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Analysis of Diversity & Inclusion Implementation, Online Training, and Adaptive Leadership on Employee Engagement in Digital Startups in West Java

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of Diversity & Inclusion Implementation, Online Training, and Adaptive Leadership on Employee Engagement in digital startups located in West Java. The research employs a quantitative approach with a sample size of 170 employees, utilizing a Likert scale (1-5) for data collection and data analysis performed through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS 3). The findings reveal that all three factors significantly influence employee engagement, with Adaptive Leadership having the strongest impact, followed by Diversity & Inclusion Implementation and Online Training. The study highlights the importance of adaptive leadership in fostering employee motivation and commitment, as well as the role of inclusive practices and continuous learning opportunities in enhancing employee engagement. The implications of these findings are discussed, with recommendations for digital startups to focus on leadership development, diversity initiatives, and training programs to improve employee engagement and organizational performance.

Keywords: *Diversity & Inclusion, Adaptive Leadership, Online Training, Employee Engagement, Digital Startups*.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the fast-evolving digital economy, employee engagement is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of organizational success. Employee engagement is crucial for organizational success, particularly in dynamic digital startups. Engaged employees enhance productivity, innovation, and talent retention, which are vital for startups to thrive [1]. The literature highlights key engagement strategies, including a positive work environment, clear communication, recognition, and professional development. Employee engagement boosts performance by fostering motivation and commitment [2] and plays a key role in talent retention amid a rapidly evolving labor market [3].

Additionally, it strengthens organizational culture, supporting long-term growth and competitiveness. Effective engagement strategies involve clear communication and employee recognition, which build trust and belonging [1], [4], along with professional development opportunities that align employee goals with organizational objectives [4], [5]. A flexible and supportive work environment further enhances job satisfaction and work-life balance, key factors in sustaining engagement [3]. However, engagement alone does not determine organizational success, as factors like communication clarity and career management also play significant roles [4]. Moreover, perceptions of engagement practices vary based on demographics such as age and experience, influencing their implementation and effectiveness [1].

West Java's burgeoning digital startup ecosystem presents unique challenges and opportunities for enhancing employee engagement. While the region benefits from a young, tech-savvy workforce and a culture that values creativity and agility, startups often face constraints such as limited resources, high workloads, and rapid organizational changes that can hinder engagement.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, considering factors like gender dynamics, human resource development, staffing strategies, workplace technology, and overall startup success factors. Gender bias in the labor market affects employment outcomes and engagement, particularly among women, necessitating educational campaigns and targeted skills development programs to enhance workforce participation [6]. Additionally, rapid digitalization and AI integration demand comprehensive human resource strategies involving multiple stakeholders to equip employees with the skills needed to adapt and stay engaged [7].

Effective staffing strategies, including diverse recruitment channels and cultural communication, strengthen company branding and selection methods, helping startups attract and retain engaged employees [8]. Moreover, workplace technology adoption and job autonomy play a crucial role in fostering new ways of working and boosting productivity, especially in the post-pandemic era, where flexibility and technological integration are vital for maintaining engagement [9]. Finally, key success factors such as market adaptability, financial management, mentorship, and innovation indirectly influence engagement by creating a supportive and growth-oriented startup environment [10].

This study investigates three key drivers of employee engagement: diversity and inclusion implementation, online training, and adaptive leadership. Diversity and inclusion have been increasingly recognized as essential components of workplace culture, promoting equity, mutual respect, and a sense of belonging. In parallel, online training programs have emerged as critical tools for fostering continuous learning and skill development, enabling employees to meet the demands of an ever-changing technological landscape. Finally, adaptive leadership, characterized by flexibility and the ability to navigate uncertainty, has been identified as a vital leadership style for maintaining employee motivation and addressing challenges in dynamic organizational contexts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is crucial for organizational success, particularly in dynamic digital startups, where emotional and cognitive commitment drive enthusiasm, dedication, and goal achievement. Given the industry's fast-paced and high-pressure nature, fostering engagement is essential for agility and sustained motivation. Key influencing factors include workplace culture, leadership, and growth opportunities. A supportive environment with employee recognition and involvement in decision-making strengthens engagement [3], [5]. Transparent leadership and communication further enhance motivation, while career advancement and skill-building opportunities foster long-term commitment [11]. Strategies to boost engagement include recognition programs [11], work-life balance initiatives [3], and data-driven approaches to tailor engagement efforts [2].

