

Hendri Firmansyah¹
Zahrotul Laila²
Moh Nadir³
Rudy Haryanto⁴
¹⁻⁴ Universitas Islam
Negeri Madura

Transformational leadership style in improving organizational performance and effectiveness in Generation Z

Abstract

Transformational leadership is a leadership approach that emphasizes a leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and transform individuals to achieve higher levels of performance and organizational goals. This approach has become increasingly relevant in the contemporary era, particularly among younger generations such as Generation Z, who possess distinct characteristics including a strong need for meaningful work, collaboration, flexibility, and a pronounced drive for innovation. This study aims to describe the typology of transformational leadership styles that are effective for Generation Z by reviewing various scholarly sources through a qualitative, library-based research method. The findings indicate that transformational leadership fosters creativity, innovation, and individual potential development through its four core dimensions—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These characteristics align with the preferences of Generation Z, who respond positively to visionary leaders, open communication patterns, and opportunities to express ideas freely. Therefore, the application of transformational leadership is believed to enhance engagement, productivity, and the attainment of organizational objectives within increasingly dynamic work environments.

Keywords: Leadership style, transformational, Generation Z

Abstrak

Gaya kepemimpinan transformasional merupakan pendekatan kepemimpinan yang menekankan kemampuan pemimpin dalam menginspirasi, memotivasi, serta mentransformasi individu untuk mencapai kinerja dan tujuan organisasi yang lebih tinggi. Pendekatan ini dinilai semakin relevan di era generasi muda, terutama Generasi Z, yang memiliki karakteristik unik seperti kebutuhan akan makna kerja, kolaborasi, fleksibilitas, serta dorongan kuat terhadap inovasi. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan tipikal gaya kepemimpinan transformasional yang efektif diterapkan pada Generasi Z dengan menelaah berbagai literatur ilmiah melalui metode penelitian kualitatif berbasis library research. Temuan studi menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan transformasional mampu mendorong kreativitas, inovasi, dan pengembangan potensi individu melalui empat dimensi inti, yaitu idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, dan individualized consideration. Karakteristik tersebut selaras dengan preferensi Generasi Z yang responsif terhadap pemimpin visioner, pola komunikasi terbuka, serta ruang untuk mengekspresikan gagasan secara bebas. Oleh sebab itu, penerapan gaya kepemimpinan transformasional diyakini dapat memperkuat keterlibatan, produktivitas, dan pencapaian tujuan organisasi di lingkungan kerja yang semakin dinamis.

Kata Kunci: Gaya kepemimpinan, transformasional, Generasi Z

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¹ Corresponding author: Hendri Firmansyah
Email: hendri.firmansyah097@gmail.com



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1. Introduction

In this era, technological advances and social transformation are occurring at a rapid pace, making leadership one of the crucial elements in guiding and inspiring members of an organization, especially when leading Generation Z (Kwartawaty et al., 2024). Subordinates or followers always observe the typical style of a leader. This style can be said to be a leadership style that will influence subordinates. Leadership style can be described as the foundation applied by an individual to influence the behavior of others so that they can follow their wishes and achieve the organization's goals (Rialti & Filieri, 2024).

High-quality human resources (HR) are personnel with high-level skills and creativity who can advance an institution or company (Agustin et al., 2024; Ngoc & Tien, 2023). Every institution often has problems related to the work ethic of its employees. Every leader in an institution constantly strives to ensure that every activity carried out can achieve maximum results in an effective and efficient manner. In order to improve employee performance, one factor that can be considered is the use of a relevant leadership style.

Human resources play a crucial and strategic role in an organization to achieve its objectives. Human resources play an important role in utilizing employees to function productively in order to achieve the company's vision and mission (Sinambela et al., 2022). As the driving force of the organization, leaders need to encourage employees to work better for the advancement of the organization so that the vision and mission can be realized (Ulyani, 2024).

Improving employee work ethic is fundamental to achieving maximum results for an agency or company and providing satisfaction to consumers or customers. Performance can be defined as the quality and quantity of results that employees must achieve in carrying out all their activities and that are relevant to the responsibilities entrusted to them.

This performance is considered to be an individual's actions in determining work objectives and achieving work objectives, work methods, and personal characteristics. Personnel are individuals who play an active role in determining the organization to achieve its objectives. The achievement of organizational objectives is only possible when the efforts of the actors included in the organization improve performance (Aguilera et al., 2024). There is a very close relationship between individual performance and corporate performance. In other words, if employees perform well, it is very likely that the organization's performance will also be good.

