



Examining the Effect of Transformational Leadership on Employee Performance within Academic Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Transformational Leadership, Employee Performance, Higher Education

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This study aims to examine the effect of transformational leadership on the performance of educational staff in a higher education institution. Employing a quantitative survey design, the research used a census technique in which all 44 members of the population were involved as respondents. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using simple linear regression with IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. The findings reveal that transformational leadership has a positive and statistically significant effect on employee performance. The coefficient of determination (R Square) of 0.116 indicates that transformational leadership explains 11.6% of the variance in employee performance, while the remaining variance is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. These results suggest that the implementation of visionary, inspirational, and individually supportive leadership practices plays an important role in strengthening staff performance. Therefore, reinforcing transformational leadership behaviors can serve as a strategic approach to improving administrative effectiveness and overall organizational performance in higher education settings.

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INTRODUCTION

The performance of public civil servants plays a pivotal role in shaping the quality of public services and national competitiveness. Effective bureaucratic performance ensures policy implementation, administrative efficiency, and public trust in government institutions. Although administrative reforms have been widely implemented, improvements often emphasize regulatory compliance rather than strengthening operational effectiveness at the unit level. Empirical global governance indicators demonstrate that while several countries show regional progress, their global competitiveness remains moderate compared to leading nations with highly adaptive administrative systems. This discrepancy suggests that structural reform alone is insufficient to generate

sustainable performance outcomes (Budiasa, 2021). Leadership capacity within public institutions becomes a crucial determinant in translating policy frameworks into measurable results. Therefore, examining factors that directly influence employee performance is essential not only for institutional development but also for broader societal advancement. Understanding how leadership shapes work behavior contributes to strengthening governance systems and improving public sector accountability.

Despite continuous bureaucratic reform, many public institutions still struggle to optimize employee performance at the operational level. Performance evaluation systems are often formalistic, focusing on administrative targets rather than behavioral and motivational dimensions that drive productivity. As a result, performance improvements may appear satisfactory on paper but fail to produce transformative organizational impact. One central issue lies in leadership practices that do not fully empower employees or foster innovation. Without effective leadership, employees may lack intrinsic motivation, strategic direction, and collaborative synergy. This condition creates a gap between institutional expectations and actual work outcomes. Furthermore, inconsistent leadership styles may limit the development of a performance-oriented culture. Consequently, identifying leadership approaches capable of strengthening employee engagement and productivity becomes an urgent necessity. Addressing this problem is fundamental to ensuring that bureaucratic reform translates into tangible improvements in service quality and institutional effectiveness.

At the institutional level, employee performance assessments often indicate relatively positive achievements, particularly in meeting formal work targets and maintaining discipline. Performance appraisal documents generally reflect satisfactory ratings, suggesting that employees fulfill their assigned duties and responsibilities (Nazarwin, 2024). However, such evaluations may not fully capture qualitative dimensions such as innovation, collaborative effectiveness, and proactive problem solving. In academic administrative environments, the complexity of service demands requires more than routine task completion. Administrative staff must adapt to dynamic academic policies, stakeholder expectations, and technological changes. Leadership plays a decisive role in shaping how employees respond to these challenges. When leaders provide clear vision, intellectual stimulation, and individual support, employees tend to demonstrate higher commitment and adaptability. Conversely, limited leadership engagement may restrict performance growth beyond minimum standards. This phenomenon highlights the importance of examining transformational leadership as a strategic factor influencing employee performance in higher education administration.

Previous studies on transformational leadership have predominantly focused on corporate or profit-oriented organizations, emphasizing outcomes

such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee loyalty. These studies generally confirm that inspirational and visionary leadership contributes positively to productivity and work engagement (Sahrul, 2025). Research conducted in financial institutions and government agencies using quantitative approaches has demonstrated significant relationships between transformational leadership and employee performance. Most of these studies utilize established leadership theories and statistical analysis tools to measure direct and indirect effects. However, the contextual focus often centers on business competitiveness rather than public academic administration. Additionally, some studies emphasize mediating variables such as motivation without thoroughly exploring direct performance indicators in educational institutions. While these findings provide valuable theoretical foundations, they leave unanswered questions regarding how transformational leadership functions within non-profit, faith-based higher education contexts characterized by distinct organizational cultures and service orientations.

