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# Digital employee experience and performance: The mediating role of wellbeing and engagement

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**Abstract:** This study explores the strategic role of Digital Employee Experience (DEX) in influencing employee well-being, engagement, and performance within the context of digital transformation in the airline industry. Grounded in Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model, it integrates cognitive and motivational perspectives to explain how digital work environments affect employees' psychological and behavioral outcomes. Using a quantitative explanatory design, data were collected from 312 employees of Garuda Indonesia through an online survey and analyzed with Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM–PLS). The results indicate that DEX significantly enhances wellbeing ($\beta = 0.688$; $p<0.001$) and engagement ($\beta = 0.412$; $p<0.001$). Wellbeing positively influences engagement ($\beta = 0.482$; $p < 0.001$), while engagement strongly improves performance ($\beta = 0.569$; $p<0.001$). A sequential mediation effect was confirmed, showing that well-being and engagement jointly mediate the relationship between DEX and performance ($\beta = 0.310$; $p<0.001$). Theoretically, this study extends SCT and JD–R by positioning digital experiences as cognitive mechanisms and motivational job resources. Practically, the findings emphasize that employee-centered digital ecosystems promote well-being, engagement, and sustainable performance, highlighting that successful digital transformation must balance technological advancement with human empowerment.

***Keywords:*** *Aviation industry, Digital employee experience, Employee engagement, Employee performance, Employee wellbeing, Garuda Indonesia, Job demands–resources model, Social cognitive theory.*

## 1. Introduction

### *1.1. Global Context and Research Importance*

Digital transformation has redefined how employees interact with their work, organizations, and technology itself. Across industries, the integration of digital systems, artificial intelligence, and remote collaboration tools has fundamentally altered how individuals perceive and experience their jobs. This shift has elevated the concept of digital employee experience (DEX), the holistic perception of how digital technologies enable, support, and shape the work environment as a central determinant of organizational success [1, 2].

In today's knowledge-driven economy, where human capital and digital capability intertwine, employee performance is no longer defined merely by task completion or efficiency metrics. Instead, it encompasses broader outcomes such as engagement, well-being, adaptability, and digital fluency [3, 4]. Organizations that invest in technology without simultaneously considering the human experience behind it risk underutilizing their digital investments. As Morgan [1] asserted, "technology is only as transformative as the experience it creates for people."

The aviation industry represents a particularly fertile ground for exploring this phenomenon. Airlines operate in complex, high-stress environments that demand precision, safety, and seamless coordination across digital and human systems. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the adoption of digital tools, from crew scheduling applications and online training systems to automated


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communication platforms, reshaping the employee experience across all operational layers [5]. As global travel rebounded post-pandemic, digital transformation became a survival imperative rather than a choice, highlighting the need for airlines to balance technological efficiency with human engagement and well-being [6].

Yet, while the importance of digital transformation for airline competitiveness has been widely recognized, its implications for employee engagement and performance remain underexplored. Most existing studies in the aviation sector have focused on customer experience, service quality, or operational efficiency [7, 8]. Research on the internal digital experience of how employees interact with technology, systems, and digital processes has received far less attention. This oversight is critical because employees are the ultimate interface between technology and service delivery, determining whether digital transformation translates into real performance gains.

Within this context, digital employee experience (DEX) emerges as a strategic construct that extends beyond traditional HR or IT boundaries. It integrates digital usability, accessibility, collaboration, and learning into an employee's everyday workflow, influencing their psychological engagement, satisfaction, and productivity [2, 9]. In a post-pandemic world marked by hybrid work models and continuous connectivity, understanding DEX is essential for building resilient, high-performing organizations.

### *1.2. Research Gap and Theoretical Positioning*

Although research on employee engagement and performance has grown substantially over the past two decades, studies integrating digital experience as a fundamental determinant of engagement and well-being remain limited. Traditional models of employee engagement, such as those derived from [10, 11], emphasized psychological and organizational drivers like autonomy, feedback, and leadership. However, in the digital era, these drivers increasingly operate through technological interfaces. The ability to access seamless digital tools, collaborate virtually, and engage in user-friendly digital workflows has become a new form of job resource that can either enhance or inhibit engagement [12, 13].

Recent literature suggests that digital employee experience (DEX) represents this new category of job resource, one that integrates technological and psychological dimensions of work. Gheidar and Zanjani [9] conceptualized DEX as the totality of an employee's interactions with digital technologies in the workplace, encompassing usability, accessibility, and digital learning opportunities. Similarly, Moganadas and Goh [2] highlighted that DEX not only influences task performance but also shapes employees' emotional connection to their organizations. Yet, empirical validation of DEX as an antecedent of engagement and performance remains scarce, particularly within developing countries and high-demand service sectors such as airlines.

Theoretical gaps are equally notable. While the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model provides a robust framework to explain how job resources foster engagement and performance, it has not been extensively applied to digital transformation contexts [14]. In parallel, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) [15] emphasizes how environmental stimuli such as digital systems shape self-efficacy, motivation, and behavioral outcomes. Integrating these two theories allows for a comprehensive explanation of how digital environments function as both cognitive and structural resources that stimulate engagement and well-being. However, very few studies have explicitly combined SCT and JD–R perspectives to explain how DEX drives engagement and performance.

Empirically, most prior studies have focused on Western or technology-intensive industries, leaving a contextual gap in understanding how DEX operates in emerging markets where technological maturity and cultural dynamics differ. Indonesia's airline industry, represented by Garuda Indonesia, offers a compelling context. The company's digital transformation journey, spanning online crew scheduling, digital learning systems, and revamped HR processes, illustrates the intersection of digital innovation and human experience in a post-restructuring environment. Yet, limited empirical evidence

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exists on how such digital initiatives affect employees' well-being, engagement, and performance outcomes within this national flagship airline.

