

Transformational Leadership in Building A Sustainable Organization: Qualitative Study at PT Pos Indonesia (Persero)

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ABSTRACT

In facing the challenges of globalization, organizations are not only required to achieve financial benefits, but also to ensure sustainability in social and environmental aspects. This study explores the role of transformational leadership in building a sustainable organization, with a case study at PT Pos Indonesia (Persero). Through a qualitative approach, this study analyzes the impact of transformational leadership on innovation, employee engagement, and organizational culture that supports sustainability. The results of the study indicate that transformational leadership contributes significantly to creating a clear long-term vision, encouraging employee empowerment, and building a positive organizational culture. The main factors that influence the effectiveness of this leadership include effective communication, empathy, employee empowerment, appreciation for contributions, and delivery of a clear vision. These findings provide insights for organizational leaders in developing responsive and adaptive leadership strategies to future business challenges

Keywords: Transformational Leadership; Organizational Sustainability; Employee Empowerment; Organizational Culture; Innovation; PT Pos Indonesia



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INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly complex era of globalization, the challenges faced by organizations are not only related to economic aspects, but also to social and environmental issues (Andini *et al.*, 2024; POPA, 2023). Organizational sustainability is one of the main focuses in developing business strategies, where companies are required to not only pursue profits, but also provide a positive impact on society and the environment (Woo and Kang, 2020). The phenomenon of transformational leadership has emerged as one of the solutions to building a sustainable organization (Givens, 2008; Veranita *et al.*, 2024; (Koloay *et al.*, 2023). Transformational leaders not only focus on achieving short-term goals, but also inspire and empower team members to contribute to the organization's long-term vision.

PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) is the object of research on transformational leadership in building a sustainable organization because PT Pos Indonesia is one of the State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN) that has an important role in the logistics and communication system in Indonesia. As a company that has been operating for more than 275 years, PT Pos Indonesia faces stiff competition from private and digital companies, such as JNE, J&T, SiCepat, and other e-commerce-based expeditions. The sustainability of the organization is highly dependent on how leadership can navigate these changes and create innovation. In addition, the company has difficulty in carrying out rapid digital transformation compared to its competitors. The slow adaptation to technology hampers operational efficiency and customer service.

Transformational leadership is key to accelerating change, driving innovation, and increasing PT Pos Indonesia's competitiveness in the digital era. PT Pos Indonesia also faces quite serious financial challenges, including pressure from traditional business models that are increasingly being eroded by digital services. The company's sustainability requires a leadership strategy that is able to manage resources more efficiently, empower employees, and create an innovative culture that can increase long-term profitability. As a large organization with thousands of employees, PT Pos Indonesia faces challenges in building a collaborative, adaptive, and innovative work culture. Transformational leadership can play a major role in increasing employee engagement, creating higher work motivation, and strengthening loyalty to the company's vision.

This study provides a new contribution by exploring the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational sustainability in the context of PT Pos Indonesia (Persero). With a qualitative approach, this study aims to identify key factors that influence leadership effectiveness in building a sustainable organization. Through in-depth interviews and data analysis, it is expected to obtain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of leadership and its impact on organizational sustainability. The main objective of this study is to provide valuable insights for organizational leaders, academics, and business practitioners in designing more effective and long-term oriented leadership strategies. By understanding how transformational leadership can contribute to organizational sustainability, it is expected that this study can be an important reference in developing more responsive and adaptive leadership practices to the challenges

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership was first introduced by Burns (1978) in (Serang *et al.*, 2024) who described transformational leaders as individuals who are able to increase the awareness and motivation of their followers by instilling higher moral values. Bass (1985) then developed this concept by adding aspects of the influence and involvement of leaders

in directing positive change in the organization. Transformational leaders not only motivate, but also provide inspiration and encouragement for members of the organization to achieve higher goals (Rivai, 2020; Panggabean *et al.*, 2024).

The main characteristic of transformational leadership is that the leader has a clear vision and is able to communicate it effectively to members of the organization. In addition, he is able to encourage positive change by providing examples and encouragement to members of the organization (Lai *et al.*, 2020). Transformational leaders care deeply about the needs of followers and strive to develop their potential and encourage members of the organization to think creatively and innovatively in facing challenges.