Effective leadership will motivate employees to strive for better performance (Avrillia et al., 2025; Muzakki et al., 2025). Motivation itself can be defined as a person's strength (energy) that can generate persistence and enthusiasm in carrying out an activity, whether it comes from within the individual (intrinsic motivation) or from outside the individual (extrinsic motivation). Motivation can provide energy that can then maximize all existing potential, create high and noble desires and ideals, and increase enthusiasm for togetherness. An individual's performance is not only influenced by job satisfaction and work ethic, but employee motivation is a more important factor for the success of an organization (Umesi, 2024).

Generation Z is the generation born between 1997 and 2012. They have strong characters and a desire to continue to grow and develop. This generation can be known as a creative and knowledge-hungry generation because they grew up with digital

technology and the internet. Generation Z is characterized by flexibility and adaptability, making them very open and able to adapt to various changes and new challenges.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the above discussion is that leadership style greatly influences the success of business, national, and social institutions. In particular, Generation Z leadership is now beginning to shape the labor market, having been born during a period of rapid growth in internet technology, which has produced characteristics that differ from previous generations. The differences between the characteristics of Generation Z and previous generations have created new challenges for companies in managing organizational management (Surugiu et al., 2025). With the characteristics mentioned above, it is clear that leaders within an organization must choose the right leadership style for Generation Z so that the organization's goals can be easily achieved.

2. Literature review

2.1 Leadership style

Leadership is any activity carried out by a person to coordinate, motivate, and encourage others to choose and achieve desired goals. The term transformation comes from the English word “transform,” which means “to change” or “to bring something into another form.” For example, transforming a vision into reality or transforming something potential into something actual (Muzakki et al., 2025; Muzakki et al., 2025). Leadership is a field that comprehensively examines ways to guide, influence, and monitor individuals to carry out tasks in accordance with established instructions. Leaders and leadership are like two sides of a coin that cannot be separated. Although they can be analyzed individually, they should be understood as a whole. A leader must possess strong leadership qualities, and these qualities are not acquired instantly, but are the result of a process that takes place over time until it finally forms certain characteristics (Fahmi, 2016).

Leadership style is a method or mechanism used by a leader to encourage and guide a team or organization in achieving its goals (Farrukh et al., 2025). Leadership style can be influenced by the personality, characteristics, experience, and values of the leader. Leadership does not only focus on power, but also on change and development of the organization, whether through motivation, inspiration, or empowerment of the organization itself.

Leadership style is essentially about how leaders relate to subordinates and the relationship between leaders and their subordinates (Mathieu & Gilbreath, 2025). In the first style, it is characterized by several aspects, including: 1) the leader gives instructions to subordinates, 2) the leader always conducts strict supervision of subordinates, 3) the leader convinces subordinates that obligations must be carried out according to his wishes, 4) the leader focuses more on the implementation of tasks than on coaching and developing subordinates. While the second leadership style, on the contrary, is characterized by various symptoms such as the following: 1) the leader gives more freedom than providing supervision to subordinates, 2) the leader invites subordinates in making decisions, 3) the leader is more family-like, trusting, cooperative relationships that respect each other.

2.2 Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership can be defined as a leadership approach that is capable of producing a shared vision, inspiring followers to prioritize collective interests, and encouraging change in both the structure and culture of an organization (Adesti et al., 2023; Muzakki et al., 2025; Prastikawati et al., 2023). In a community setting, this type of leadership is very important due to the rigid, hierarchical nature of institutions and their tendency to experience program stagnation (Celestin & Sujatha, 2024). Transformational leadership continues to evolve to address future changes, one of which is by changing the paradigms and values held by individuals within the organization, so that organizational goals can be achieved (Muzakki & Christina, 2021; Jaya & Guntoro, 2020).

Transformational leadership essentially encourages team members to perform better than they normally would. In this case, it can boost the confidence of subordinates, which in turn has a positive impact on performance improvement. To support management success, a leader who is capable of performing management roles and responsibilities well is needed. An effective leader must be able to provide encouragement for the organization to achieve optimal productivity and ensure job satisfaction for their team (Hasanah & Maunah, 2023). In this situation, a transformative leader will be more active in initiating continuous training programs, conducting regular supervision, and implementing a coaching model that focuses on strengths (Adila & Jarodi, 2022; Muzakki & Pratiwi, 2019; Sumarita & Muzakki, 2019).

