

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN MODERN GOVERNMENT IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

This study examines the role of transformational leadership in strengthening modern governance and encouraging innovation in public services. The urgency of this study arises from the challenges of contemporary bureaucracy, ranging from the need for bureaucratic reform, service digitalization, to increasing accountability and public trust, which demand a leadership model that can inspire, motivate, and encourage innovation. The objectives of this study are (1) to reconstruct the concept and dimensions of transformational leadership in the context of government; (2) to examine empirical evidence of the application of this leadership style to service innovation and bureaucratic performance; and (3) to formulate policy recommendations for strengthening public leadership capacity. The method used is a literature study (library research) with a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach: searching for journal articles, academic books, and selected policy documents, thematic classification, and analytical synthesis of the four dimensions of transformational leadership. The results of the study indicate that transformational leadership through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual attention has the potential to increase service innovation, apparatus commitment, and public accountability when supported by managerial capacity and a supportive organizational climate. This article recommends (a) a training and coaching-based transformational leadership development program for public officials; (b) strengthening dynamic managerial capacity at the middle level to accelerate innovation; and (c) a further research agenda that examines implementation mechanisms in various regional contexts.

Keywords: Governance, Transformational Leadership, Public Service Innovation.

A. INTRODUCTION

The development of modern governance positions public leadership as a key factor in determining the effectiveness of government administration. Strategic environmental changes marked by globalization, technological progress, and increasing public demands for transparency and quality in public services require state officials not only to carry out routine administrative functions, but also to adapt and innovate. In this context, leadership quality becomes a fundamental element that determines the success of bureaucratic reform and the achievement of governmental objectives.

In recent years, Indonesia's governance context has reflected growing demands for higher-quality public leadership. The processes of bureaucratic reform, the implementation of governmental decentralization, and increased public participation and expectations have pushed the government to shift rigid and hierarchical bureaucratic work patterns toward approaches that are more responsive, adaptive, and service-oriented. Leadership is no longer

understood merely as formal authority in decision-making, but rather as the capacity to steer change, build officials' commitment, and create public trust in government institutions.

One leadership approach considered relevant in addressing these dynamics is transformational leadership. Transformational leadership emphasizes a leader's ability to communicate a clear vision, provide inspirational motivation, encourage changes in values and work culture, and continuously develop human resource potential. Unlike transactional leadership, which focuses on exchanges of rewards and formal compliance, transformational leadership seeks to transform officials' attitudes, behaviors, and commitment so that they work beyond personal interests for the benefit of the organization and the broader public.

Within Indonesia's governmental setting, the relevance of transformational leadership becomes stronger as the complexity of challenges increases—such as the large bureaucratic structure, the low quality of public services in some sectors, and persistent issues of integrity and professional standards among officials. A leadership model that is purely administrative and procedural is seen as insufficient to respond to these challenges. Therefore, a pattern of leadership is needed that can serve as the driving force for change, strengthen work ethic, and foster an organizational culture oriented toward performance and public service.

The practice of transformational leadership in Indonesia can be observed at both national and local levels, for example through the implementation of bureaucratic reform, simplification of public service procedures, adoption of electronic government (e-government), and efforts to increase transparency and accountability. These initiatives reflect the leader's role as an agent of change who not only formulates policy, but also inspires officials to adapt to new ways of working and improve service quality. In this sense, transformational leaders function as pioneers of change who contribute to strengthening public trust in government.

A number of studies in Indonesia indicate that transformational leadership has a positive impact on officials' performance and the quality of public services. Leaders who are able to provide role modeling, inspirational motivation, and individualized support have been shown to enhance organizational commitment, employee loyalty, and job satisfaction. These effects ultimately contribute to improved effectiveness of public organizations and the successful implementation of administrative reform. Such findings reinforce the argument that transformational leadership is not only conceptually relevant, but also carries practical implications within Indonesia's governance context.

