

Inspiring Excellence: How Transformational Leadership Shapes Institutional Performance in Higher Education

Abd Aziz^{1*}, Poppy Rachman², Ainun Zamilah³

¹Islamic Education Department, Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan, Probolinggo, East Java, Indonesia

²Islamic Educational Management, Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan, Probolinggo, East Java, Indonesia

³Sharia Financial Management Department, Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan, Probolinggo, East Java, Indonesia

Email: abdazizwahab65@gmail.com¹, poppyrachman37@gmail.com², zamilahainun@gmail.com³

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze transformational leadership in shaping institutional performance in higher education, based on Bernard M. Bass's perspective integrated with spiritual values and local wisdom. The approach used is a qualitative case study type, where data is collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques based on the Miles and Huberman model, which allows the identification of key themes related to transformational leadership practices. The results of the study indicate that the application of transformational leadership that integrates cultural and spiritual values can increase the motivation and involvement of lecturers and staff while contributing to improved academic performance. Through five main dimensions, namely idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and cultural-spiritual synergy, this study proves that this approach is able to encourage increased institutional performance in higher education. The implication of this study is the importance of considering the cultural and spiritual context in leadership practices in educational institutions. The integration of these values not only creates a harmonious academic environment but also strengthens innovation, collaboration, and engagement, thus supporting the achievement of institutional goals in a sustainable manner.

Keywords: *Transformational Leadership, Institutional Performance, Spiritual Values, Cultural Integration*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kepemimpinan transformasional dalam membentuk kinerja institusional di perguruan tinggi, berdasarkan perspektif Bernard M. Bass yang diintegrasikan dengan *Transformational Leadership, Institutional Performance, Spiritual Values, Cultural Integration* nilai-nilai spiritual dan kearifan lokal. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kualitatif jenis studi kasus, di mana data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Data dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis tematik berdasarkan model Miles dan Huberman, yang memungkinkan identifikasi tema-tema utama terkait praktik kepemimpinan transformasional. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan kepemimpinan transformasional yang mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai budaya dan spiritual mampu meningkatkan motivasi dan keterlibatan dosen serta staf, sekaligus berkontribusi pada peningkatan kinerja

akademik. Melalui lima dimensi utama, yaitu idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, dan cultural-spiritual synergy, penelitian ini membuktikan bahwa pendekatan tersebut mampu mendorong peningkatan kinerja institusional di perguruan tinggi. Implikasi dari penelitian ini adalah pentingnya mempertimbangkan konteks budaya dan spiritual dalam praktik kepemimpinan di lembaga pendidikan. Integrasi nilai-nilai ini tidak hanya menciptakan lingkungan akademik yang harmonis, tetapi juga memperkuat inovasi, kolaborasi, dan keterlibatan, sehingga mendukung pencapaian tujuan institusional secara berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: *Kepemimpinan Transformasional, Kinerja Institusional, Nilai Spiritual, Integrasi Budaya*

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INTRODUCTION

Transformational leadership is an increasingly relevant issue in the context of modern organizations, especially in the education sector (Khan & Khan, 2022; Kılınç et al., 2024; Saeed et al., 2022). In recent years, educational institutions around the world have faced major challenges, such as improving the quality of teaching and implementing the latest technologies (Huang et al., 2020; Rasool et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2020). The World Economic Forum (2020) report states that 94% of educators said they had to change the way they teach to prepare students for an uncertain future (Cirocki & Anam, 2024; Dicke et al., 2020; Vermeulen et al., 2022). This phenomenon shows that leaders who are skilled in running an organization do not only rely on management but also on the development of an organizational culture that is adaptive to learning and innovation (Bellibaş et al., 2021; Fernández-Batanero et al., 2022; Kwan, 2020). Given this, it is important to explore how transformational leadership affects institutional performance, especially in the education sector, which is very important for human resource development and societal progress. In theory, transformational leadership, as explained by Bernard M. Bass, involves four main elements: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration (Barinua & Tamunonengiyefori, 2022; Dalkie & Botha, 2024; Gachira & Ntara, 2024). However, its implementation in higher education institutions is often hampered by a resistant organizational culture, lack of collective support, and challenges in integrating local wisdom. For example, many institutions fail to utilize local cultural and spiritual values as drivers of change (Dauletova & Al-Busaidi, 2024; Roux et al., 2022). Although many higher education leaders understand this concept, its practical implementation is uneven. Thus, a more in-depth study is needed to understand how transformational leadership can be adjusted to local wisdom values to drive institutional performance holistically. Previous studies have shown the positive impact of transformational leadership on institutional performance in various sectors, including education. For example, a study by Becker et al. (2022) said that transformational leadership increases motivation, innovation, and collaboration in teams.

