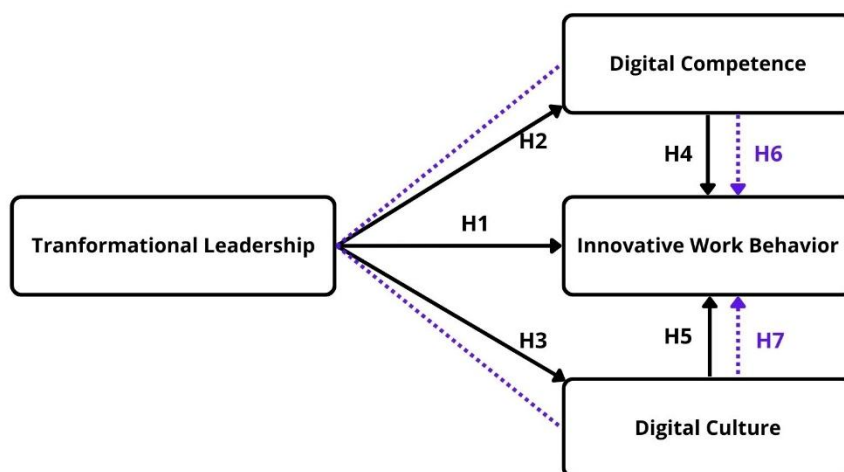
#### **Digital Competence and Digital Culture as a Mediating Variable**

There is still conflicting empirical support for the mediation function of digital competence. According to certain research, individuals that possess digital competence are better able to convert leadership support into successful experimentation and new idea implementation, which enhances the connection between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior. Leaders who provide vision, encouragement, and intellectual stimulation are more successful in fostering innovation when employees possess adequate digital skills to use technology creatively and confidently (Haspemi et al., 2023). In contrast, other studies report weak or insignificant links between digital competence and innovative behavior, suggesting that digital skills alone may not automatically lead to innovation without supportive leadership and appropriate organizational context (Ilomäki et al., 2016). This inconsistency highlights the importance of examining digital competence as a mediating mechanism that enhances the influence of transformational leadership on innovative work behavior.

Similarly, digital culture is recognized as a key contextual factor shaping innovative work behavior. A supportive digital culture promotes openness to experimentation, reduces resistance to change, and creates an environment in which leadership-driven innovation initiatives can be effectively realized (Kane et al., 2015; Abbas et al., 2024). Transformational leaders play a central role in developing such a culture by modeling digital values, encouraging learning, and reinforcing innovation-oriented norms. However, prior findings differ on whether digital culture acts as a direct predictor or a mediating variable influenced by leadership and individual competence. These variations suggest that the mediating role of digital culture may depend on organizational context, particularly within hierarchical institutions such as police organizations, making its examination both theoretically important and empirically necessary.

H6: Digital competence has a mediating positive effect between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior.

H7: Digital culture has a mediating positive effect between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework

The study's suggested conceptual framework is depicted in Figure 1. Innovative work behavior is seen to be primarily influenced by transformational leadership, both directly and indirectly. In addition to explicitly encouraging workers to participate in creative endeavors, it simultaneously develops the organization's digital culture and competency. Innovative work behavior has also shown to be directly impacted by digital competence and digital culture, highlighting the significance of both a supportive corporate environment and individual digital abilities in promoting innovation. Additionally, both digital culture and digital competence serve as mediating mechanisms that amplify the impact of transformational leadership on creative work practices, suggesting that strong digital capabilities and a supportive digital culture increase the effectiveness of leadership in fostering innovation.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design, as the objective is to examine and explain the causal relationships between transformational leadership, digital competence, digital culture, and innovative work behavior. The explanatory method allows the researcher to test hypotheses regarding direct and indirect effects, particularly the mediating roles of digital competence and digital culture among members of the Batu Police Department. A quantitative approach is appropriate because it enables the measurement of variables using standardized instruments and allows statistical analysis to ensure objectivity and generalizability.

The study population comprises all employees of Polres Batu who work on administrative and operational projects that call for the utilization of digital technology and innovation. Purposive sampling is the sampling technique used in light of the population's diverse characteristics. Respondents are chosen according to three criteria: (1) they have worked for Polres Batu for at least a year; (2) they actively use digital tools or systems in their daily work; and (3) they participate in public service, operational, or managerial functions. The Hair et al. (2012) recommendation, which recommends at least ten responders per indication, is used to establish the minimum required sample size. 350 responders is the minimal sample size needed when there are 35 indicators.

