Transforming Lecturer Performance: The Mediating Role of Servant Leadership in Enhancing Digital Competence and Psychological Well-Being

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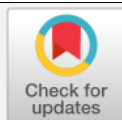[3] Universitas Pelita Harapan Medan, 20112, Medan, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia
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ABSTRACT

Lecturer performance is a critical factor in improving the quality of higher education. This study investigates the impact of digital competence and psychological well-being on lecturer performance, with servant leadership as a mediating variable. A quantitative methodology was employed, collecting data through structured questionnaires distributed to lecturers at several private universities in Medan City. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results reveal that digital competence and psychological well-being positively and significantly affect lecturer performance. Additionally, servant leadership mediates the relationship between these independent variables and lecturer performance, highlighting its essential role in enhancing lecturers' digital readiness and psychological well-being. This study contributes to the theoretical framework by integrating leadership theory with individual attributes (competence and well-being) to examine their influence on lecturer performance in higher education. The findings emphasize the importance of adopting servant leadership to improve lecturer performance by fostering digital competence and promoting psychological well-being.

1. Introduction

Higher education is crucial in cultivating skilled human resources capable of global competition and contributing to national development (Ghafar, 2024). In the contemporary age of globalization and digital transformation, higher education must operate as an educational entity and hub for innovation, research, and community service (Mahesh et al., 2024). Instructors are instrumental in influencing the quality and efficacy of the higher education system (Kundori, 2024). Lecturers serve as instructors imparting knowledge to students, researchers doing excellent scientific work, and innovators addressing community issues through advancements in science and technology (Sachdeva & Singh, 2024).

Lecturers' contributions extend beyond the classroom to encompass joint research, international publishing, and the creation of innovations tailored to the requirements of industry and society (Anda & Tay, 2024). Instructors can propose pragmatic remedies to diverse developmental issues, from enhancing human resource quality to bolstering national economic competitiveness (Susanto et al., 2024). Furthermore, lecturers serve as intermediaries between academia and the broader community through research-based programs and relevant technology (Hasani, 2024). This designates academics as catalysts for change, significantly promoting sustainable development across diverse sectors (Nelly et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, it must systematically manage and enhance professor performance to fulfill this function effectively. The performance of lecturers is a critical metric for evaluating the efficacy of higher education institutions, as the quality of learning, research relevance, and the influence of community service is contingent upon the productivity and competence of lecturers in fulfilling their responsibilities (Hazzam & Wilkins, 2023). Universities must enhance lecturer quality through competency development, welfare provision, and sufficient institutional support (Farida, 2023). Establishing an ecosystem that enhances lecturer performance by boosting digital competency, psychological well-being, and effective leadership is essential for addressing the difficulties of contemporary higher education (Hazzam & Wilkins, 2023).

Servant leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing the competitive advantage of higher education institutions in the context of globalization and intensifying competition. This leadership paradigm emphasizes service to individuals within the company (Keradjaan et al., 2021). Higher education institutions that adopt servant leadership are generally more focused on social impact and sustainability (Nelly et al., 2024). Community engagement enhances higher education institutions' relevance and public esteem, bolstering their national and international reputation (Jakada, 2024). Servant leadership fosters essential values that are critical foundations for cultivating a healthy and effective business culture (Sihombing et al., 2024). Servant leadership fosters individual empowerment by providing trust, support, and developmental opportunities. Educators, academic personnel, and students experience heightened appreciation and acknowledgment of their contributions (Yuntina et al., 2024). This support enhances lecturers' motivation to innovate, elevate research and teaching quality, and favorably contribute to attaining higher education institutions' vision (Imaduddin et al., 2022).

Prior research findings demonstrate that servant leadership significantly influences professor performance (Bayangkari et al., 2024; Linda & Hidayat, 2021; Ramdan et al., 2024).

Servant leadership fosters a collaborative work culture in which all stakeholders unite to attain shared objectives (Saing et al., 2024). Servant leadership cultivates successful leaders and establishes a durable, inventive, and adaptable organizational framework (Winarno & Hermana, 2021). Universities implementing this leadership will possess a heightened competitive edge in attracting high-caliber students, forming strategic alliances, and creating graduates prepared for global competition (Gultom et al., 2024).