Transformational leadership is an approach that emphasizes the leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and transform members of the organization toward higher achievement (Avrillia et al., 2025; Mulyono, 2021). This concept was first introduced by Burns (1978) and further developed by Bass (1985), who identified four main dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Transformational leaders focus not only on achieving organizational targets, but also on developing the full potential of individuals. In the context of modern organizations, this style has proven effective in creating an innovative, collaborative, and growth-oriented work environment. Another crucial aspect of transformational leadership is creating genuine and meaningful bonds between leaders and team members. Generation Z prioritizes honesty, openness, and emotional connections in their professional interactions (Hayati, 2024).

2.3 Organizational effectiveness

Organizational effectiveness is the accuracy of achieving a goal by utilizing available resources (Gutterman & A, 2023). Organizational effectiveness can also be defined as the ability of an organization to achieve its vision and mission using available resources efficiently and effectively. There are several factors that influence organizational effectiveness, including the existence of clear and well-defined objectives to achieve effectiveness. Furthermore, an effective organizational structure is needed to help improve communication, coordination, and decision-making so that it can motivate and direct members of the organization to achieve their goals. In addition, adequate resources are also needed, whether in terms of human resources, finance, or technology. Furthermore, effective communication is needed to help improve coordination and

cooperation among members of the organization so that people in the organization coordinate with one another to achieve the organization's goals.

The efficiency of an organization is influenced by its culture. A strong organizational culture that is aligned with its mission and plans can have a positive effect on the overall performance and efficiency of the organization. Therefore, it is important to conduct regular evaluations of the organizational culture to ensure that the values and norms that apply are still relevant and functioning properly. If necessary, make modifications and adjustments to ensure alignment with the organization's development. In addition, it is important to create a system of rewards and recognition that values employees who consistently adhere to and implement the organizational culture (Irfan & Al Hakim, 2022).

Creating recognition can take the form of public acknowledgment or opportunities for further development. Convey a meaningful organizational culture by continuously communicating organizational cultural values through various communication media. This effort can also be done by sharing success stories or relevant experiences that demonstrate these values in practice. Therefore, it is crucial for managers to understand and wisely manage organizational culture in order to achieve the best organizational efficiency.

The effectiveness of an organization in the context of the younger generation is not only determined by performance achievements, but also by the level of engagement, job satisfaction, and employee retention. Organizations that are able to accommodate the values and expectations of Generation Z tend to be more adaptive and sustainable. Transformational leadership plays an important role in creating an inclusive, flexible, and collaboration-oriented work culture. This shows that this leadership style can increase productivity, strengthen loyalty, and encourage innovation among the younger generation (Zanabazar et al., 2023; Kosasi, 2024). Therefore, in facing today's organizational challenges, transformational leadership is not only a strategic choice but also an urgent need to build organizations that are effective and relevant to Generation Z (Lestari & Mardikaningsih, 2020).

2.4 Transformational leadership style in improving organizational performance and effectiveness in Generation Z

Being a great leader in Generation Z is a major challenge. A leader must have strong ambition and energy in order to overcome major obstacles, so a leader must always keep up with changes and technological advances. A leader must have excellence and must have the responsibility to be an inspiration, especially for their employees. When Generation Z excels in work ethic, it is important for a leader to determine an effective management approach to motivate and lead, so that organizational effectiveness can be achieved. After the author's analysis, one of the most relevant and appropriate leadership styles, especially for Generation Z, is transformational leadership.

Leadership involves more than just making the right decisions; it also includes effective communication, developing strong relationships, and utilizing individual potential to achieve mutual success. In order to achieve organizational goals, a transformational leader needs a clear role and a strong approach (Iqbal, 2021).

Transformational leaders are agents of change who are closely associated with the changes that occur within an organization. Their main role is to act as catalysts for change,

rather than managing change (Lewa et al., 2022). Transformational leaders have strong charisma, enabling them to convey a vision that motivates those around them. They not only inspire pride, but also earn the respect and trust of their team. In this context, employees are encouraged to put more effort into their work thanks to the support of transformational leaders. Each leader has the ability to formulate the core values and behaviors that are important in the work environment. Transformational leadership is an approach that encourages followers to achieve performance that exceeds expectations, based on the recognition employees receive for their contributions. Through their leadership skills, followers become more connected to the goals of the organization they work for and more focused on meeting the demands of that organization (Salas, 2021).

