



## **Inspirational Leadership from The Perspective of Transformational Theory at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung**

**Desi Dwi Anissa<sup>1)</sup>, Abd. Aziz<sup>2)</sup>, Nur Effendi<sup>3)</sup>**

<sup>1,2,3)</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, Indonesia

E-mail: [desidwianissa1712@gmail.com](mailto:desidwianissa1712@gmail.com)<sup>1)</sup> [abd.aziz@uinsatu.ac.id](mailto:abd.aziz@uinsatu.ac.id)<sup>2)</sup> [nurefendi2016@gmail.com](mailto:nurefendi2016@gmail.com)<sup>3)</sup>

### **ABSTRACT**

The rapid technological developments in the Society 5.0 era require Islamic educational institutions to adopt flexible and innovative leadership styles to keep pace with changing times. This study aims to examine the application of transformational and visionary leadership in managing change in Islamic educational institutions in the digital era. Therefore, this leadership model can serve as a reference for other institutions in facing global challenges and strengthening sustainable Islamic educational governance. The method used was a qualitative case study at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with university leaders, lecturers, and educational staff, participant observation, and analysis of policy documents and academic programs. The research findings indicate that transformational leadership improves management effectiveness, motivates educators, and encourages innovation in institutional management. The discussion of the research results also reveals that combining technology-based leadership with transformational principles can strengthen the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions. The implementation of adaptive and visionary leadership is crucial for educational institutions to develop and innovate in the future.

**Keywords:** Inspirational Leadership, Transformational Leadership Theory, UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The acceleration of digital transformation and the emergence of Society 5.0 have changed the governance landscape of higher education, including Islamic universities. Institutions are now expected not merely to digitize academic services, but also to strengthen data-based decision-making, accelerate organizational learning, encourage cross-unit collaboration, and preserve Islamic ethical values amid rapid technological change. These demands create a substantive leadership problem because conventional administrative approaches are often insufficient to mobilize innovation across complex university structures. Consequently, leadership in Islamic higher education needs to be examined as a mechanism for managing institutional transformation rather than merely as a determinant of organizational success. Transformational leadership is particularly relevant because it emphasizes a shared vision, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized support, which can align human resources with changing institutional goals and contemporary educational challenges (Triyantoro, 2024)

Within Islamic educational institutions, strong leadership is crucial to driving the major changes needed to improve service quality (Arrosyid et al., 2024). One type of leadership considered highly effective in managing change in social service organizations, including education, is transformational



leadership. This leadership style has become widely recognized and extensively researched since the early 1980s. Transformational leadership is a new approach that emphasizes charisma and emotional connection. Its popularity is likely due to its focus on intrinsic motivation and member development, which align with the organization's needs. This model can inspire and empower people to succeed, especially in uncertain situations.

Since Burns introduced the concept of transformational leadership, several theoretical perspectives have emerged, contributing to the development of transformational leadership studies. Among these perspectives, Bass's approach to transformational and transactional leadership has become one of the most influential and widely adopted frameworks in leadership research (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Sashkin, 1988; Tichy & Devanna, 1986). Unlike Burns, who viewed these two types of leadership as mutually exclusive, Bass sees them as two dimensions that can be implemented simultaneously at different levels (Bass, 1985). Jika Burns menekankan bahwa pemimpin idealnya hanya berorientasi pada kepemimpinan transformasional (Burns, 1978). Bass actually argues that a combination of transactional and transformational leadership is the most effective approach to achieving success (Bass, 1985).