A standardized questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), is used to gather data. Four primary variables are measured by the instrument. Items from Bass and Avolio that span idealistic influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational drive, and individualized consideration are used to evaluate transformational leadership. The European Digital Competence Framework (DigComp), which covers metrics including information processing, digital communication, problem-solving, and technological flexibility, is used to assess digital competence. Indicators of openness, cooperation, innovation orientation, digital

acceptance, and corporate digital ideals are used to gauge digital culture. Three dimensions are used to measure innovative work behavior: idea generation, concept promotion, and idea implementation.

A pilot test is carried out to evaluate the instrument’s validity and reliability before the questionnaire is distributed. Item-total correlation is used to assess construct validity, and Cronbach’s Alpha, with a minimum acceptable value of 0.70, is used to assess reliability. To maintain instrument accuracy, items that don’t fit these requirements are changed or eliminated. This study uses SmartPLS software and Structural Equation Modeling using Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) for data analysis. This analytical method was selected because it does not require normally distributed data and is appropriate for complex models with several mediating factors. The inner model, which evaluates the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), effect size ( $f^2$ ), predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ), and hypothesis testing through path coefficients, comes after the outer model, which includes convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability. The bootstrapping method is used to investigate mediation effects.

It is anticipated that the analysis’s findings would offer empirical proof of how much transformational leadership affects creative work practices both directly and indirectly through digital competency and digital culture. This technique guarantees a thorough and methodical approach to comprehending the dynamics of innovation inside the Batu Police Department and adds to the larger body of knowledge on public sector leadership and digital transformation.

**RESULTS**

The results of the structural model analysis utilizing SmartPLS to look at the direct relationships between the research variables are shown in this part. To assess the suggested theories and ascertain the importance and strength of the causal links within the model, direct effect testing was carried out. The findings of this analysis serve as the foundation for hypothesis testing and offer empirical proof of how each independent variable affects its corresponding dependent variable.

**Table 1.** Validity & Reliability Test

| Variable                    | Range Outer Loading | AVE (>0.50) | Cronbach’s Alpha (0.70–0.90) | Composite Reliability (0.70–0.90) |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|-------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Transformational Leadership | 0.71 – 0.82         | 0.56        | 0.78                         | 0.83                              |
| Digital Competence          | 0.72 – 0.84         | 0.58        | 0.80                         | 0.85                              |
| Digital Culture             | 0.70 – 0.81         | 0.55        | 0.76                         | 0.82                              |
| Innovative Work Behavior    | 0.73 – 0.86         | 0.60        | 0.81                         | 0.87                              |

As shown in Table 1, the measurement model demonstrates adequate convergent validity, with indicator loadings falling within acceptable ranges and AVE values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50 for all constructs. The reliability assessment further indicates consistent measurement, as Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability values meet established criteria without suggesting indicator redundancy. These results confirm that transformational leadership, digital competence, digital culture, and innovative work behavior are measured appropriately for subsequent analysis.

**Table 2.** Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ) and Predictive Relevance ( $Q^2$ )

| Endogenous Variable      | $R^2$ | $Q^2$ |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|
| Digital Competence       | 0.34  | 0.21  |
| Digital Culture          | 0.29  | 0.19  |
| Innovative Work Behavior | 0.46  | 0.28  |

As shown in Table 2, the coefficient of determination indicates that the model explains a moderate proportion of variance in digital competence, digital culture, and innovative

work behavior. The  $R^2$  values suggest that transformational leadership, together with digital competence and digital culture, provides sufficient explanatory power without indicating an overestimated model. The predictive relevance assessment shows that all  $Q^2$  values exceed zero, confirming the model's ability to predict the observed data. The magnitude of the  $Q^2$  values reflects meaningful predictive accuracy across all endogenous constructs. These results support the adequacy of the structural model for hypothesis testing.

**Table 3.** Effect Size ( $f^2$ )

| Exogenous Variable          | Endogenous Variable      | $f^2$ Value | Effect Category |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Transformational Leadership | Digital Competence       | 0.18        | Moderate        |
| Transformational Leadership | Digital Culture          | 0.15        | Moderate        |
| Transformational Leadership | Innovative Work Behavior | 0.17        | Moderate        |
| Digital Competence          | Innovative Work Behavior | 0.14        | Small–Moderate  |
| Digital Culture             | Innovative Work Behavior | 0.12        | Small           |

According to the effect size study, transformational leadership has a moderate impact on digital competence, digital culture, and creative work practices, as Table 3 illustrates. With minor to moderate effects, digital competency and digital culture also support creative work practices, indicating significant but harmonious interactions between dimensions.