On the other hand, local research, such as that conducted by Amin & Ritonga (2024), shows that adapting Bass's theory in the context of Indonesian culture requires integration with local wisdom values, such as deliberation and

cooperation. Donitsa-Schmidt and Ramot (2020) found evidence that transformational leadership increases the level of innovation in the education sector. Meanwhile, another study conducted by Ibrahim et al. (2021) found that one of the dimensions of Individual Consideration in transformational leadership increased job satisfaction and commitment among lecturers.

Despite the extensive research on transformational leadership, there is still a gap in understanding how specific contexts, such as organizational culture and team dynamics, will influence the effectiveness of this type of leadership (Fathi et al., 2021). This study aims to fill this gap by examining ways in which transformational leadership practices can be more appropriately implemented at Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University and their impact on institutional performance.

The gap in this research lies in the lack of understanding of the contextual factors that influence transformational leadership practices in educational institutions. Previous studies tend to examine the overall relationship of transformational leadership to performance without considering specific variables that may explain the results. By identifying and analyzing these factors, this study will make a significant contribution to the scientific literature as well as provide practical insights for educational leaders on how to design more effective leadership strategies.

This study offers a novel contribution by applying Bernard M. Bass' theory holistically in the context of Islamic higher education. Not only utilizing the four main elements of Bass's theory (Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration), this study also introduces an additional element in the form of "Cultural-Spiritual Synergy", which emphasizes the integration of Islamic values and local wisdom. This approach provides a new perspective in understanding how transformational leadership can create an academic environment that is not only institutionally superior but also in harmony with the cultural and religious identity of the surrounding community.

This study aims to answer the question: How Does Transformational Leadership Shape Institutional Performance in Higher Education at Zainul Hasan Islamic University? In this context, the study will identify the transformational leadership practices applied, explore the role of local wisdom, and evaluate their impact on institutional performance. By focusing on a value-based approach, this study aims to provide a relevant framework for leaders of other higher education institutions.

This study argues that transformational leadership that is adapted to the local context can create significant changes in institutional performance. Elements such as idealized influence and inspirational motivation encourage commitment to a shared vision, while intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration build innovation and individual development. When combined with the element of "Cultural-Spiritual Synergy", this approach is able to integrate Islamic values and local culture as a solid foundation for leadership. This argument will be tested through empirical analysis to see the extent to which the approach is effective in improving performance at Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative case study approach. This approach was chosen to allow researchers to explore the meaning and context behind the phenomenon being studied in depth (Cole, 2024; Scharp, 2021; Tasci et al., 2020) regarding how transformational leadership plays a role in improving institutional performance at Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University. By using a case study design, this study can provide more detailed insights into the local context and the experiences of the individuals involved and help understand the phenomena that occur more contextually. This research was conducted at Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University, Probolinggo, East Java, Indonesia. The reason for choosing this research location is because this university has unique characteristics as a higher education institution that integrates Islamic values into its education system. This provides an opportunity to study the application of transformational leadership in the context of religious-based higher education. In addition, this university is trying to improve the quality of education and institutional achievements. This makes this study relevant to explore how transformational leadership can contribute to change and improve institutional performance. The existence of transformational leadership in the academic environment at this university has also not been widely studied, so this study can make a significant contribution to the development of educational leadership theory and practice.