Transformational leadership style is always a topic of discussion, especially in motivating Generation Z, particularly in modern workplaces (Richard, 2024). For Generation Z, a transformational leadership approach is the most effective choice. In addition to improving leadership and managerial skills, this approach also helps Generation Z recognize and understand various types of leadership (Kumpangpune & Tumbelaka, 2021). This leadership model contributes to the achievement of organizational goals and employee development, fosters a healthy work environment, and encourages team members to reach their highest potential. Transformational leadership can build trust, a sense of appreciation, loyalty, and respect for leaders so that what an organization aims to achieve is easily attained (Angelia & Astiti, 2020).

When linked to the characteristics of Generation Z, this transformational leadership becomes even more relevant. Generation Z, born between the late 1990s and early 2010s, grew up in a fast-paced, information-rich digital era. Generation Z is known as a critical, independent generation that highly values authenticity and participation in decision-making processes. Generation Z tends to reject authoritarian leadership styles and responds more positively to leaders who are open, communicative, and able to give meaning to their work. Generation Z also wants room for innovation, constructive feedback, and clear opportunities for self-development. In this case, transformational leaders are able to respond to these needs by providing inspiration, intellectual challenges, and personal attention that are in line with the aspirations of the younger generation.

3. Method

3.1 Types and sources of data

This study employs a qualitative research design using a library research approach. The investigation was conducted by systematically and comprehensively reviewing relevant scholarly literature to examine and analyze the concept of transformational leadership and its implications for organizational performance and effectiveness, particularly within the context of Generation Z. The data sources were derived from a wide range of secondary materials, including academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, research reports, digital publications such as e-books, and other documented information accessible through library databases. This method enables the researcher to build a robust theoretical foundation and to deepen insights by synthesizing perspectives from previous studies related to the topic under investigation (Lim & M, 2025).

3.2 Data analysis method

Data analysis was carried out descriptively using a content analysis approach, which involved synthesizing insights from multiple scholarly sources to compare perspectives, evaluate findings, and identify recurring patterns, relationships, and trends within the existing literature. This analytical process facilitated the development of an in-depth theoretical interpretation of how transformational leadership styles can influence organizational performance and effectiveness, particularly in institutions dominated by Generation Z employees (Yasar, 2024). The primary focus of this analysis is to examine how strategic leadership approaches tailored to Generation Z can enhance organizational outcomes, as well as to explore the mechanisms through which such leadership influences work motivation in contemporary work environments. While library research provides a rigorous and efficient means of gathering comprehensive information and deepening theoretical understanding, it is essential to acknowledge its inherent limitations, particularly the absence of empirical validation and potential reliance on previously established viewpoints.

4. Results

The findings indicate that Generation Z, with their distinctive personalities and behavioral characteristics, is particularly well-suited to be led through a transformational leadership style. This leadership approach emphasizes organizational advancement through continuous change, innovation, and empowerment. Transformational leaders are able to motivate subordinates to place organizational interests above personal preferences by fostering a shared vision and cultivating intrinsic motivation. Moreover, this leadership style is widely recognized as more inspiring and effective in fostering innovative behavior among employees. Such outcomes are driven by the leader's ability to decentralize responsibilities, encourage risk-taking for organizational improvement, and stimulate subordinates to think creatively and challenge existing practices.

Furthermore, transformational leadership consistently promotes creativity and innovation within teams, enabling individuals to pursue higher-level goals and actualize their full potential. This includes granting members the autonomy and support needed to generate new ideas—an approach that aligns closely with the values of Generation Z, who tend to be highly adaptive, innovation-driven, and inclined to seek meaningful change in their work environment.

Transformational leadership also involves a dynamic process through which leaders engage with followers to build strong interpersonal relationships that enhance motivation, trust, and mutual growth. This interaction empowers subordinates by strengthening their commitment to continuous learning, enhancing their skills and self-confidence, and cultivating a workplace climate that supports creativity and innovative thinking. Transformational leaders demonstrate strong sensitivity to the needs and aspirations of their followers and intentionally foster conditions that enable them to reach their full potential—attributes that are especially relevant for Generation Z employees operating within today's fast-paced and technologically driven organizational landscape.