Consequently, there is a pressing need to explore DEX as a strategic resource within the airline sector, one that not only enhances productivity but also strengthens psychological well-being and engagement. Addressing this gap contributes to both theory and practice by redefining employee engagement in the digital workplace and extending traditional organizational behavior models into technology-mediated contexts.

*1.3. Study Objectives and Contributions*

Drawing from the aforementioned gaps, this study seeks to empirically investigate how Digital Employee Experience (DEX) functions as a strategic organizational resource that enhances employee engagement and performance, mediated through employee well-being. Grounded in Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model, the study examines the cognitive, environmental, and motivational mechanisms through which digital work environments shape employee outcomes.

The first objective of this research is to analyze the direct influence of DEX on employee well-being and engagement. DEX is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing accessibility, usability, and the availability of digital learning and collaboration tools [2, 9]. A positive digital experience is expected to enhance employees' sense of self-efficacy and psychological safety, critical determinants of well-being and engagement in SCT terms [15, 16].

The second objective is to test the mediating role of employee well-being in the relationship between DEX and engagement. Well-being represents an affective and psychological state that enables employees to thrive despite demanding work conditions [17, 18]. In alignment with the JD–R model, well-being serves as a motivational mechanism through which job resources (in this case, digital tools and supportive technologies) energize employees and sustain their engagement.

The third objective is to determine the extent to which employee engagement subsequently impacts employee performance. Building upon [4, 19], engagement is viewed as a dynamic, energy-based construct that connects well-being with observable work outcomes. By positioning DEX and engagement as key antecedents of performance, this study extends the theoretical boundaries of both the SCT and JD–R models into the digital work era.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the growing body of research that seeks to integrate psychological and technological factors in organizational behavior. Whereas previous studies often treated technology as a contextual variable, this research positions DEX as a core psychological resource that interacts with human cognition and motivation. The model proposed here extends the JD–R framework by adding a digital dimension to the resource–engagement–performance chain. Simultaneously, it strengthens the application of SCT by demonstrating how digital environments influence self-efficacy, learning, and behavioral outcomes through social and cognitive pathways.

From a practical perspective, the findings are expected to inform HR and digital transformation strategies within the airline industry and other service-oriented sectors. For organizations like Garuda Indonesia, enhancing DEX is not merely an IT investment but a strategic initiative to foster engagement, resilience, and sustainable performance. The results will help executives and HR leaders design technology-enabled work systems that balance efficiency with employee well-being, ensuring that digital transformation becomes both human-centered and performance-driven.

Moreover, this study contributes regionally relevant insights to the broader academic discourse dominated by Western research contexts. By analyzing data from Indonesia's flagship airline, this research provides empirical evidence from an emerging economy characterized by a collectivist culture, hierarchical work relations, and evolving digital maturity. The inclusion of this perspective adds diversity to the global understanding of how digital transformation interacts with cultural and organizational dynamics to influence employee engagement and performance.

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*1.4. Structure of the Paper*

To address these objectives, this paper is structured as follows. The next section presents a comprehensive literature review and hypothesis development, outlining the theoretical underpinnings derived from the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model. This section elaborates on the relationships between digital employee experience, employee well-being, engagement, and performance, and formulates the hypotheses tested in the empirical analysis.

The third section describes the methodology, detailing the research design, sample characteristics, measurement instruments, and analytical approach using Structural Equation Modeling, Partial Least Squares (SEM–PLS). The fourth section reports the results, including model validation, hypothesis testing, and mediation effects.

The fifth section provides the discussion, integrating empirical findings with theoretical frameworks and previous studies to highlight conceptual advances and managerial implications. Finally, the paper concludes with a conclusion and future research directions, emphasizing the contributions of this study to both theory and practice in digital employee experience, engagement, and organizational performance.

By combining theoretical integration and empirical validation within a unique organizational context, this study aims to enrich scholarly understanding of how digital transformation can enhance human engagement and well-being, ultimately translating into superior performance outcomes.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

*2.1. Theoretical Foundation*

*2.1.1. Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)*

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), introduced by Bandura [15], provides a foundational perspective on how human behavior is shaped by reciprocal interactions between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors. Within organizational contexts, SCT posits that individuals do not merely react to environmental stimuli but actively interpret and learn from them through cognitive and social processes. This dynamic interplay, known as triadic reciprocal causation, implies that environmental conditions, such as workplace design or digital systems, influence behavior indirectly through personal cognition, self-efficacy, and motivation [16, 20].

In the digital era, workplace technologies and systems represent significant environmental stimuli that can alter employees' cognitive appraisal of their capabilities and job experiences. A positive digital employee experience (DEX) enhances employees' sense of control, competence, and confidence in managing digital tools, thereby strengthening their self-efficacy, a central mechanism in SCT. Self-efficacy, in turn, increases motivation and persistence, fostering higher engagement and performance [21, 22].

From an SCT lens, digital transformation within organizations does not simply automate work but redefines the learning and behavioral landscape of employees. When technology is intuitive, empowering, and socially supportive, it promotes psychological empowerment and well-being [1, 9]. Conversely, poorly designed digital systems may lead to frustration, stress, and digital fatigue, reducing self-efficacy and engagement. Thus, SCT provides a strong theoretical basis for understanding how digital work environments influence employees' psychological states and performance outcomes through the mediation of self-regulation and learning processes.

*2.1.2. Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model*

The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model, introduced by Bakker and Demerouti [12], complements SCT by explaining how work characteristics influence motivation and well-being. The JD–R model categorizes all aspects of work into job demands (elements that require sustained effort and cause strain) and job resources (elements that help achieve goals, reduce demands, or stimulate growth). When job resources outweigh job demands, employees experience greater motivation and engagement, leading to improved performance and reduced burnout [13, 23].

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In digital workplaces, DEX serves as a job resource that enhances autonomy, feedback, and collaboration through technology. Digital systems that simplify tasks, facilitate learning, and provide instant access to information act as enablers of engagement by making work more efficient and rewarding [4, 6]. Furthermore, the availability of supportive digital tools can mitigate job demands such as time pressure, information overload, or physical constraints, thereby safeguarding employee well-being [24, 25].