Although existing research confirms the positive influence of transformational leadership, several limitations remain evident. First, many studies employ performance indicators tailored to corporate productivity, which may not fully reflect the multidimensional responsibilities of educational administrative staff. Second, sector-specific contextualization is frequently limited, reducing the applicability of findings to public higher education institutions. Third, theoretical integration between leadership constructs and comprehensive performance measurement frameworks is often inconsistent. Some studies rely on simplified performance metrics that emphasize output quantity rather than quality, effectiveness, and teamwork simultaneously. These limitations reveal a research gap concerning how transformational leadership interacts with holistic performance indicators in academic administrative settings. Addressing this gap is important because higher education institutions operate within complex governance structures that require both bureaucratic compliance and adaptive leadership. Therefore, a focused investigation within this sector contributes to refining theoretical understanding and strengthening empirical relevance.

This study offers a contextual and theoretical contribution by integrating transformational leadership theory with a comprehensive performance measurement framework tailored to educational staff in public higher education. Unlike prior studies centered on corporate environments, this research situates transformational leadership within an academic administrative context characterized by service orientation and institutional accountability. Performance is measured through multidimensional indicators encompassing quality, quantity, effectiveness, and teamwork, providing a balanced evaluation of task and behavioral outcomes. By synthesizing established leadership constructs with a structured performance model, this study advances a more

holistic analytical approach. The novelty lies in examining the direct effect of transformational leadership without relying solely on mediating variables, thereby clarifying its independent contribution to employee performance. This approach strengthens the empirical foundation for leadership development strategies in educational institutions and supports evidence-based policy recommendations for administrative reform.

Based on the identified gap, this study addresses the central research problem: to what extent does transformational leadership influence the performance of educational administrative staff in higher education institutions? The study argues that transformational leadership characterized by idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration positively and significantly affects employee performance. The underlying assumption is that leaders who articulate a clear vision, encourage innovation, and provide personal support create a conducive work climate that enhances productivity and collaboration. By empirically testing this relationship using quantitative methods, the research seeks to provide objective evidence regarding the strategic role of leadership in strengthening bureaucratic performance. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically by reinforcing leadership-performance linkages and practically by informing leadership development programs aimed at improving administrative effectiveness within higher education institutions.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research design using a survey method. The quantitative approach was selected because it enables objective measurement of the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance through statistical analysis. A census technique was applied, as the total population of educational staff consisted of 44 employees, making it feasible to involve all members as research respondents (Sugiono, 2020). The study was conducted at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, chosen due to its structured performance appraisal system and the relevance of examining leadership influence within an academic administrative setting. This location provided an appropriate context for analyzing how transformational leadership practices affect bureaucratic performance in higher education institutions.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on theoretical frameworks and relevant variable indicators. The instrument was distributed directly in offline format to ensure immediate and accurate responses from participants. The questionnaire applied a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree to measure respondents' levels of agreement with each statement (Douven, 2018). Prior to full implementation,

content and construct validity were assessed by expert validators who reviewed language clarity, item relevance, and structural consistency. Their recommendations were incorporated to refine the instrument before conducting a pilot study on 20 equivalent staff members at another faculty within the same institution.

The pilot test results indicated that two items were invalid, resulting in 24 valid statements for the transformational leadership variable (X) and 24 valid statements for the employee performance variable (Y). Reliability testing confirmed that the instrument met acceptable internal consistency standards. The data analysis procedure included data condensation through coding and scoring responses, data display in tabular statistical summaries, and data verification through validity, reliability, and classical assumption tests. Normality and linearity tests were conducted prior to hypothesis testing. Subsequently, simple linear regression analysis using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27 was applied to test the proposed hypothesis (H_1): Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh.

To ensure data credibility and accuracy, several validation procedures were implemented. Instrument validity was examined using product-moment correlation, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. Classical assumption testing strengthened the robustness of regression analysis results. Furthermore, expert judgment contributed to content validity, and pilot testing enhanced construct clarity. These procedures collectively ensured that the collected data were valid, reliable, and appropriate for hypothesis testing, thereby supporting the rigor and trustworthiness of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this study were analyzed through a series of statistical tests to ensure instrument quality and data validity before hypothesis testing. The analysis stages included validity, reliability, normality, and linearity tests, as well as simple linear regression analysis to determine the relationships and influences between the variables studied.

