TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP: THE CASE OF HUMAN RESOURCES BUREAU OF A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

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Abstract
This study aims to analyze the implementation of transformational leadership by three generations of leaders in the Human Resources (HR) Bureau of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI). Participants included three former and current Bureau Heads (2015-2016, 2020-2024, and 2024-2028) with diverse educational backgrounds and extensive experience in educational administration and human resource management. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews using a validated protocol of 20 open-ended questions based on Bass & Riggio's transformational leadership dimensions, along with document studies of policy documents, performance reports, and bureau meeting archives. Through a qualitative approach and ATLAS.ti software-assisted data analysis, this study identifies how transformational leadership strategies improve employee performance, work motivation, organizational innovation, and build a value and technology-based work culture. The main findings show that leaders can formulate a clear vision, provide individualized support, build an open communication system, and utilize technology to strengthen work effectiveness. Visualization of the code shows a close relationship between aspects such as employee empowerment, strengthening collaboration, career development, and the use of digital-based performance reporting systems. This research recommends the need for a structured competency development system, data-based performance measurement, and strengthening cross-team communication to sustainably improve transformational leadership effectiveness in a changing work environment.

Keywords: leadership, transformational leadership, human resources

Introduction

Leadership plays a pivotal role in the success of an organization. Leadership plays a pivotal role in the success of an organization. The leadership style applied by the leader can affect various aspects, such as motivation, job satisfaction, and employee performance (E. Berger et al., 2011). In the context of educational organizations, such as Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), the effectiveness of leadership is of paramount importance in creating a work environment that is productive, innovative, and adaptive to changing times. One unit that relies heavily on effective leadership is the Human Resources Bureau, which is responsible for planning, managing, and developing HR potential at UPI.

Transformational leadership is frequently linked to enhanced employee performance. This leadership style emphasizes active participation, empowerment, and respect for employees' ideas, ultimately leading to improved performance and achievement of organizational goals (Bass & Riggio, 2005). This leadership style emphasizes active participation, empowerment, and appreciation of employee ideas, ultimately leading to improved performance and achievement of organizational goals

(E. Berger et al., 2011). In particular, transformational leadership plays an important role in creating positive change and improving emotional intelligence, communication, and employee engagement (Bass & Riggio, 2005). Therefore, this leadership style can be an effective link in improving organizational productivity and competitiveness.

Athough transformational leadership has been extensively studied in business and industry contexts, its implementation in higher education bureaucracy in Indonesia remains an underexplored area. Studies conducted by Nuraeni & Saeful (2023) indicate that leadership styles in Indonesian higher education institutions are still dominated by transactional and bureaucratic approaches, which are often less adaptive to the demands of digital transformation and global competition. Moreover, in state higher education institutions like UPI, relatively rapid leadership rotation (averaging every 4 years) creates unique challenges in building consistency of vision and leadership approach. This creates a gap between expectations for modern institutional performance and leadership practices being implemented.

At UP HR Bureau, leadership plays a central role in ensuring effective human resource management and development. Transformational leadership becomes relevant when leaders not only perform administrative functions but also inspire and motivate employees to achieve optimal performance. As explained in the research of Constantin & Florea (2023), leadership that can move employees through motivation and strategic direction contributes directly to improving organizational performance. This approach emphasizes the importance of creativity and innovation, as well as the character of leaders who can be relied upon in the face of future dynamics and challenges.

In the context of human resource management in higher education institutions, such as the HR Bureau of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, the role of leaders who prioritize integrity and creativity is increasingly crucial. Based on the results of interviews with former Bureau Heads, there is hope for a leader who is not only able to respond to current challenges but also has a long-term vision in maintaining organizational sustainability. Unfortunately, in previous practices, strategic decision-making was often done without considering long-term impacts, especially in terms of managing important documents that are part of the organization's information assets. The neglect of document management and the lack of commitment in addressing far-reaching issues have been the main obstacles to the realization of the transformational change needed. Empirical findings support the importance of integrity in leadership. Podsakoff et al. (1990) suggested that transformational leadership style, through idealized influence and inspirational motivation, significantly increases employee trust and engagement, which in turn has a positive impact on organizational performance. Trust built through a leader's integrity is an important foundation in creating accountable and professional bureaucratic governance.

Furthermore, Rego et al. (2013) found that authentic leadership, characterized by consistency of values and actions, can increase organizational commitment and sustainable positive work behavior. In a bureaucratic context, this approach is important to ensure that every policy and leadership action is not only reactive but also strategic and has a long-term impact. Creativity is also an important dimension of effective leadership. Research by Stoll & Temperley (2009) confirms that creative leaders can create an organizational culture that supports innovation and team collaboration, even in stressful situations. This creativity includes the ability to redesign work systems, improve document management efficiency, and develop new approaches to adaptive and sustainable human resource development.

In addition, Peus et al. (2012) showed that the application of leadership values based on integrity, creativity, and commitment has a positive impact on the psychological well-being of employees, as well as increasing organizational resilience in the face of change. This confirms that sustainable human resource development cannot be separated from the underlying leadership quality. Thus, the implementation of leadership values based on integrity, creativity, and commitment is an important foundation for the creation of sustainable organizational change. In the context of higher education bureaucracy, this approach not only serves to encourage internal reform but also strengthens the organizational structure in facing future dynamics in a more adaptive and transformative manner.

In line with the statement of the current Head of the HR Bureau, it is emphasized that leadership values have a strategic role in shaping organizational structure and culture. Although transformational leadership theories have been widely developed, understanding of their impact on employee performance, especially in the context of educational institutions such as Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, is still relatively limited. The previous Bureau Head had applied the principles of transformational leadership through two main dimensions, namely Initiating Structure and Consideration. These two dimensions refer to the leadership theory developed by researchers from Ohio State University in the 1940s, which describes the leader's behavior patterns in carrying out their role, especially in building effective relationships and work structures with employees (Bass, 1981; Choi et al., 2020). A significant gap in the leadership literature in the Indonesian higher education context is the lack of longitudinal research analyzing changes and continuity in leadership styles within a single work unit over several leadership periods. Previous studies, such as those conducted by Suhadirman & Pratomo (2022) and Widyaningrum et al. (2021), tend to focus on leadership analysis in a particular period, without considering how leadership transformation evolves. This gap becomes increasingly important given the rapid dynamics of change in the higher education context, especially related to work process digitalization, regulatory changes, and increasing accountability demands.