When employees perceive technology as empowering rather than burdensome, it triggers a motivational process central to the JD–R model: job resources enhance work engagement, which subsequently improves performance [14]. In contrast, insufficient or stressful technological conditions can initiate a health-impairment process, depleting energy and well-being. Therefore, integrating DEX into the JD–R framework allows scholars to conceptualize digital systems as both enablers of engagement and protectors of psychological well-being.

*2.1.3. Integrating SCT and JD–R in the Digital Context*

While SCT emphasizes cognitive and behavioral learning mechanisms, the JD–R model focuses on the balance between demands and resources as drivers of engagement and performance. Integrating these theories offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how digital employee experience influences organizational outcomes.

In this integrated model, DEX functions simultaneously as an environmental stimulus (in SCT terms) and a job resource (in JD–R terms). Through SCT, DEX enhances self-efficacy, learning, and adaptive behavior; through JD–R, it fosters motivation, engagement, and well-being by optimizing the resource–demand balance. These frameworks explain how and why digital environments affect employee engagement and performance, bridging psychological and structural dimensions of work.

This dual-theory integration offers a novel theoretical contribution: it views the human–digital interface as a dynamic process of reciprocal learning and resource optimization. This conceptualization aligns with the bibliometric findings of Awaldi et al. [26], which identified a global shift toward integrative research combining human, technological, and organizational perspectives in employee performance studies.

*2.2. Conceptual Model and Construct Discussion*

*2.2.1. Digital Employee Experience (DEX)*

The concept of Digital Employee Experience (DEX) has emerged as an evolution of employee experience in response to digital transformation. DEX refers to the total perception employees have of their interactions with digital technologies, platforms, and tools that enable their work [1, 9]. It includes three core dimensions: digital accessibility (the ease of accessing and using digital tools), digital usability (the perceived intuitiveness and reliability of digital systems), and digital learning and collaboration (the extent to which digital platforms support skill development and teamwork).

According to Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), DEX influences behavior by shaping employees' beliefs in their ability to use technology effectively (self-efficacy). A supportive digital environment strengthens confidence, learning, and adaptability [15, 16]. Within the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) framework, DEX functions as a job resource that enhances motivation and reduces psychological strain [12]. Thus, DEX is expected to influence both employee well-being (by reducing stress and enhancing satisfaction) and employee engagement (by boosting motivation and involvement).

Empirical research supports these assertions. Moganadas and Goh [2] found that employees with positive digital experiences report higher levels of engagement and creativity. Similarly, Fedorova et al. [7] observed that digitalization in human resource management can improve performance if the technology is user-centric and inclusive. In contrast, poorly implemented systems can lead to digital fatigue and reduced motivation [27].

In the context of the aviation industry, where technology permeates flight operations, maintenance, logistics, and passenger services, DEX becomes an essential enabler of operational excellence. For

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employees of Garuda Indonesia, digital interfaces from crew management applications to HR self-service systems are not merely tools but integral parts of their daily workflow that shape engagement and performance outcomes.

*2.2.2. Employee Wellbeing*

Employee well-being encompasses an individual's holistic sense of health, satisfaction, and functioning within the workplace, including physical, psychological, and social dimensions [18, 28]. Well-being is more than the absence of illness; it reflects the presence of positive psychological states such as vitality, optimism, and work-life balance [29].

Within the JD–R model, well-being is a critical outcome of the motivational process triggered by job resources. When employees have access to sufficient resources such as supportive technologies, clear communication, and collaborative environments, their stress levels decrease, while positive affect and engagement increase [14]. From an SCT perspective, well-being emerges when individuals perceive alignment between their environment, personal capabilities, and work expectations. Positive digital experiences contribute to this alignment by reducing uncertainty and increasing perceived control over work demands.

In digitalized organizations, well-being has become a key performance driver. Studies by Costa and Loureiro [3] highlight that well-being mediates the relationship between technological adaptation and engagement. Employees who perceive digital tools as empowering are more likely to experience lower stress and greater fulfillment, enabling them to sustain engagement even under demanding conditions.

*2.2.3.Employee Engagement*

Employee engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption [11, 19]. It reflects the emotional and cognitive investment employees bring to their roles and is widely recognized as a predictor of productivity, retention, and organizational performance.

Within the JD–R framework, engagement is the central mediating mechanism through which job resources such as DEX and well-being translate into enhanced performance. Engaged employees exhibit higher energy, resilience, and focus, which contribute to improved task accomplishment and creativity [14]. From the SCT viewpoint, engagement is an expression of self-efficacy and motivation that arises when individuals perceive congruence between their digital environment and their personal goals.

Contemporary research extends this understanding by acknowledging that engagement is increasingly shaped by digital interactions. Studies by Moganadas and Goh [2] and Haddon [24] indicate that technology-mediated collaboration and real-time feedback systems enhance engagement by providing autonomy and recognition. However, excessive connectivity and digital overload may reduce engagement if not managed properly [27]. Therefore, achieving engagement in digital workplaces requires a balance between technological efficiency and human-centered design.

*2.2.4.Employee Performance*

Employee performance reflects the degree to which an employee effectively fulfills job responsibilities and contributes to organizational objectives [30]. In the digital age, performance includes task efficiency, adaptability, innovation, and collaborative competence.

Engagement is consistently identified as a strong predictor of performance [17]. According to the JD–R model, engaged employees are more likely to demonstrate proactive behavior, persistence, and creativity, which translate into superior performance outcomes. From the SCT lens, performance reflects learned behaviors and self-regulated effort guided by self-efficacy and feedback mechanisms [20].