The digital competency of a professor is a determinant of their performance (Nelly et al., 2024). The issue of digital competence is more pertinent in the context of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and the transformation of education through digital means, necessitating major alterations in higher education administration (Montilla et al., 2023). Higher education institutions must swiftly adapt to information and communication technology advancements, particularly in facilitating online learning, doing digital-based research, and publishing in internationally esteemed journals (Kundori, 2024). In light of these expectations, lecturers, as the fundamental pillars of the educational process, are assuming a more intricate role (Rui et al., 2024). Lecturers serve as both facilitators of traditional education and catalysts for innovation, employing digital technologies to enhance learning efficacy and broaden student access to knowledge (Obadimeji & Oredein, 2023).

The study's findings (Saaiq et al., 2024) indicate deficient digital technology proficiency, insufficient continuous training, and inadequate institutional support hinder lecturers' optimal utilization. Inadequate digital competency adversely affects the efficacy of online learning, resulting in a suboptimal educational experience for students (He et al., 2023). Furthermore, inadequate technological proficiency impedes instructors from employing digital tools and platforms to perform quality research and disseminate their findings in esteemed international forums (Mardiana, 2024). In Medan City, numerous lecturers lacking technological proficiency are prone to delays in developing digital learning materials, administering e-learning platforms, and engaging in international research collaborations that leverage information technology. This eventually influences academic productivity, including research quality, the quantity of scientific publications, and discoveries generated. Over time, these constraints may diminish the competitiveness of private colleges both nationally and globally, given that the contemporary landscape of higher education increasingly relies on digital competencies to establish competitive advantages.

Servant leadership has become an effective paradigm that cultivates a favorable work environment and enhances instructor performance development (Madu & Musa, 2024). In contrast to the traditional leadership style focused on power, servant leadership emphasizes individual development, improves the welfare of subordinates, and holistically empowers human resources (Devisa et al., 2023). This method establishes the leader as a servant who addresses the team's needs, fosters professional development, and cultivates a good and collaborative work environment (Sary, 2023).

A study by Rui et al. demonstrated that servant leadership can enhance individual and organizational performance by elevating team members' motivation, self-confidence, and loyalty (Rui et al., 2024). Servant leaders guarantee that lecturers' performance is acknowledged and valued equitably by sincerely recognizing their efforts and contributions (Cao et al., 2023). This recognition may be prizes or performance-based incentives, encompassing financial and non-financial elements, such as performance allowances, bonuses, or professional development scholarships (Nelly et al., 2024).

Enhancing the digital proficiency of instructors is a critical issue for universities, particularly for private institutions that frequently have budget constraints (I. S. L. Lubis, 2016).

This expertise is necessary to facilitate online learning, improve research quality, and increase the production of scientific publications (Haidarravy & Ismail, 2023). In the era of Industrial Revolution 4.0, insufficient technological proficiency would hinder professors' ability to fulfill their roles effectively. Strategic measures may involve regular technological training tailored to the requirements of instructors (M. Muhammad et al., 2024). Moreover, instructors necessitate technical support from a dedicated team of IT specialists to overcome technological challenges (Zhang, 2024).

The study indicated that digital competency significantly influences lecturer performance (Huy, 2024). Universities must allocate resources towards technology infrastructure to facilitate digital transformation. Ensuring stable internet connectivity and a dependable learning management system (LMS) is crucial for the online learning process to function efficiently and successfully (Chimbunde & Jakachira, 2024). This infrastructure enables the administration of materials, evaluations, and interactions between instructors and students (Uko & Uko, 2024). Educators may more readily foster creativity and innovation in learning and research with sufficient technology support. This will enhance the overall quality of education and bolster the competitiveness of universities, both nationally and worldwide, in the contemporary era of digitalization (Göltl et al., 2024).

The psychological well-being of lecturers is frequently neglected in research concerning lecturer performance (Marendić et al., 2024). This well-being is vital in fostering internal motivation and enhancing productivity (Rangkuti et al., 2024). Psychological well-being encompasses several critical dimensions, including job satisfaction, meaningfulness in work, and the equilibrium between professional and personal life (Haznah et al., 2024). Lecturers who experience appreciation, derive satisfaction from their work, and maintain equilibrium between their professional and personal lives generally exhibit greater commitment to the school (Ali et al., 2024). This state promotes lecturers' productivity in executing academic responsibilities, including teaching, research, and community service (Hassan et al., 2023).