The Initiating Structure dimension pertains to leadership behaviors that prioritize the establishment of a transparent and structured framework of tasks and responsibilities to facilitate the attainment of organizational objectives. Leaders who exemplify this behavior are inclined to organize work, devise schedules, delineate roles, and define specific goals (Bass, 1981; Nobis, 2022). The consideration dimension pertains to leadership behaviors that evoke concern, empathy, and support for the needs and well-being of team members. Leaders who exhibit high levels of this dimension tend to cultivate warm, open, and supportive relationships with their followers (Basker et al., 2020). The integrated application of two key dimensions of leadership behavior, namely initiating structure and consideration, showed a significant impact on improving team performance, including in demanding and stressful work situations. A collaborative work culture between superiors and subordinates is established through mutual help and support among team members. This leadership approach became relevant as a response to internal organizational challenges, including issues inherited by previous leadership within the human resources department. In addition, the consistently applied transformational leadership style strengthens the effectiveness of both dimensions.

Research by Nguyen et al. (2019) and Helalat et al. (2023) proves that transformational leadership-which emphasizes inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation, maintains employees' intrinsic motivation and improves teamwork in the face of work pressure. In a bureaucratic context such as the HR Bureau of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, the integration of transformational leadership and structural-relational approaches is an adaptive and sustainable strategy in responding to managerial challenges and supporting overall institutional transformation.

The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive approach to analyzing the implementation of transformational leadership across three generations of leaders in a strategic work unit within a higher education institution. Unlike previous research that generally focuses on a single leadership dimension or a single leadership period, this research integrates multitemporal and multidimensional perspectives to understand how transformational leadership practices evolve in response to changing organizational and external contexts. This study's contribution to the field of higher education management is in identifying patterns of transformational leadership adaptation within the typically rigid higher education bureaucracy context, and revealing how the integration between classical leadership values (structure initiation and consideration) and transformational leadership dimensions can create a more adaptive and effective leadership model in supporting sustainable institutional transformation. The HR Bureau at UPI needs to be led by a figure capable of dealing with the complexities of modern HR management. Leaders in this position are not only required to understand administrative aspects, but also must have the ability to motivate and improve employee performance. Research conducted by Firsova et al. (2024) shows that the world of work is now experiencing rapid changes, accompanied by increasingly high expectations for the quality of education. Meanwhile, according to Duc et al. (2018), the importance of increasing operational efficiency is assessed by the leadership style. In this case, leadership in the UPI HR Bureau is crucial.

Based on the identified literature gaps and organizational context, this study aims to comprehensively analyze how transformational leadership has been implemented by three generations of leaders in UPI's HR Bureau, and how this leadership approach influences organizational outcomes. The research explores how leaders incorporate the four dimensions of transformational leadership—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—into their management practices. It examines the effects of these leadership approaches on employee performance, work motivation, and innovative capacity while investigating the development of a value-based work culture within the bureau. The study further analyzes the challenges faced in implementing transformational leadership within bureaucratic constraints and during digital transformation processes, seeking to understand how leaders adapt their strategies in response to these challenges. Additionally, the research investigates the potential synergies between traditional leadership approaches (initiating structure and consideration) and transformational leadership in creating a more effective leadership model for higher education administrative units operating in rapidly changing environments. Through this multilayered analysis, the study seeks to develop strategic recommendations that can enhance employee performance and optimize HR Bureau functions in the modern higher education landscape. It is anticipated that this research will provide strategic recommendations for the management of the UPI HR Bureau to enhance the efficacy of employee performance and optimise the functions of the HR Bureau in the modern era.

Literature Review

This literature review examines key concepts and theories that form the foundation of the present research on transformational leadership in the UPI Human Resources Bureau. The review is structured around three interconnected theoretical frameworks: Transformational Leadership Theory, Ohio State Leadership Studies, and their combined relevance to employee performance in bureaucratic settings. These theories provide critical perspectives on how leadership approaches influence organizational dynamics, particularly in educational institutions. By examining these conceptual frameworks, this review establishes the theoretical rationale for investigating how

transformational leadership practices evolve across multiple leadership generations within a single administrative unit and how they impact employee performance and organizational culture in the context of higher education bureaucracy.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership has evolved into one of the most influential leadership paradigms in dealing with the complexities of modern organizations, including higher education institutions. This approach is rooted in the leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and transform organizational members through a strong vision, deep interpersonal relationships, and a drive for innovation and change (Bass & Riggio, 2005). In the context of human resource management, especially in academic institutions such as the UPI HR Bureau, transformational leadership has strategic value in shaping productive, adaptive, and committed human resources.

According to B. M. Bass & Riggio (2005), there are four main dimensions in transformational leadership:

1. Idealized Influence: Leaders model integrity, trustworthiness, and uphold organizational values.
2. Inspirational Motivation: Leaders convey a clear vision and mobilize the collective spirit.
3. Intellectual Stimulation: Leaders encourage creativity and critical thinking.
4. Individualized Consideration: Leaders provide personal attention to each individual's development.

Various research studies have recently reinforced the effectiveness of this leadership model in the context of higher education and public services. Studies by Lai et al. (2020) and Atiku & Van Wyk (2024) show that transformational leadership is positively correlated with job satisfaction, organizational loyalty, and increased employee productivity. These findings are particularly relevant for bureaucratic organizations such as the HR Bureau, which often face challenges in maintaining motivation and innovation within rigid structures.

Furthermore, Fourie & Höhne (2017) asserted that transformational leadership plays an important role in fostering innovative work behavior, especially when leaders encourage flexibility and critical problem solving. Wang & Shao (2024) added that flexibility in leadership approaches is key in adjusting to institutional dynamics and individual needs. Similarly, Oh (2023) emphasized the importance of open two-way communication in strengthening trust, one of the essential elements in transformational leadership. This is reinforced by Iqbal & Piwowar-Sulej (2023), who state that trust built through consistency in leader behavior can create a cohesive and responsive work climate. In the context of the UPI HR Bureau, the application of transformational leadership can be a strategic instrument to face challenges such as system digitization, generational shifts in the workforce, and demands for performance-based accountability. By combining vision and four, as well as innovation and structure, transformational leadership becomes an important mechanism in strengthening institutional resilience and progress.

