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THE EFFECTS OF DIGITAL READINESS AND DIGITAL SKILL ON INNOVATIVE WORK BEHAVIOR: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF WORK ENGAGEMENT AMONG AUTOMOTIVE ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES

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Abstract:
Digital transformation has intensified competition in Indonesia's automotive sector and increased the need for account executives to adopt innovative, technology-enabled selling practices. This study examines the relationships of digital readiness and digital skill with innovative work behavior among automotive account executives in Surabaya, with work engagement as a mediating variable. A quantitative design was employed using 150 purposively selected respondents from multiple automotive brands. Data were collected through an online questionnaire and analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS. The results show that digital readiness is positively associated with innovative work behavior ($\beta = 0.272$, $p = 0.002$) but not with work engagement ($\beta = 0.047$, $p = 0.576$). Digital skill is positively associated with both innovative work behavior ($\beta = 0.286$, $p = 0.001$) and work engagement ($\beta = 0.509$, $p < 0.001$), while work engagement is positively associated with innovative work behavior ($\beta = 0.259$, $p = 0.001$). The indirect effect of digital readiness through work engagement is not significant ($\beta = 0.012$, $p = 0.598$), whereas the indirect effect of digital skill is significant ($\beta = 0.132$, $p = 0.006$). These findings indicate that digital readiness and digital skill operate through different pathways and highlight the value of practice-oriented digital-skills development for supporting engagement and innovative selling behavior.

Keywords: Automotive Account Executive; Digital Readiness; Digital Skill; Innovative Work Behavior; Work Engagement

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has brought about significant changes in the industrial sector, particularly in the automotive industry (Llopis-Albert et al., 2021). The automotive market in Indonesia is now facing intense competition, compounded by the entry of dozens of new foreign vehicle brands, especially electric vehicle manufacturers (Gaikindo, 2026). In Surabaya, economic activity remains strong, Badan Pusat Statistik (2025) reported that Surabaya's year-over-year growth in regional gross domestic product (GRDP) reached 5.45% in the third quarter of 2024, surpassing the 4.91% figure for East Java and the national rate of 4.95%. This achievement indicates that Surabaya has dynamic and promising economic activity across various industrial sectors, particularly the automotive sector. This situation creates significant pressure on every automotive company. They must not only prioritize the physical quality and price of their products but also strive to rapidly adopt digital technologies to reach consumers (Lionarto et al., 2022). Therefore,

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digital transformation has become a crucial mechanism for organizational adaptation and sustainable innovation (Ardiansyah, 2023).

Digital transformation has triggered intense competition and high work pressure, which as a result requires adjustments to work patterns and the skills needed at the operational level, particularly for automotive account executives. Conventional selling methods, such as waiting for customers to come to the dealership, holding exhibitions in shopping centers, or distributing printed brochures, are less than optimal for obtaining prospective customers (Hendradi & Priyambodo, 2023). Digitalization has also shifted consumer habits, as prospective buyers now tend to search for information independently through the internet and check online reviews before deciding to purchase a vehicle (Aditya Ivan et al., 2025). With such changes taking place, automotive account executives are now required to adopt digitally based selling and to think of creative ways to use social media, customer relationship management (CRM) applications, and other digital platforms in order to generate leads and maintain relationships with prospective customers (Bowen et al., 2021).

The transition from conventional selling methods to digital media-based selling methods is a concrete manifestation of innovative work behavior, because employees are required to generate, develop, and implement new ideas in their work (Pradipta et al., 2026). To sustain such innovative behavior, account executives need digital readiness, which according to (Azzahra et al., 2025), is defined as an individual's openness, preparedness, and knowledge to adopt and use digital technology, as well as digital skill, which according to (Nilawati et al., 2026) is defined as the ability to use social media, CRM systems, and other digital tools effectively in order to manage digital information and solve digital problems. This connection between digital readiness, digital skill, work engagement, and innovative work behavior can be analyzed through the perspective of Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory. Viewed from this perspective, digital readiness and digital skill function as personal resources that give employees confidence and the capacity to face demanding sales targets (Bakker et al., 2023). When sales personnel possess strong digital capability, they become more confident in using technology for sales activities, and this capability can strengthen work engagement, reflected in vigor, dedication, and absorption (Yani et al., 2026), This positive psychological condition can encourage employees to explore new ideas, generate new approaches, produce creative solutions, and implement ideas to boost sales (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010).