Previous research has demonstrated that psychological well-being positively influences employee performance across multiple sectors (Krishnan, 2022). Nevertheless, studies explicitly investigating the psychological well-being of instructors in private universities remain scarce (Yudiani et al., 2024). Private institutions possess distinct attributes, including elevated job pressure, administrative responsibilities, and constrained facilities and incentives, which may impact the psychological well-being of faculty members (Eloff et al., 2023). Additional investigation is required to address this research deficiency (Fraboni et al., 2023). A comprehensive examination of the psychological well-being of lecturers in this context is essential to formulate policy recommendations that enhance their well-being, thus improving academic performance and fulfilling the university's vision (Teo et al., 2023).

This study's originality lies in the absence of research concentrating on instructors in state institutions, whilst investigations into lecturer performance in private universities remain scarce. Private universities possess distinct characteristics, including constrained facilities and institutional support, influencing instructor performance. Most studies exclusively examine the impact of digital competence or psychological well-being on individual performance in isolation. This study amalgamates both factors into a singular conceptual model to offer an exhaustive perspective on the drivers of lecturer performance. Finally, servant leadership studies hardly address the mediating function in the association between digital competence, psychological well-being, and lecturer performance. This creates an opportunity to address the theoretical gap by strengthening the role of servant leadership in higher education.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Lecturer Performance

Ideal educator performance, particularly in education and pedagogy, is essential for enhancing the quality of student learning (Y. Lubis et al., 2023). High-performing lecturers typically employ innovative, effective, and engaging teaching approaches, fostering a more dynamic learning environment (F. R. A. Lubis et al., 2023). High-quality instruction equips pupils to compete more effectively in the labor market (Ariasari & Tjahjono, 2024). High-performing lecturers significantly contribute to the scientific productivity of higher education (Jalaludin, 2024). High-quality research leads to publications in esteemed journals, positively influencing the academic reputation of both instructors and institutions (Ningrum et al., 2024). These scholarly papers enhance higher education rankings nationally and globally, reinforcing their status as hubs for scientific and innovative advancement (Mijoto Solekan, 2022). Enhanced productivity in research facilitates collaboration with other institutions domestically and internationally, hence broadening the academic network and resources within higher education (Keradjaan et al., 2021).

The performance of lecturers is crucial in using research findings to address societal issues (Gultom et al., 2024). Lecturers serve as a conduit between institutions and the community by engaging in community service activities that apply knowledge effectively (Gunawan et al., 2024). The performance of lecturers significantly impacts the accreditation of academic programs and institutions (Nelly et al., 2024). Global ranking organizations, such as QS World University Rankings and Times Higher Education, prioritize lecturer productivity as the primary criterion for evaluating the quality of higher education (Syekh, 2021). Optimal lecturer performance is crucial for generating quality graduates (Watrianthos, 2021). Lecturers serve as educators, mentors, and role models, influencing academic proficiency, professional abilities, and student character (Terttiaavini, 2023).

2.2. Servant Leadership

Servant leadership prioritizes service, empowerment, and personal development within an organization (Nelly et al., 2024). Leaders who implement this principle prioritize the welfare of team members by offering assistance, fostering trust, and assisting lecturers in reaching their maximum potential (Winarno & Hermana, 2021). In an academic setting, leaders employing a servant-leadership model significantly enhance lecturers' competencies by ensuring academic autonomy and supplying sufficient resources, including research facilities, training, and opportunities for global collaboration (Ramdan et al., 2024).

Lecturers under this leadership often experience increased satisfaction and loyalty due to the leader's empathetic approach, which involves listening, understanding, and addressing the lecturers' professional and personal needs (Anwar et al., 2024). This service-oriented leadership fosters trust and comfort while enhancing the lecturer's intrinsic motivation (Yuntina et al., 2024). Emotional support and acknowledgment of a lecturer's efforts enhance their productivity in teaching, research, scholarly publications, and community service (Linda & Hidayat, 2021).

Moreover, servant leadership fosters the development of an inclusive and collaborative workplace atmosphere (Gunawan et al., 2024). Leaders who intentionally foster community or a sense of oneness among organizational members enhance productive collaboration among speakers. This inclusive and supportive atmosphere enhances productivity and fosters creativity in research and education (Gultom et al., 2024). Consequently, adopting servant leadership is essential for facilitating lecturers' optimal performance in executing the Three Pillars of Higher Education (Education, Research, and Community Service).

