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Linking Principals' Digital Leadership to Teacher Performance through Digital Transformation Readiness: An Integrative Literature Review

Sabar LT Simatupang[1], Elfrianto[2]
[1,2] *Universitas Efarina, Pematangsiantar, Indonesia*
Corresponding Author : sabarsimatupang70@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Digital transformation has reshaped educational practices and increased the need for school leadership that can support teachers in adapting to technology-driven changes. However, existing studies tend to examine principals' digital leadership, teacher readiness, and teacher performance separately, leaving the mechanism connecting these constructs insufficiently integrated. This study aims to synthesize existing evidence on the relationships among principals' digital leadership, teachers' digital transformation readiness, and teacher performance, and to develop an integrative framework explaining the potential role of readiness in linking leadership with professional performance. An integrative literature review was conducted using a predefined corpus of 12 scholarly articles published between 2022 and 2026. The articles were examined through structured evidence extraction, evidence classification, conceptual harmonization, relational synthesis, and integrative thematic synthesis. The findings show relatively consistent evidence that principals' digital leadership is positively associated with teacher performance, while complementary evidence indicates relationships between digital leadership and digital readiness and between readiness for change and teacher performance. The synthesis further identifies teacher digital transformation readiness as a multidimensional construct encompassing capability readiness, psychological readiness, and organizationally enabled readiness. Nevertheless, none of the reviewed studies directly tested the complete pathway linking principals' digital leadership to teacher performance through digital transformation readiness. Therefore, this review proposes digital transformation readiness as a theoretically plausible explanatory mechanism rather than an empirically confirmed mediator. The resulting leadership–readiness–performance framework highlights that effective educational digital transformation depends on the interaction between supportive digital leadership, teachers' preparedness for change, and enabling organizational conditions.

Key Word *Digital Leadership, Digital Transformation Readiness, Teacher Performance, Principal Leadership, Integrative Literature Review.*

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PENDAHULUAN

Digital transformation has become an increasingly important dimension of educational change, reshaping not only the technological infrastructure of schools but also the ways in which teaching, professional collaboration, instructional decision-making, and school management are organized. The growing integration of digital platforms, technology-supported instruction, artificial intelligence, and digitally mediated communication has created new expectations for schools and teachers.

Teachers occupy a central position in this process because school-level digital transformation ultimately becomes meaningful when it is incorporated into teaching and professional activities. The reviewed literature indicates, however, that teachers do not demonstrate uniform levels of preparedness for digital change. Anggraini et al. (2025) found that teacher readiness for digital transformation varies particularly in relation to digital literacy, pedagogical competence, adaptability, and understanding of contemporary educational change.

This organizational dimension places school leadership at the center of digital transformation. As schools become increasingly dependent on digital systems and technology-supported teaching, principals are expected to perform functions that extend beyond conventional administration. They must articulate a coherent digital vision, facilitate technology-supported communication, encourage innovation, support teachers' professional learning, supervise technology integration, and establish organizational conditions that enable teachers to adapt.

The reviewed evidence provides substantial support for the relevance of principals' digital leadership to teacher outcomes. Timan et al. (2022) conceptualized digital leadership through five dimensions—visionary leadership, digital-age learning culture, excellence in professional practice, systemic improvement, and digital citizenship—and reported relationships between these dimensions and teacher performance.

One potentially important explanatory mechanism is teacher digital transformation readiness. The reviewed studies suggest that readiness is conceptually broader than digital competence. Digital competence primarily reflects teachers' knowledge and ability to use digital technologies, whereas readiness additionally concerns whether teachers are psychologically willing, pedagogically prepared, confident in their ability to adapt, and supported by their organization to participate in digital transformation. Sarinten & Raharja (2023) provide particularly relevant evidence for this distinction.

More direct evidence linking digital leadership to readiness is provided by Harsanti et al. (2025) . Their study of 382 Indonesian teachers examined digital leadership, digital readiness, perceived usefulness, and teachers' intention to use artificial intelligence. The findings indicate that digital leadership contributes to teachers' digital readiness and that digital readiness forms part of the indirect pathway connecting leadership with technology-use intention.