Although digital readiness, digital skill, and innovative work behavior have been studied, most evidence has been collected in settings that differ from those of automotive sales. For example, Riswan et al. (2021) and Rahmadani et al. (2025), investigated digital readiness in public-sector and manufacturing settings, respectively, research on digital readiness and digital skill, prior to this work, had been primarily limited to academics, medical practitioners, and IT professionals (Briones et al., 2023; Moafa et al., 2026). studies on digitalization in sales had predominantly focused on the use of technology, CRM, or selling skills (Endres et al., 2024; Vial, 2021). and none addressed the psychological mechanisms through which digital can enhance or hinder behavior. Thus, the evidence that digital readiness and digital skill are applicable among automotive account executives and that work engagement helps explain their relationships with innovative work behavior is scarce.

Such a gap has theoretical and practical implications. Without more explicit evidence on the correlation between various digital resources and innovative behavior among automotive sales personnel, dealership managers have little guidance on whether human-resource investment should be directed toward psychological readiness, practical digital skill, or both. This is why the present study deals with the following seven research questions:

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1) H1: Is digital readiness positively associated with innovative work behavior among automotive account executives?
2) H2: Is digital readiness positively associated with work engagement among automotive account executives?
3) H3: Is digital skill positively associated with innovative work behavior among automotive account executives?
4) H4: Is digital skill positively associated with work engagement among automotive account executives?
5) H5: Is work engagement positively associated with innovative work behavior among automotive account executives?
6) H6: Does work engagement mediate the relationship between digital readiness and innovative work behavior?
7) H7: Does work engagement mediate the relationship between digital skill and innovative work behavior?

From the JD-R perspective, this study contributes by exploring simultaneously digital readiness and digital skill, testing work engagement as a mediating mechanism, and focusing on customer service representatives in the automotive sector in Surabaya. This research model does not assume that readiness and skill are interchangeable digital resources but rather explores whether the two elements have clear direct and indirect routes to innovative professional behavior. This context is important, because customer service representatives in the automotive sector work under pressure of high sales targets and at the same time become more and more dependent on digital instruments for customer acquisition and customer relationship management. The findings are expected to extend the application of the JD-R Theory to digitally enabled sales work and offer practical guidance for dealership managers who design digital-capability and engagement initiatives.

METHODS

The study employed a quantitative design, utilizing a primary data collection procedure. The research was conducted on respondents of several automotive account executives representing various car brands in Surabaya. The sampling strategy was purposive and nonprobability. The respondents' inclusion criteria were automotive account executives working for automobile brands that were active in Surabaya. The number of the population was not mentioned, but the researchers collected data from respondents that satisfied the inclusion criteria. The measurement model consisted of 29 indicators : six for digital readiness, eight for digital skill, nine for work engagement, and six for innovative work behavior. The sample size was determined by a preliminary test procedure based on the rule of thumb proposed by Hair et al. (2021). The sample size was suggested to be five to ten times the number of indicators. The expected volume of the sample size was 145 but the actual volume of sample was 150. The researchers used questionnaires from disagree to strongly agree on a five-point Likert scale. Data was collected using Google forms as automotive account executives are very mobile. The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS version 4.1.1.8 and a two-step procedure. In the first stage, the outer model was assessed with outer loading, average variance extracted (AVE), heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT), composite reliability and cronbach's alpha. In the second stage, the inner model was evaluated using coefficient of determination R^2, f^2, and

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bootstrapped tests for direct and indirect effects. Figure 1 below provides the conceptual framework of this study. The conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1.