Based on the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that transformational leadership is a strategic and relevant approach for governance in Indonesia. This introduction provides the foundation for further examining the concept of transformational leadership, its characteristics, and its role in supporting the realization of effective, innovative, and citizen-oriented governance.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Leadership

Leadership is a foundational concept in the study of administration and governance. In general, leadership is understood as an individual's ability to influence, direct, and regulate the behavior of individuals or groups in order to achieve shared goals. Robbins and Judge (2017) explain that leadership is the capacity to influence a group to achieve a predetermined vision or objective. In the context of government, leadership involves not only interaction between leaders and followers, but also ethical and social responsibility toward the public interest.

Thoha (2015) emphasizes that governmental leadership has distinctive characteristics because it is closely tied to the management of power, public decision-making processes, and the delivery of services to citizens. Consequently, leadership effectiveness in government is

strongly shaped by a leader's ability to recognize bureaucratic dynamics and respond to societal needs.

The Concept of Transformational Leadership

The concept of transformational leadership was introduced by James MacGregor Burns in 1978. Burns viewed transformational leadership as a process in which leaders and followers elevate one another's levels of motivation, morality, and commitment in pursuing meaningful shared goals (Burns, 1978). From this perspective, leadership is not merely the act of directing; rather, it is a transformative process rooted in values and vision. The concept was later expanded by Bernard M. Bass (1985), who argued that transformational leadership can be observed through leaders' behaviors and their influence on followers' attitudes and performance. Bass described transformational leaders as individuals who can raise employees' awareness of the importance of organizational and societal interests above self-interest. In practicing transformational leadership, a leader does not rely solely on formal authority, but acts as a figure who provides direction, meaning, and hope throughout the implementation of governance.

Bass and Avolio (1994) identified four main dimensions of transformational leadership that serve as indicators for assessing its application. The first dimension is idealized influence, reflected in a leader's role modeling, integrity, and consistency in action. In government settings, transformational leaders are seen as ethical exemplars who earn trust from public officials and citizens.

- The second dimension is inspirational motivation, shown through a leader's ability to communicate vision and goals clearly while inspiring employees' commitment and work spirit. Indicators of this dimension include optimism, collective enthusiasm, and a sense of ownership toward governmental organizational objectives. Transformational leaders do not merely issue instructions; they cultivate the belief that policies and programs carry meaning for the public good.
- The third dimension is intellectual stimulation, namely the leader's ability to encourage employees to think critically, creatively, and innovatively. This can be observed through openness to new ideas, courage to pursue change, and support for innovation in public service delivery. Within transformational leadership, leaders provide opportunities for employees to learn from mistakes and develop solutions to complex bureaucratic problems.
- The fourth dimension is individualized consideration, demonstrated through the leader's attention to each employee's needs, abilities, and professional development. Indicators include coaching, guidance, and recognition of individual performance. Transformational leaders are understood as those who view employees not merely as bureaucratic instruments, but as individuals with the capacity to grow and develop.

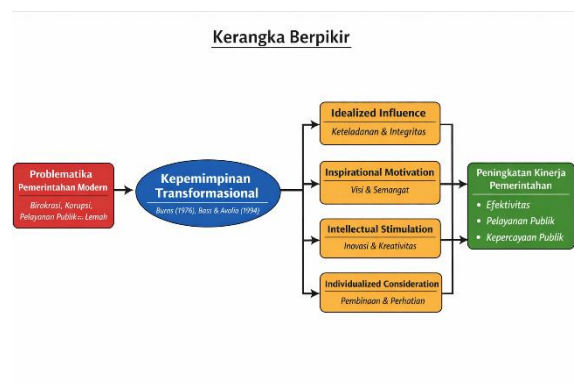


Figure 1. Framework of Thinking

Source: Processed by Researchers, 2026

The transformational leadership theory described in this article is based on the ideas of Burns (1978) and Bass (1985), with operational indicators developed by Bass and Avolio (1994). This theoretical framework serves as an analytical foundation for understanding the effective application of transformational leadership in contemporary government.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach, namely an approach that aims to understand and interpret social phenomena in depth through the analysis of meanings, concepts, and ideas, without using numerical measurement. The qualitative approach is selected because this research focuses on understanding the concepts and values embedded in a phenomenon, rather than testing hypotheses or conducting statistical calculations.