Taken together, the reviewed studies reveal a distinctive pattern of empirical fragmentation. One stream establishes a relationship between principals' digital leadership and teacher performance (Putra et al., 2025; Siskawati et al., 2025; Timan et al., 2022; Yovinda et al., 2025). A second provides evidence connecting digital leadership with teachers' digital readiness and technology-related behavioral outcomes (Harsanti et al., 2025). A third demonstrates that readiness for change is associated with teacher performance and can operate as an intermediate mechanism between digital competence and performance (Sarinten & Raharja, 2023) .

This fragmentation is accompanied by a conceptual problem. Across the literature, terms such as digital competence, digital readiness, technology readiness, readiness for change, and digital transformation readiness are closely related but not conceptually interchangeable. Digital competence concerns what teachers are capable of doing with technology, while readiness additionally involves their willingness, confidence, pedagogical preparedness, and capacity to adapt to change.

Based on the reviewed evidence, this study conceptualizes teacher digital transformation readiness as teachers' capability, psychological willingness, and organizationally supported preparedness to adopt, integrate, and sustain digitally enabled changes in their instructional and professional practices.

From this perspective, digital leadership may contribute to performance through two theoretically distinguishable pathways. The first is a direct pathway, in which leadership practices such as digital vision, technology-supported communication, professional development, digital supervision, and innovation support directly shape teachers' professional practices. The second is a potential indirect pathway, in which these leadership practices strengthen teachers' digital transformation readiness, enabling them to translate organizational digital initiatives into changes in instructional and professional behavior.

Accordingly, this integrative literature review aims to synthesize and critically examine evidence concerning principals' digital leadership, teachers' digital transformation readiness, and teacher performance and to develop an integrative framework explaining the potential role of readiness in linking leadership with professional performance.

METODE PENELITIAN

This study employed an integrative literature review (ILR) to synthesize and critically examine the relationships among principals' digital leadership, teachers' digital transformation readiness, and teacher performance. An integrative approach was selected because the literature relevant to these constructs is conceptually and methodologically heterogeneous.

Literature Corpus

The review was based on a predefined corpus of 12 scholarly articles published between 2022 and 2026. The articles were selected based on their substantive relevance to at least one component of the conceptual relationship investigated in this review: principals' digital leadership, teachers' readiness for digital transformation, and teacher performance.

The use of a predefined corpus means that this review was not intended to claim exhaustive coverage of all publications concerning digital leadership or teacher readiness. Instead, the corpus was used for an in-depth integrative analysis of theoretically connected evidence.

Evidence Classification

Studies were categorized as core evidence when they directly examined relationships between two or more focal constructs, including digital leadership and teacher performance, digital leadership and digital readiness, or readiness and teacher performance. Studies were categorized as bridging or supporting evidence when they investigated closely related constructs that helped connect different components of the proposed pathway.

Data Extraction

Each article was subjected to full-text reading and structured evidence extraction. The extraction process focused on the study's bibliographic information, educational context, research objective, research design, participants and sample size, focal constructs, theoretical or conceptual framework, measurement approach, analytical technique, principal findings, statistical relationships where reported, mediating or indirect effects, contextual conditions, and methodological or reporting limitations.

Numerical findings were extracted according to the statistical information reported in the original articles, including path coefficients, regression coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values where available. When inconsistencies occurred within an article, they were retained as methodological observations rather than silently reconciled.

Conceptual Harmonization

A specific analytical procedure was applied to conceptually related but non-equivalent constructs. The terms digital competence, digital readiness,

technology readiness, readiness for change, and digital transformation readiness were not automatically merged into a single variable. Instead, their definitions, dimensions, and empirical roles were compared across studies.

The comparison resulted in three higher-order dimensions used to organize the synthesis of teacher digital transformation readiness. The first, capability readiness, encompasses digital competence, technological knowledge, and digital-pedagogical capability. The second, psychological readiness, encompasses cognitive and emotional acceptance, confidence or efficacy, adaptability, and willingness to engage with change.

These dimensions were used as an integrative analytical framework rather than treated as an empirically validated measurement scale. Thus, the review did not assume that the original studies measured an identical latent construct.