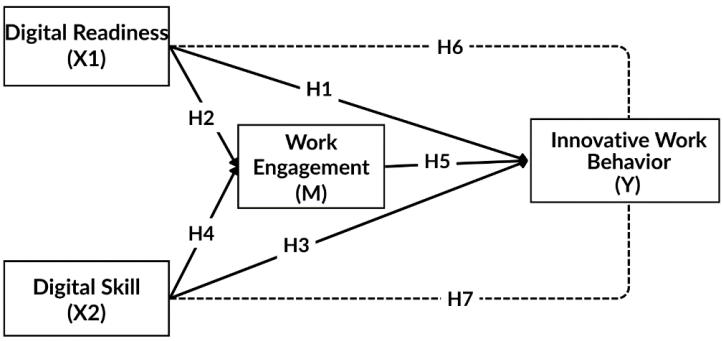


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

This study involves 150 automotive account executives from several vehicle brands that operate in Surabaya. As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents were male (68.7%), aged between 20 and 30 years (50.7%), and had between one and five years of work experience (54%). The respondents in this study were from several car brands, namely : Toyota, Honda, Mitsubishi, Suzuki and others.

Table 1. Respondent Criteria

Criteria	Assessment	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	103	68.7%
	Female	47	31.3%
Age	< 20 Years	6	4%
	20-30 Years	76	50.7%
	30-40 Years	48	32%
	> 40 Years	20	13.3%
Work Experience	< 1 Year	24	16%
	1-5 Years	81	54%
	> 5 Years	45	30%
Location	Surabaya	150	100%
Vehicle Brand	Toyota	47	31.33%
	Honda	20	13.33%
	Mitsubishi	17	11.33%
	Suzuki	13	8.67%
	BYD	13	8.67%

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Daihatsu	12	8%
Hyundai	9	6%
Wuling	7	4.67%
Mazda	6	4%
Chery	4	2.67%
Isuzu	1	0.67%
Polytron	1	0.67%

Source: Authors' processed data (2026).

The profile results show that the sample is characterized by a relatively young and early-career sales workforce operating in an increasingly digitalized automotive retail environment

Outer Model Assessment

Convergent Validity

Outer loadings above 0.70 were considered sufficient for indicator reliability and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2021). In the first measurement model, DS2 and WE7 had outer loadings less than 0.70 and were removed prior to re-estimation. The remaining indicators still reflected the targeted Digital Skill and Work Engagement constructs. Final outer-loading results are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Outer Loading

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading	Assessment
Digital Readiness	**DR1**	0.749	Valid
	DR2	0.777	Valid
	DR3	0.771	Valid
	DR4	0.747	Valid
	DR5	0.784	Valid
	DR6	0.727	Valid
Digital Skill	**DS1**	0.720	Valid
	DS3	0.753	Valid
	DS4	0.753	Valid
	DS5	0.746	Valid
	DS6	0.802	Valid
	DS7	0.731	Valid
	DS8	0.723	Valid
Work Engagement	**WE1**	0.731	Valid
	WE2	0.754	Valid
	WE3	0.720	Valid

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	WE4	0.739	Valid
	WE5	0.745	Valid
	WE6	0.744	Valid
	WE8	0.737	Valid
	WE9	0.718	Valid
Innovative Work Behavior	**IWB1**	0.716	Valid
	IWB2	0.749	Valid
	IWB3	0.710	Valid
	IWB4	0.742	Valid
	IWB5	0.771	Valid
	IWB6	0.721	Valid

Source: Authors' processed data (2026).

Average variance extracted (AVE) was also used to assess convergent validity. The value of AVE is more than 0.50 which means that a construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators (Hair et al., 2021). As seen in Table 3, all constructs were above this threshold.

Table 3. Average Variance Extracted

Variable	AVE	Assessment
Digital Readiness	0.577	Valid
Digital Skill	0.558	Valid
Innovative Work Behavior	0.540	Valid
Work Engagement	0.542	Valid

Source: Authors' processed data (2026).

Discriminant Validity

To evaluate discriminant validity, we used heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). The criterion proposed (Hair et al., 2021). Is that all HTMT values should be below 0.9, which means that there is discriminant validity between constructs. Based on this criterion, the values of all HTMT for the pairwise constructs were less than 0.9, which indicated that the four constructs had sufficient discriminant validity.