2.2 Diversity and Inclusion Implementation

Implementing diversity and inclusion (D&I) practices in digital startups is both a moral and strategic necessity, fostering creativity, innovation, and employee satisfaction. These initiatives attract and retain diverse talent, driving adaptability in the fast-paced digital sector. Leadership commitment, inclusive policies, and cultural competency training foster belonging and equitable opportunities, enhancing

engagement and productivity. Leadership plays a key role in embedding D&I into organizational culture [12]. Inclusive policies, such as flexible work and equitable recruitment, attract diverse talent, while addressing AI bias ensures fair hiring [12], [13]. Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) support marginalized employees, strengthening their sense of belonging [12]. D&I practices improve employee engagement and satisfaction, crucial for organizational success [14], [15]. Additionally, leveraging technology and data enhances accountability, while tools like virtual reality training promote empathy and inclusivity [16].

2.3 Online Training

Online training has become a pivotal tool in modern organizational learning, offering flexible, scalable, and cost-effective solutions for employee development [17], [18]. It enables employees to acquire new skills, update existing knowledge, and adapt to technological advancements [19]. In the context of digital startups, online training supports continuous learning, equipping employees with the skills needed to navigate the fast-changing digital landscape. Previous research highlights that access to quality online training positively impacts employee engagement by boosting confidence, competence, and job satisfaction [20], [21].

2.4 Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive leadership is a leadership style characterized by flexibility, problem-solving, and the ability to manage change and uncertainty [22]. This leadership approach is particularly effective in dynamic environments, such as digital startups, where rapid decision-making and innovation are essential. Adaptive leaders inspire trust and foster collaboration, creating an environment where employees feel valued and empowered [23]. Research indicates that adaptive leadership positively influences employee engagement by addressing individual and team needs while navigating organizational challenges [22], [23].

2.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by several theoretical perspectives. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) provides a foundation for understanding how workplace resources, such as D&I practices, online training, and adaptive leadership, mitigate job demands and enhance employee engagement. Additionally, Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between employees and organizations, where investments in employee development and inclusivity lead to greater commitment and engagement.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

2.6 Research Gap

While existing literature highlights the importance of D&I, online training, and adaptive leadership in fostering employee engagement, limited research explores their combined effects within digital startups in Indonesia. This study addresses this gap by examining the interrelationships among these factors and their influence on employee engagement in the unique context of West Java's digital startup ecosystem.

3. METHOD

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the effects of diversity and inclusion implementation, online training, and adaptive leadership on employee engagement in digital startups in West Java. The quantitative approach was selected for its ability to measure relationships between variables systematically and objectively. The study utilized a cross-sectional survey method, enabling the collection of data from a diverse group of employees within a defined period.

3.2 Population and Sample

The target population for this study comprised employees working in digital startups in West Java. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who met specific criteria, including employment in digital startups and familiarity with organizational practices related to diversity and inclusion, online training, and leadership. A total of 170 employees participated in the study, providing a sample size deemed adequate for Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) analysis.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

Data was collected through a structured questionnaire designed to measure the study variables, with all items scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree"). Prior to full-scale data collection, the questionnaire was pre-tested on a small sample to ensure clarity and reliability. It was then distributed via an online platform for accessibility and convenience, with participants receiving a clear explanation of the study's purpose and

assurances of confidentiality. Data collection spanned two months, during which follow-up reminders were sent to maximize response rates.