Ohio state leadership studies

To complement the understanding of transformational leadership, this study also adopted the framework of the Ohio State Leadership Studies, which identified two main dimensions of leadership behavior, namely Initiating Structure and Consideration (Bass, 1981). Both dimensions make an

important contribution in broadening the approach to transformational leadership values, especially in integrating structural aspects and interpersonal relationships in leadership practices. Bass (1981) explains that:

- Initiating Structure: Refers to a leader's role in organizing tasks, defining roles, and setting work procedures systematically.
- Consideration: Reflects the leader's attention to employees' well-being and fostering positive interpersonal relationships.

The merging of these two theories results in a more holistic understanding of leadership. While transformational leadership emphasizes vision, empowerment, and innovation, the Ohio State study provides a foundation of behaviors that support task clarity and healthy working relationships. This integrative perspective is particularly relevant in human resource management, where leaders are required to drive institutional change while maintaining administrative efficiency. By applying this dual perspective to the context of UPI's HR Bureau, this study aims to examine how leadership style affects employee performance, job satisfaction, and overall organizational climate.

The Ohio State Leadership Studies are particularly relevant to the Indonesian higher education context, where administrative structures are often highly formalized. In bureaucratic environments like the UPI HR Bureau, leaders must navigate between institutional procedures and interpersonal dynamics. The initiating structure dimension addresses the leaders' abilities to establish clear operational frameworks within the constraints of university regulations and governmental policies. Meanwhile, the consideration dimension examines how leaders create supportive environments despite hierarchical structures that may impede close interpersonal relationships. This theoretical approach allows the present research to investigate how leaders in the HR Bureau balance structural requirements with human-centered leadership approaches across different leadership periods.

Relevance to employee performance in bureaucratic settings

In the context of bureaucratic institutions such as the UPI HR Bureau, transformational leadership plays a crucial role in overcoming various structural and cultural challenges. Based on the theoretical framework in Figure 1, this approach starts from idealized influence to individualized consideration, which gradually forms the basis for increasing staff motivation and staff participation. Typical bureaucratic challenges, such as low employee engagement, lack of work innovation, and weak operational effectiveness, demand a more adaptive, visionary, and empowering leadership style.

Research by Chen et al. (2024) reinforces the validity of the framework, showing that when elements of transformational leadership are consistently applied-including inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation-there is a significant increase in employees' intrinsic motivation, team cohesion, and work performance. This is in line with the conceptual pathway in the figure, where individualized consideration is the tipping point that drives staff motivation, which impacts their active participation in organizational processes.

Furthermore, this framework also shows the importance of integrating leadership behavior theory from the Ohio State Studies, particularly through the initiating structure and consideration dimensions. In a bureaucratic context, the balance between systematic work structures and positive interpersonal relationships strengthens the effectiveness of transformational leadership implementation. The relationship box in the figure confirms that the Ohio State dimension strengthens the individualized consideration aspect, which then increases staff motivation more concretely.

The intersection of transformational leadership theory and the Ohio State framework is particularly significant in analyzing leadership effectiveness in the UPI HR Bureau for several reasons. First, bureaucratic settings often present unique challenges that require both structural clarity and emotional intelligence from leaders. Second, the cyclical nature of leadership changes in academic institutions necessitates understanding how different leadership styles affect long-term organizational development. Third, the digital transformation of administrative processes has created new dynamics that require adaptive leadership approaches that balance procedural rigor with innovative thinking.

This research contributes to the literature by examining how these theoretical frameworks manifest in practice across three generations of leadership in a single administrative unit. By analyzing leadership continuity and change through these theoretical lenses, the study provides insights into how transformational leadership can be effectively implemented within the constraints of higher education bureaucracy, particularly in the Indonesian context, where administrative processes are undergoing significant modernization while still operating within traditional hierarchical structures.

Thus, this conceptual framework provides a complete understanding of how transformational leadership can be strategically adapted in a bureaucratic environment such as UPI. Leaders who can combine transformational vision with structural and relational sensitivity, as illustrated in Figure 1, are more capable of creating an innovative, collaborative, and high-performance-oriented work culture.

Figure 1. *Theoretical framework*
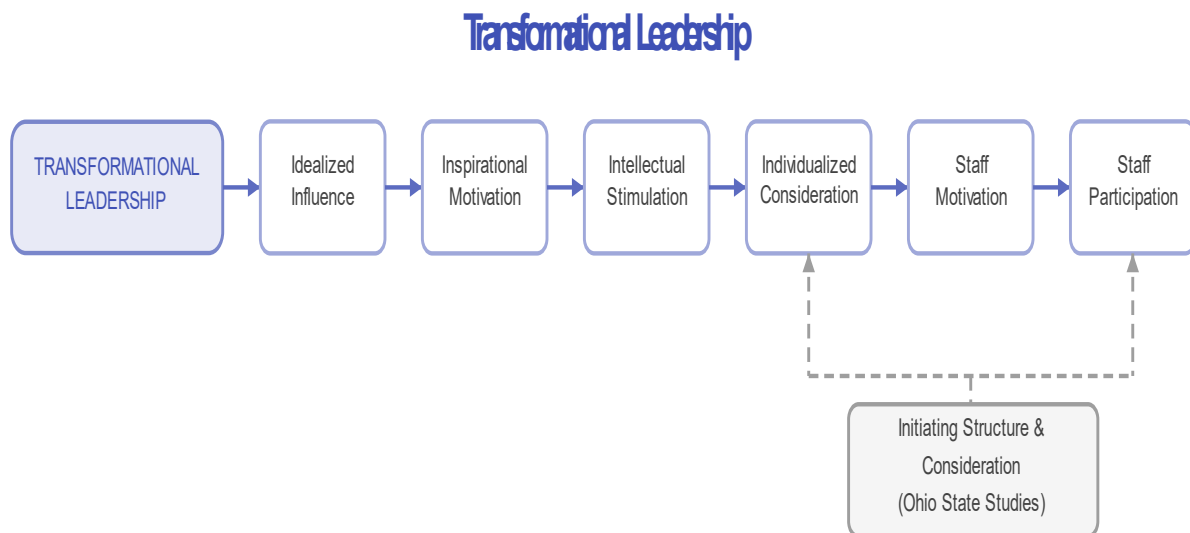
Methodology