2.3. Digital Competence

Digital competence denotes an individual's capacity to effectively employ digital technology for several objectives, including employment, communication, and decision-making (He et al., 2023). A primary aspect of digital competence is information and data literacy, encompassing the capacity to acquire, evaluate, and manage digital information effectively and critically (Oghenetega & Efevberha-Ogodo, 2023). Moreover, the capacity to employ digital media for communication and collaboration constitutes a fundamental aspect of digital competence (Montilla et al., 2023). These abilities empower instructors to engage proficiently with students, academic peers, and research collaborators globally across diverse digital platforms, including email, video conferencing, and social media, enhancing academic and professional networks (Cao et al., 2023).

Moreover, the capacity to produce digital creations is essential to digital competence (Obadimeji & Oredein, 2023). This capability generates digital content in many formats, such as text, audio, photos, videos, and multimedia, as a beneficial educational resource or scientific publication material (Sary, 2023). This capability not only fosters the creativity of educators but also facilitates the presentation of instructional materials in a more novel and comprehensible manner for students (Liesa-Orus et al., 2023). Furthermore, digital competence includes digital security elements, such as protecting devices, personal data, and academic information against dangers such as data breaches, cyberattacks, or unethical technology usage (Susanto et al., 2024). The final aspect of digital competence is the capacity to resolve issues utilizing technology (Kundori, 2024). This talent is essential for tackling many issues encountered in the professional sphere through the application of digital technology (Madu & Musa, 2024).

Prior research indicates that digital competency significantly influences instructor performance (Hasani, 2024). As stated in (Rui et al., 2024), the capacity to acquire and handle digital information can enhance learning efficacy, both directly and via online platforms. Simultaneously, (Amaewhule & Nwadike, 2023) indicated that digital competence significantly enhances lecturers' research efficiency, particularly in utilizing tools such as SPSS, NVivo, and Mendeley. Proficiency in technology enables instructors to analyze data, collect references, and create scientific articles more quickly and efficiently. Moreover, (Dang et al., 2024) underscored the crucial importance of digital communication and collaboration in promoting academic cooperation among institutions (M. Muhammad et al., 2024). Instructors proficient in using digital platforms, including email, Zoom, and Google Meet, possess enhanced options for collaborative study and participation in foreign seminars. The significance of digital security in preserving the integrity of academic data is also highlighted in (Mardiana, 2024). Proficiency in technological security enables educators to safeguard information from breaches and guarantee the ethical application of technology in research and instructional endeavors (I. S. L. Lubis, 2016).

2.4. Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being denotes a condition characterized by emotional stability, contentment, and a favorable perception of oneself and one's surroundings (H. Muhammad & Athar, 2022). Psychological well-being has six interconnected dimensions (Krishnan, 2022). Self-acceptance refers to an individual's capacity to acknowledge their strengths and faults with a constructive mindset (Chan & Leong, 2022). Positive relationships with others demonstrate an individual's capacity to cultivate healthy and helpful social interactions (Holliman et al., 2022). Moreover, independence denotes an individual's capacity to make autonomous decisions unencumbered by external influences (Sari, 2022).

Moreover, the capacity to govern one's environment correlates with an individual's proficiency in adjusting to and constructing circumstances that foster personal development (Dewi & Abadi, 2023). Life objectives encompass a defined direction and objective that impart clarity of meaning and purpose to an individual's existence (Krishna & Agrawal, 2023). Ultimately, self-development signifies the individual's endeavors to persist in growth, acquire knowledge, and maximize their potential (Fraboni et al., 2023). The six dimensions collectively contribute to psychological well-being, enhancing individuals' satisfaction and empowerment (Kenku et al., 2023).

Subsequently, assistance from peers and institutions is crucial in fostering a favorable work atmosphere for lecturers (Teo et al., 2023). Lecturers who perceive appreciation and recognition from peers and leaders may enhance their desire to perform effectively and attain optimal outcomes (Al-Dalaeen et al., 2023). Moreover, equitable distribution of responsibilities is essential for sustaining a balance between work and personal life (Eloff et al., 2023). An equitably allocated task enables professors to sustain productivity without excessive strain, facilitating more effective time management (Ghafar, 2024). Verbal recognition, awards, or promotions that acknowledge lecturer performance enhance job satisfaction and foster favorable sentiments regarding their work (Mukhlis et al., 2024). Moreover, familial emotional support and amicable interactions with coworkers bolster the mental stability of lecturers in confronting diverse professional problems (Anda & Tay, 2024). This support enhances lecturers' resilience, enabling them to concentrate, alleviate stress, and sustain peak performance in fulfilling the Three Pillars of Higher Education responsibilities of higher education (Oderinde et al., 2024).