First, a validity test was conducted to determine the extent to which the items in the research instrument accurately measured the variables being studied (Sahrul, 2025). Validity testing in this study used Pearson Product Moment correlation with the help of IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. In the item validity test using Pearson Product Moment correlation, degrees of freedom were calculated using the formula:

$$df = N-2 (44-2) = 42$$

Table 3. Validity Test Results

Variable	r-Count	r-Table	Information	Variable	r-Count	r-Table	Information
Transformational Leadership (X)				Employee Performance (Y)			
P1	0.543	>0.297	Valid	P1	0.333	>0.297	Valid
P2	0.365	>0.297	Valid	P2	0.394	>0.297	Valid
P3	0.415	>0.297	Valid	P3	0.366	>0.297	Valid
P4	0.381	>0.297	Valid	P4	0.498	>0.297	Valid
P5	0.398	>0.297	Valid	P5	0.402	>0.297	Valid
P6	0.504	>0.297	Valid	P6	0.568	>0.297	Valid
P7	0.430	>0.297	Valid	P7	0.349	>0.297	Valid
P8	0.382	>0.297	Valid	P8	0.460	>0.297	Valid
P9	0.407	>0.297	Valid	P9	0.463	>0.297	Valid
P10	0.316	>0.297	Valid	P10	0.384	>0.297	Valid
P11	0.496	>0.297	Valid	P11	0.333	>0.297	Valid
P12	0.362	>0.297	Valid	P12	0.334	>0.297	Valid
P13	0.390	>0.297	Valid	P13	0.357	>0.297	Valid
P14	0.322	>0.297	Valid	P14	0.467	>0.297	Valid
P15	0.311	>0.297	Valid	P15	0.362	>0.297	Valid
P16	0.365	>0.297	Valid	P16	0.349	>0.297	Valid
P17	0.320	>0.297	Valid	P17	0.337	>0.297	Valid
P18	0.334	>0.297	Valid	P18	0.487	>0.297	Valid
P19	0.330	>0.297	Valid	P19	0.398	>0.297	Valid
P20	0.380	>0.297	Valid	P20	0.505	>0.297	Valid
P21	0.353	>0.297	Valid	P21	0.305	>0.297	Valid
P22	0.316	>0.297	Valid	P22	0.406	>0.297	Valid
P23	0.347	>0.297	Valid	P23	0.363	>0.297	Valid
P24	0.448	>0.297	Valid	P24	0.570	>0.297	Valid

Source: SPSS Output (Researcher, 2026)

Based on the results of statistical analysis using SPSS version 27, the following findings were obtained. First, the construct validity test was conducted by correlating the scores of each instrument item with the total score of the variable using Pearson Product Moment correlation. At a 5% significance level and 42 degrees of freedom (N=44), the r-table value was 0.297.

The analysis results showed that all statement items for the Transformational Leadership (X) variable had correlation coefficients (r-calculated) between 0.311 and 0.543, while items for the Employee Performance (Y) variable ranged from 0.305 to 0.570. All r-calculated values were greater than the r-table, thus being declared valid.

Second, the reliability test using the Cronbach's Alpha method yielded coefficients of 0.746 for the X variable and 0.782 for the Y variable. These results align with Alfarisi's findings, which state that instruments with Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70 indicate a strong level of reliability in research (Alfarisi et al., 2023).

Table 4. Reliability Test Results

Variabel	Cronbach's Alpha	Kriteria	N of Items	keterangan
Kepemimpinan Transformasional (X)	0.746	0,70	24	Reliabel
Kinerja Pegawai (Y)	0.782	0,70	24	Reliabel

Source: SPSS Output (Researcher, 2026)

Third, the normality test was conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk test due to the relatively small sample size of 44 respondents (Ahadi, 2023). The test results showed that the significance value (Sig.) for the Transformational Leadership variable was 0.533, while for the Employee Performance variable it was 0.470. Both values are greater than 0.05, so it can be concluded that the research data from both variables are normally distributed.

Table 5. Normality Test Results

Variabel	Statistic	df	Sig.	Keterangan
Kepemimpinan Transformasional (X)	0,977	44	0,533	Normal (p > 0,05)
Kinerja Pegawai (Y)	0,976	44	0,470	Normal (p > 0,05)

Source: SPSS Output (Researcher, 2026)

Fourth, the linearity test using the Test for Linearity shows a significance value in the Deviation from Linearity row of 0.288. This value is greater than 0.05, so it can be concluded that the relationship between Transformational Leadership (X) and Employee Performance (Y) is linear.

These results indicate that the linearity assumption in the regression analysis has been met, so a simple linear regression model is appropriate to measure the influence between the two variables.