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio

Variable	*Digital Readiness*	*Digital Skill*	*Innovative Work Behavior*
Digital Readiness			
Digital Skill	0.757		
Innovative Work Behavior	0.646	0.692	
Work Engagement	0.425	0.599	0.597

Source: Authors' processed data (2026).

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According to the information shown in Table 4, we could confirm the discriminant validity because all the HTMT values were below 0.9.

Reliability Assessment

A construct can be regarded as reliably measured once its composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha both surpass the 0.70 benchmark (Hair et al., 2021). The analysis reveals that every construct met this benchmark on both indicators, reflecting satisfactory internal consistency and overall measurement reliability.

Table 5. Reliability Assessment

Variable	*Composite Reliability*	*Cronbach's Alpha*	Assessment
Digital Readiness	0.891	0.853	Valid
Digital Skill	0.898	0.868	Valid
Innovative Work Behavior	0.876	0.830	Valid
Work Engagement	0.904	0.880	Valid

Source: Authors' processed data (2026).

As shown in Table 5, all constructs achieved composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70, confirming satisfactory internal consistency and reliability.

Inner Model Assessment

R-Square Analysis

The coefficient of determination (R^2), was used to evaluate how much of the variance in the variables of interest is explained by the underlying structural model. According to Hair et al. (2021), if R^2 is equal to 0.25, 0.5, and 0.75, it has a weak, moderate, and substantial level of variance explanation, respectively. Thus, the R^2 of innovative work behavior is 0.457, which means that it has a weak to moderate level of variance explanation. It can be said that 45.7% of variance is explained by the predictors, and 54.3% is explained by unobserved variables. On the other hand, the R^2 of work engagement is 0.292, which means that it has a weak level of variance explanation. Hence, 29.2% of variance is explained by digital readiness and digital skill, and 70.8% is explained by unobserved variables.

Table 6. R-Square Analysis (R^2)

Variable	R^2	*Adjusted* R^2
Innovative Work Behavior	0.457	0.446
Work Engagement	0.292	0.283

Source: Authors' processed data (2026).

Effect Size Analysis (f^2)

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Effect size (f^2) was used to evaluate the influence of each predictor on the explained variance of the associated endogenous construct. Benchmarks applied conventionally to the current data set were approximately 0.02 for a small effect, 0.15 for a medium, and 0.35 for a large one.

Table 7. Effect Size Analysis (f^2)

Variable	*Digital Readiness*	*Digital Skill*	*Innovative Work Behavior*	*Work Engagement*
Digital Readiness			0.079	0.002
Digital Skill			0.072	0.212
Innovative Work Behavior				
Work Engagement			0.088	

Source: Authors' processed data (2026).

Table 7 reveals that digital readiness had a small effect on innovative work behavior ($f^2 = 0.079$) and a negligible one on work engagement ($f^2 = 0.002$). Digital skill had a small effect on innovative work behavior ($f^2 = 0.072$) and a medium effect on work engagement ($f^2 = 0.212$). Work engagement had a small effect on innovative work behavior ($f^2 = 0.088$). Thus, among the predictors of work engagement, digital skill made the largest contribution to explained variance, whereas all direct predictors of innovative work behavior showed relatively small effect sizes.

Hypothesis Testing

To test the expected direct and indirect relationships, bootstrapping was used with 5,000 subsamples. Two tailed significances of $p < 0.05$ and $t > 1.96$ Hair et al. (2021). were used to get statistical support for the expected relationships. The result can be found in Table 8.

Table 8. Hypothesis Tests

Hypothesized relationship	*Path coefficient (β)*	*t statistic*	*p value*	**Decision**
H1: Digital Readiness → Innovative Work Behavior	0.272	3.139	0.002	Supported
H2: Digital Readiness → Work Engagement	0.047	0.559	0.576	Not supported
H3: Digital Skill → Innovative Work Behavior	0.286	3.235	0.001	Supported
H4: Digital Skill → Work Engagement	0.509	6.066	< 0.001	Supported

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H5: Work Engagement → Innovative Work Behavior	0.259	3.347	0.001	Supported
H6: Digital Readiness → Work Engagement → Innovative Work Behavior	0.012	0.527	0.598	Not supported
H7: Digital Skill → Work Engagement → Innovative Work Behavior	0.132	2.766	0.006	Supported

Source: Authors' processed data (2026).