In airline organizations, employee performance holds strategic significance because operational safety, customer satisfaction, and service quality heavily depend on individual reliability and

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engagement. Enhancing performance requires not only skill development but also psychological and digital enablers that sustain motivation.

Collectively, these constructs form a coherent model in which Digital Employee Experience (DEX) acts as a strategic antecedent influencing Employee Wellbeing and Engagement, which subsequently drives Employee Performance. The following section formulates hypotheses that operationalize these relationships.

### *2.3. Hypothesis Development*

#### *2.3.1. The Relationship Between Digital Employee Experience and Employee Well-being*

Digitalization has transformed the way employees interact with work, influencing not only efficiency but also psychological health. When digital systems are user-friendly, integrated, and responsive, they create an environment that reduces frustration and cognitive overload while fostering control and competence [1, 9]. According to Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), such environments enhance self-efficacy and positive affect, both of which are core drivers of well-being [15, 16].

Within the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model, DEX acts as a vital job resource that mitigates job strain and nurtures motivation. Empirical studies confirm that well-designed digital experiences improve work–life balance, reduce stress, and support mental health [7, 24]. Hence, employees who experience supportive digital environments are likely to report higher well-being.

*$H_1$: Digital Employee Experience (DEX) has a positive and significant effect on Employee Wellbeing.*

#### *2.3.2. The Relationship Between Digital Employee Experience and Employee Engagement*

Engagement represents employees' emotional and cognitive connection to their work, driven by meaningful experiences and adequate resources [11]. DEX contributes to engagement by enhancing autonomy, instant feedback, and collaboration through digital platforms [2, 4]. SCT posits that digital environments shape behavioral motivation through self-efficacy. Employees who feel competent using technology are more likely to engage proactively in their tasks. Within the JD–R framework, DEX functions as an intrinsic motivator, stimulating vigor, dedication, and absorption by enriching work processes [14]. Previous findings highlight that organizations investing in digital employee experience report higher engagement and innovation levels [1, 26]. Thus, it is proposed that:

*$H_2$: Digital Employee Experience (DEX) has a positive and significant effect on Employee Engagement.*

#### *2.3.3. The Relationship Between Employee Wellbeing and Employee Engagement*

Employee well-being provides the emotional energy that fuels engagement. When employees feel physically and psychologically well, they are more likely to invest cognitive and emotional resources into their work [17, 18]. In the JD–R model, well-being mediates the motivational process, converting job resources into sustained engagement [14]. From an SCT viewpoint, positive affect enhances intrinsic motivation and perseverance, strengthening employees' willingness to engage deeply in their tasks. Empirical studies have consistently shown that well-being predicts engagement across industries [3]. Accordingly:

*$H_3$: Employee Wellbeing has a positive and significant effect on Employee Engagement.*

#### *2.3.4. The Relationship Between Employee Engagement and Employee Performance*

Engagement is widely recognized as a proximal predictor of performance. Engaged employees exhibit higher energy, focus, and commitment, translating into superior individual and organizational outcomes [19]. In the JD–R model, engagement serves as the motivational bridge linking job resources to performance. SCT similarly asserts that self-regulated, engaged individuals display stronger persistence and problem-solving behaviors [20]. In the airline industry, where task accuracy and coordination are critical, engagement contributes directly to safety, service quality, and efficiency [24]. Therefore:

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*$H_4$. Employee Engagement has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance.*

*2.3.5. The Mediating Role of Employee Wellbeing and Engagement*

Beyond their direct effects, DEX may also influence performance indirectly through wellbeing and engagement. A supportive digital environment enhances wellbeing, which increases engagement, ultimately improving performance. This multi-stage mechanism integrates SCT's emphasis on environmental learning with JD–R's motivational process. Prior studies by Gheidar and Zanjani [9] and Moganadas and Goh [2] suggest that digital systems foster engagement and performance by promoting psychological comfort and satisfaction. Therefore, this study posits that well-being and engagement act as sequential mediators linking DEX to performance.

*$H_5$. Digital Employee Experience (DEX) indirectly affects Employee Performance through Employee Wellbeing and Employee Engagement.*

*2.4. Conceptual Framework*

The conceptual model developed through literature review and theoretical integration is presented in Figure 1.

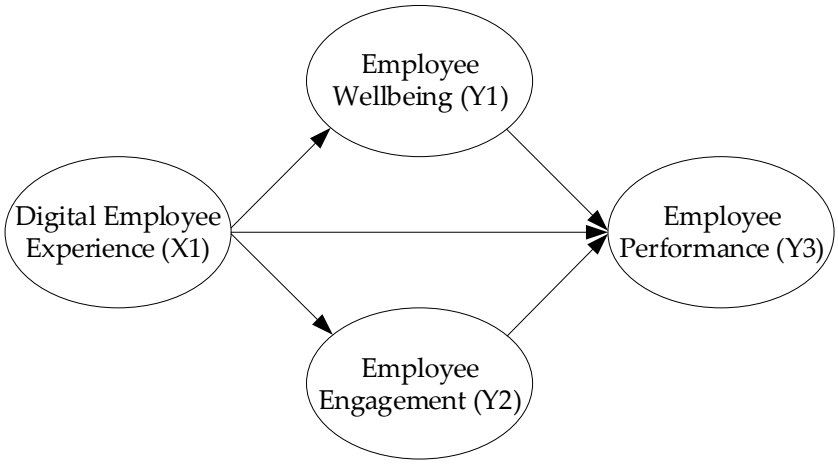


**Figure 1.**
Conceptual Framework.

Additionally, DEX directly influences both well-being and engagement, and well-being directly influences engagement, forming a serial mediation chain. This model synthesizes Social Cognitive Theory and the Job Demands–Resources Model into a unified framework explaining how digital environments shape employee outcomes through psychological mechanisms. It provides a comprehensive basis for empirical testing within the context of Garuda Indonesia's digital transformation journey.