Bernard M. Bass in (Reza, 2019), consists of four main components of transformational leadership, namely Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation but also has Individualized Consideration. This concept of transformational leadership has been proven effective in various organizational contexts, including in building sustainable organizations. Through inspirational leadership and based on positive influence, organizations can be more adaptive in dealing with change and create a more productive and innovative work environment (Stewart, 2006).

Transformational Leadership Theory

Bass and Avolio Leadership Model, (Salter and Harris, 2014) developed a transformational leadership model that emphasizes the importance of interactions between leaders and followers in building an innovative and adaptive organizational culture. This model combines four main dimensions of transformational leadership and highlights how leaders can increase individual and team engagement and performance in achieving organizational goals. Transformational leadership is often associated with charismatic leadership theory, which emphasizes the strong influence of leaders on their followers through personal magnetism and extraordinary communication skills (Williams, 2018). Although both have similarities, transformational leadership emphasizes more on individual and organizational development through inspiration, motivation, and intellectual enhancement rather than relying solely on the leader's charisma (Watson, 2024).

Organizational Sustainability

The concept of organizational sustainability refers to the ability of an organization to survive and thrive in the long term by considering economic, social, and environmental aspects (Rahman *et al.*, 2022). Elkington (2001) introduced the concept of Triple Bottom Line (TBL), which emphasizes that sustainability does not only depend on economic profit, but also on the social and environmental impacts of organizational activities (Slaper and Hall, 2011). Factors that influence organizational sustainability (Errida and Lotfi, 2021; Tsai *et al.*, 2013) in addition to visionary leadership, adaptive organizational culture, innovation and technology, socio-environmental responsibility, risk management and financial sustainability.

Transformational Leadership in the Context of Sustainability

Transformational leadership plays an important role in creating a culture of innovation within an organization (Asbari and Novitasari, 2024). Leaders who adopt this leadership style are able to encourage members of the organization to think creatively, take measured risks, and dare to create new solutions in facing business challenges. With intellectual stimulation, leaders can increase the innovation power of individuals and teams, so that

organizations become more adaptive to environmental changes (Slahanti and Setyowati, 2021).

Several previous studies have shown that transformational leadership has a positive impact on organizational sustainability. For example, research by (Shahid, 2024) found that transformational leaders can increase organizational innovation that contributes to long-term sustainability. In addition, a study by (Ahmad *et al.*, 2020) showed that transformational leaders are able to encourage pro-environmental behavior in organizations, which supports the implementation of more effective sustainability strategies (Turyandi *et al.*, 2023).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research, conducted from June to September 2024, employs a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of transformational leadership in the context of sustainable organizations (Fadli, 2021). The research design is a case study, allowing a comprehensive exploration of leadership phenomena in real organizational settings (Ridlo, 2023).

The study population consists of leaders and employees at PT Pos Indonesia who are involved in transformational leadership practices and sustainability initiatives. Using purposive sampling, 15 key informants were selected based on their direct experience and active involvement in transformational initiatives within the organization.

To collect data, the study used three qualitative techniques:

1. In-depth (semi-structured) interviews
Conducted with individual informants (executives, middle managers, and staff) to explore personal experiences, perceptions, and the perceived impact of transformational leadership. Each interview lasted between 45–90 minutes and was audio recorded (with consent) for accuracy and transcription.
2. Focus Group Discussions (FGD)
FGDs were conducted in groups of 4–6 participants to encourage dynamic interaction and to capture collective views on leadership and organizational culture. The discussions explored how leadership practices influence team collaboration, innovation, and employee engagement. Two FGDs were held, each lasting approximately 2 hours.
3. Participant Observation
Researchers participated in organizational activities (e.g., staff meetings, training sessions, and informal gatherings) to observe leadership behavior, employee responses, and cultural dynamics in a natural setting. Field notes were taken to support and triangulate the interview and FGD data.

The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved coding interview and FGD transcripts, identifying key themes, and interpreting patterns related to transformational leadership and sustainability. Data triangulation was applied by comparing findings across interviews, FGDs, and observations to enhance the credibility and validity of the results. Member checking was also employed, where preliminary findings were shared with selected informants to validate interpretations and ensure the authenticity of the results.