Effect of Digital Readiness on Innovative Work Behavior

H1 was supported: digital readiness was positively associated with innovative work behavior ($\beta = 0.272$, $t = 3.139$, $p = 0.002$). This indicates that automotive account executives that are more prepared to understand and embrace digital technologies are more likely to develop and implement novel approaches to their work. Within the JD-R model, digital readiness reflects personal resource which enable them to adapt to evolving job demands (Bakker et al., 2023). Such dynamic working conditions are particularly salient in the automotive sales sector, as dealerships rapidly adopt digital technologies which transform traditional selling practices (Llopis-Albert et al., 2021).

The observed link between digital readiness and innovative work behavior is in line with similar studies in different sectors. For instance, a study found that digital readiness predicted innovative work behavior for the public sector employees Riswan et al. (2021), and several others have found that readiness for technological changes is positively related to using novel approaches at work Kaur (2025), Rahmadani et al. (2025), Kumi (2024), and Azzahra et al. (2025) While different models have been used and different technologies have been the focus of each study, their findings support the central argument of this study, that is, readiness for technological change facilitates experimentation and the implementation of novel ways of working.

In the context of automotive sales, such changes most prominently concern customer relationships, as buyers increasingly turn to online sources of information when assessing their purchase options (Aditya Ivan et al., 2025). In particular, automotive account executives required to use Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems to track and understand their potential customers' interests and behavior and to communicate with them through social media (Bowen et al., 2021). In this regard, the present findings suggest that digital readiness enables automotive account executives to update their selling practices in accordance with the changing preferences of their customers. By extension, the present findings support the argument that digital readiness contributes to the use of innovative work behaviors in the automotive sales sector.

Effect of Digital Readiness on Work Engagement

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H2 was not supported. The relationship between digital readiness on work engagement was positive but statistically non-significant (β = 0.047, t = 0.559, p = 0.576). Thus, psychological openness to and preparedness for the use of digital technology failed to predict significant differences in vigor, dedication, and absorption among the automotive account executives surveyed. Unlike the significant connection between digital readiness and innovative work behavior, such absence implies that digital readiness is not necessarily a resource that contributes to employees' psychological engagement with their work.

The result aligns with Ninda and Soetjipto (2026), study that also revealed a weak connection between the said variables. In their paper, the authors concluded that the level of digital readiness of Indonesian professionals predicted their work engagement negligibly. However, other researchers have discovered a positive link between the two concepts. For instance, Wening (2025) found that technology readiness increased work engagement among lecturers. Similarly Khoza et al. (2024). proved that there was a significant relationship between the readiness to adopt technology and one's ability to stay engaged at work. It can be inferred that digital technology readiness influences employees' engagement when they have a positive perception of it and it is applicable to their field of work and available resources.

In the case of automotive account executives, increased sales quotas and ongoing customer interaction may make it challenging to invest in employee readiness for engagement. The JD-R model provides the opportunity for personal resources to enhance engagement, but it presupposes the presence of other factors in the work environment and the ability of employees to use these resources (Bakker et al., 2023). By not being significant in the H2 relationship, the data suggests that the notion of readiness creates a boundary condition. Being psychologically prepared to use digital technology does not guarantee that an employee will invest more effort into work and demonstrate dedication and absorption.

Effect of Digital Skill on Innovative Work Behavior

H3 was supported. Digital skill was positively associated with innovative work behavior (β = 0.286, t = 3.235, p = 0.001). Therefore, practical competence in the use of social media, CRM systems, digital advertising tools and related technologies is relevant not only for routine administration, but also for the generation and application of new sales practices.