Data Analysis

The extracted evidence was analyzed through a three-stage procedure consisting of descriptive mapping, relational synthesis, and integrative thematic synthesis.

In the first stage, descriptive mapping was conducted to characterize the 12 studies according to publication year, educational setting, participants, research design, analytical method, focal constructs, and principal findings. In the second stage, relational synthesis was performed by grouping empirical findings into four analytical pathways:

Evidence directly testing a relationship was distinguished from evidence that merely supported its theoretical plausibility.

The third stage involved integrative thematic synthesis. Findings across the studies were compared to identify recurring themes, conceptual convergence, divergence, explanatory mechanisms, and contextual conditions.

Assessment and Interpretation of Evidence

The evidence was interpreted according to the methodological characteristics and directness of each study. Quantitative studies using regression or structural equation modeling were examined primarily for the direction, statistical significance, and structure of the reported relationships.

Particular caution was applied to causal and mediating interpretations because most of the empirical evidence was based on observational or cross-sectional designs.

The same principle was applied to mediation. A mediating relationship was considered directly supported only when the original study explicitly tested an indirect effect involving the relevant variables.

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Development of the Integrative Framework

The final analytical stage involved constructing an integrative framework from the converging and complementary evidence identified across the corpus. Principals' digital leadership was positioned as an organizational-level antecedent, teachers' digital transformation readiness as a potential individual-level explanatory mechanism, and teacher performance as the professional outcome.

The first pathway was evaluated using studies directly examining digital leadership and teacher performance. The second pathway was reconstructed from complementary evidence across studies examining leadership and readiness, readiness and performance, and related indirect mechanisms.
Accordingly, the proposed mediating position of digital transformation readiness was treated as an integrative theoretical proposition generated from the reviewed evidence, not as an empirically established causal mechanism.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the Reviewed Studies

The 12 studies reviewed in this study were published between 2022 and 2026 and represented heterogeneous methodological approaches and educational contexts. Quantitative studies constituted the main source of direct relational evidence, particularly those employing regression analysis and structural equation modeling.

The distribution of evidence was uneven across the three focal constructs. Several studies directly examined the relationship between digital leadership and teacher performance, whereas fewer studies directly connected digital leadership with teacher readiness or readiness with teacher performance.

Table 1.
Characteristics and Evidence Mapping of the Reviewed Studies

Study	Design and Context	Main Constructs	Principal Finding Relevant to the Review	Evidence Role
Timan et al. (2022)	Quantitative; SEM-AMOS; elementary-school context	Digital leadership; teacher performance; student competence	Dimensions of principals' digital leadership were reported to affect teacher performance and student competence	Core: DL → TP

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Study	Design and Context	Main Constructs	Principal Finding Relevant to the Review	Evidence Role
Amin & Sumiati (2023)	Cross-sectional quantitative survey; multiple regression; 105 teachers from 10 public senior high schools in Cirebon	Principal leadership; readiness for change; teacher performance	Principal leadership and readiness for change were positively associated with teacher performance, individually and jointly	Bridging: Leadership + Readiness → TP
Sarinten & Rahardja (2023)	Quantitative; PLS-SEM; 262 vocational-school teachers in Klaten	Digital competence; readiness for change; teaching performance	Digital competence predicted readiness and performance; readiness positively predicted performance and participated in a significant indirect relationship	Core: Readiness → TP
Purwati & Auliani (2024)	Literature study; thematic/descriptive analysis	Digital transformation; teacher readiness and competence	Digital literacy, competence, training, infrastructure, and openness to change were identified as important for teacher preparedness	Contextual
Anggraini et al. (2025)	Literature study; thematic analysis	Teacher readiness; digital transformation; digital literacy	Readiness extends beyond technical skill to pedagogical competence and adaptability; continuous training and learning communities are important	Conceptual /contextual
Harsanti et al. (2025)	Quantitative; PLS-SEM; 382 Indonesian teachers	Digital leadership; digital readiness; perceived usefulness; AI-use intention	Digital leadership contributed to digital readiness; readiness participated in an indirect pathway toward intention to use AI	Core: DL → DR