The data collection techniques used in this study were in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted with various related parties, such as leaders, lecturers, and students, to explore their views on the influence of transformational leadership on institutional performance at the university. Participatory observation was carried out by researchers directly involved in academic and managerial activities at the university to gain a deeper understanding of how leadership is applied in practice. In addition, documentation was also used to collect documents related to leadership policies, annual reports, and relevant institutional performance data.

The data analysis technique used in this study refers to the data analysis model from Miles and Huberman, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion (Ikotun et al., 2023; Saura, 2021; Yang et al., 2020). At the data reduction stage, researchers will organize and filter the information obtained from interviews and observations to identify the main themes that are relevant to the study. Next, at the data presentation stage, the researcher will organize the reduced information into a clear and structured narrative, making it easier to understand. In addition, thematic analysis will also be applied to identify patterns and themes that emerge from the data (Byrne, 2022; Campbell et al., 2021; Kiger & Varpio, 2020), which will provide deeper insight into how transformational leadership affects institutional performance. Finally, at the conclusion drawing stage, the researcher will analyze the data that has been presented to identify patterns and relationships that emerge and provide an in-depth interpretation of the phenomenon being studied.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results of the study indicate that transformational leadership at Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University plays a significant role in improving institutional performance through five main dimensions: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, Individualized Consideration and Cultural-Spiritual Synergy. This leadership not only inspires positive changes in organizational culture but also creates cultural-spiritual synergy that strengthens religious values in the context of higher education. Each of these dimensions contributes to the development of an innovative, motivating, and individual-oriented academic environment, which ultimately drives better performance at the university. Where in the study, field findings were found related to the impact of transformational leadership on institutional performance as follows.

Idealized Influence

Idealized influence is another dimension of transformational leadership, which shows a professional who shows an exemplary figure that his subordinates can emulate. Leaders who have Idealized Influence gain trust and respect through integrity, relentless commitment, and ethical actions. Where in the findings of idealized influence in the field have several indicators, as shown in Figure 1.

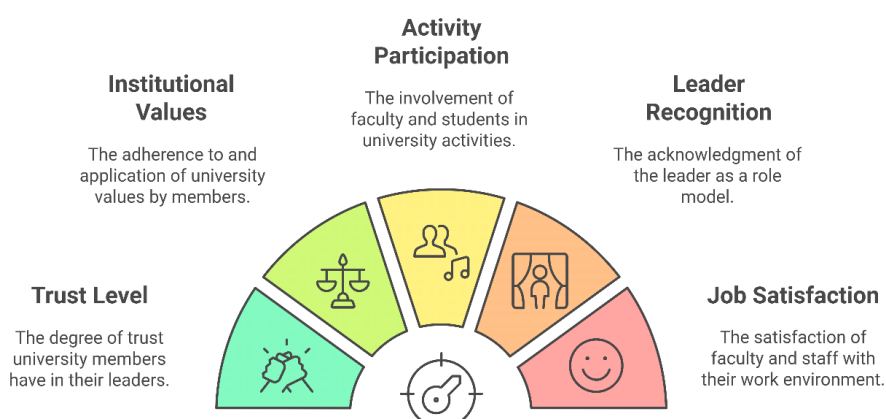


Figure 1. Idealized Influence Indicator

In the observation activities conducted at Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University, Idealized influence is not only about being a director of the institution's vision but also a leader who inspires the achievement of a conducive academic culture. High respect for the values of education and spirituality inspires the leaders of this university to expect lecturers and students to participate positively in achieving the desired targets so that they can develop a humane academic environment. This is reflected in the increasing level of participation of university members and a strong drive to be involved in various academic and social activities initiated by the university. The observation data above is also supported by the results of interviews conducted with several sources on campus.