Research design and approach of the study

This research is qualitative as described by Chali et al. (2022), which outlines key concepts in research methods and supports the theoretical framework of the qualitative approach as formulated in Creswell's Research Design book, 4th edition (2014). The method used was a case study, as described in Musara (2024), which is an approach that allows researchers "to explore a real-life,

contemporary bounded system (a case) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information". Approach II is used to examine in depth the practice of transformational leadership in the HR Bureau at UPI. The choice of this design is intended to provide a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of leadership in a real organizational context. Case studies are considered relevant because they allow researchers to understand a phenomenon in depth within the confines of a particular context, both in terms of time and location. This research design also refers to the procedures proposed by Creswell & Creswell (2018), which emphasize the importance of systematic stages and a strong theoretical foundation in conducting data-driven qualitative research.

Systematically, the first step in this research is to formulate a problem based on real issues that occur in the organization. The second step involves determining the research method, which is a qualitative approach with a case study to capture in depth the complexity of leadership within the UPI HR Bureau. The third step is to determine informants purposively, namely three heads of the Bureau who served in different periods (2015-2016, 2020-2024, and 2024-2028), assuming that they have an in-depth understanding of the leadership transformation that occurred during their term of office. The next step was data collection through exploratory interviews, designed to explore the personal experiences and strategic perspectives of the informants. The data obtained was then analyzed using a thematic approach with the help of ATLAS.ti software, through a coding process that refers to Sharma (2024) thematic analysis guidelines. Finally, the research results are presented in the form of descriptive narratives to link the findings in the field with the transformational leadership theory developed by B. M. Bass & Riggio (2005), to provide a complete picture of the leadership patterns that take place in the Bureau. The flow of this research can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2. *Research flowchart*
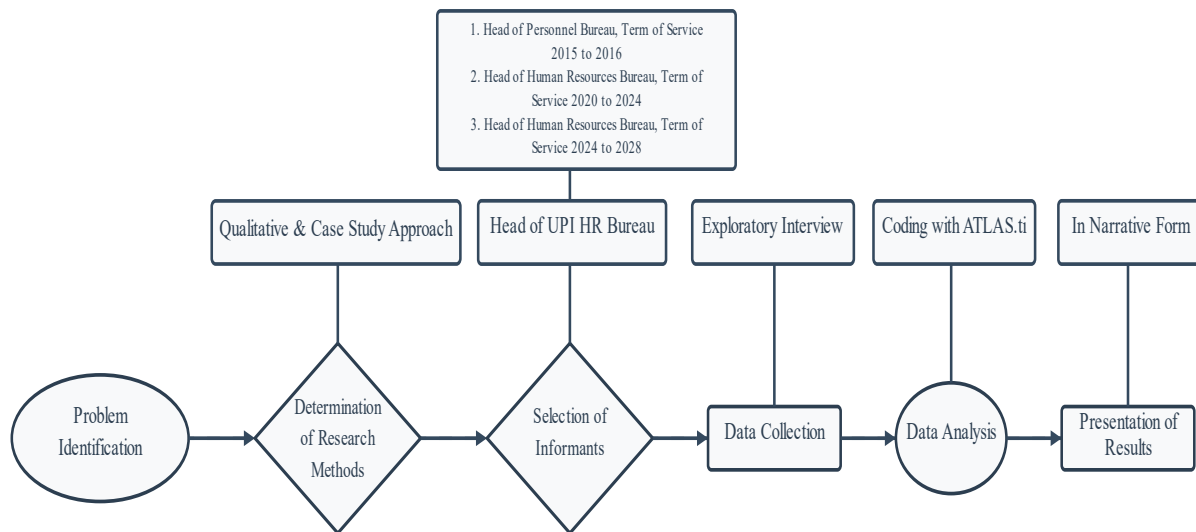
Research site and participants

This research was conducted at the HR Bureau of UPI, which is a strategic institution in managing staffing and leadership within the university. Informants were selected purposively based on their positions and tenure periods to obtain historical perspectives and leadership development

over time. A total of three key informants were involved in this research, all of whom had served as Head of HR Bureau in different periods. This purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that the selected participants had first-hand experience and strategic insights relevant to the research focus. The variety of leadership periods among the informants enabled the researcher to explore leadership patterns across administrations. Details of the participants are presented in the following table:

Table 1. *Period of office of the head of the hr bureau*

No	Position	Period of duty
1.	Head of HR Bureau (Informant 1 YR)	2015 – 2016
2.	Head of HR Bureau (Informant 2 LR)	2020 – 2024
3.	Head of HR Bureau (Informant 3 PNF)	2024 - 2028

Source: study of bureau of hr documents

The selection of informants utilized an exploratory approach (Thanos et al., 2023), which allowed the researcher to gain in-depth insights from key figures directly involved in the Bureau leadership. The participants reflect chronological leadership continuity and provide rich data for analyzing transformational and classical leadership styles in the context of organizations at UPI. The three informants were selected based on specific inclusion criteria: (1) current or past experience serving as Head of the UPI HR Bureau, (2) experience in implementing comprehensive HR management policies, and (3) willingness to share experiences related to their leadership approaches. Informant 1 (YR) is a woman with a Doctoral degree in Education Management, aged 64. Informant 2 (LR) is a woman with a doctorate in Educational Research and Evaluation, aged 57. Informant 3 (PNF) is a man with an S.T., M.M. in Management, aged 43. The diversity in backgrounds and leadership periods allowed the researchers to gain a comprehensive perspective on the transformation of leadership in the UPI HR Bureau over the past decade (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data collection and analysis

Data collection was conducted through exploratory and semi-structured interviews, as suggested by Creswell & Creswell (2018), who explained that semi-structured interviews allow researchers to obtain in-depth information while still providing room for flexibility in data mining through open-ended questions tailored to the context of perceptual responses and experiences. In this case, it is adjusted to the transformational leadership strategy implemented by the head of the HR Bureau. Interviews were conducted using open and flexible questions, which allowed informants to explain their views broadly and contextually.