The research method used is library research, that is, a method that treats bibliographic sources as the primary object of inquiry. In library research, data are obtained through searching and reviewing various written materials, such as scholarly books, academic journals, research articles, and official documents relevant to the research topic. According to Lexy (2002), library research aims to identify data, concepts, and ideas through a systematic review of literature sources related to the problem under study.

More specifically, this study uses a descriptive–analytical qualitative method. This method is used to describe and analyze phenomena systematically, factually, and in depth based on available data. The descriptive component aims to present concepts, theories, and findings from prior studies in a structured manner, while the analytical component is used to interpret, compare, and derive meaning from various perspectives found in the literature. The research findings are not expressed in numerical form, but rather as narrative descriptions that explain relationships among concepts and the phenomena examined.

The data used in this study are secondary data, namely data obtained indirectly from primary sources. The data sources include various scientific journals, research articles, and academic books relevant to the focus of the study, namely the ethics of bureaucrats in public service. The selection of data sources is conducted by considering topic fit, source credibility, and relevance to the research problems and objectives.

The data collection process is carried out through a literature search of journals and scientific articles published by academic institutions and related agencies. Data collection consistently refers to the research questions and objectives to ensure that the collected data remain focused and do not deviate from the core topic. The selected literature is then classified based on themes, concepts, and key findings related to bureaucratic ethics and public service.

Data analysis in this study is conducted using qualitative data analysis, namely through textual data processing or text-meaning interpretation. The stages of analysis include data collection, in-depth reading of text content, grouping of ideas, and interpretation of meanings contained in the literature. Subsequently, discourse analysis is used to understand the interactions, values, and norms that shape bureaucrats' behavior in the context of public service. The results of the analysis are then presented narratively to provide a comprehensive and focused account of the research object.

Through this method, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive conceptual understanding of bureaucratic ethics in public service based on a review of relevant and credible literature.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This discussion is developed from the theoretical foundation of transformational leadership outlined earlier, particularly the work of James MacGregor Burns (1978) and Bernard M. Bass (1985), as well as the refinement of indicators by Bass and Avolio (1994). In the context of modern governance, transformational leadership is not understood merely as a normative concept, but rather as an empirically relevant leadership approach for addressing the many challenges of public administration—especially in developing countries such as Indonesia. Indonesian governance faces complex dynamics, ranging from demands for bureaucratic reform and improvements in public service quality to the strengthening of public trust in governmental institutions. Under these conditions, transformational leadership can be interpreted as a leader's effort to reshape employees' values, ways of thinking, and behaviors so that they align with the objectives of public organizations and the broader public interest. This view is consistent with Burns (1978), who emphasizes that transformational leadership operates in the realm of values and morality, rather than being limited to interactions based on the exchange of interests. Accordingly, this study's discussion considers the four (4) dimensions of transformational leadership as follows.

Idealized Influence

Within the dimension of idealized influence, transformational leadership in government is reflected in a leader's role modeling and integrity. Government leaders with strong integrity are more likely to earn the trust of civil servants and the broader community. Such trust becomes a crucial form of social capital in driving bureaucratic transformation toward higher accountability and integrity. Thoha's (2015) findings indicate that a leader's exemplary conduct has a significant influence on the loyalty and commitment of government apparatus. In the bureaucratic context, exemplary leadership is understood as consistency between a leader's values, attitudes, and behaviors in carrying out public duties and authority. When leaders demonstrate integrity, honesty, and adherence to governmental norms and ethics, civil servants more readily develop trust and respect toward the leadership being exercised.

These findings are consistent with Wibowo (2018), who reports that transformational leadership—particularly idealized influence—has a positive effect on organizational commitment among local government officials. A leader's exemplary conduct functions as a mechanism for internalizing organizational values, whereby employees comply with rules not only due to structural obligations but also because of normative awareness and emotional attachment to the organization. This condition strengthens employee loyalty to governmental institutions and increases their willingness to support public policies and programs.