In one of the interviews conducted with one of the lecturers on campus, he said "Our rector always shows high integrity and commitment, so we feel motivated to contribute better in teaching and research (I_D_2024)." The interview

shows that the leadership shown by the rector at Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University has a major impact on the motivation of lecturers to contribute to teaching and research. By emphasizing high integrity and commitment, the rector not only serves as a director of the institution's vision but also as a role model who inspires lecturers to improve institutional performance. This is in line with the concept of Idealized Influence in transformational leadership, where leaders who are able to build trust and respect among their team members can encourage them to actively participate in achieving academic and institutional goals.

Inspirational Motivation

The second research finding, namely regarding Inspirational motivation on institutional performance at Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University. Inspirational Motivation is the second dimension of transformational leadership that can upgrade institutional performance. Leaders at Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University are able to communicate a clear and attractive vision, which serves to motivate team members.

In an interview conducted with one of the administrative staff, he said, "The rector always attends the activities we carry out and always reminds us of the big goals we want to achieve. This makes us feel part of something bigger" (I_ST_2024). In the interview conducted above, it shows that leaders not only provide direction, but also create a sense of belonging among team members. This is an important issue to increase their involvement and commitment to the goals of the institution.

In the observation, it was seen that leaders often use various media to convey their vision and mission, including seminars and workshops. One lecturer added, "These activities are not only informative, but also raise our enthusiasm to innovate in teaching" (I_D_2024). The observation activities carried out showed that inspirational motivation contributes to the development of an innovative academic environment where lecturers feel encouraged to apply more creative and effective teaching methods.

Findings related to Inspirational Motivation show that inspirational leadership at Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University contributes to improving institutional performance. Leaders who communicate a clear vision create a sense of belonging among team members, increasing their engagement and commitment. Interviews revealed that reminders of the big goal made staff feel involved, while seminars and workshops sparked a spirit of innovation among lecturers. Thus, Inspirational Motivation plays an important role in creating a positive work culture and improving institutional performance.

Intellectual Stimulation

According to this study, the Intellectual Stimulation dimension of transformational leadership influences institutional performance at Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University. Leaders at this university motivate lecturers and students to become critical thinkers, customers of innovation, and generators of ideas. Leaders not only improve the quality of teaching by fostering a climate of intellectual inquiry but also encourage collaboration among academic staff.

In an interview with one of the lecturers, it was explained that “Our rector always encourages us to think critically and try new teaching methods, which greatly contributes to the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom” (I_D_2024). The same thing was also conveyed by one of the staff who said, “We feel strongly encouraged to come up with new ideas in regular meetings, which helps improve the quality of teaching and learning at this university” (I_ST_2024). The interview results show that leaders at Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University, especially the rector, encourage critical thinking and innovation in teaching methods. Lecturers and staff feel encouraged to try new approaches and come up with ideas in regular meetings, which contributes significantly to improving the quality of teaching and learning at the university. This intellectual stimulation creates an innovative and productive academic environment. From the interview results above, it is known that intellectual stimulation has an impact on institutional performance in the education sector.

The results related to Intellectual Stimulation show that Intellectual Stimulation at Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University is able to provide improvements to institutions by stimulating thinking and creativity. The existence of leaders who bring intellectual stimulation supports fresh ideas, and they also improve the teaching standards of education and build interactions between lecturers, which ultimately help the development of the institution.

Individualized Consideration

The Individualized Consideration dimension in transformational leadership focuses on the attention and support given by leaders to each team member, which contributes to individual development and improved institutional performance at Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University. This study reveals how leaders try to understand the needs, aspirations, and potential of each lecturer and student, creating an environment that supports personal and professional growth. By providing appropriate guidance and personal attention, leaders not only increase individual motivation and engagement but also strengthen their commitment to the goals of the institution.