Prior research has repeatedly demonstrated that psychological well-being significantly impacts instructor performance across multiple dimensions (Hoang et al., 2024). Psychological well-being significantly enhances work motivation and the quality of instruction, as shown in (Yudiani et al., 2024). Psychologically well-adjusted lecturers typically exhibit positive energy, enhancing their effectiveness in delivering information, fostering a conducive learning environment, and optimally addressing student needs (Gilar-Corbi et al., 2024). Research (Uyeri, 2024) indicates that lecturers with elevated psychological well-being exhibit more productivity in their research endeavors. Effectively managing academic pressure allows lecturers to focus, complete research on time, and produce high-quality scientific articles.

3. Research Methodology

This research used a quantitative methodology utilizing a survey to examine the impact of digital competence and psychological well-being on lecturer performance, with leadership acting as a mediating variable. This research used the quantitative technique as it facilitates the systematic examination of variable interrelationships using statistical analysis.

The subjects of this study were instructors from multiple private universities in Medan City. This research employed a purposive sampling method to identify respondents who fulfilled the subsequent criteria: Engaged in instruction at private universities. Possess at least two years of teaching experience. The individual must consent to completing the research questionnaire. The sample size was established following the rule of thumb from PLS-SEM analysis, which stipulates a minimum of 10 samples for each indication in the largest latent variable. The study's sample comprised 200 teachers from diverse private universities in Medan City.

Table 1. Variable Measurement Scale

Variable	Operational Definition	Indicator	Measurement Scale
Digital Competence (X1)	Digital competence refers to an individual's capacity to proficiently master, comprehend, and utilize digital technology to accomplish activities, facilitate communication, and attain professional objectives, including teaching, research, and administrative management.	1. Information literacy 2. Digital communication 3. Use of technology for teaching 4. Mastery of research applications 5. Digital security	Ordinal
Psychological Well-being (X2)	Psychological well-being is an individual's favorable mental state marked by emotional equilibrium, life contentment, and a constructive self-perception and outlook on their surroundings, which fosters productivity and job fulfillment.	1. Self-acceptance 2. Positive relationships 3. Autonomy 4. Environmental management 5. Life purpose 6. Self-development	Ordinal
Servant Leadership (Z)	Servant leadership is a leadership approach that prioritizes the support of subordinates, fosters individual growth, and cultivates a collaborative work community to facilitate subordinates in realizing their full potential and establishing a pleasant work environment.	1. Active listening 2. Empathy 3. Supporting individual development 4. Building a work community 5. Commitment to growth 6. Empowering members	Ordinal
Lecturer Performance (Y)	Per the execution of the Three Pillars of Higher Education, a lecturer's primary responsibilities encompass teaching, research, and community service, with evaluation grounded in productivity, quality, and effect.	1. Development of updated textbooks 2. Relevance between teaching and research 3. Publication quality 4. Research collaboration 5. Community service innovation	Ordinal

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4. Results

4.1. Validity and Reliability Testing

The validity and reliability of the research instrument were assessed to ensure that the constructs measured align with their theoretical underpinnings and exhibit internal consistency. This process is vital for confirming that the data collected can accurately represent the relationships between variables and provide credible results.

Convergent validity was evaluated by analyzing the loading factors of the indicators associated with each construct. In this study, all indicators for the variables—Digital Competence, Psychological Well-being, Servant Leadership, and Lecturer Performance—achieved loading factor values greater than 0.7, surpassing the standard threshold for robust convergent validity. These results demonstrate that the indicators strongly correlate with their respective constructs and effectively capture the dimensions they are designed to measure. High loading factor values indicate that the constructs are well-defined and that the measurement model is aligned with theoretical expectations.

To further ensure the reliability of the measurement model, internal consistency was assessed using Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The CR values for all constructs exceeded 0.7, indicating that the indicators within each construct are cohesive and consistently measure their intended dimensions. Similarly, the AVE values were all greater than 0.5, confirming that their respective constructs explain a significant proportion of the variance in the indicators. These results validate the instrument's reliability and ensure minimal random measurement errors.

The combined results of the validity and reliability tests demonstrate the robustness of the research instrument. The strong convergent validity confirms that the constructs and their indicators are well-aligned, while the high internal consistency ensures that the constructs are reliably measured. These findings provide a solid foundation for subsequent analyses, such as hypothesis testing and structural modeling, ensuring that the relationships between the variables—Digital Competence, Psychological Well-being, Servant Leadership, and Lecturer Performance—are grounded in a reliable and valid measurement framework.