Related evidence from Sedarmayanti (2018) further underscores that leaders' exemplary behavior is a critical factor in cultivating a professional and integrity-based bureaucratic work culture. In hierarchical public bureaucracies, leaders' behavior often becomes the primary reference point for employees in determining ethical standards and work quality. Therefore, exemplary leadership plays a strategic role in shaping an organizational climate conducive to improved performance and public accountability.

Moreover, exemplary leadership contributes to strengthening long-term employee commitment. Civil servants who perceive their leaders as credible and morally grounded tend to show higher levels of work engagement. This is supported by Pratama and Riyanto (2019), who found that transformational leadership significantly influences organizational commitment and the performance of civil servants. Thus, exemplary leadership affects not only formal compliance, but also the development of employees' intrinsic commitment to governmental organizational goals.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that leaders' exemplary conduct is a key element of transformational leadership that supports the development of loyalty and commitment among government officials. Consistent role modeling reinforces leadership

legitimacy and enhances the effectiveness of policy implementation, thereby supporting the realization of professional governance oriented toward public interest. In practice, transformational leaders are viewed as figures whose words and actions are aligned, enabling them to serve as moral reference points in public administration.

Inspirational Motivation

Inspirational motivation in transformational leadership is closely related to a government leader's capacity to formulate a clear vision and communicate it effectively to public servants. The vision functions not only as a strategic guide for the organization, but also as a source of meaning that connects government policies and programs to broader public service objectives. In the governmental bureaucracy, a practical vision that is focused on public interest helps employees recognize their roles and contributions to achieving organizational goals. Bass (1985) argues that transformational leaders can generate collective spirit, optimism, and followers' confidence in the organization's future. Inspirational motivation operates through symbolic communication, in which leaders convey expectations, values, and organizational objectives convincingly so that employees are encouraged to contribute beyond their individual interests. As a result, civil servants do not merely carry out administrative tasks; they also develop an emotional connection with the organization's vision.

This is reinforced by Wibowo (2018), who found that leaders' inspirational motivation has a positive and significant effect on work motivation and employee performance in local government. Leaders who communicate vision consistently and inspiringly tend to build a positive work atmosphere in which employees feel valued and engaged in pursuing organizational objectives. This situation promotes greater work dedication and encourages employees to contribute at their fullest capacity.

Other Indonesian studies similarly emphasize the importance of inspirational motivation in public leadership. Pratama and Riyanto (2019) show that transformational leadership significantly affects the performance of civil servants through increased intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction. This suggests that inspirational motivation not only influences performance directly, but also shapes durable positive work attitudes within public organizations.

Based on these points, inspirational motivation can be concluded to be a strategic dimension of transformational leadership in governmental practice. Leaders' ability to formulate and communicate a vision in an inspiring manner not only enhances officials' motivation and performance, but also strengthens organizational commitment toward public service oriented governance.

Intellectual Stimulation

The dimension of intellectual stimulation becomes increasingly important in response to the growing complexity of public problems. In modern governance, intellectual stimulation is understood as a leader's capacity to encourage employees to think critically and creatively, and to question bureaucratic practices that are no longer effective. This approach positions civil servants as active agents in problem-solving rather than merely administrative implementers of policy. Bass and Avolio (1994) emphasize that transformational leaders do not regard themselves as the sole source of truth; instead, they create space for dialogue, exchange of ideas, and collective learning. Through intellectual stimulation, leaders encourage employees to develop new perspectives and pursue innovative solutions to public service challenges. This is particularly crucial in bureaucratic settings that have traditionally been hierarchical and less adaptive.

This argument aligns with Sedarmayanti's (2018) findings that innovation in bureaucracy can progress only when supported by leadership that provides room for creativity and innovation. Leaders who support new ideas and demonstrate tolerance for measured risk can

build an organizational atmosphere conducive to innovation in policy and public service delivery. In this way, intellectual stimulation functions as a catalyst for organizational change in government institutions.

Empirical evidence in Indonesia also highlights the relevance of this dimension. Nugroho and Prasojo (2016) found that transformational leadership significantly affects public service innovation in local governments. Leaders' intellectual encouragement drives employees to innovate in designing and implementing services that are more responsive to community needs. Similar results are reported by Wibowo (2018), who notes that leaders' support for employee innovation positively influences performance improvement and public service quality.