Table 6. Linearity Test Results

		Tabel ANOVA					
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Kinerja Pegawai.Y* Kepemimpinan Transformasional.X	Between Groups	(Combined)	497.495	19	26.184	1.525	0,163
		Linearity	105.230	1	105.230	6.129	0,021
		Deviation from linearity	392.266	18	21.793	1269	0,288
	Within Groups		412.050	24	17.169		
Total			909.545	43			

Source: SPSS Output (Researcher, 2026)

Based on the results of the simple linear regression analysis, the R-square value was 0.116. This indicates that the Transformational Leadership variable explains 11.6% of the variation in Employee Performance, while the remaining 88.4% is influenced by factors outside this model.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.340 ^a	.116	.095	4.376

a. Predictors: (Constant), Kepemimpinan Transformasional

Figure 1. Model Summary

Source: SPSS Output (Researcher, 2026)

The ANOVA test results show an F-value of 5.495 with a significance level of 0.024. Because the significance value is less than 0.05, this regression model is considered significant and suitable for predicting employee performance.

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	105.230	1	105.230	5.495	.024 ^b
	Residual	804.316	42	19.150		
	Total	909.545	43			

a. Dependent Variable: Kinerja Pegawai

b. Predictors: (Constant), Kepemimpinan Transformatasional

Figure 2. ANOVA test Result

Source: SPSS Output (Researcher, 2026)

Table 7. Simple Linear Regression Test

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
constant	55.737	8.534	-	6.531	<,001
Transformational Leadership (X)	0,271	0,116	0,340	2.344	0,024

Source: SPSS Output (Researcher, 2026)

Based on the coefficient table, the following structural equation is obtained:

$$Y = 55.737 + 0.271X$$

Therefore, the equation is: The constant (a) is 55.737, indicating that if there is no Transformational Leadership, the Employee Performance score is 55.737. The regression coefficient (b) is 0.271, indicating that every one-unit increase in the Transformational Leadership variable will increase Employee Performance by 0.271 units.

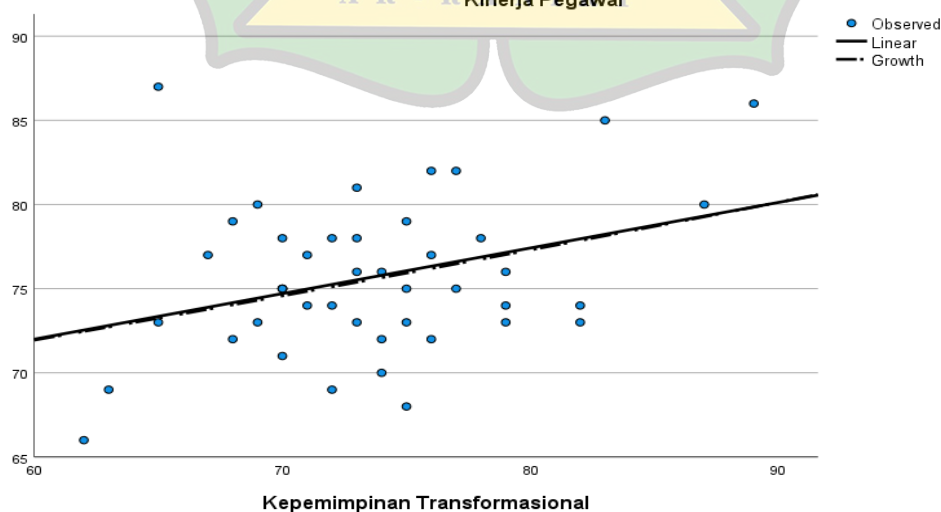


Figure 3. employee performance

Source: SPSS Output (Researcher, 2026)

Based on Figure 3, the regression line diagram, the explanation of the straight line and the growth shown in the straight line in the diagram demonstrates the relationship between variables X and Y. This line is calculated using statistical methods such as ordinary least squares, which minimizes the distance of all data points from the line. This line is called a straight line because it has a constant slope, meaning that changes in variable X will always cause a proportional change in variable Y. The growth indicated by this line is positive linear growth. This is evident from the shape of the line, which rises to the right with a constant slope. This means that every one-unit increase in X will cause an increase in Y equal to the value of the slope of the line. There is no acceleration or deceleration in the growth pattern; the relationship pattern is constant and can be predicted using the linear equation $Y = a + bX$.

The significance value of the t-test for variable X is 0.024 (<0.05), so the research hypothesis is accepted. This finding proves that transformational leadership has a positive and significant influence on employee performance at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh.