Study	Design and Context	Main Constructs	Principal Finding Relevant to the Review	Evidence Role
Putra et al. (2025)	Quantitative correlational; 45 teachers and one principal; MAN 1 Palembang	Digital-based leadership; teacher performance	Digital leadership was positively and significantly associated with teacher performance (β = .62, p < .05)	Core: DL → TP
Siskawati et al. (2025)	Quantitative; PLS-SEM; 342 teachers	Digital leadership; organizational communication; organizational culture; emotional intelligence; teacher performance	Digital leadership positively predicted teacher performance (β = .310, t = 2.464, p = .014)	Core: DL → TP
Yovinda et al. (2025)	Quantitative; PLS-SEM; 301 teachers	Digital leadership; work engagement; innovation; occupational stress; performance	Digital leadership and innovation were associated with performance; work engagement represented an important intermediate mechanism	Supporting: DL → TP and alternative mechanisms
Syah & Wahyudi (2026)	Quantitative descriptive-explanatory with qualitative support; 61 teachers in 3T areas of Central Kalimantan	Digital transformation; teacher readiness	Readiness involved technical, pedagogical, and psychological dimensions and was constrained by infrastructural and institutional conditions	Core contextual: Readiness
(Ningrum et al., 2026)	Descriptive qualitative; elementary-school context	Technology implementation; learning motivation	Technology supported interactive learning, while facilities, connectivity, and teacher training constrained implementation	Contextual

Study	Design and Context	Main Constructs	Principal Finding to the Review	Relevant Evidence Role
Jaya et al. (2026)	Descriptive qualitative; one experienced Indonesian-language teacher	Deep-learning pedagogy; technology integration	Technology supported instructional practice, but the study did not directly examine the focal leadership–readiness–performance relationships	Peripheral/ contextual

The mapping indicates that the corpus should not be interpreted as 12 equivalent tests of the proposed model. Instead, the studies provide different types and strengths of evidence. This distinction forms the basis for the relational synthesis that follows.

Digital Leadership as an Organizational Antecedent of Teacher Performance

The most consistent relational pattern in the reviewed literature concerns principals' digital leadership and teacher performance. Timan et al. (2022) conceptualized principals' digital leadership through five dimensions: visionary leadership, digital-age learning culture, excellence in professional practice, systemic improvement, and digital citizenship. Their findings indicate that these dimensions contribute to teacher performance and student competence. This conceptualization is particularly relevant because it demonstrates that digital leadership extends beyond a principal's personal ability to operate technological tools.

Evidence from Putra et al. (2025) supports this relationship in a madrasah setting. Digital-based leadership included digital vision, digital supervision, technology-based communication, teacher training, and innovation in organizational management. The study reported a positive and significant relationship between digital leadership and teacher performance ($\beta = .62$, $p < .05$). Digital vision and technology-based communication were particularly prominent within the leadership practices described in the study. Siskawati et al. (2025) provide additional evidence using PLS-SEM with 342 teachers. Digital leadership positively predicted teacher performance ($\beta = .310$, $t = 2.464$, $p = .014$). However, their model also incorporated organizational communication, organizational culture, and emotional intelligence. This broader structure is important because it indicates that digital leadership operates within an organizational system rather than independently from it.

The findings of Yovinda et al. (2025) reinforce the possibility of more complex mechanisms. Their model incorporated digital leadership, educational innovation, work engagement, occupational stress, and teacher performance. The

findings connected digital leadership and educational innovation with teacher performance while highlighting work engagement as an important intermediate mechanism. At the same time, the predominance of cross-sectional and correlational evidence requires caution.

Conceptualizing Teacher Digital Transformation Readiness

Syah & Wahyudi (2026) provide particularly relevant evidence by conceptualizing teacher readiness through technical, pedagogical, and psychological dimensions. Their study of 61 teachers in 3T areas of Central Kalimantan also indicates that infrastructure, institutional support, policy support, and professional training affect teachers' ability to respond to digital transformation. Anggraini et al. (2025) similarly emphasize that teacher readiness is not determined solely by technical proficiency. Their literature-based analysis identifies pedagogical competence, adaptability, digital literacy, continuous professional development, and learning-community support as important elements of readiness. Sarinten & Raharja (2023) add an important psychological dimension through the concept of readiness for change. Their conceptualization incorporates cognitive, emotional, and intentional responses to organizational change.