Individualized Consideration

The dimension of individualized consideration complements transformational leadership by emphasizing the importance of human resource development within government organizations. In bureaucratic practice, employees are often treated as components of a rigid administrative system, resulting in limited attention to individual development. Transformational leadership offers a different perspective by recognizing civil servants as individuals with diverse potentials, needs, and aspirations. Bass and Avolio (1994) state that individualized consideration is manifested through coaching, mentoring, and constructive, continuous feedback. Transformational leaders seek to identify each employee's potential and development needs, and provide appropriate support to enhance skills and self-confidence. This approach does not focus solely on short-term results, but also on sustained capacity building among civil servants.

In the Indonesian governmental context, personal attention has significant implications for improving employees' work quality. Wibowo (2018) indicates that leaders' attention to employee development has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Employees who receive attention and support for self-development tend to demonstrate higher work engagement and stronger loyalty to governmental organizations.

If these four dimensions of transformational leadership are applied in governance practice, they can foster a public organizational culture that is more professional, adaptive, and service-oriented. Transformational leadership influences not only the development of individual employees' capabilities, but also the overall performance quality of government organizations. This is consistent with various prior studies suggesting that transformational leadership is positively associated with organizational effectiveness in the public sector.

In public administration research, transformational leadership is also considered a key condition for achieving good governance. Transparency, accountability, and public participation are more readily achieved when government leaders are able to build trust and shared commitment. Sedarmayanti (2018) emphasizes that public administration reform in Indonesia is closely linked to the quality of leadership that is visionary and oriented toward transformation.

Overall, this discussion demonstrates that transformational leadership is not merely a theoretical idea, but has strong empirical relevance in Indonesian governance. Through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, transformational leadership can address modern governmental challenges and serve as a foundation for improving civil servant performance and the quality of public services.

E. CONCLUSION

Based on prior studies and the theoretical literature, it can be concluded that transformational leadership plays a strategic role in enhancing the effectiveness of modern

governance. This form of leadership does not merely emphasize the achievement of administrative outcomes; it also prioritizes changes in the values, attitudes, and behaviors of public employees as they confront the evolving dynamics and complexity of public problems.

The dimension of idealized influence underscores the importance of leaders serving as role models as the primary basis for building trust, loyalty, and commitment among civil servants. Empirical findings in Indonesia indicate that leaders who uphold integrity and demonstrate consistency in values can cultivate moral legitimacy, which strengthens bureaucratic support for government policies and programs. Such exemplary conduct is a prerequisite for successful, sustainable transformation and bureaucratic reform.

Next, inspirational motivation highlights that a leader's capacity to create and communicate a clear, compelling vision has a significant impact on employees' work motivation, performance, and public service orientation. Research in Indonesia suggests that well-communicated leadership visions can align civil servants' personal goals with the objectives of government organizations, thereby improving the effectiveness of public policy implementation.

The dimension of intellectual stimulation positions transformational leadership as a key driver of innovation within governmental institutions. Leaders who foster an environment that encourages critical thinking, creativity, and shared learning have been shown to promote innovation in public service delivery, particularly at the local government level. Within a typically hierarchical bureaucratic structure, intellectual stimulation functions as a vital mechanism for building public organizations that are flexible and responsive to societal needs.

Meanwhile, individualized consideration emphasizes that developing human resources is a central element of transformational leadership. Leaders' attention to the needs, potential, and aspirations of individual civil servants has been found to positively influence job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work engagement. This approach strengthens humanistic and participatory work relationships while supporting continuous capacity development among public employees. Overall, transformational leadership is both appropriate and contextually relevant for implementation in Indonesia's governance system. Integrating the four dimensions of transformational leadership not only enhances individual and organizational performance, but also contributes to improved public service quality and governance that prioritizes citizens' interests. Therefore, strengthening transformational leadership is a strategic necessity in efforts to achieve governance that is efficient, innovative, and sustainable.

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