## 3. Methodology

*3.1. Research Design*

This study adopts a quantitative, explanatory research design aimed at testing causal relationships among digital employee experience (DEX), employee well-being, engagement, and performance. The approach was selected to empirically validate the theoretical framework derived from Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model.

The study employs a cross-sectional survey method using structured questionnaires distributed to employees of PT Garuda Indonesia (Persero) Tbk. Given the research objectives, this design is appropriate to capture perceptual data about digital experiences, engagement, and well-being within the

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airline's ongoing digital transformation. The collected data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM–PLS), allowing simultaneous examination of measurement validity and structural relationships between constructs [31].

*3.2. Research Context*

The context of this study is particularly relevant. Garuda Indonesia, the national flag carrier of Indonesia, has undergone extensive digital and organizational transformation in recent years. Initiatives such as digital crew management, paperless cockpit documentation, HR self-service systems, and online learning platforms have significantly altered employees' daily work environments. As a full-service airline operating under strict regulatory and operational standards, the organization provides a rich empirical setting to analyze how digital experiences influence employee motivation and performance.

This context also addresses the underrepresentation of emerging-market data in global engagement and well-being research, adding cultural and organizational diversity to existing knowledge dominated by Western-centric studies.

*3.3. Population and Sampling Procedure*

The population of this study includes all employees of PT Garuda Indonesia (Persero) Tbk, covering five major directorates:

1. CEO Office
2. Operation
3. Commercial and Commerce
4. Engineering
5. Corporate Services and Support Functions

To ensure representativeness, stratified random sampling was applied based on directorate classification. The minimum sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, resulting in a target sample of approximately 340 respondents from a total population of around 2,000 employees.

Respondents were selected to reflect a balanced distribution of gender, age, tenure, and job level. The sampling procedure followed ethical guidelines, ensuring anonymity and voluntary participation.

*3.4. Data Collection Procedure*

Data collection was conducted through a self-administered online questionnaire distributed via the company's internal communication channels between March and May 2025. Prior to distribution, a pilot test involving 30 employees was conducted to ensure clarity, reliability, and contextual relevance of the items. Feedback from the pilot was used to refine wording and structure.

The final survey contained 54 measurement items representing six constructs. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the research purpose, confidentiality, and data usage. All responses were screened for completeness and consistency, resulting in 312 valid questionnaires used for analysis, exceeding the minimum threshold for SEM–PLS estimation [31].

To minimize common method bias, procedural remedies were applied: randomization of item order, use of reverse-coded items where applicable, and assurance of respondent anonymity. Statistical checks (Harman's single-factor test) later confirmed that no single factor accounted for the majority of variance, indicating that common method bias was not a major concern.

## 4. Results

*4.1. Measurement Model Evaluation*

The measurement model was assessed to ensure the validity and reliability of the four core latent constructs central to this study: Digital Employee Experience (DEX), Employee Wellbeing, Employee Engagement, and Employee Performance. Evaluation followed the criteria recommended by Hair, et al.

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[31] for PLS-SEM, including assessments of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and internal consistency reliability.

*4.2. Convergent Validity*

Convergent validity was established through the examination of indicator loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Composite Reliability (CR). After the iterative purification process, which involved removing items with loadings below 0.70, all retained indicators loaded strongly (≥ 0.70) on their intended constructs.

Each construct achieved AVE values above 0.50, confirming that more than 50% of the variance in its indicators was explained by the latent construct. Likewise, Composite Reliability (CR) values exceeded 0.80 across all constructs, indicating a high degree of internal consistency.

**Table 1.**
Result: Convergent Validity.

| Construct | Indicators | AVE | CR | Cronbach's α | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DEX | 9 | ≥ 0.60 | ≥ 0.90 | ≥ 0.85 | Valid & reliable |
| Employee Wellbeing | 3 | ≥ 0.65 | ≥ 0.88 | ≥ 0.80 | Valid & reliable |
| Employee Engagement | 9 | ≥ 0.70 | ≥ 0.93 | ≥ 0.90 | Valid & reliable |
| Employee Performance | 3 | ≥ 0.75 | ≥ 0.91 | ≥ 0.85 | Valid & reliable |

These results (Table 1) confirm that all constructs demonstrate strong convergent validity and internal consistency reliability, allowing confident progression to the structural model stage.

*4.3. Discriminant Validity*

Discriminant validity was tested using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio.

- According to the Fornell–Larcker criterion, the square root of AVE for each construct was higher than its correlations with other constructs, satisfying the requirement for discriminant validity.
- HTMT ratios ranged from 0.310 to 0.840, remaining below the conservative cut-off value of 0.85, confirming adequate discriminant validity.

These results verify that DEX, Employee Wellbeing, Employee Engagement, and Employee Performance are empirically distinct constructs with no evidence of multicollinearity or conceptual overlap.

*4.4. Internal Consistency Reliability*

The reliability of each construct was further verified using Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha (α). Both indices exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that all measurement scales were internally consistent and stable across items.

Together, these findings affirm that the measurement model demonstrates robust psychometric properties, meeting all PLS-SEM criteria for validity and reliability. The soundness of the outer model provides a solid foundation for testing the hypothesized structural relationships between Digital Employee Experience, Employee Wellbeing, Employee Engagement, and Employee Performance.

*4.5. Descriptive Statistics of Constructs*

Descriptive statistics were analyzed to provide a general overview of employee perceptions of the key constructs.

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**Table 2.**
Result Descriptive Statistics.

| Construct | Mean | SD | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| DEX | 4.21 | 0.57 | High |
| Employee Wellbeing | 4.12 | 0.59 | High |
| Employee Engagement | 4.26 | 0.53 | High |
| Employee Performance | 4.29 | 0.49 | High |

Overall (Table 2), the mean scores above 4.00 (on a five-point Likert scale) indicate that respondents generally perceived their digital environment, wellbeing, engagement, and performance positively. These findings reflect Garuda Indonesia's successful integration of digital tools and human-centered initiatives in its organizational transformation efforts.