The cross-study synthesis consequently identifies three analytically distinguishable dimensions of teacher digital transformation readiness. The first is capability readiness, encompassing digital competence, technological knowledge, and the pedagogical ability to integrate technology into teaching. The second is psychological readiness, encompassing cognitive acceptance, emotional acceptance, confidence or efficacy, adaptability, and willingness to participate in change. This definition is an integrative synthesis of the reviewed literature rather than a measurement scale validated by the 12 studies.

Digital Leadership and Teacher Digital Transformation Readiness

Harsanti et al. (2025) provide the clearest empirical evidence. Their study of 382 Indonesian teachers examined digital leadership alongside digital readiness, perceived usefulness, and intention to use artificial intelligence. Digital leadership contributed to digital readiness, while digital readiness participated in an indirect pathway toward teachers' intention to use AI.

However, the outcome investigated by Harsanti et al. (2025) was intention to use artificial intelligence, not teacher performance. Contextual findings nevertheless help explain why leadership might affect readiness. Syah & Wahyudi (2026) identify institutional support, policy, infrastructure, and training as relevant conditions of teacher readiness.

Digital Transformation Readiness and Teacher Performance

Evidence concerning the relationship between readiness and performance is most clearly represented by Sarinten & Raharja (2023). Their study of 262 vocational-school teachers found that digital competence positively predicted readiness for change ($\beta = .337$, $t = 5.546$, $p < .001$).

The study additionally reported a significant indirect relationship between digital competence and teaching performance through readiness for change. This finding is theoretically important because it suggests that possessing digital capability may not be sufficient for improved professional performance.

Amin & Sumiati (2023) provide complementary evidence. Their study of 105 teachers from ten public senior high schools in Cirebon found that principal leadership and readiness for change were positively and significantly related to teacher performance, individually and jointly. Nevertheless, readiness for change as measured by these studies cannot automatically be equated with the broader digital transformation readiness construct proposed in this review.

Fragmented Evidence and the Missing Integrative Link

A central finding of this review is therefore not the absence of research concerning digital leadership, teacher readiness, or teacher performance. Rather, the major gap lies in the fragmentation of evidence across these constructs.

Table 2.
Cross-Study Evidence Matrix

Relationship	Main Evidence	Interpretation
Digital Leadership → Teacher Performance	Putra et al. (2025), Siskawati et al. (2025), Timan et al. (2022), and Yovinda et al. (2025)	Relatively consistent positive evidence
Digital Leadership → Digital Readiness	Harsanti et al. (2025)	Direct evidence exists, but remains limited within the corpus
Digital Transformation/Institutional Conditions → Teacher Readiness	Syah & Wahyudi (2026); supported contextually by Anggraini et al. (2025) and Purwati & Auliani (2024)	Readiness depends on individual and organizational conditions
Readiness for Change → Teacher Performance	Amin & Sumiati (2023); Sarinten & Raharja (2023)	Positive evidence, although constructs are not identical to digital transformation readiness

Relationship	Main Evidence	Interpretation
Digital Leadership → Readiness → Teacher Performance	No study in the corpus directly tests the complete pathway	**Primary empirical gap**
Other intermediate mechanisms between leadership and performance	Yovinda et al. (2025); organizational factors in Siskawati et al. (2025)	Indicates that the leadership–performance relationship may involve multiple mechanisms

Putra et al. (2025), Siskawati et al. (2025), Timan et al. (2022), and Yovinda et al. (2025) provide evidence for the leadership–performance segment. Harsanti et al. (2025) provide evidence for the leadership–readiness segment. Sarinten & Raharja (2023) provide strong evidence for the readiness–performance segment and demonstrate that readiness can function as an intermediate mechanism in a digital-competence model.

These findings form a theoretically coherent sequence, but a sequence assembled across different studies is not equivalent to a mediation effect demonstrated within one empirical model. Consequently, the reviewed literature supports the theoretical plausibility of mediation, not its empirical confirmation.