In the interview activities conducted with several informants, one of which was an interview with a staff member where he said, "Our leader is always ready to listen to complaints and provide the support we need (I_ST_2024). A similar thing was also conveyed by a student in an interview activity where the student said, "Our lecturers really care about our development, and that makes us feel appreciated" (I_MHS_2024). The results of the interview showed that there is a strong culture of caring among leaders and lecturers as well as staff and students at Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University that encourages community growth. This encourages more motivation and involvement in the institution where the concept of individualized consideration and its relationship to institutional performance is as shown in Figure 2.

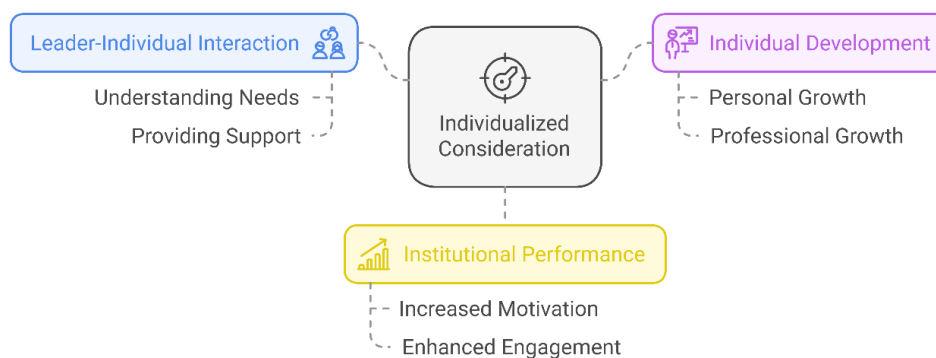


Figure 2. The Concept of Individualized Consideration and Institutional Performance

Figure 2 shows the concept of individualized consideration and its relationship to institutional performance, where the role of interaction between leaders and individuals is emphasized. A leader helps meet the needs of team members, and support is given to help them, which in turn allows for the formation of deep-rooted relationships that foster individual and organizational development. In addition, by providing this attention, leaders enable their followers to grow, thereby increasing their confidence and skills. This interaction improves institutional performance because it increases team member motivation and engagement. After all, the institution has higher aspirations and a better environment to work in.

Cultural-Spiritual Synergy

This Cultural-Spiritual Synergy serves as a foundation for the development of student and faculty character, encouraging them to behave ethically and responsibly in every aspect of academic life. By integrating these values, institutions are able to create a harmonious environment where each individual feels valued and motivated to contribute positively. These findings suggest that when culture and spirituality complement each other, they can increase engagement, collaboration, and innovation, which ultimately contribute to better institutional performance.

Table 1. Cultural-Spiritual Synergy in Higher Education

Key Dimension	Core Features	Impact on Higher Education
Cultural Integration	Emphasizes shared cultural values to create a cohesive academic environment.	Encourages respect and inclusivity among faculty and students.
Spiritual Alignment	Incorporates spiritual principles to guide ethical decision-making.	Promotes ethical leadership and integrity in academic activities.
Holistic Outcomes	Fosters a balance between personal growth and institutional goals.	Enhances institutional performance through motivated and responsible stakeholders.

Cultural-Spiritual Synergy implemented at Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University reflects the integration of cultural and spiritual values to create an inclusive, ethical, and productive academic environment. This Synergy

strengthens the character development of students and lecturers, encourages responsible behaviour, and enhances collaboration and innovation. The impact is seen in improving institutional performance through leadership with integrity, higher engagement, and a balance between individual growth and institutional goals. This integration shows that a holistic, value-based approach can be the foundation for sustainable higher education transformation. This study also found that transformational leadership creates Synergy between organizational culture and spiritual values. A lecturer stated, "Leadership here is not only focused on academics but also character development and religious values" (I_D_2024). Based on an interview conducted with one of the teachers, it was explained that transformational leadership at Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University is not only directed at academic achievement but also emphasizes the importance of character development and spiritual values. This suggests that leaders in these institutions strive to build a more integrative climate where moral and ethical dynamics that are often rooted in religious values are integrated into the teaching and learning process.