The relevance of transformational leadership in Islamic education has been demonstrated in previous studies; however, an important research gap has remained due to the limited scope and emphasis of the existing literature. The implementation of transformational leadership in Islamic educational institutions has been examined. However, the discussion was presented in a broad context, and the leadership model's operation within a complex Islamic university undergoing organizational transformation was not examined in detail (Arrosyid, 2024). The principal components of transformative leadership have also been identified, although the study was primarily conceptual and the identified components were not linked to concrete institutional innovations and governance outcomes (Ulufah, 2024). The contribution of transformational leadership to improving the quality of Islamic education in the digital era has been highlighted. However, an in-depth, case-based analysis at the university level has not been provided (Hadi, 2023). In addition, leadership, compensation, and teacher performance were examined within a boarding-school context, whereas other studies paid greater attention to school leadership, teacher competence, and institutional competitiveness (Tanzeh, 2021). Therefore, limited scholarly attention has been devoted to inspirational leadership grounded in transformational theory within an Islamic higher education institution undergoing organizational, technological, and entrepreneurial transformation. This research gap is addressed through a case study conducted at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung.

One concrete example of the application of transformational leadership in Islamic education can be found at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung. As an institution that has undergone significant changes through various policies and programs, UIN demonstrates how inspirational leadership grounded in transformational theory can drive meaningful change. The reforms implemented include strengthening academic governance, implementing technology-based learning innovations, improving research quality, and developing strategic partnerships with various parties. Transformational leadership at this institution emphasizes a clear vision, inspiring the entire academic community, and empowering human resources to achieve higher goals (Sholeh et al., 2021; Tanzeh et al., 2021). Through this approach,

UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung has succeeded in enhancing the quality of Islamic education by aligning it with contemporary advancements and fostering graduates who possess strong competitiveness at the national and global levels.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative approach using a single-case embedded case study design. UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung was positioned as a single bounded case. At the same time, university leaders, lecturers, and educational staff were treated as embedded units of analysis representing different organizational levels within the institution (Yin, 2018).

Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on three predetermined criteria: direct involvement in institutional leadership or governance, active participation in implementing strategic academic or institutional service programs, and at least 2 years of professional experience within the university. The informants comprised university leaders, lecturers, and educational staff members. These categories were included to obtain diverse and comprehensive perspectives concerning the implementation of inspirational leadership and institutional transformation.

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The interviews were conducted to explore the informants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of leadership practices and institutional change. Participant observation was conducted during leadership activities, institutional meetings, and the implementation of strategic programs. Meanwhile, document analysis examined institutional strategic policies, academic program documents, service development records, and institutional innovation reports. The use of multiple data sources enabled the comprehensive examination of institutional leadership practices within their actual organizational context (Yin, 2018).

Data collection was continued until the information obtained from different informant groups became recurrent and no substantively new themes emerged. The collected data were analyzed thematically through several stages, including data familiarization, initial coding, categorization, theme development, and interpretive synthesis. During the analytical process, patterns emerging from interviews, observations, and institutional documents were compared and integrated to construct a comprehensive interpretation of inspirational leadership practices.

Research credibility was strengthened through source and technique triangulation. Information obtained from university leaders, lecturers, and educational staff was compared across informant groups, and interview findings were corroborated by observational evidence and institutional documents. Through this research design, an in-depth, context-sensitive explanation was developed of how inspirational leadership, grounded in transformational leadership theory, was implemented to manage institutional change and improve the quality of Islamic higher education.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Transformational leadership in Islamic educational institutions emphasizes the leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and empower members to achieve shared goals. This model focuses on the development of values, innovation, and the ability to adapt to changing times, including the use of technology in learning. Transformational leaders go beyond administrative tasks to create an environment that supports collaboration and continuous learning. In Islamic education, this type of leadership has

been shown to improve educational quality through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and attention to individual needs. Here are several definitions of transformational leadership from various relevant sources.

According to Sudarwan Danim, transformational leadership is a leader's ability to collaborate with others to maximize organizational resources and achieve significant results aligned with predetermined targets (Danim, 2009). In this context, leaders play a crucial role in transforming organizational culture and designing management structures and strategies to achieve desired goals. With this approach, leaders go beyond simply issuing orders, but also inspire and empower team members to make their best contributions to achieving shared goals.