4.2. Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis tests were conducted to examine both direct and mediated effects. **Table 2** summarizes the results:

Table 2. Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	t-Statistic	P-Value	Result
Digital Competence → Lecturer Performance	0.312	4.21	0.000	Significant
Psychological Well-being → Lecturer Performance	0.276	3.92	0.000	Significant
Servant Leadership → Lecturer Performance	0.401	5.32	0.000	Significant
Digital Competence → Servant Leadership	0.345	4.15	0.000	Significant
Psychological Well-being → Servant Leadership	0.289	3.77	0.000	Significant

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Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	t-Statistic	P-Value	Result
Digital Competence → Lecturer Performance (via Servant Leadership)	0.138	3.41	0.001	Significant Mediation
Psychological Well-being → Lecturer Performance (via Servant Leadership)	0.116	3.08	0.002	Significant Mediation

5. Discussions

5.1. The Influence of Digital Competence on Servant Leadership

The study's findings demonstrate that digital competence exerts a favorable and significant impact on servant leadership inside private colleges in Medan. The outcomes of this study indicate that numerous private universities in Medan have not regularly implemented digitalization training for their permanent faculty members. This situation is frequently observed among professors who inadequately employ various artificial intelligence functionalities. The caliber of publications and research partnerships with international lecturers is subpar. This demonstrates that educators at Medan universities require ongoing training in executing the Three Pillars of Higher Education activities of higher education.

The findings of this study align with prior research indicating that digital competence significantly impacts servant leadership (Bonaiuto et al., 2023; Haidarravy & Ismail, 2023; Mainardes et al., 2024). Digital competence serves as a technical talent and a fundamental basis for developing a service-oriented leadership style (Devisa et al., 2023). Adopting digital culture is imperative for leaders to enhance the development of organizational members, deliver optimal services, and attain the strategic objectives of higher education (Bilan et al., 2023). Digital culture encompasses technology's methodical and sustainable application to foster a more transparent, flexible, and responsive workplace for transformation (Dang et al., 2024).

Leaders possessing advanced digital competence can discern new prospects for organizational advancement by applying information and communication technology (Amaewhule & Nwadike, 2023). Digital competence enables leaders to promote collaboration among teams and departments, foster enhanced synergy within the firm, and improve efficiency in executing activities and attaining objectives (Mardiana, 2024). Leaders possessing digital competence may leverage technology to enhance internal and external communication (Montilla et al., 2023). Digital platforms empower leaders to disseminate information rapidly, precisely, and transparently to all organizational members and stakeholders (Kundori, 2024). Enhance trust among team members and promote active participation in attaining shared objectives (Oghenetega & Efevberha-Ogodo, 2023). Digital competence enhances leaders' technical skills and shapes lecturers' mindsets and approaches to service-oriented and team welfare-focused leadership (Saaiq et al., 2024).

5.2. The Influence of Psychological Well-being on Servant Leadership

The study's findings demonstrate that psychological well-being exerts a favorable and significant impact on servant leadership inside private colleges in Medan. The outcomes of this study indicate that the leaders of private universities in Medan have not adequately ensured the psychological well-being of professors. The foundation significantly influences the trajectory of institutional policy, as opposed to the policies established by university officials. This consequently affects lecturers' motivation, impeding the institution's capacity to improve its competitiveness by following higher education principles.

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The findings of this study align with (Das & Pattanayak, 2023; Hassan et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2023), which asserts that leaders with strong digital competence can enhance technology to improve communication, transparency, and collaboration within the organization. Technology enables leaders to address team requirements more swiftly, offer personalized support, and cultivate an environment centered on collective growth (Qureshi et al., 2023). Servant leadership necessitates the backing of a favorable company environment and culture (Xiao et al., 2023). Digital competence facilitates data-driven decision-making for leaders while promoting inclusivity and effective communication (Hoang et al., 2024). Digital competency can enhance an organization's ability for innovation via responsive and adaptive leadership (Eloff et al., 2023). Leaders possessing digital competence may discern chances for corporate advancement, adapt to technological shifts, and promote inter-team communication (H. Muhammad & Athar, 2022).