Observation results at Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University show that cultural and spiritual Synergy is very visible in various academic and non-academic activities. Activities such as seminars, discussions, and traditional celebrations not only strengthen the sense of togetherness among students and lecturers but also create space for reflection and self-development. In daily interactions, students and lecturers support and appreciate each other, creating an atmosphere that is conducive to learning and innovation. This observation indicates that support from leaders who understand the importance of this Synergy contributes to increased engagement and collaboration, which ultimately has a positive impact on overall institutional performance.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that transformational leadership significantly affects institutional performance in various sectors, including education. This finding is in line with previous literature, which identifies transformational leadership as an important component in increasing the Motivation and engagement of organizational members. Wu et al. (2020) stated that transformational leaders motivate their followers to prioritize collective goals over individual interests, thereby improving organizational performance. Research conducted by Alblooshi et al. (2021) showed that leaders who apply a transformational leadership style can foster a positive work environment, thereby increasing productivity and innovation. Research conducted by Sliwka et al. (2024) stated that transformational leadership is essential for fostering a school culture that is conducive to learning and professional growth. Research conducted by Tari et al. (2023) showed that aspects of transformational leadership, including Idealized Influence and Inspirational Motivation, improve individual and team performance. Idealized Influence forms a model for team members to emulate, while Inspirational Motivation fosters enthusiasm and dedication to the organization's vision. This study revealed that leaders who demonstrate high integrity and dedication can effectively motivate professors and students to increase their contributions to teaching and research, as evidenced by interviews

with informants at Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University. This is in line with the findings of Cirocki & Anam (2024), which highlighted that leaders who foster trust and respect among team members can encourage active involvement in achieving institutional goals. In addition, Intellectual Stimulation, one aspect of transformational leadership, has been shown to encourage critical thinking and innovation among academic staff. Research conducted by Fuad et al. (2022) showed that leaders who encourage the investigation of innovative concepts and creative methodologies in education can improve the quality of education and student learning outcomes. Research findings at the Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University showed that leaders who encourage critical thinking and innovative teaching methods among academics can improve the overall development of the institution. This underscores the need to foster an environment conducive to creativity and collaboration within the organization.

The practical contribution of this study suggests that institutions, especially in the education sector, need to adopt and apply the principles of transformational leadership to improve their performance. Theoretically, this study strengthens the argument that transformational leadership is not just a leadership style but also a strategic approach that can be integrated into the development of leadership policies and practices. By understanding and applying the dimensions of transformational leadership, organizations can create a more productive and innovative environment, which will ultimately contribute to the achievement of their strategic goals.

CONCLUSION

The main findings of this study indicate that transformational leadership, implemented through the dimensions of Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration, has an impact on institutional performance at Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong. This study reveals that the application of the Cultural-Spiritual Synergy perspective as part of transformational leadership can enrich our understanding of how cultural and spiritual values contribute to team member motivation and engagement. The lesson that can be taken from this study is the importance of integrating local and spiritual values in leadership practices to create an environment that supports innovation and collaboration. These findings not only provide new insights into the field of leadership studies but also strengthen the argument that effective leadership must consider the cultural and spiritual contexts within the organization. This study offers a new perspective, namely Cultural-Spiritual Synergy, in the context of transformational leadership, which has not been previously discussed in the existing literature. This study updates the existing perspective by showing that transformational leadership does not only focus on managerial aspects, but also on strengthening cultural and spiritual values that can improve institutional performance. However, this study has limitations, including the limited scope of one institution and the relatively small number of informants. Therefore, further research is needed to explore aspects that have not been reached, such as differences in gender, age, and the use of broader survey methods. Thus, future research is expected to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth picture, as well as become the basis for more

appropriate and targeted policies in leadership development in the education sector.

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