In this context, leaders play a vital role in transforming organizational culture and developing management structures and strategies to achieve desired goals. Through this leadership style, leaders not only issue instructions but also motivate and empower team members to contribute optimally to achieving collective goals (Bass, 1985). In this situation, followers are encouraged to exceed initial expectations. Transformational leaders not only provide guidance but also inspire and foster their enthusiasm and commitment to achieving more ambitious shared goals.

Based on the previously mentioned expert definitions, transformational leadership is an approach that emphasizes fostering commitment to organizational goals and empowering members to achieve them. In this model, leaders play a crucial role in changing organizational culture and implementing effective management strategies to achieve desired results. Furthermore, transformational leaders can collaborate with others to maximize the use of organizational resources and achieve meaningful results. In this context, followers feel trust, admiration, and loyalty toward the leader, thus encouraging them to deliver performance that exceeds expectations. Therefore, leaders not only provide instructions but also inspire and empower team members to make their best contributions to achieving shared goals:

#### 1. Characteristics of Transformational Leadership

A leader in an educational institution, particularly a PTKIN (Private Islamic Boarding School), is responsible for guiding members' thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors to ensure they align with the institution's goals. Effective leadership in educational institutions is not only oriented toward administrative management but also focuses on developing members' character and motivation so they can play an active role in achieving shared goals. Leaders are required to create a conducive, supportive atmosphere for cooperation so that each individual feels valued and motivated to participate in the educational process. In this context, several characteristics are worth noting, including (Robbins, 2017):

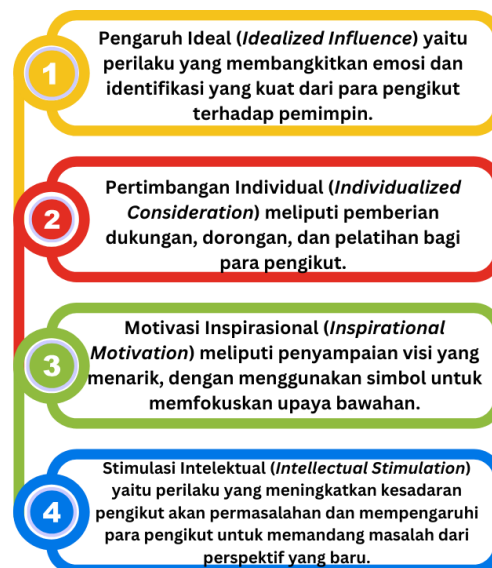


Figure 1. Characteristics of Transformational Leadership Style According to Robbins & Judge

a. Idealized Influence (Or Charismatic Influence)

The idealized influence of a transformational leader reflects charisma that can "captivate" members to follow the leader's direction. Specifically, this charisma is manifested in behavior that demonstrates an understanding of the organization's vision and mission, strong convictions, and commitment and consistency in every decision. Furthermore, the leader also values his or her subordinates. Thus, transformational leaders serve as role models who are admired, respected, and followed by their members.

b. Inspirational Motivation

Inspirational motivation is a characteristic of leaders who set high standards and encourage members to meet them. In other words, transformational leaders consistently strive to inspire and encourage their subordinates to achieve better results. This type of leader is also known as an excellent communicator, able to convey messages clearly and demonstrate commitment to the organization's vision and values. They challenge team members to exceed their limits, while also providing support and recognition for individual efforts and achievements. In this way, this leader not only motivates his followers to achieve their goals but also fosters a productive, collaborative work environment.

c. Intellectual Stimulation

Intellectual stimulation is a leader's approach that encourages team members to develop their intellectual abilities, thereby fostering creativity and innovation. Leaders who implement this approach focus on logical thinking and careful problem-solving skills. By creating an atmosphere that supports new ideas and open discussion, leaders help subordinates think critically and find appropriate solutions to various challenges.

d. Individualized Consideration

Individualized Consideration in transformational leadership is the behavior of leaders who provide personal attention to each team member, treating them as individuals with different needs, abilities, and aspirations. Leaders who implement this approach focus on

developing each subordinate's potential by providing appropriate guidance, support, and training. They act as mentors, accompanying team members, monitoring their development, and creating opportunities for personal and professional growth. Thus, this approach not only helps individuals achieve organizational goals but also increases team members' job satisfaction and motivation.