The primary data collection instrument were a semi-structured interview protocol consisting of 20 open-ended questions developed based on the four dimensions of transformational leadership according to B. M. Bass & Riggio (2005). The protocol was validated through expert judgment by two educational management experts from UPI before its use. According to Kallio et al. (2016), a semi-structured interview protocol should be based on existing knowledge and tailored to the research questions while allowing flexibility in exploring emergent themes. The interview protocol covered five main areas: (1) leadership vision and values, (2) approaches to staff motivation and development, (3) methods for fostering innovation and critical thinking, (4) individualized staff support strategies, and (5) integration of traditional and transformational leadership elements.

Each interview was conducted face-to-face in the informant's office, lasting 60-90 minutes per session. All interviews were digitally recorded with the informant's consent and stored in MP3 format for transcription. To ensure accuracy, transcripts were returned to participants for member checking, a technique recommended by Lincoln & Guba (1985) to enhance the credibility of qualitative findings. In addition to interviews, the researcher conducted document studies of policy documents, performance reports, and Bureau meeting archives from 2015 to 2024 for data triangulation. In this process, the researcher acts as the main instrument, according to the principles of qualitative research, according to Chali et al. (2022), which provides an overview of the research implementation design. Academic competence and field experience were used to interpret the meaning of informants' statements. The interview process was recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed systematically using ATLAS.ti software. Data analysis was conducted using a thematic approach using ATLAS.ti software. the stages of analysis followed five main stages: Pre-ATLAS.ti stage, Pre-Analysis Stage, Material Exploration Stage, Interpretation Stage, and Post-ATLAS.ti Stage. Some stages take place outside the software, such as document preparation and inference, while the material exploration and preliminary interpretation stages are performed directly within ATLAS.ti. The structure of this analysis flow is depicted in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3. *Analytical framework of the study*
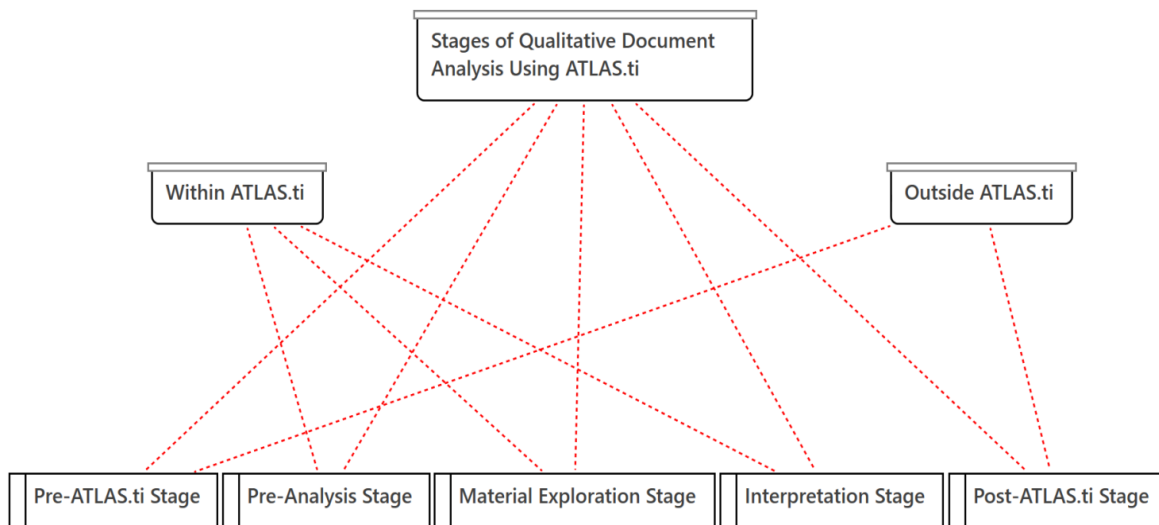
Source: (Sharma, 2024)

In detail, the stages depicted in Figure 3 include:
- Pre-ATLAS.ti Stage and Pre-Analysis Stage were contucted outside of ATLAS.ti, including document collection, interview transcripts, and initial review data of context.
- The Material Exploration Stage was conducted inside ATLAS.ti, involving data uploading, quotations tagging, coding, and categorization according to emerging themes.
- Interpretation Stage took place both inside and outside ATLAS.ti, by reflecting and examining the relationships between themes and drawing deeper meanings, based on the transformational leadership theory of B. M. Bass & Riggio (2005).

- Post-ATLAS.ti Stage was conducted outside the software, including concluding, validating the results, and compiling a comprehensive narrative of the analysis.

The specific data analysis procedures followed Braun & Clarke (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts; (2) initial code generation using both inductive and deductive approaches, with codes derived from transformational leadership theory and emerging from the data itself; (3) theme searching by grouping related codes; (4) theme review against the coded extracts and entire dataset; (5) theme definition and naming to capture the essence of each theme; and (6) report production with compelling extract examples. The use of ATLAS.ti enhanced analytical rigor by allowing for systematic code application, relationship mapping, and visual representation of thematic networks (Friese et al., 2023).

Following Korstjens & Moser (2018) guidelines for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research, several strategies were implemented: (1) credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement with the research site, methodological triangulation (interviews and document analysis), and member checking of interview transcripts; (2) transferability was addressed through thick description of the research context and participant characteristics; (3) dependability was ensured by maintaining a detailed audit trail of research decisions and processes; (4) confirmability was established through researcher reflexivity and transparent documentation of how findings were derived from the data; and (5) authenticity was strengthened by fairly representing different viewpoints from all three leadership periods. Additionally, researcher positionality was acknowledged through reflective journaling throughout the research process to minimize potential biases (R. Berger, 2015).

This approach draws on Braun & Clarke (2006), thematic analysis methodology, which allows for inductive and deductive identification of key themes. The results of the analysis were then presented narratively to show the relationship between the findings and the main focus of the research.

Results

This section presents the findings of our research on transformational leadership implementation in the UPI HR Bureau across three leadership periods. The results are organized systematically to address the research objectives outlined in the introduction: (1) examining how three generations of HR Bureau leaders implement the key dimensions of transformational leadership; (2) analyzing the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance, motivation, and organizational culture; (3) identifying challenges and adaptive strategies in implementing transformational leadership; and (4) exploring the integration between traditional and transformational leadership approaches. The visualization of relationships between transformational leadership elements in Figure 4 forms the foundation for our analysis.