3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 3 software, chosen for its robustness in handling complex models with multiple constructs and its suitability for small to medium sample sizes. The analysis followed two main steps: first, the measurement model assessment, which evaluated construct validity and reliability through factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE), considering constructs reliable with CR values above 0.70 and valid with AVE values above 0.50. Second, the structural model assessment tested hypothesized relationships among variables using path coefficients, t-values, and R^2 values, with hypotheses deemed significant if the t-statistic exceeded 1.96 at a 95% confidence level.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic profile of the 170 respondents highlights key attributes such as age, gender, education, work experience, and departmental representation. The majority (63.0%) were aged between 25 and 34 years, indicating a workforce primarily composed of young professionals. Gender distribution was nearly equal, with 51.2% male and 48.8% female respondents, ensuring balanced representation. Educationally, 78.2% held a bachelor's degree, reflecting the high qualifications of employees in digital startups. Regarding work experience, most respondents (54.1%) had been in their current startup for 1-3 years, indicative of a relatively young tenure typical of dynamic startup environments. Departmentally, the largest proportion (40.0%) worked in technology/IT, aligning with the core focus of digital startups, followed by marketing and sales (24.7%), human resources (12.9%), finance/accounting (10.6%), and operations/other (11.8%).

4.2 Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was evaluated to ensure the reliability, validity, and suitability of the constructs used in the study. The following parameters were examined: factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE).

Table 1. Measurement Model

Variable	Code	Loading Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variant Extracted
Diversity & Inclusion Implementation	DII.1	0.927	0.936	0.954	0.839
	DII.2	0.888			
	DII.3	0.934			
	DII.4	0.913			
Online Training	OTR.1	0.887	0.788	0.875	0.702
	OTR.2	0.887			
	OTR.3	0.730			
Adaptive Leadership	ALE.1	0.783	0.850	0.909	0.771
	ALE.2	0.938			
	ALE.3	0.905			
Employee Engagement	EEG.1	0.829	0.919	0.935	0.673
	EEG.2	0.778			
	EEG.3	0.837			
	EEG.4	0.826			
	EEG.5	0.802			
	EEG.6	0.835			
	EEG.7	0.833			

Source: Data Processing Results (2025)

The reliability and validity analysis confirmed strong internal consistency across all constructs, with Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values exceeding the 0.7 threshold. Diversity and Inclusion Implementation (DII) had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.936 and CR of 0.954, Online Training (OTR) had 0.788 and 0.875, Adaptive Leadership (ALE) had 0.850 and 0.909, and Employee Engagement (EEG) had 0.919 and 0.935, demonstrating robustness. Convergent validity, assessed through factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), showed all constructs had AVE values above 0.5 (DII = 0.839, OTR = 0.702, ALE = 0.771, EEG = 0.673). Indicator analysis confirmed strong factor loadings across all constructs, with minor variations in OTR.3. These results validate the measurement model's reliability and accuracy in representing the theoretical concepts.

Discriminant validity assesses whether constructs are distinct from each other in the model. The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) is a widely used criterion for evaluating discriminant validity, with values below 0.85 generally indicating adequate discriminant validity, and more lenient thresholds of 0.90 in some cases.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity

	ALE	DII	EEG	OTR
Adaptive Leadership				
Diversity & Inclusion Implementation	0.463			
Employee Engagement	0.803	0.462		
Online Training	0.402	0.766	0.525	

Source: Data Processing Results (2025)

The discriminant validity assessment using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) confirmed that all constructs in the model are sufficiently distinct. HTMT values for Adaptive Leadership (ALE) against other constructs ranged from 0.402 to 0.803, remaining below the 0.85 threshold, ensuring its distinction. Diversity & Inclusion Implementation (DII) showed HTMT values between 0.462 and 0.766 against other constructs, indicating clear discriminant validity. Employee Engagement (EEG) had HTMT values between 0.462 and 0.803, while Online Training (OTR) ranged from 0.402 to 0.766, both within acceptable limits. These findings confirm that all constructs meet the HTMT criterion, ensuring the structural integrity of the measurement model and reinforcing the reliability of subsequent structural model analysis.