Because studies using the exact term digital skill remain limited, related research on digital competence provides a useful comparison. Haspemi et al. (2023) found that digital skill was positively related to innovative work behavior; accordingly, Noerchoidah et al. (2021) and Nilawati et al. (2026) discovered a similar association between digital competence and innovative behavior in the context of other occupations. Therefore, the application of practical digital competence can be considered as a way to increase the number of tools and methods applied by an employee to improve the quality of work.

Some previous research have failed to find a direct effect. Suhada et al. (2024, 2026), considered digital skill as a moderator or mediator resource in other models. Such variation can denote occupational differences in the contribution of digital skill to innovation. In an automotive field-based sales role, one can put practical digital skill immediately into use generating leads, communicating with clients, following up and supporting transactions. The sample is relatively young so this might be a relevant factor, but the data do not support that age translated to stronger

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digital application. In conclusion, the results validated the digital skill as a proximal predictor of innovative work behavior, at least as it pertains to the account executives sampled (Huu, 2023).

Effect of Digital Skill on Work Engagement

H4 was supported. Digital skill was positively associated with work engagement ($\beta = 0.509$, $t = 6.066$, $p < 0.001$). The path coefficient was the largest among the structural relationships in the model. Account executives who could use social media, CRM systems, and other digital tools more practically tended to have a higher level of work engagement. When considering the job demands-resources theory, digital skill might be regarded as a personal resource that employees can use to deal with technology-related job demands and feel competent, energetic, dedicated, and absorbed in their work.

The current finding was consistent with those of previous studies conducted in different working fields, such as the research by Julia et al. (2025), Briones et al. (2023), Moafa et al. (2026), and Yuan and Wang (2025), The studies demonstrated that digital competence or skill was positively related to work engagement. Even though the current study focused on automotive sales, and these studies investigated other working fields, the overall findings were similar. It could be suggested that digital skill reduces obstacles that employees experience with technology and increases their confidence in their work.

Oberländer and Bipp (2022), however, reported that digital competence was not significantly related to work engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic, illustrating that contextual conditions can alter the role of digital resources. The present findings suggest that, in the relatively stable and customer-facing context of automotive sales, practical digital skill is more strongly related to engagement than digital readiness. This result supports practice-oriented digital-skills development as a potentially important component of employee-development programs, while recognizing that the cross-sectional design does not establish causality.

Effect of Work Engagement on Innovative Work Behavior

H5 was supported. Work engagement was positively associated with innovative work behavior ($\beta = 0.259$, $t = 3.347$, $p = 0.001$). The more engaged these account executives were (vigor, dedication, and absorption), the more initiative in innovating their sales practices they displayed. This result aligns with the notion that engaged employees are more likely to expend cognitive and emotional resources on the job than what is required to satisfactorily perform their core tasks.

The result is consistent with similar findings across different industries. Sitompul et al. (2024), Welia and Tannady (2026), Sanhokwe et al. (2023), Ali et al. (2022), and Sabuhari et al. (2025) all found positive associations between work engagement and innovative work behavior, albeit with varying control variables and occupational contexts. Together, these findings support work engagement as an important psychological factor associated with employees' propensity to innovate

Automotive account executives may find engagement particularly relevant, as their job involves intense client engagement and tough sales targets. Psychologically engaged and energetic employees may be more willing to try new ways of finding leads, communicating value and maintaining customer relationships. The early-career nature of the sample is mostly useful context but the present study cannot assess whether age or tenure moderates this relationship. These differences could be directly tested in future research.

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The Mediating Role of Work Engagement in the Relationship between Digital Readiness and Innovative Work Behavior

H6 was not supported. The indirect relationship between digital readiness and innovative work behavior through work engagement was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.012$, $t = 0.527$, $p = 0.598$). This finding is consistent with H2 which revealed that there was no significant relationship between digital readiness and work engagement. Therefore, work engagement did not mediate the relationship between digital readiness and innovative work behavior for this sample. However, digital readiness had a significant direct relationship with innovative work behavior (H1). This means that the relationship between digital readiness and innovative work behavior is mainly through the proposed direct path in the model.