RESEARCH RESULTS

This study involved 15 informants consisting of leaders who implement transformational leadership and employees of PT Pos Indonesia (Persero).

The characteristics of informants include:

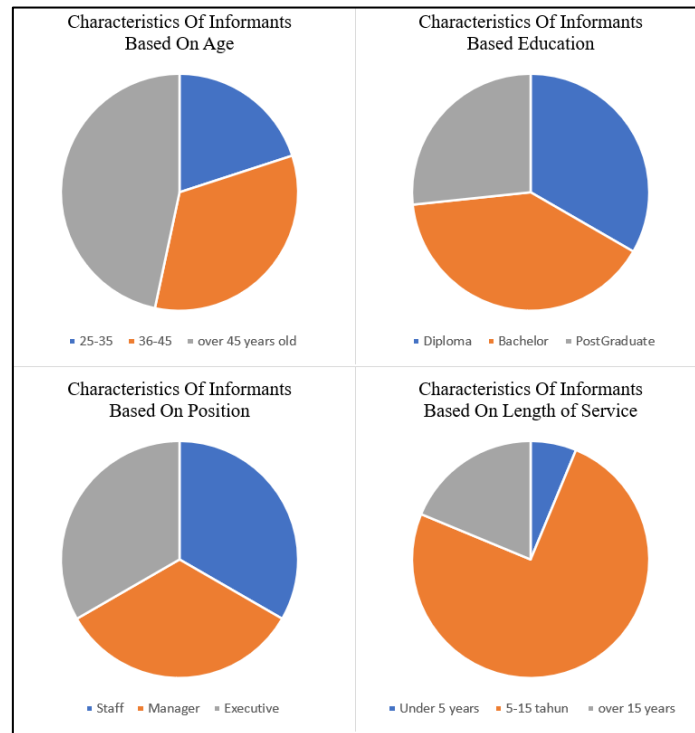


Figure 1: Characteristics Of Research Informants

Clear Vision and Mission

In-depth interviews with several informants showed the importance of a clear vision and mission in transformational leadership. One senior manager informant at PT Pos Indonesia stated, “A clear vision helps us stay focused on long-term goals and inspires the team to contribute”. This shows that transformational leadership at PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) is greatly influenced by a clear vision and mission.

The vision of PT Pos Indonesia (Persero), namely “Becoming the Most Competitive Postal Operator Providing Courier and Financial Services” and its mission: “Acting effectively to achieve the best performance” has been communicated well by the Leaders and has become the direction and guideline for employees in working. Employees expressed that their leaders have the ability to master the situation by conveying a clear vision regarding the group's goals.

In line with research (Rahman *et al.*, 2022), this clear vision functions as a guide that helps employees understand the direction and goals of the organization, thus creating passion and energy in working. When employees feel connected to the organization's vision, they tend to be more motivated to contribute optimally. Through interviews with several informants, it was revealed that the Leaders at PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) who implemented this style were able to inspire long-term vision and encourage sustainable innovation. One informant stated, “Our manager always emphasizes the importance of a

clear vision for the future, and that makes us feel involved in the organization's journey." This shows that transformational leadership does not only focus on short-term results, but also builds a foundation for sustainability.

The importance of vision in transformational leadership cannot be separated from how the vision is internalized by employees. Employees as research informants believe that effective leaders are able to communicate company goals well to employees. An inspiring vision and measurable mission help increase employee motivation and engagement, and create a positive work culture. This is in line with research (Setyawan *et al.*, 2021), that transformational leadership must build employee commitment by developing a clear organizational vision and mission. Transformational leaders act as good listeners, support individual development, and encourage innovation, so that employees feel valued, motivated and have a high commitment to contribute to achieving organizational goals through a clear vision and mission.