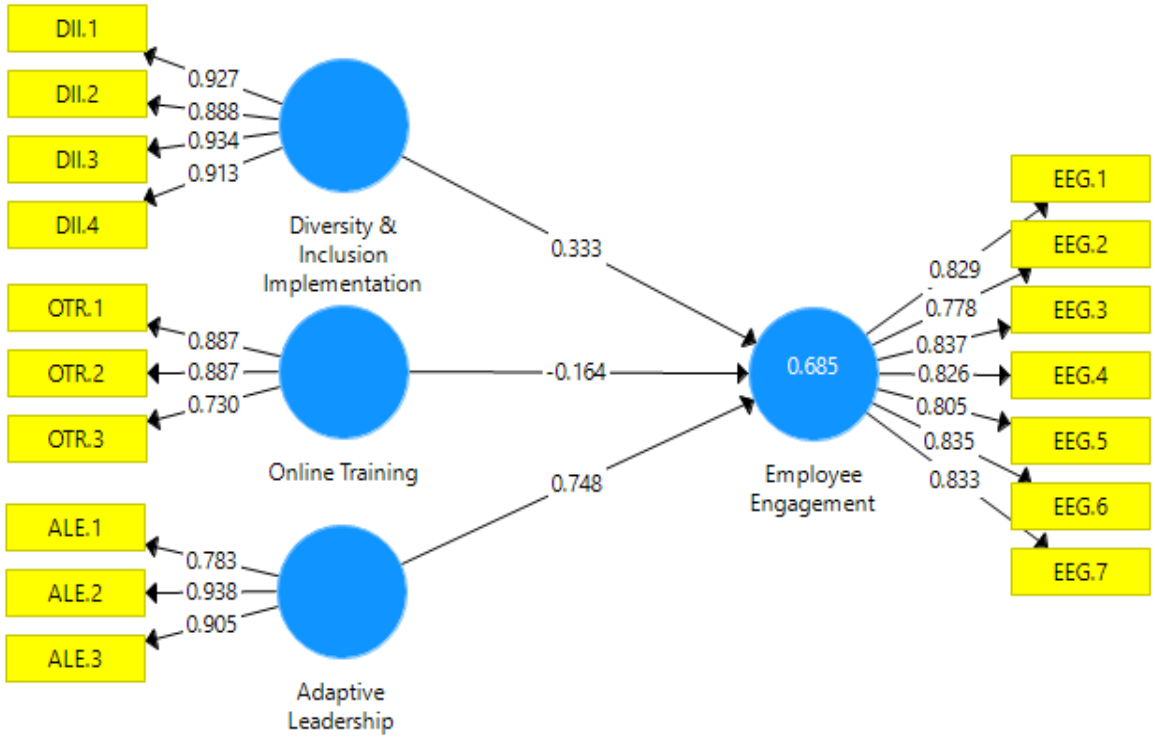

Figure 2. Model Results

Source: Data Processed by Researchers, 2025

4.3 Model Fit Assessment

Model fit in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) refers to how well the proposed model represents the relationships among the constructs in the data. The following fit indices were used to assess the overall fit of the model: SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual), d_ULS (Squared Euclidean Distance), d_G (Geodesic Distance), Chi-Square (χ^2), and NFI (Normed Fit Index).

Table 3. Model Fit Results Test

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.079	0.079
d_ULS	0.952	0.952
d_G	1.197	1.197
Chi-Square	611.390	611.390
NFI	0.705	0.705

Source: Process Data Analysis (2025)

The model fit assessment indicates an overall acceptable fit based on multiple indicators. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) for both the saturated and estimated models was 0.079, within the acceptable threshold of 0.08, suggesting that the proposed relationships align well with the data. The Squared Euclidean Distance (d_ULS) and Geodesic Distance (d_G) were 0.952 and 1.197, respectively, indicating minimal discrepancies between observed and predicted distances, supporting model adequacy. The Chi-Square (χ^2) value of 611.390 for both models further confirm a good fit, as there are no significant discrepancies between the observed and model-implied covariance matrices. However, the Normed Fit Index (NFI) of 0.705 falls below the recommended 0.90 threshold, suggesting room for improvement in the model structure. While the overall fit is acceptable, refinements may be needed to optimize relationships between constructs.