5.3. The Influence of Digital Competence on Lecturer Performance

The study's findings demonstrate that digital competence positively and significantly impacts lecturer performance in private universities in Medan. The study suggests that universities must allocate budgets to enhance technological infrastructure, including a reliable internet network, hardware (computers, servers), and digital platforms that facilitate lecturers' teaching and research endeavors. Furthermore, institutional rules should have a compulsory program for developing lecturers' digital competencies, conducted regularly through systematic evaluations. This program may encompass digital skills certification, customized lecturer training, and incentives for those who effectively integrate technology into the educational and research processes. Moreover, recognition and accolades for lecturers who actively employ technology in teaching, research, and community engagement can further catalyze their digital competencies.

The findings of this study corroborate prior studies demonstrating the substantial influence of digital competence on improving lecturer effectiveness (Amaewhule & Nwadike, 2023; Dang et al., 2024; Oghenetega & Efevberha-Ogodo, 2023). Proficiency in digital technology enables instructors to be more adaptable and responsive to the evolving digital education environment (Cao et al., 2023). Simultaneously, lecturers proficient in software like AMOS, EndNote, or Atlas.ti can handle research data more effectively and expedite analysis (Mardiana, 2024). Conversely, innovative technological applications can enhance the efficacy of community service projects and broaden their beneficial effects on society (Susanto et al., 2024). Instructors proficient in technology exhibit more preparedness and confidence in executing teaching, research, and community service responsibilities (Nelly et al., 2024).

5.4. The Influence of Psychological Well-being on Lecturer Performance

Medan private universities have demonstrated that psychological well-being positively and significantly influences teaching performance. The findings of this study indicate that private institutions in Medan have not effectively implemented psychological support programs or services to assist teachers in managing work-related stress. The program's aims may include professional counseling sessions, stress management training, and workshops to improve work-life balance. University administrators must establish a conducive work environment that promotes the psychological well-being of academics. Ultimately, recognizing the performance of lecturers, whether via formal or informal accolades, greatly enhances their sense of gratitude and acknowledgment. Lecturers exhibiting outstanding performance may be awarded

incentives, certificates, or promotions. Ultimately, calibrating the workload to align with the individual's capacity and capabilities will enhance lecturers' efficiency and productivity.

The findings of this study align with the results (Hoang et al., 2024; Kenku et al., 2023; Sari, 2022), indicating a direct correlation between psychological well-being and lecturer performance. Psychological well-being, encompassing self-acceptance, autonomy, life objectives, and environmental management, is crucial for sustaining mental stability and motivation (Krishnan, 2022). Lecturers with elevated psychological well-being typically exhibit enhanced self-confidence and intrinsic fulfillment. Individuals experiencing pleasant emotions generally exhibit enhanced creativity, productivity, and efficacy in executing intricate tasks, such as research necessitating perseverance and innovation (Dewi & Abadi, 2023). Instructors can efficiently allocate their time, logically reason, and cooperate with their peers (Holliman et al., 2022). Psychological well-being enhances individual productivity and elevates the quality and impact of research, including publications in esteemed journals and substantial contributions to scientific advancement (Uyeri, 2024). Psychological well-being assists lecturers in managing external pressures, including institutional publishing targets, journal reviewer revisions, and the necessity to provide research pertinent to societal and industrial needs (Teo et al., 2023).

5.5. The Influence of Servant Leadership on Lecturer Performance

Servant leadership significantly impacts instructor performance at universities in Medan City. The practical implications of this study highlight the importance of servant leadership, increasing digital competence, and attention to psychological well-being as the main factors in supporting lecturer performance. Universities in Medan City must undertake concrete measures, including enhancing policies, supplying requisite facilities, and executing sustainable development initiatives, to enable lecturers to perform their teaching, research, and community service responsibilities more effectively. This strategy will improve the quality of higher education in Medan City and prepare it to address the needs and challenges of the contemporary digital era.

The findings of this study correspond with prior research that has shown a substantial influence of servant leadership on lecturer performance (Imaduddin et al., 2022; Jakada, 2024; Larasati et al., 2022). Servant leadership has demonstrated the capacity to cultivate an environment conducive to enhancing lecturer performance. Leaders employing this technique offer emotional support by attentively listening to requirements, comprehending the obstacles encountered by lecturers, and prioritizing their psychological well-being (Bayangkari et al., 2024). Professional development enhances lecturer competence through many initiatives, including training, mentorship, and career advancement possibilities (Saing et al., 2024). Moreover, individual empowerment constitutes a crucial element of servant leadership because leaders instill faith in lecturers to participate in decision-making and promote active engagement in fulfilling institutional objectives (Keradjaan et al., 2021). Servant leadership significantly fosters a happy and effective work environment through emotional support, promoting professional development, and enhancing individual empowerment (Nelly et al., 2024). This type of leadership enhances individual performance and fosters a collaborative organizational culture focused on attaining shared objectives (Linda & Hidayat, 2021).