The literature on this mechanism is inconclusive. Ninda and Soetjipto (2026) obtained a similarly insignificant role of digital readiness in explaining work engagement, while Khoza et al. (2024) and Wening (2025) identified positive associations between readiness and engagement in different contexts. Related studies employing similar constructs obtained contrasting results (Chandra Sari et al., 2024; Prasetyono et al., 2022; Yani et al., 2026). The current finding should therefore be understood as context-specific rather than as universal evidence against the relevance of work engagement to digital readiness. In the present sample, the insignificant readiness-to-engagement path limited the applicability of the proposed indirect mechanism.

A possible explanation for this finding is that automotive account executives are apt to convert digital readiness into specific adjustments in selling behaviors due to the short-term nature of their sales-focused work. The readiness to embrace digital technology can facilitate rapid experimentation with customer interaction methods, lead generation approaches, and sales communication tactics that do not necessarily require increased engagement with the job itself.

The Mediating Role of Work Engagement in the Relationship between Digital Skill and Innovative Work Behavior

H7 was supported. The indirect relationship between digital skill and innovative work behavior through work engagement was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.132$, $t = 2.766$, $p = 0.006$). Given that the direct path from digital skill to innovative work behavior was also significant, it is plausible that work engagement partially mediates the relationship between digital skill and innovative work behavior. In other words, digital skill was positively associated with innovative work behavior both directly and indirectly through enhanced work engagement. This finding is consistent with recent studies that identified the role of digital resources, engagement, and innovation in technology intensive and professional work contexts (Briones et al., 2023; Moafa et al., 2026; Xu & Aumeboonsuke, 2025; Zia et al., 2025). In the JD-R model, practical digital skill can be theorized as a personal resource that enables employees to cope with digital job demands; intensified work engagement could represent an alternative psychological mechanism through which digital skill can be converted to innovative work behavior. The youthful and early-career characteristics of the sample could be related to the observed relationship, however, this possibility needs to be further investigated.

CONCLUSION

The results revealed that digital readiness and digital skill were both positively associated with innovative work behavior but related to work engagement differently. Digital readiness was directly

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and significantly associated with innovative work behavior but was not significantly associated with work engagement. On the other hand, digital skill was positively associated with both innovative work behavior and work engagement, and work engagement in turn was positively associated with innovative work behavior. These findings suggest that psychological readiness and practical proficiency should not be regarded as interchangeable resources for fostering employees' engagement and innovation.

As revealed by the mediation analysis, work engagement did not play a mediating role in the relationship between digital readiness and innovative work behavior, but it significantly mediated the relationship between digital skill and innovative work behavior. Thus, in addition to the primarily direct relationship between digital readiness and innovative work behavior, a direct-plus-indirect relationship was found between digital skill and innovative work behavior. In doing so, this study not only supported the JD-R Theory by investigating the role of different person-sourced resources in sales jobs but also extended its application to the context of digitally enhanced selling.

From a managerial perspective, in order to reinforce the positive role of digital resources in sales jobs, automotive dealerships need to complement their efforts in cultivating employees' positive attitude toward the use of technology with continuous practice in building their digital skills. The training course designed for employees can include such activities as operating social media and customer relationship management (CRM) software, communicating with customers in a digital environment, and using other relevant tools. As indicated by this study, digital skill is positively related to innovative work behavior through a direct mechanism and an indirect mechanism by which it influences work engagement. In addition, managers need to recognize that readiness may not be adequate for reinforcing engagement on its own but should be combined with other job-related and organizational factors to facilitate the effective application of digital resources by employees.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, cross-sectional study design does not support establishing a time or causal order between digital readiness, digital skill, work engagement, and innovative work behavior. Thus, one should interpret the insignificant H6 mediation cautiously. Second, the study relies on a single city and uses purposive sampling; thus, the findings may not apply to the entire population of automotive account executives. Third, all the concepts were operationalized and measured objectively using survey responses, which is vulnerable to common-method variance due to respondents' perception. Future studies should adopt a longitudinal and/or multi-city study design, utilize various sources of measurement, collect data from a wider range of automotive sales occupations, and explore other job and organizational resources that might moderate the theorized relationships.

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