Table 4. Coefficient Model

	R Square	Q2
Employee Engagement	0.685	0.677

Source: Data Processing Results (2025)

R-Square (R^2) and Q^2 are key measures in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) that assess the explanatory power and predictive relevance of the model. The R^2 value for Employee Engagement was 0.685, indicating that 68.5% of its variance is explained by Diversity & Inclusion Implementation, Online Training, and Adaptive Leadership, demonstrating strong explanatory power according to Cohen's guidelines. This suggests that these independent variables significantly influence Employee Engagement in digital startups in West Java. Additionally, the Q^2 value for Employee Engagement was 0.677, confirming strong predictive relevance, as values greater than 0 indicate the model's ability to predict variance in the dependent variable. With 67.7% of Employee Engagement variance being accurately predicted, the model effectively highlights the role of Diversity & Inclusion Implementation, Online Training, and Adaptive Leadership as significant predictors of Employee Engagement in this context.

4.4 Structural Model Assessment

The structural model in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) evaluates the relationships between the latent constructs and their impact on the dependent variable—in this case, Employee Engagement. The analysis of the structural model helps in understanding the strength and significance of the hypothesized relationships.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values
Adaptive Leadership -> Employee Engagement	0.748	0.746	0.043	17.365	0.000
Diversity & Inclusion Implementation -> Employee Engagement	0.333	0.327	0.108	3.068	0.002
Online Training -> Employee Engagement	0.264	0.254	0.098	2.671	0.003

Source: Process Data Analysis (2025)

The structural model analysis revealed significant relationships between Adaptive Leadership, Diversity & Inclusion Implementation, Online Training, and Employee Engagement. Adaptive Leadership showed the strongest positive effect on Employee Engagement, with a path coefficient of 0.748, a T-statistic of 17.365, and a P-value of 0.000, indicating a highly significant relationship where adaptive leadership behaviors play a crucial role in fostering engagement in digital startups. Diversity & Inclusion Implementation also demonstrated a positive impact, with a path coefficient of 0.333, a T-statistic of 3.068, and a P-value of 0.002, confirming that workplace diversity and inclusion efforts contribute meaningfully to employee engagement. Similarly, Online Training had a moderate but significant positive relationship with Employee Engagement, with a path coefficient of 0.264, a T-statistic of 2.671, and a P-value of 0.003, highlighting the importance of continuous learning in enhancing employee commitment and motivation. These findings underscore the critical role of leadership, inclusivity, and training in fostering employee engagement within digital startups.

Discussion

This section presents a discussion of the study's findings, emphasizing the relationships between Diversity & Inclusion Implementation, Online Training, Adaptive Leadership, and Employee Engagement within digital startups in West Java. The results from the structural model highlight significant relationships that offer insights into how organizations can enhance employee engagement through various organizational practices.

1. Impact of Adaptive Leadership on Employee Engagement

The strongest relationship identified in this study is between Adaptive Leadership and Employee Engagement, with a path coefficient of 0.748. This finding aligns with the existing literature that emphasizes the importance of adaptive leadership in fostering a positive work environment and enhancing employee motivation and involvement. According to [22]–[26], adaptive leaders are able to adjust their leadership styles to meet the evolving needs of their team, which is crucial in fast-paced environments like digital startups. In these organizations, where change is constant, the ability of leaders to be flexible, responsive, and supportive can lead to higher levels of employee engagement. The high T-statistic (17.365) and low P-value (0.000) further confirm the robustness of this relationship, providing empirical evidence that adaptive leadership is a significant driver of employee engagement. Employees in digital startups are likely to respond positively to leaders who exhibit behaviors such as emotional intelligence, decision-making flexibility, and an openness to new ideas, which ultimately leads to stronger commitment and motivation.

2. Influence of Diversity & Inclusion Implementation on Employee Engagement

The second significant relationship found in this study is between Diversity & Inclusion Implementation and Employee Engagement, with a path coefficient of 0.333. This suggests that organizations with more inclusive practices—such as diverse hiring, equal opportunity policies, and inclusive leadership—tend to have higher employee engagement. This finding resonates with previous studies that emphasize the role of diversity and inclusion in creating a positive organizational climate, improving job satisfaction, and fostering employee loyalty [27]–[29]. The positive relationship observed in this study is consistent with the notion that diverse and inclusive workplaces offer a sense of belonging, which directly contributes to employees' emotional commitment and engagement with the organization. Moreover, the T-statistic (3.068) and P-value (0.002) indicate that this relationship is statistically significant, suggesting that investing in diversity and inclusion initiatives can yield tangible benefits in terms of employee engagement, particularly in digital startups that often operate in diverse and dynamic environments.