Employee Empowerment

Based on the results of interviews with several employees of PT Pos Indonesia, the leadership has empowered employees to take the initiative and innovate and contribute to the sustainability of the organization. One employee said, "When leaders give us the freedom to innovate, we feel more involved and committed". In accordance with the organization's goal of "Building a more competitive and prosperous nation", all components of PT Pos Indonesia realize this by providing relevant products according to market needs, providing excellent service, running business processes efficiently, building excellent information technology solutions and reliable human capital, and strengthening internal control systems, governance and risk management to achieve a level of maturity that is adequate to secure the achievement of company goals. This is in accordance with the statement (Handoko and Tjiptono, 1996) that transformational leadership combined with the empowerment dimension will guide the organization to move steadily in welcoming the era of transformation. This study found that the transformational leadership style at PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) has a significant positive impact on organizational commitment and employee empowerment.

Positive Organizational Culture

The results of the study showed that transformational leadership plays an important role in creating a positive organizational culture. Through interviews with employees, it was revealed that leaders who apply this leadership style encourage collaboration and open communication that increase engagement and job satisfaction.

Employees stated that their leaders actively invite participation in decision-making, creating an atmosphere where every idea is valued. One employee said, "I feel heard and appreciated when the leader asks for our opinions in meetings." This shows that open communication is one of the keys to building trust and a sense of belonging among team members. In addition, the study found that leaders who give recognition to individual and team contributions also contribute to a positive culture. One employee added, "When the boss appreciates our hard work, it makes us more motivated to work together." This recognition not only increases morale but also strengthens collaboration between teams. Furthermore, organizational culture plays an important role in strengthening this relationship, where organizational values that are open, collaborative, and based on rewards for individual performance create a work atmosphere that is more conducive for employees to be proactive and highly committed.

To support the realization of its vision, mission, goals and business strategies, PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) has set AKHLAK as the main value of the company's culture, namely: trustworthy, competent, harmonious, loyal, adaptive and collaborative. Thus, the subjective experience of employees towards the leadership and work culture applied plays a significant role in shaping their attitudes and behavior in the organizational environment.

The results of the study (Lismiatun, 2018) revealed that employee perceptions of transformational leadership have a close relationship with Organizational Culture and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) as well as employee organizational commitment. The study conducted showed that leaders are actively involved in daily activities, provide direct feedback, and hold regular meetings to discuss progress. Leaders are seen to support employee initiatives and encourage active participation in decision-making, although it is still found that there is still resistance to change and a lack of training for new leaders. "Some leaders are still stuck in old ways, and this hinders progress"

Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Sustainability

The results of qualitative research show that transformational leadership at PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) has a significant impact on organizational sustainability. In addition, this study found that leaders who support employee professional development contribute to organizational sustainability. An employee said, "When leaders provide opportunities to learn and develop, we feel more prepared to face future challenges." This shows that investment in human resource development is key to maintaining sustainability. It is known that during 2023 various training activities/seminars/workshops for Management trainees and employees to improve competency have been carried out both domestically and abroad, including Induction Training, Function Training, Competency Standardization Training, Certification Training, Self-Development, Corporate Inspiring Forum, Leadership, Entrepreneurship, Internal Audit and other training with a total of 513 training hours.

This is in line with the results of research (Pamungkas *et al.*, 2024) which emphasizes that transformational leadership plays an important role in creating an environment that supports innovation and development, which in turn contributes to organizational sustainability.

Key Factors Affecting Leadership Effectiveness

The results of this qualitative study identified several key factors that affect the effectiveness of transformational leadership at PT Pos Indonesia (Persero). Through in-depth interviews with 15 informants consisting of executives, managers and employees, it was revealed that several important elements contribute to the success of transformational leadership in sustainable organizations. If described, it is as presented in Figure 2 below:



Figure 2: Key Factors Influencing Transformational Leadership
 Source : Avolio, B. J., & Bass, B. M. (1994). *Improving Organizational Effectiveness through Transformational Leadership*.

One of the key factors identified was effective communication. Informants emphasized the importance of openness in communication between leaders and employees. One employee stated, “Our leader is always open to listening to our opinions. When we feel we can speak up without fear of being judged, it makes us more willing to share new ideas.” This shows that good communication creates an environment that supports innovation and collaboration.