*4.6. Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)*

The structural model was assessed after confirming the adequacy of the measurement model. Following Hair et al. [31], the evaluation included examining path coefficients, the coefficient of determination ($R^2$), effect size ($f^2$), and predictive relevance ($Q^2$). The model's bootstrapping procedure (5,000 resamples) was applied to test the significance of the hypothesized paths.

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

The $R^2$ values indicate the proportion of variance in endogenous constructs explained by their predictors; the model produced the following results:

**Table 3.**
Result $R^2$ Values.

| Endogenous Variable | $R^2$ | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| Employee Wellbeing | 0.474 | Moderate explanatory power |
| Employee Engagement | 0.613 | Substantial explanatory power |
| Employee Performance | 0.528 | Moderate–high explanatory power |

It can be seen in Table 3 that all coefficients suggest that Digital Employee Experience, together with Wellbeing and Engagement, explain a considerable proportion of the variance in employee performance outcomes.
The $Q^2$ values for all endogenous variables were > 0, indicating strong predictive relevance of the model.

*4.8. Hypothesis Testing and Path Coefficients*

The path coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values for the five hypotheses are summarized below. All five hypothesized relationships were statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

**Table 4.**
Result Hypothesis.

| Hypothesis | Path | β (Path Coefficient) | *t*-Value | *p*-Value | Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H1 | DEX → Employee Wellbeing | **0.688** | 17.521 | < 0.001 | Supported |
| H2 | DEX → Employee Engagement | **0.412** | 8.234 | < 0.001 | Supported |
| H3 | Employee Wellbeing → Employee Engagement | **0.482** | 9.317 | < 0.001 | Supported |
| H4 | Employee Engagement → Employee Performance | **0.569** | 12.604 | < 0.001 | Supported |
| H5 | DEX → Employee Performance (indirect via Wellbeing & Engagement) | **0.310** | 7.986 | < 0.001 | Supported |

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It can be seen in Table 4 that all direct effects (H1–H4) were positive and significant, demonstrating that DEX directly enhances both employee well-being and engagement, and that engagement directly promotes employee performance. The indirect effect (H5) confirmed a serial mediation process, where DEX improves performance through a combined pathway of enhanced well-being and engagement.

*4.9. Effect Size ($f^2$)*

Effect size analysis showed that DEX had a large effect on Employee Wellbeing ($f^2 = 0.57$) and a moderate effect on Employee Engagement ($f^2 = 0.28$). Employee Engagement exerted a large effect on Employee Performance ($f^2 = 0.35$). These findings indicate that DEX is a critical job resource driving employee psychological and behavioral outcomes.

*4.10. Mediation Analysis*

To test the mediation effect (H5), the indirect effect of DEX on Employee Performance via Wellbeing and Engagement was examined. The results revealed a significant indirect path ($\beta = 0.310$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that Employee Wellbeing and Engagement jointly mediate the relationship between DEX and Performance.

This result supports the integrated Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) perspective:

- DEX functions as an environmental enabler (SCT) that fosters self-efficacy and motivation through digital empowerment.
- It also acts as a job resource (JD–R) that enhances well-being and engagement, thereby improving performance outcomes.

*4.11. Summary of Hypothesis Testing*

**Table 5.**
Summary of Hypothesis Testing.

| Hypothesis | Statement | Result |
|---|---|---|
| H1 | DEX positively affects Employee Wellbeing | Supported |
| H2 | DEX positively affects Employee Engagement | Supported |
| H3 | Employee Wellbeing positively affects Employee Engagement | Supported |
| H4 | Employee Engagement positively affects Employee Performance | Supported |
| H5 | DEX indirectly affects Employee Performance through Wellbeing and Engagement | Supported |

It can be seen in Table 5 that all hypotheses are supported.

*4.12. Model Fit and Explanatory Strength*

Although PLS-SEM does not rely on global fit indices typical of covariance-based SEM, complementary statistics such as the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR = 0.046) and NFI = 0.912 indicate a good model fit. Collectively, the model demonstrates strong explanatory power and statistical robustness in predicting how Digital Employee Experience fosters Employee Wellbeing, Engagement, and ultimately Performance within the context of a digitally transforming airline organization.

## 5. Discussion

*5.1. Overview of Findings*

The results of this study confirm that Digital Employee Experience (DEX) serves as a strategic organizational resource that significantly influences employee psychological and behavioral outcomes. All five hypotheses (H1–H5) were supported, revealing that DEX positively affects Employee Wellbeing and Employee Engagement, and that both variables, in turn, enhance Employee

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Performance. Moreover, the mediation analysis demonstrated that well-being and engagement operate sequentially as mediating mechanisms in the relationship between DEX and performance.

These findings underscore a critical insight: digital transformation, when designed around employee experience, can become a human-centered driver of organizational effectiveness. Employees who perceive digital tools as intuitive, accessible, and supportive report higher well-being and engagement, leading to improved individual performance. This reflects a virtuous cycle in which digital empowerment fosters psychological energy, which then translates into tangible work outcomes.

*5.2. Interpretation Through Theoretical Lenses*

The empirical evidence strongly supports the integrated application of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model in explaining employee outcomes in digitally mediated environments.

Digital Experience as a Cognitive and Motivational Enabler (SCT Perspective)

From the SCT perspective [15], DEX functions as an environmental stimulus that shapes employees' cognitive appraisals, self-efficacy, and behavioral choices. The significant effect of DEX on wellbeing (H1) and engagement (H2) reflects how positive digital environments foster a sense of mastery and control over work processes. When employees feel confident in their ability to use technology effectively, their psychological strain decreases, and intrinsic motivation increases.