Discussion

The results of the simple linear regression analysis using SPSS indicate that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on the performance of educational staff at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh. This is evidenced by a significance value of 0.024 ($p < 0.05$) and a t-value of 2.344, confirming that the proposed hypothesis (H_1) is accepted. The regression coefficient of 0.271 demonstrates a positive directional relationship, meaning that improvements in transformational leadership practices are followed by increases in employee performance. Furthermore, the R Square value of 0.116 indicates that transformational leadership contributes 11.6% to the variance in employee performance, while the remaining percentage is influenced by other unexamined variables.

These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted by Afzan (Afzan et al., 2024), Lumintang (2025), and Lempoy (2025), which collectively demonstrate that visionary and inspirational leadership styles significantly enhance employee productivity in public institutions and service organizations. In particular, the present findings reinforce Afzan's argument that transformational leadership strengthens positive work behavior through motivational reinforcement. Transformational leadership can be understood as a leadership approach that inspires and empowers employees, playing a central

role in shaping the psychological quality of work life (Dewi, 2025). Within the academic environment of UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, this leadership style extends beyond productivity orientation and emphasizes intrinsic motivation, behavioral development, and professional commitment among educational staff.

The application of performance indicators derived from Bernardin and Russell (Bernardin & Russell, 1992), as also highlighted by Lempoy (2025), provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating employee performance through four dimensions: quality, quantity, effectiveness, and cooperation. These dimensions serve as measurable standards to assess how administrative staff execute their professional responsibilities. A structured performance appraisal system enables institutional leaders to map employee work behavior and identify service-related obstacles that require managerial intervention (Bayani, 2025). In this study, intellectual stimulation provided by leaders appears to enhance work accuracy and efficiency, particularly in handling academic administrative processes within the Islamic higher education context.

However, not all empirical findings align with the present results. Research conducted by Amy Nurhuda (2019) revealed that transformational leadership did not significantly influence employee motivation and performance in a hospital setting. Although the direction of influence was positive, it was not statistically significant. The study further indicated that work discipline had a stronger direct effect on performance, while the work environment significantly affected motivation. Similarly, Uhai (2021) argued that transformational leadership does not directly impact performance but requires mediating variables such as readiness for change to produce significant outcomes. These contrasting findings suggest contextual variability in leadership effectiveness.

The comparison of these studies highlights that the effectiveness of transformational leadership is highly dependent on organizational context and internal employee conditions. In healthcare and industrial sectors, leadership influence may operate indirectly through mediating factors. Conversely, within the academic administrative environment of UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, transformational leadership demonstrates a direct and measurable contribution to employee performance. This may be attributed to the alignment between leadership values and institutional culture, where academic norms, collaboration, and organizational commitment are strongly embedded. The leadership approach fosters adaptive capacity and reinforces shared institutional values among staff members.

Overall, previous research confirms that transformational leadership represents a strategic instrument for addressing administrative challenges in

educational institutions. While Afzan (2024) emphasized the mediating role of work motivation, the present study contributes novelty by demonstrating a direct relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance within an Islamic higher education setting. The findings provide practical implications for human resource development, suggesting that strengthening leaders' capacity to inspire, intellectually stimulate, and personally support employees is essential for building adaptive, accountable, and high-performing administrative systems in universities.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that transformational leadership has a positive and statistically significant effect on the performance of educational staff at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh. The research hypothesis (H_1) is accepted, as indicated by a significance value of 0.024 ($p < 0.05$) and the regression equation $Y = 55.737 + 0.271X$, meaning that each one-unit increase in transformational leadership leads to a 0.271-unit increase in employee performance. Although the contribution is 11.6%, the most important insight of this study lies in demonstrating that leadership characterized by idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration plays a meaningful role in strengthening administrative performance. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of leadership-performance literature by confirming the direct relevance of transformational leadership within the specific context of Islamic higher education institutions, particularly among educational administrative staff.

However, this study has several limitations. The sample was confined to one faculty, limiting the generalizability of findings to the broader university environment or other Islamic higher education institutions. Additionally, since transformational leadership explains only 11.6% of performance variance, 88.4% is influenced by other factors such as compensation systems, organizational culture, work discipline, or personal characteristics that were not examined in this research. Future studies are therefore encouraged to expand the research scope across multiple institutions, incorporate additional variables, and apply more complex analytical models to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of employee performance in higher education settings.

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