5. Discussion

The workforce plays a vital role in driving business progress, making employee quality a critical determinant of organizational success and the achievement of strategic objectives. Every institution comprises employees with diverse personalities and generational backgrounds, one of which is Generation Z (Oktariani, et al., 2017). This cohort has become increasingly dominant in today's labor market and is widely recognized for its creativity, technological fluency, and strong potential to excel in dynamic work environments. However, Generation Z often demonstrates lower levels of organizational loyalty, a characteristic that can create challenges within leadership processes perceived as misaligned with their preferences. This lack of loyalty may lead to declines in organizational productivity, reflected in higher absenteeism rates and increased employee turnover—factors that can significantly impede long-term business development.

In the Indonesian context, Generation Z tends to be more pragmatic than earlier generations and often expresses uncertainty regarding long-term employment commitments, whether in permanent or temporary positions (Gandasari et al., 2024). Consequently, companies must adopt strategic and adaptive measures in managing this generational group. One factor that has been shown to strengthen employee loyalty is the implementation of transformational leadership, a style capable of enhancing trust, loyalty, and respectful behavior among employees toward their leaders (Astuti & Heryad, 2023). Therefore, organizations must understand the unique needs and preferences of Generation Z in order to create a supportive and productive work environment that fosters retention, engagement, and sustained performance.

6. Conclusion

Based on the above analysis, it can be concluded that transformational leadership is highly appropriate for enhancing the performance and effectiveness of organizations dominated by Generation Z. This leadership style is distinguished by its emphasis on a clear vision, mission, and organizational goals, supported by strong rhetorical abilities and effective impression management that foster deep emotional connections between leaders and followers. Such characteristics enable transformational leaders to cultivate trust, strengthen engagement, and create a supportive relational climate that aligns closely with the values and expectations of Generation Z. Moreover, transformational leadership plays a pivotal role in helping Generation Z employees develop their full potential by encouraging autonomy, stimulating creativity, and promoting innovative thinking. Through this approach, Generation Z is provided with the space and motivation to generate new ideas and pursue higher levels of achievement, thereby contributing significantly to improved organizational outcomes.

7. Theoretical and practical implication

This study contributes to the advancement of leadership and organizational management theory in several key dimensions. First, it enriches the conceptual understanding of transformational leadership by demonstrating how its core dimensions can be adapted to accommodate the unique attributes of Generation Z, a cohort characterized by technological fluency, a collaborative orientation, and a strong emphasis on meaningful work. By centering the analysis on Generation Z, the study highlights that leadership approaches aligned with the values, expectations, and motivations of younger employees

can significantly enhance individual and organizational performance. This reinforces the theoretical proposition that leadership effectiveness is contingent upon its congruence with the sociocultural and generational characteristics of followers.

The practical implications of this research are highly relevant for organizational leaders, educators, and human resource practitioners, particularly within the Indonesian context. The findings suggest that leadership development programs, human resource management strategies, and organizational culture initiatives grounded in transformational leadership principles can cultivate a work environment that is innovative, inclusive, and growth-oriented. Such an environment resonates strongly with the aspirations of Generation Z, fostering greater engagement, commitment, and productivity. Consequently, organizations that integrate transformational leadership into their management practices are better positioned to attract, develop, and retain talented young professionals while enhancing overall organizational effectiveness.

8. Limitations and suggestions for further research

The author recognizes the importance of conducting this research, as it is expected to contribute to the development of effective management strategies aimed at motivating Generation Z, who now constitute a significant proportion of the contemporary workforce. Given their increasing dominance in organizational settings, it is crucial to identify leadership approaches that can enhance their performance, motivation, and creativity within the professional environments they currently navigate. Accordingly, leadership styles that align with their characteristics and expectations are essential for ensuring both present and future organizational success.

The purpose of this study, titled “Transformational Leadership Style in Improving Organizational Performance and Effectiveness in Generation Z,” is to describe the typology of transformational leadership as applied to Generation Z. Additionally, this research encourages readers—particularly organizational leaders—to provide meaningful trust, autonomy, and empowerment to Generation Z employees, enabling them to make significant contributions toward strengthening organizational capacity and achieving the institution’s vision and mission. This study also complements and extends previous scholarly works, including: (1) “Transformative Leadership Style for Gen Z” by [Hardian and Hermawan](#); (2) “An Overview of Effective Transformational Leadership Styles for Leading Generation Z” by [Bantam, et al.](#); and (3) “The Implementation of Transformational Leadership Styles on the Work Motivation of Generation Z” by [Pardede](#). Collectively, these studies form a foundation upon which the present research builds to offer deeper insights into effective leadership for the emerging generation.

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