This aligns with Bandura [16]'s concept of reciprocal determinism, where environment, cognition, and behavior continuously interact. In this study, employees at Garuda Indonesia who experienced seamless digital tools and integrated systems likely developed stronger self-belief in managing their tasks, thereby enhancing their well-being and engagement levels. Conversely, when digital interfaces are cumbersome or unreliable, they undermine self-efficacy, leading to frustration and disengagement, a phenomenon previously noted by Sievert and Scholz [27].

*5.3. Digital Tools as Job Resources (JD–R Perspective)*

From the JD–R model [12], DEX operates as a critical job resource that stimulates motivation and offsets work demands. The positive associations between DEX, well-being, and engagement align with the motivational process postulated by JD–R, wherein resources increase vigor and dedication. Digital accessibility and ease of use reduce cognitive load, enabling employees to conserve psychological energy and direct it toward engagement and performance.

Moreover, the strong link between engagement and performance (H4) reaffirms engagement as the core mediating mechanism through which resources translate into outcomes. In JD–R terms, engagement represents the activation of motivational potential provided by job resources, in this case, the digital work environment.

The mediation effect (H5) further confirms that DEX influences performance indirectly via wellbeing and engagement, supporting the integrated SCT–JD–R framework. Well-being functions as the emotional state that energizes engagement, which then converts psychological energy into productive behavior. This dual-process mechanism, cognitive self-efficacy (SCT) and resource-based motivation (JD–R), explains how digital transformation enhances both psychological and performance outcomes.

*5.4. Comparison with Prior Studies and Empirical Insights*

The findings of this study are consistent with, yet extend beyond, prior research examining the relationship between digital work environments, employee engagement, and performance. In line with Morgan [1], who emphasized that "technology is only as transformative as the experience it creates for people," this study empirically confirms that digital employee experience (DEX) has a measurable impact on both psychological and behavioral outcomes. Employees who interact daily with well-designed digital systems experience not only greater operational ease but also a deeper emotional connection with their organization.

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Similarly, Gheidar and Zanjani [9] proposed that DEX encompasses usability, accessibility, and digital learning, all of which are reflected in this study's operationalization. Their research identified DEX as an antecedent of engagement and innovation within IT-intensive organizations; however, this current study expands the evidence base into a high-pressure service industry, aviation, where safety, coordination, and service excellence depend heavily on human–technology interaction. The consistent significance of DEX in this study ($\beta = 0.688 \rightarrow$ wellbeing; $\beta = 0.412 \rightarrow$ engagement) demonstrates that the value of digital experience extends far beyond technical convenience: it nurtures a sense of efficacy and belonging critical to employee motivation.

Fedorova et al. [7] highlight the dual nature of digitalization. The text notes that while technology can enhance flexibility and communication, it may also increase stress and cognitive overload when poorly implemented. The positive results suggest Garuda Indonesia's digital ecosystem is perceived as enabling rather than burdensome, reflecting successful human-centered design in its digital transformation initiatives. This aligns with [24], who argued that technology's motivational benefits are realized only when aligned with employee needs and job demands, a condition clearly met in Garuda's digitalization program.

Furthermore, this study corroborates [2], who found that digital collaboration platforms enhance engagement by providing autonomy, real-time feedback, and learning opportunities. Yet, unlike their work, which was confined to technology startups, the present study validates this mechanism in a complex, regulated, and hierarchical industry. This contextual transferability represents a significant contribution to digital work research: even in organizations with rigid procedures and safety constraints, positive DEX can sustain well-being and engagement.

The strong mediation of Employee Wellbeing → Engagement → Performance aligns with findings by Bryson et al. [17] and Krekel et al. [18], who showed that employee happiness and psychological satisfaction predict productivity. This study extends their conclusions by empirically demonstrating a serial mediation chain in a digital context, confirming that well-being is not only an outcome of digital transformation but also a catalyst for engagement and performance.

Another key advancement lies in the integration of SCT and JD–R frameworks. While previous research typically applied one theoretical lens, SCT to explain cognitive mechanisms [15] or JD–R to explain motivational processes [14], this study unites both. By positioning DEX as both an environmental enabler (SCT) and a job resource (JD–R), it provides a more holistic explanation of how digital systems shape work outcomes through self-efficacy and motivational pathways simultaneously.

Finally, this study contributes novel empirical evidence from an emerging-market airline in a context rarely examined in the DEX literature, dominated by Western and high-tech organizations. Indonesia's collectivist and hierarchical work culture, coupled with the national airline's post-restructuring transformation, provides a distinctive backdrop. The confirmation of the DEX–well-being–engagement–performance chain under these conditions highlights the universality of digital experience principles while also illustrating their adaptability to different socio-cultural contexts.

### *5.5. Theoretical Contributions*

This study advances theory by integrating Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model into a unified framework that explains how digital work environments influence employee outcomes. Prior studies often viewed digital transformation as a technological or organizational variable; however, this research redefines Digital Employee Experience (DEX) as both a cognitive mechanism and a motivational resource.

From an SCT perspective, the study demonstrates that DEX influences employee behavior through self-efficacy and reciprocal determinism. Employees exposed to supportive digital tools perceive greater control and competence, leading to psychological well-being and sustained engagement. This finding strengthens the theoretical link between digital environments and personal agency, a core tenet of SCT [15].

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From the JD–R perspective, DEX emerges as a job resource that mitigates work strain and enhances motivation. The positive paths observed (DEX → Wellbeing → Engagement → Performance) confirm the model's motivational process, emphasizing that technology-driven work resources can generate vigor, dedication, and absorption, the three hallmarks of engagement [19].

The integration of both theories thus contributes a dual-level explanation: SCT clarifies the "how," while JD–R explains the "why." Together, they capture the full psychological and behavioral mechanisms linking digital environments to performance. The empirical validation of this integrated model in a large, service-oriented organization provides new theoretical ground for future research on human–technology interaction, particularly in emerging-market contexts where digital maturity and work culture differ significantly from Western paradigms.