Based on the results of data analysis using ATLAS.ti software, a thematic map is obtained that represents the relationship between the elements of transformational leadership within the UPI HR Bureau. These findings illustrate how leadership affects motivation, innovation, staff development, and responses to the digitization of the personnel system. The visualization of the relationship between these themes is shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. *Data analysis results based on interviews with three heads of upi hr bureau*
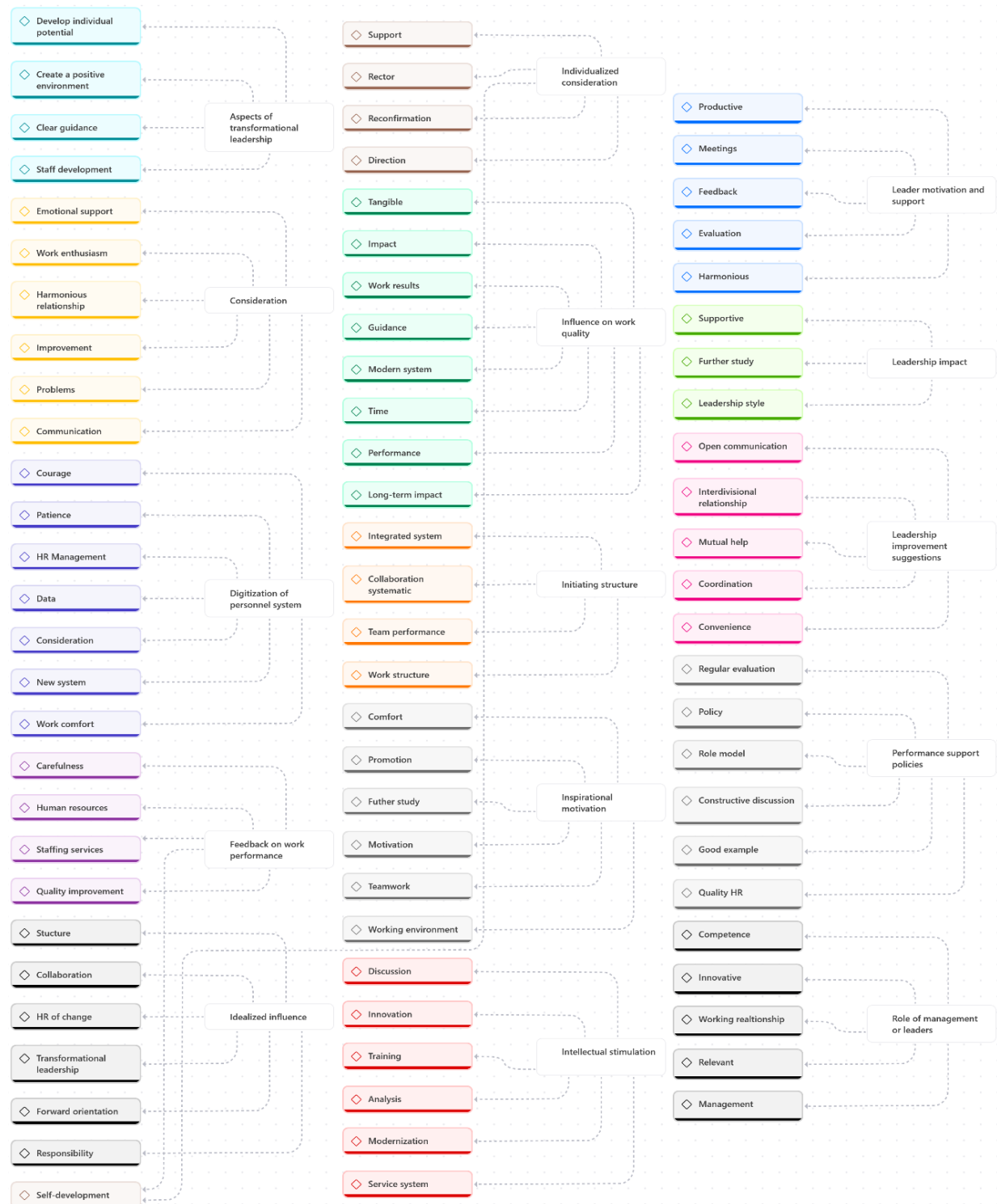
(Source: Output ATLAS.ti, 2025)

The thematic network presented in Figure 4 illustrates the complex interconnections between various elements of transformational leadership as implemented in the UPI HR Bureau. At the center of the network is "Leadership" as the core theme, with multiple connections radiating to key dimensions including "Innovation," "Communication," "Digital Transformation," and "Staff Development." The visualization reveals particularly strong connections (represented by thicker lines) between leadership and motivation, as well as between leadership and the establishment of evaluative cultures. This suggests that the transformational leadership approach employed by the three Bureau heads consistently prioritized motivational strategies and systematic evaluation practices.

Several key patterns emerge from this thematic analysis. First, the four classic dimensions of transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) are represented in the network, though they manifest through different practical mechanisms across leadership periods. Second, there is a noticeable integration between transformational elements and classical leadership approaches derived from Ohio State studies, particularly in how structured systems (initiating structure) complement individualized support (consideration). Third, the network demonstrates a strong focus on digital transformation as a response to changing organizational contexts, illustrated by the prominent connections between leadership, innovation, and digital-based systems.

Discussion

Figure 4 finds that leadership in the HR Bureau blends transformational and classical approaches synergistically. The dimensions of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized attention appear dominant in strengthening staff performance and engagement. At the same time, the systematic work structure and interpersonal attention of the classical style remain relevant. The application of this leadership is also reflected in the response to digitalization, the establishment of an evaluative culture, and policies that are adaptive to organizational needs.

Deepening the transformational dimension, leadership in the HR Bureau is demonstrated through the presence of a leader figure who is not only respected but also an example of integrity. Informant PNF identified the ideal leadership dimension in three keywords: "leadership, responsibility, guidance", which reflects the leader's position as a figure who directs and serves as a role model. This is in line with the theory of B. M. Bass & Riggio (2005), which places transformational leaders as moral actors who can build trust and respect from their followers. Furthermore, informants YR and LR emphasized that leadership credibility is built through a clear vision and collaborative approach, which consistently strengthens staff trust and loyalty. Thus, idealized influence serves as the main foundation for transformative and organizationally meaningful leadership relations.