Another factor that was very influential was empathy demonstrated by the leader. One manager explained, “I always try to understand the needs and feelings of my team. When they feel emotionally supported, they are more motivated to work hard.” Another informant added, “When leaders show concern for our well-being, we feel more engaged with the organization.” This shows that empathy can increase employee commitment and loyalty.

Employee empowerment also emerged as a key factor in leadership effectiveness. One employee stated, “When leaders give us the freedom to make decisions and innovate, we feel more responsible for our work.” This shows that giving employees autonomy can increase their sense of ownership and motivation to achieve organizational goals.

Recognition for employee contributions was also identified as an important factor. An employee stated, “When our superiors appreciate our hard work, it makes us feel valued and motivated to give our best.” Another informant added, “Rewards do not always have to be monetary; sometimes, a sincere thank you is enough to make us feel valued.” This shows that proper recognition can strengthen the relationship between leaders and employees. Lastly, having a clear vision from the leader is also a key factor in leadership effectiveness. Employees also noted that a clear vision helps them feel more involved in the organization’s processes and goals. The effectiveness of transformational leadership is greatly influenced by effective communication, empathy, employee empowerment, appreciation, and a clear vision. These factors are interrelated and contribute to the creation of a positive work environment, which in turn improves employee performance and commitment to the organization. This study provides valuable insights for leaders in designing more effective and sustainability-oriented leadership strategies.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that transformational leadership has a significant impact on organizational sustainability at PT Pos Indonesia (Persero). Leadership that clearly communicates the vision and mission has been proven to increase employee engagement and foster a collaborative work culture. Empowering employees through innovation and decision-making autonomy also contributes to higher motivation and individual performance. Moreover, a positive organizational culture reinforces the link between leadership and sustainability. The effectiveness of transformational leadership in this context is supported by key factors such as open communication, empathy, appreciation of employee contributions, and development through training and learning opportunities. Understanding these elements enables leaders to design more effective strategies for sustaining organizations amidst dynamic business challenges.

This study provides several theoretical contributions to the understanding of transformational leadership in the context of organizational sustainability. First, it extends Bass and Avolio's Transformational Leadership Model by demonstrating how its four key components idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration are implemented in large, state-owned enterprises undergoing digital and organizational transformation. Second, the findings reinforce existing literature linking transformational leadership with innovation and employee empowerment, particularly in competitive and uncertain environments. Third, this study contributes to the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework by illustrating how transformational leadership aligns economic, social, and environmental goals through a sustainability-oriented organizational culture. Finally, this research bridges the gap between leadership theory and sustainability studies by offering a conceptual framework that connects leadership behavior, employee engagement, and organizational culture with sustainable outcomes laying a foundation for future theoretical development that integrates leadership, change management, and sustainability.

Research Limitations

This study has limitations, namely: only focuses on one company : PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) so that the results obtained may not be generalizable to other organizations, especially private companies or different industries. Future studies can expand the scope by comparing several organizations in the logistics sector or other BUMN. Another limitation is that this study uses a qualitative approach and the number of informants is limited, this study provides in-depth insights but does not describe the entire population of PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) employees. Further studies can use quantitative or mixed-method methods to obtain broader and more objective data. The next limitation is that the use of semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) relies heavily on the subjective perspective of informants. There is a possibility of social bias, where informants provide answers that are considered more positive towards the company's leadership. To reduce bias, future research can use long-term observation techniques or more in-depth data triangulation.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the research results, here are some policy recommendations that can be implemented by PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) to strengthen transformational leadership and ensure organizational sustainability:

- Strengthening leadership development programs by forming transformational leadership training programs and implementing competency-based leadership models.
- Improving organizational culture and employee engagement through fostering a collaborative and adaptive culture and encouraging employee involvement in decision-making.
- Digital transformation and sustainable innovation, by accelerating the digitalization of services and operations and implementing a data-based management system.
- Improving sustainability in business, by implementing the triple bottom line principle (profit, people, planet) and collaborating with stakeholders.

By implementing these policies, PT Pos Indonesia can increase the effectiveness of transformational leadership, accelerate digital transformation, and ensure the sustainability of its business amidst increasingly fierce competition. This policy can also increase employee engagement and create an innovative culture that supports the company's long-term growth.

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