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5.6. The Influence of Digital Competence on Lecturer Performance through Servant Leadership

The hypothesis testing indicates that servant leadership connects digital competence and lecturer performance by cultivating a collaborative, supportive, and development-focused atmosphere for team members. Lecturers who perceive support from leaders possessing digital competence exhibit an increased drive to enhance their performance in teaching, research, and community involvement. The outcomes of this study indicate that lecturers who perceive assistance from leaders possessing digital competence and a servant leadership style will exhibit increased motivation in fulfilling their academic responsibilities. Universities must guarantee substantial assistance, including acknowledgment of lecturer performance, supply of technological resources, and opportunity for professional advancement. This assistance will enhance lecturers' teaching, research, and community service productivity.

The findings of this study align with prior research that underscores the substantial role of servant leadership in mediating digital competence and lecturer performance (Amaewhule & Nwadike, 2023; Jakada, 2024; Saing et al., 2024). Servant leadership is crucial in enhancing team member motivation and performance via an inclusive and compassionate leadership style (Haidarravy & Ismail, 2023). Leaders with high digital competence can utilize technology to provide more effective services to team members, support collaboration, and facilitate the development of individual potential (Kundori, 2024). Leaders possess technological proficiency and can support, motivate, and guide organizational members (Sihombing et al., 2024).

5.7. The Influence of Psychological Well-being on Lecturer Performance through Servant Leadership

The results of the hypothesis testing show that servant leadership plays a crucial role in directing the Psychological Well-being of leaders into leadership behaviors that support Lecturer Performance in universities in Medan City. Leaders with psychological stability tend to be more able to provide quality guidance, support, and appreciation to lecturers. With this attention and support, lecturers feel more appreciated, motivated, and supported in academic tasks, including teaching, research, and community service. Furthermore, the servant leadership approach creates a positive, collaborative, and empowerment-oriented work environment, which impacts Lecturer Performance individually and encourages collective performance achievement at the institutional level. With leaders who care about Psychological Well-being, lecturers tend to have higher levels of job satisfaction, better manage challenges, and demonstrate consistent and quality performance.

The study's findings align with prior research, indicating that servant leadership significantly mediates the relationship between psychological well-being and lecturer performance (Chan & Leong, 2022; Hoang et al., 2024; Imaduddin et al., 2022). Servant leadership is crucial for sustaining individual psychological well-being and establishing a robust foundation that fosters motivation, work satisfaction, and enhanced productivity among lecturers (Nelly et al., 2024). Instructors who perceive themselves as acknowledged, valued, and backed by leadership will exhibit a heightened intrinsic motivation to fulfill academic duties with increased enthusiasm and quality (Gunawan et al., 2024). A harmonious relationship among organizational members fosters a sense of collective ownership of the institution's objectives. The psychological well-being of lecturers includes emotional stability, self-esteem, and professional security; this promotes enhanced focus and productivity in their responsibilities, including teaching, research, and community involvement (Yuntina et al., 2024).

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that digital competence and psychological well-being positively and significantly influence instructor performance in private universities in Medan City. Servant leadership mediates the association between digital competence and psychological well-being in lecturer performance, affirming the significant role of servant leadership in enhancing performance through the advancement of lecturer competence and well-being. This study theoretically adds by synthesizing the notion of servant leadership with individual aspects within higher education. These findings enhance the comprehension of the interplay among leadership, psychological well-being, and digital competence in augmenting lecturer effectiveness. This study emphasizes the imperative of adopting servant leadership within higher education. This study recommends that educational institutions implement training programs to improve lecturers' digital proficiency and develop policies that foster psychological well-being. This measure can substantially enhance professor productivity and performance quality, impacting the overall quality of higher education. While offering valuable insights, this study is constrained by limited coverage and reliance on a quantitative methodology. Subsequent studies are anticipated to broaden the geographical reach, employ mixed methodologies, and incorporate new variables to enhance the understanding of the determinants affecting lecturer performance in higher education.

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The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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