Addressing the first research question on how the three generations of leaders implement key dimensions of transformational leadership, the findings reveal both continuity and evolution in leadership practices. All three Bureau heads demonstrated aspects of idealized influence, albeit with different emphases. YR (2015-2016) established the foundation through integrity-based leadership, focusing on "vision, trust, and credibility" (YR, interview). LR (2020-2024) built upon this foundation by emphasizing collaborative leadership where "every decision reflects our collective wisdom, not just mine" (LR, interview). Most recently, PNF (2024-2028) has further developed this dimension through what she describes as "leadership by example" in implementing digital transformation initiatives. This

progression demonstrates how the idealized influence dimension has evolved from establishing foundational trust to collaborative leadership and finally to exemplary implementation of strategic initiatives.

Furthermore, the inspirational motivation dimension is reflected in the leader's efforts to create a positive and motivating work environment. Leaders do not only rely on formal instructions, but also build relationships that are supportive and inspirational. Informant LR highlighted the importance of the leader's role as a work partner who creates comfort in professional life, while YR gave a concrete example of support for further studies and promotions as a form of incentive that increases work motivation. This view is reinforced by Rafferty & Griffin (2004), who state that transformational leaders can articulate high expectations and foster collective spirit. In addition, the open communication mentioned by PNF informants as a form of providing solutions shows that motivation is not only verbal, but also manifested in leadership strategies that are responsive and lead to team empowerment.

In addressing our second research question regarding the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance and motivation, the thematic network in Figure 4 shows particularly strong connections between leadership approaches and motivational outcomes. The visual thickness of these connecting lines indicates the frequency and consistency of this relationship across all interviews. Informant LR stated that under transformational leadership, "staff morale visibly improved because they felt genuinely valued and supported" (LR, interview). This aligns with what YR described as "shifting from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation," where staff began to "internalize organizational goals as personal goals" (YR, interview). The data reveals that this motivational impact translated directly to performance improvements, with PNF noting measurable increases in "output quality, timeliness, and initiative-taking" (PNF, interview). These findings confirm B. M. Bass & Riggio (2005) assertion that transformational leadership creates deeper engagement than transactional approaches alone.

No less important, the dimension of intellectual stimulation also colors the dynamics of transformational leadership applied. Transformational leadership is also characterized by the encouragement of innovation and critical thinking inherent in organizational culture. PNF informants mentioned that activities such as innovation, discussion, and training are part of routine practices that strengthen the intellectual development of staff. The implementation of digital-based services shared by informant YR shows a concrete form of the innovative approach adopted by the Bureau. On the other hand, LR emphasized the importance of analysis and evaluation as reflective mechanisms that are part of the work culture. This finding is relevant to the views of Eisenbeiss et al. (2008), which emphasize the importance of leaders in facilitating open discussions and exploration of new ideas to improve organizational effectiveness. Thus, the intellectual stimulation dimension plays a crucial role in encouraging the adaptive and innovative capacity of public organizations.

The third research question focused on challenges and adaptive strategies in implementing transformational leadership within bureaucratic constraints and digital transformation. The findings reveal three primary challenges identified consistently across leadership periods: bureaucratic rigidity, resistance to change, and technological adaptation barriers. As shown in Figure 4, these challenges were addressed through various adaptive strategies. The "Feedback" node connected to "Evaluation" demonstrates how leaders established "regular reflection cycles" (YR, interview) and "data-driven improvement mechanisms" (PNF, interview) to overcome bureaucratic inertia. Resistance to change was addressed through the strong connection between "Communication" and "Work Comfort"

nodes, with LR implementing a strategy of "transparent communication about the why behind changes" (LR, interview). The technological adaptation challenges were met through what PNF described as "staged implementation with continuous support," visible in the connection between "Digital-based" and "Support" nodes in Figure 4.

Complementing the previous dimension, individualized attention is also evident in HR Bureau leadership style. The caring aspect of leadership is reflected in the concern for the personal and professional development of staff. Informant PNF revealed that guidance, support, and reinforcement are part of the leader's approach in fostering relationships with staff. This was clarified by YR, who mentioned the direct attention from the highest level of leaders, including the rector, to the conditions and needs of employees. LR added that personalized facilitation of self-development is an important aspect in supporting individual performance. This finding corresponds with Yukl (2013), theory, which places individualized attention on inclusive and supportive work. Overall, leadership approaches that address individual needs not only enhance staff well-being but also strengthen commitment to organizational goals.

Regarding the fourth research question on the integration between traditional leadership approaches and transformational leadership, the thematic network displays several key connections that illuminate this relationship. The "Systematic" node connects strongly to both "Evaluation" and "Collaboration" nodes, showing how the initiating structure dimension (from Ohio State studies) was integrated with transformational elements. LR described this integration as "providing clear frameworks that enable rather than restrict creativity" (LR, interview). Similarly, the "Support" node connects with both "Motivation" and "Staff Development," illustrating the marriage between the consideration dimension and transformational individualized attention. YR explained this integration as "formalized systems of caring" where "administrative procedures were redesigned to facilitate personal growth" (YR, interview). This successful integration was particularly evident in the Bureau's approach to digital transformation, where PNF implemented what she termed "structured innovation" - a systematic framework for encouraging creative problem-solving within regulatory boundaries.

Although transformational approaches dominate, classic leadership styles still retain relevance in the context of the HR Bureau. In the leadership practices that take place in the HR Bureau, the classic style still has relevance, especially through two main dimensions: initiating structure and consideration. The first dimension, initiating structure, is reflected in systematic and organized work planning. PNF highlights the importance of feedback, evaluation, and discussion as elements in building a solid framework. Meanwhile, YR emphasized that the structured system has supported integration in the development of staff performance, and LR mentioned "systematic collaboration" as a concrete form of implementing an effective structure. In line with Robbins & Judge (2017) and Job (2022), a clear work structure can improve operational efficiency, tighten coordination, and establish a transparent accountability system within the organization.