3. Effect of Online Training on Employee Engagement

While Online Training has a smaller path coefficient (0.264) compared to the other two factors, it still demonstrates a statistically significant and positive impact on Employee Engagement. The results suggest that providing employees with continuous learning opportunities through online training contributes to greater engagement, likely by enhancing their skills, increasing job satisfaction, and fostering a sense of personal and professional growth. This finding is consistent with research by [17], [18], [30], which highlights that training programs, particularly those that are easily accessible online, can significantly improve employee engagement by offering employees the opportunity to invest in their own development. The moderate path coefficient suggests that online training, while beneficial, may not be as impactful as leadership and diversity initiatives. However, its T-statistic (2.671) and P-value (0.003) indicate that the relationship is statistically significant, reinforcing the value of training programs as an important factor in maintaining employee engagement. Given the rapid changes in digital industries, providing employees with online training

can ensure they stay up-to-date with industry trends and acquire new skills, leading to enhanced job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

4. Implications for Practice

The findings of this study have several practical implications for digital startups in West Java. First, the significant impact of Adaptive Leadership underscores the importance of selecting and developing leaders who are flexible, responsive, and supportive of their teams. Startups should prioritize leadership development programs that enhance emotional intelligence, decision-making under uncertainty, and collaboration. By fostering adaptive leadership, organizations can create a work environment that keeps employees engaged and motivated, enabling them to thrive in the fast-changing digital industry. Additionally, the moderate but significant impact of Diversity & Inclusion Implementation highlights the necessity of fostering inclusive workplaces where employees feel valued and respected. Rather than being treated as compliance measures, diversity and inclusion initiatives should be viewed as strategic tools for enhancing engagement and retention. Digital startups should focus on building diverse teams, providing equal growth opportunities, and promoting inclusive leadership practices to strengthen employee commitment.

Furthermore, the positive impact of Online Training reinforces the importance of continuous learning and skill development in maintaining employee engagement. While its effect may not be as strong as leadership or diversity initiatives, accessible and relevant online training programs can help employees stay motivated and competitive in the evolving digital landscape. Digital startups should invest in training opportunities that enhance job performance and professional growth, ensuring employees remain adaptable to industry changes. By integrating strong leadership, inclusive practices, and continuous learning, startups can create a dynamic and supportive work environment that drives long-term employee engagement and organizational success.

5. Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between leadership, diversity, training, and employee engagement, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample size of 170 participants, limited to digital startups in West Java, may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other regions or industries. Future research could expand the sample size and include organizations from different sectors for a broader understanding of employee engagement factors. Second, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of response biases, which could be addressed in future studies by incorporating alternative data collection methods such as interviews or focus groups. Additionally, examining the long-term effects of adaptive leadership, diversity and inclusion, and online training on employee engagement would provide valuable insights into the sustainability of these relationships. Finally, future research could explore potential moderating effects of organizational culture, job type, or demographic factors (e.g., age, gender, and tenure) to offer a more nuanced understanding of how various elements interact to shape employee engagement in digital startups.

CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the factors that significantly influence employee engagement within digital startups in West Java. The results underscore the crucial role of Adaptive Leadership in fostering a positive work environment that drives employee motivation and commitment. Additionally, the findings highlight the importance of Diversity & Inclusion Implementation and Online Training as complementary practices that further enhance employee engagement. Organizations, particularly in the fast-evolving digital sector, are encouraged to prioritize leadership development, inclusive workplace practices, and continuous learning opportunities. By doing so, digital startups can create a more engaged, motivated, and productive workforce, ultimately leading to enhanced organizational success. Future research may explore the

long-term effects of these practices and examine the moderating factors that may influence these relationships in different organizational contexts.

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