## 2. Elements of Transformational Leadership

According to the theory proposed by MC Shane and Von Glinow, transformational leadership has several essential elements that must be present in its implementation. These elements include:



Figure 2. Elements of Transformational Leadership MC Shane and Von Glinow

- a. Developing a Strategic Vision: Transformational leaders formulate a picture of the future that unites members of the organization to achieve goals they may never have considered before.
  - b. Communicating the Vision: Leaders must clearly convey the vision to members so everyone understands the organization's direction and goals.
  - c. Modeling the Vision: Leaders not only articulate the vision but also put it into action, demonstrating their commitment to it.
  - d. Building Commitment to the Vision: Leaders strive to build members' commitment to the vision through words, symbols, and enthusiasm that encourage members to embrace the vision as part of themselves.
- ## 3. Implementation of Transformational Leadership at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung

Transformational leadership has been a primary focus of various studies in Islamic education between 2019 and 2024. These studies highlight how an inspirational and empowering leadership style can improve teacher performance and students' motivation to learn. Principals who implement transformational leadership can create an inspiring work environment in which teachers feel valued and motivated to improve their performance (Palembangan, 2023).

The transformational leadership of a madrasah principal significantly influences the performance of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and students' motivation to learn. A madrasah principal who inspires and empowers teachers can create a positive learning environment, which, in turn, increases students' motivation to learn in PAI subjects (Azzahro, 2024).

At UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Abd. Aziz, M.Pd.I, the implementation of transformational leadership has led to significant achievements. With 49 study programs across four faculties and one Postgraduate program, UIN SATU currently offers undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral education. Of the total study programs, 12 study programs have been accredited Excellent, 17 study programs have Very Good status, 13 Good, 3 study programs have been accredited A, and 4 study programs have been accredited B, built an integrated laboratory building, and initiated innovative programs such as SATU Mart, SATU Caffe, SATU Food Court and Catering, SATU Press, SATU Pay, SATU Mall, SATU Water, SATU Clinic, SATU TV, Halal Certification, and Workshop. These achievements reflect the effectiveness of transformational leadership in driving the progress of educational institutions.

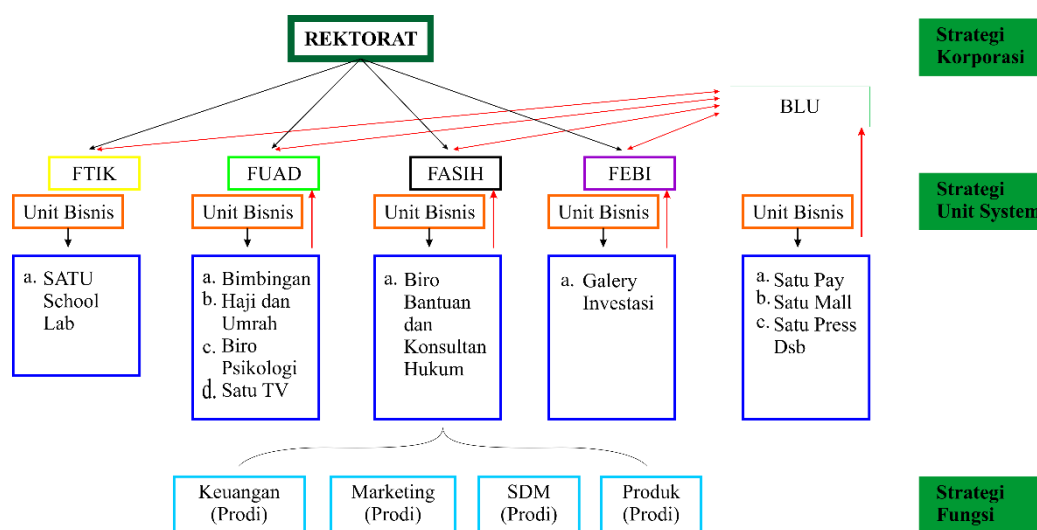


Figure 3. Strategic Hierarchy at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung

In the context of Islamic higher education, the term "strategy hierarchy" has evolved into the categories of institutional, faculty, and departmental strategy. Corporate strategy, known in higher education as institutional strategy, encompasses various policies aimed at strengthening the institution's position. Meanwhile, business unit strategy, known as faculty strategy in higher education, focuses on actions and approaches to achieve optimal performance in specific areas.

Previous research has emphasized that transformational leaders can create a clear vision and empower staff to achieve shared goals (Radiana, 2024). This aligns with the leadership of Prof. Dr. Abd. Aziz, who focuses on innovation and collaboration in institutional development. This approach not only improves the quality of education but also strengthens the university's reputation nationally and internationally.

Furthermore, research shows that transformational leadership can increase organizational commitment and job satisfaction among staff. At UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, a participatory and inspirational leadership approach has fostered a positive work culture in which lecturers and administrative staff feel motivated to contribute optimally (Cahyati & Adelia, 2024; Saepudin et al., 2024; Saifullah et al., 2023).

The implementation of innovative programs such as One Mart, One Pay, and One Mall, One Water demonstrates how transformational leadership can foster creativity and entrepreneurship on campus. These programs not only provide additional services for students and staff but also create valuable practical learning opportunities (Fitri Wahyuni & Binti Maunah, 2021).

The construction of an integrated laboratory building and clinical facilities reflects the university's commitment to improving the quality of education and research. These facilities provide students and faculty with the means to conduct relevant and applicable research, which in turn enhances graduates' competitiveness in the job market.

Furthermore, regularly held workshops and training programs demonstrate the university's efforts to enhance the professional competencies of staff and students. These activities align with research findings emphasizing the importance of continuous professional development in fostering an adaptive and innovative organizational culture (Abijaya et al., 2021; Kodir & Rotim, 2024; Noordiana et al., 2023).

The university's regular workshops and training programs demonstrate its commitment to enhancing the professional competency of staff and students. These activities reflect the importance of continuous professional development in creating an adaptive and innovative organizational culture, the success of transformational leadership in driving institutional change, increasing organizational efficiency, and strengthening sustainable governance of Islamic higher education. These efforts are also an integral part of the institution's strategy to address the increasingly dynamic challenges of higher education (Efendi, 2017)

The various achievements of UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, such as improvements in academic quality, infrastructure development, and educational services, demonstrate the effectiveness of applied transformational leadership. This assertion is supported by various studies showing that transformational leadership can improve academic quality and organizational efficiency through innovation, empowering human resources, encouraging institutional change, increasing efficiency, and strengthening sustainable governance in Islamic higher education (Zulaikah et al., 2024).

Overall, the implementation of transformational leadership at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung has had a significant positive impact. Achievements in accreditation, infrastructure development, and program innovation reflect how this leadership style has catalyzed positive change within Islamic educational institutions. With a focus on a clear vision, staff empowerment, and continuous innovation, UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung's experience can serve as an example for other Islamic educational institutions seeking to improve the quality of education and their public reputation.

By integrating workshops and training into its transformational leadership strategy, the university has successfully created an environment that supports continuous professional development and enhances the institution's competitiveness.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the transformational leadership implemented at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Abd. Aziz, M.Pd.I has had a significant impact on the institution's development. By implementing leadership focused

on vision, inspiration, and the empowerment of human resources, this university has achieved notable milestones, such as obtaining 23 superior accreditations, building modern facilities, and implementing innovations in the education system and academic entrepreneurship. These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that transformational leadership is effective in improving academic quality, organizational efficiency, and the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions. Therefore, this leadership model can serve as an example for other Islamic educational institutions in addressing global challenges and fostering sustainable innovation.

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