**Table 4.** Direct Effect

| Hypothesis | Relationship   | Coefficient | t-statistic | t-table | p-value | Result   |
|------------|--|-------------|-------------|---------|---------|----------|
| H1         | Transformational Leadership → Innovative Work Behavior | 0.180       | 3.847       | 1.96    | 0.000   | Accepted |
| H2         | Transformational Leadership → Digital Competence       | 0.311       | 8.137       | 1.96    | 0.000   | Accepted |
| H3         | Transformational Leadership → Digital Culture          | 0.396       | 10.497      | 1.96    | 0.000   | Accepted |
| H4         | Digital Competence → Innovative Work Behavior          | 0.280       | 6.596       | 1.96    | 0.000   | Accepted |
| H5         | Digital Culture → Innovative Work Behavior             | 0.208       | 5.040       | 1.96    | 0.000   | Accepted |

The direct effect analysis results are shown in Table 4. With a coefficient of 0.180, t-value of 3.847 ( $>1.96$ ), and  $p = 0.000$  ( $<0.05$ ), the results show that transformational leadership significantly improves innovative work behavior. This implies that workers who experience intellectual stimulation, inspiration, and support from transformational leaders are more likely to come up with and carry out creative ideas, supporting H1. Furthermore, transformational leadership has a significant impact on digital competence, as evidenced by a coefficient of 0.311, t-statistic of 8.137, and  $p = 0.000$ . This suggests that leaders successfully improve their staff members' digital skills through direction, inspiration, and educational opportunities (H2 accepted).

Furthermore, with a coefficient of 0.396, a t-value of 10.497, and  $p = 0.000$ , transformational leadership has the greatest direct impact on digital culture. This suggests that transformational leaders successfully cultivate a favorable digital culture by encouraging learning, supporting collaborative digital work habits, and encouraging openness to technology (H3 accepted). With a coefficient of 0.280, t-statistic of 6.596, and  $p = 0.000$ , digital competency also has a positive impact on innovative work behavior, corroborating H4 by showing that employees with greater digital competence are better able to generate, promote, and implement creative ideas. Lastly, innovative work behavior is positively impacted by digital culture (coefficient = 0.208, t-statistic = 5.040,  $p = 0.000$ ), demonstrating that a robust digital culture greatly fosters innovative behavior by fostering an atmosphere that prioritizes technological adaptation and ongoing progress (H5 accepted).

The indirect effect analysis's findings are shown in Table 5. With an indirect impact coefficient of 0.087, t-statistic of 5.124, and  $p = 0.000$  ( $<0.05$ ), the results demonstrate that

digital competence strongly mediates the association between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior. This suggests that transformational leadership improves workers' digital competency, which promotes their capacity to come up with and carry out creative ideas. H6 is confirmed by the fact that workers with greater digital proficiency are better able to convert the motivation and encouragement given by transformational leaders into tangible, creative actions.

**Table 5.** Indirect Effect Hypothesis Testing Results

| Hypothesis | Mediation Path  | Coefficient | t-statistic | p-value | Result   |
|------------|---|-------------|-------------|---------|----------|
| H6         | Transformational Leadership → Digital Competence → Innovative Work Behavior | 0.087       | 5.124       | 0.000   | Accepted |
| H7         | Transformational Leadership → Digital Culture → Innovative Work Behavior    | 0.082       | 4.543       | 0.000   | Accepted |

Furthermore, with a coefficient of 0.082, a t-statistic of 4.543, and  $p = 0.000$ , digital culture also acts as a significant mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior. This indicates that a supportive digital environment strengthens the impact of leadership on innovative behavior. H7 is confirmed by both mediation paths, which highlight the critical role that digital preparedness and culture play in converting transformational leadership into concrete, innovative results.

**DISCUSSION**

The findings demonstrate that transformational leadership significantly influences innovative work behavior, digital competence, and digital culture among personnel at Polres Batu, while digital competence and digital culture also significantly affect IWB and mediate the leadership effect. This indicates that leaders who act as role models, inspire a shared vision, motivate personnel, and stimulate creative thinking are more likely to encourage members to generate, develop, and implement innovative ideas in policing tasks, as reflected in digital service innovations, the use of social media for public education, adaptive patrol strategies, and improvements in technology-based reporting systems that enhance public service quality and efficiency. Applying Kurt Lewin's Change Theory, transformational leadership guides innovation by raising awareness of digital transformation needs (unfreeze), encouraging experimentation and creative problem-solving (change), and institutionalizing innovative practices through recognition and reinforcement (refreeze), while Expectancy Theory reinforces this process by strengthening beliefs that innovative efforts improve performance, are acknowledged, and provide tangible benefits, thereby increasing personnel motivation and commitment to innovation. These findings align with Kim and Yoon (2025), and Sibassaha et al. (2025), confirming that transformational leadership is a key driver of innovation in digitalizing public-sector organizations.