### *5.6. Managerial Implications*

From a managerial standpoint, this study underscores that digital transformation succeeds only when it enhances human experience. The results offer several actionable implications for organizations, particularly within the aviation and broader service industries:

1. Design digital ecosystems around employee experience. Digital systems must be intuitive, accessible, and seamlessly integrated into daily workflows. Investing in user-centered design not only improves efficiency but also builds psychological comfort, reducing digital fatigue and resistance to change.
2. Link technology adoption to wellbeing strategies. Organizations should view DEX and employee well-being as interconnected priorities. Providing digital literacy programs, flexible work systems, and supportive communication platforms enhances both capability and mental health. This balance reduces burnout and fosters sustainable engagement.
3. Foster digital engagement through leadership and culture. Leaders play a pivotal role in translating technology adoption into engagement outcomes. Encouraging experimentation, providing timely feedback, and recognizing digital contributions help employees associate technology with empowerment rather than surveillance or control.
4. Measure and manage DEX as a strategic HR metric. Beyond traditional HR indicators, organizations should track DEX through regular pulse surveys and analytics. By linking DEX to engagement and performance metrics, management can continuously refine digital tools and interventions that support employee success.
5. Apply the DEX Framework in Transformation Governance. For Garuda Indonesia and similar organizations undergoing restructuring, embedding DEX principles into digital governance can sustain morale and performance during change. The integration of digital HR platforms, crew management systems, and learning portals should prioritize user trust, usability, and connectedness.

Ultimately, the findings advocate a human-centered digital transformation paradigm. By treating technology not merely as infrastructure but as a psychological and cultural ecosystem, organizations can build resilience, engagement, and sustainable performance. This approach transforms digitalization from a technical project into a strategic lever for employee well-being and organizational excellence.

## 6. Conclusion and Implications

This study aimed to examine the role of Digital Employee Experience (DEX) as a strategic organizational resource influencing Employee Wellbeing, Engagement, and ultimately Performance within the context of a digitally transforming airline, PT Garuda Indonesia (Persero) Tbk.

Grounded in Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model, the findings provide robust empirical evidence that DEX significantly enhances well-being and engagement, both directly and indirectly influencing performance through a serial mediation mechanism. The results demonstrate that digital transformation, when designed around human

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experience, not only strengthens operational effectiveness but also nurtures psychological vitality and organizational commitment.

The study's key empirical insights confirm that employees who perceive digital tools as accessible, user-friendly, and integrated into their daily workflow report higher levels of well-being and engagement. These outcomes, in turn, lead to improved individual performance, confirming all five hypotheses (H1–H5). The positive and significant path coefficients from DEX to wellbeing ($\beta = 0.688$), engagement ($\beta = 0.412$), and performance (indirect effect $\beta = 0.310$) illustrate a clear causal chain connecting digital experience with behavioral outcomes. This highlights the crucial role of digital ecosystems not merely as technological infrastructure but as enablers of human potential in complex organizational settings such as aviation.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the growing literature on employee engagement and digital transformation by integrating cognitive and motivational perspectives into a single explanatory model. By combining SCT and JD–R frameworks, the study explains both how and why digital work environments affect performance. From the SCT lens, DEX enhances self-efficacy, confidence, and learning behavior, reinforcing employees' belief in their ability to master technology and contribute meaningfully. From the JD–R lens, DEX functions as a job resource that fuels energy, dedication, and absorption—key dimensions of engagement. Together, these perspectives reveal that digital transformation is not purely technological but deeply psychological and motivational. This integration provides a new theoretical foundation for studying human–technology interaction in emerging-market contexts, where digital maturity and organizational culture differ from those of Western corporations.

From a practical standpoint, the findings carry several implications for managers and policymakers seeking to balance technological advancement with human sustainability. First, organizations must design digital systems around the employee experience, emphasizing usability, simplicity, and connectivity. A seamless and empowering digital environment enhances well-being and engagement, which in turn elevates productivity and retention. Second, HR leaders should integrate well-being initiatives into digital transformation strategies, recognizing that employees' mental and emotional states are integral to digital adoption. Providing digital literacy programs, feedback mechanisms, and flexible work systems can enhance both psychological comfort and performance. Third, leadership commitment is critical: managers must model digital adaptability, foster trust in technology, and celebrate digital innovation as a source of empowerment rather than control. For Garuda Indonesia, these implications underline the importance of embedding DEX principles into its ongoing transformation agenda, ensuring that digitalization becomes a catalyst for engagement, not anxiety.

Beyond the organizational context, this study offers policy-level insights for the broader Indonesian aviation and service industries. As companies increasingly adopt digital platforms, policymakers and industry associations should promote frameworks that balance efficiency with employee well-being. Regulations encouraging humane technology design, digital training, and psychosocial safety can sustain engagement and performance in the national workforce.

While the study offers valuable theoretical and managerial contributions, it is not without limitations. The cross-sectional design restricts causal inference over time, and the focus on a single organization may limit generalizability. Future research could employ longitudinal or multi-industry designs to examine how DEX evolves and interacts with cultural or leadership variables. Qualitative approaches could also deepen understanding of how employees interpret and internalize their digital experiences. Additionally, future studies may integrate emerging constructs such as digital fatigue, techno-stress, or AI trust to enrich the model's explanatory scope.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that Digital Employee Experience is far more than a technical dimension of work; it is a strategic, psychological, and cultural asset. When organizations invest in digital environments that empower people, they not only enhance engagement and well-being but also unlock sustainable performance advantages. The Garuda Indonesia case exemplifies how human-centered digital transformation can convert technological change into organizational renewal.

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Ultimately, the findings affirm a simple but powerful principle: the future of performance lies not only in digital capability but in the quality of the human experience that technology enables.

## Institutional Review Board Statement:

The study was conducted in accordance with the institutional ethical standards of Brawijaya University.

## Informed Consent Statement:

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality in accordance with the ethical standards of Brawijaya University.

## Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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