An Integrative Leadership–Readiness–Performance Framework

Based on the converging and complementary evidence, the present review proposes a framework containing both a direct and a potential indirect pathway. Within this framework, principals' digital leadership functions as an organizational-level antecedent. Teacher digital transformation readiness functions as a potential translation mechanism between these organizational conditions and individual professional behavior.

The framework therefore offers an explanation for why digital leadership may not automatically produce improved performance. Leadership practices first need to be translated into conditions that teachers can understand, accept, and enact. This interpretation extends the literature beyond a simple direct-effect perspective while remaining consistent with the limitations of the available evidence.

Contextual and Boundary Conditions

The reviewed studies also demonstrate that the proposed mechanism operates within broader contextual conditions. Infrastructure represents one of the most recurrent factors. Syah & Wahyudi (2026) demonstrate that teachers working in 3T contexts encounter limitations associated with technological infrastructure and institutional support.

Professional learning constitutes another recurring condition. Training is important not simply because it transfers technical knowledge but because it can strengthen capability, confidence, pedagogical understanding, and willingness to experiment with new instructional practices.

Organizational communication and culture may perform similar functions. Siskawati et al. (2025) situate digital leadership alongside organizational communication and organizational culture, while Yovinda et al. (2025) demonstrate the relevance of engagement and innovation. Consequently, the proposed pathway should not be interpreted as a closed three-variable mechanism.

First, digital leadership should be understood as an organizational capability rather than merely the technological competence of a principal. Second, digital transformation readiness should be distinguished from digital competence. Digital competence forms an important component of preparedness, but readiness additionally incorporates psychological willingness, pedagogical preparedness, adaptability, efficacy, and organizational enablement. Third, the review introduces digital transformation readiness as a potential cross-level explanatory mechanism connecting organizational leadership with individual teacher performance. Existing studies provide evidence for separate components of this mechanism, but not yet for the complete pathway.

The synthesis also has practical implications for school leadership. Investment in technological infrastructure alone is unlikely to be sufficient for digital transformation if teachers remain pedagogically or psychologically unprepared to use it. Principals seeking to promote digital transformation should therefore combine strategic digital direction with teacher-capacity development.

Several limitations within the reviewed evidence should inform interpretation. First, much of the direct relational evidence is based on cross-sectional quantitative designs. Second, substantial conceptual heterogeneity exists across the studies. Digital readiness, readiness for change, digital competence, and digital transformation readiness overlap conceptually but are not identical. Similarly, teacher performance is operationalized differently across studies. Third, the corpus contains some internal reporting inconsistencies. For example, Timan et al. (2022) report different sample sizes in different sections of the article, while Amin & Sumiati (2023) present an inconsistency between the sign of one coefficient in the regression equation and the positive coefficient and interpretation reported elsewhere.

Most importantly, the complete mediation model proposed by this review remains empirically untested within the reviewed corpus. Future research

should therefore operationalize principals' digital leadership, digital transformation readiness, and teacher performance simultaneously and test both direct and indirect relationships within a single model. Future studies should also validate the multidimensional conceptualization of digital transformation readiness proposed here. In particular, the relationships among capability readiness, psychological readiness, and organizationally enabled readiness require empirical examination rather than being assumed to constitute a single latent construct.

CONCLUSION

This integrative literature review demonstrates that principals' digital leadership, teacher digital transformation readiness, and teacher performance constitute conceptually related but empirically fragmented areas of research. Across the 12 reviewed studies, evidence consistently indicates that digitally oriented leadership is associated with teacher performance, while a smaller body of evidence connects digital leadership with teacher readiness and teacher readiness with professional performance.

The review further shows that teacher digital transformation readiness cannot be reduced to digital competence alone. Based on these findings, the review proposes an integrative framework in which principals' digital leadership functions as an organizational antecedent that may influence teacher performance both directly and indirectly through teachers' digital transformation readiness. The framework does not establish a new causal relationship; rather, it integrates separate strands of empirical evidence into a coherent proposition for future investigation.

Finally, this review is limited by its predefined corpus of 12 studies and therefore does not claim exhaustive representation of the broader literature on educational digital transformation. Future research should empirically test the proposed framework using designs capable of simultaneously examining principals' digital leadership, teacher digital transformation readiness, and teacher performance.

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