The findings indicate that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on both digital competence and digital culture. Leaders who inspire, support development, and act as digital role models enhance members' digital literacy, adaptability, and effective use of digital systems, while simultaneously fostering a culture that supports digital adoption, openness, and collaboration in the context of digitalized public services. From the perspective of Lewin's Change Theory, transformational leadership raises awareness of the importance of technology, facilitates skill development and adoption, and reinforces consistent digital practices, while Expectancy Theory explains these effects through personnel beliefs that digital skills and behaviors improve performance, are recognized, and provide valuable benefits. These findings are consistent with prior studies by Shin et al. (2023) and Elbably and Zayed (2025), although contrasting evidence by Rahman and Lukman (2022) suggests that organizational

readiness and resistance to change may moderate the effectiveness of transformational leadership in shaping digital competence and culture.

Digital competence and digital culture significantly influence innovative work behavior among personnel at Polres Batu. Personnel with strong digital skills are better able to generate and implement innovative ideas, particularly in technology-based policing services and decision-making, as digital competence facilitates the change and refreeze stages in Lewin's Change Theory and strengthens confidence in achieving innovative outcomes as explained by Expectancy Theory. Likewise, a supportive digital culture promotes collaboration, open communication, and technology-based work practices, stabilizing innovative behaviors and increasing motivation to innovate. These findings are consistent with previous studies by Mayastinasari and Suseno (2023), Abbas et al. (2024) and Sibassaha et al. (2025). However, evidence from Rahman and Lukman (2022) and Waty (2024) suggests that digital competence and digital culture alone may be insufficient when digital literacy is uneven or leadership support is weak, underscoring the importance of an enabling organizational context.

Digital competence and digital culture significantly mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and Innovative work behavior. Transformational leaders who encourage learning, technological exploration, and collaboration enhance personnel's digital skills and embed shared digital values, which in turn facilitate idea generation and implementation as part of everyday work practices. From the perspective of Lewin's Change Theory, digital competence supports the change and refreeze stages by enabling the adoption and stabilization of innovative practices, while digital culture institutionalizes these behaviors. Expectancy Theory further explains how improved competence and cultural support increase confidence and motivation to engage in innovation. This mediating role is consistent with prior studies by Shin et al. (2023), Abbas et al. (2024), and Elbably and Zayed (2025), although evidence from Rahman and Lukman (2022) suggests that low organizational readiness may weaken these effects, highlighting the importance of sustained leadership support. This study underscores that fostering innovative work behavior in police organizations requires not only transformational leadership but also deliberate efforts to enhance digital competence and institutionalize a supportive digital culture. These findings provide practical implications for leadership development, digital training programs, and cultural change initiatives aimed at strengthening innovation and service quality in policing institutions.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that transformational leadership has a positive and significant influence on innovative work behavior, digital competence, and digital culture among personnel of Polres Batu. Digital competence and digital culture also directly enhance innovative work behavior and function as mediating mechanisms that strengthen the impact of transformational leadership. This indicates that when leaders effectively inspire, motivate, and intellectually stimulate their personnel, they are more capable of developing digital skills and fostering a supportive digital culture, which subsequently encourages the generation and implementation of innovative ideas in policing activities.

From a practical perspective, these findings suggest that police organizations should emphasize the development of transformational leadership to support digital transformation and innovation. Leaders need to actively encourage continuous learning, support the use of digital technologies, and embed digital values such as collaboration, openness, and adaptability into everyday work practices. Strengthening digital competence through structured training and cultivating a supportive digital culture can improve service quality, operational efficiency, and responsiveness to public needs.

This study enriches the literature on leadership and innovation in the public sector by demonstrating that digital competence and digital culture play crucial mediating roles in translating transformational leadership into innovative work behavior, particularly within hierarchical organizations such as the police. However, the use of cross-sectional data and the study's concentration on a single organization may restrict generalizability and the

capacity to identify long-term effects. Therefore, in order to provide a more thorough understanding of innovation in digital-era policing, future research is encouraged to involve multiple public-sector institutions, apply longitudinal approaches, and include additional variables like organizational readiness, digital infrastructure, or employee engagement.

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