The thematic analysis further reveals the evolutionary nature of leadership approaches across the three generations of Bureau heads. As visualized in Figure 4, there is a clear progression in focus from establishing foundational systems (YR period) to enhancing collaboration and motivation (LR period) to embracing digital transformation and innovation (PNF period). Yet, despite these shifts in emphasis, the core elements of transformational leadership remain consistent throughout all periods. This suggests an adaptive implementation of transformational leadership principles that responds to changing organizational contexts while maintaining philosophical continuity. The continuity-within-change pattern observed across leadership generations provides a valuable model for understanding

how transformational leadership can be sustained through leadership transitions in higher education administrative units.

At the same time, the consideration dimension shows the humanistic side of the classic leadership style, demonstrated through attention to interpersonal relationships. Constructive communication practices are the main instrument in encouraging performance improvement, as stated by PNF LR added that the harmony of the work atmosphere also strengthens team collaboration. Meanwhile, YR highlighted openness in problem-solving as a form of leadership concern for staff welfare. This perspective reinforces Northouse (2019) theory that effective leaders are those who can understand and respond to the emotional and social needs of team members, not solely by achieving organizational targets.

Turning to the real impact of transformational leadership, the application of transformational leadership in the HR Bureau has a real impact on increasing employee motivation and performance. Informant YR stated that leader support encouraged staff to continue their studies and expand their professional competencies, which in turn improved work performance. LR also asserted that "morale has increased because they feel valued and supported", which reflects the success of leaders in fostering a sense of belonging to the institution. This finding is reinforced by the research of Firdaus et al. (2025), which showed that transformational leadership contributed to improved performance through strengthening organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Furthermore, transformational leadership also affects the quality of employee work. Informant LR stated that employees' work is now "more tangible and has a long-term impact", indicating that there is an increased focus on strategic and sustainable results. PNF added that leaders encourage staff to think more systematically and develop high-quality solutions. This is in line with the findings of Heridiansyah et al. (2024), who stated that transformational leadership creates a trust-based organizational climate that supports a productive and harmonious quality of life and work.

In overall practice, the four main dimensions of leadership are consistently present in the leadership structure of the HR Bureau. Informant YR described a leader who is visionary and communicative, creating trust among employees. PNF emphasized the leader's role in providing direction, guidance, and constructive dialogue. LR underlined the importance of leader-directed training and development. It can be concluded that combining three statements from informants in the four dimensions can effectively increase job satisfaction and employee motivation.

In summary, the findings from this research provide comprehensive insights into how transformational leadership has been implemented and evolved across three generations of leaders in the UPI HR Bureau. The thematic analysis, visually represented in Figure 4, illustrates the complex relationships between leadership approaches, employee outcomes, and organizational processes. The findings demonstrate that while each Bureau head employed different strategies responding to the needs of their period, there was a consistent emphasis on the core dimensions of transformational leadership throughout. The integration of traditional leadership elements (initiating structure and consideration) with transformational approaches created a more robust and contextually appropriate leadership model for the bureaucratic higher education setting. These findings not only address the research questions outlined in the introduction but also contribute to the broader understanding of how transformational leadership can be effectively adapted across leadership transitions in administrative units within higher education institutions.

To ensure the sustainability of performance improvement, a regular evaluation and coaching system demonstrates strong motivation and support from leaders towards their subordinates.

Informant PNF highlighted the importance of "evaluation, discussion, periodic" as a means of shared learning that encourages the improvement of individual competencies. YR mentioned that the system is systematic and aims to provide structured developmental direction for staff. According to Budworth & Chummar (2017), interactive feedback is key in creating an effective performance cycle and strengthening working relationships based on trust and collaboration.

In line with the development of the digital era, digital transformation is part of the Bureau's efforts to create an adaptive and responsive HR management system. Informant YR stated that digitizing the staffing process brings significant efficiency. LR emphasized the importance of courage and openness to digital system changes, while PNF said that the success of digitalization depends on the factors of "communication, work comfort, and impact". Avolio et al. (2001) stated that digital leaders must be able to strategically integrate technology into the organizational structure, not only for efficiency, but also to strengthen team engagement and performance.

Furthermore, the practice of performance evaluation and feedback is a routine and structured process within this Bureau. PNF emphasizes that evaluation, discussion, and periodic feedback are important elements in a continuous development cycle that includes quality improvement, human resource management, and personnel services. In this context, careful and thoughtful feedback on work outcomes is instrumental in driving positive and timely change. LR highlighted the importance of periodic reflection as a means to understand achievements while identifying weaknesses that need to be improved. In line with this, YR emphasized that evaluation should not be seen as a form of punishment, but rather as a systematic mentoring process. Goller & Späth (2023) state that positive feedback can significantly improve employee motivation and performance, while negative feedback without the right approach can lead to resistance.

The leadership development suggestions lead to strengthening open communication and increasing synergy between divisions. YR and LR considered that collaborative working relationships need to be strengthened to create synergy between units. PNF suggested improving service quality to be more responsive and accessible. (Kashyap & Eugene, 2024) emphasize that healthy organizations are built through open communication, leaders who are receptive to feedback, and improving the overall resilience of the organization's employees.

The role of management in this context is not limited to policy-making, but includes the role of facilitator, mentor, and driver of change. Informant PNF mentioned that leaders serve as "role models" in the implementation of organizational policies. YR emphasized the importance of leaders in facilitating staff training and development. LR stated that the success of the Bureau is highly dependent on leaders' activity in building two-way communication and productive working relationships. This is in line with the findings of Romi et al. (2023), who stated that transformational leadership has a direct positive effect on the quality of staff work life through the creation of a healthy organizational climate.

Finally, leadership policies are an important foundation in creating a work culture that supports performance. Informant PNF mentioned "policy, regular evaluation, constructive discussion" as policy elements that consistently encourage staff productivity. YR considers that leaders act as implementers as well as role models in implementing work policies. LR emphasized the importance of adjusting policies to the competencies and dynamics of staff needs. According to Schein (2010), organizational policies that are in sync with leadership values and practices will strengthen organizational culture and encourage member loyalty.

Despite the robust findings, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, regarding participant selection, our study included only three key informants—all former or current Bureau heads—who provided depth but limited breadth of perspectives. Including staff members from different organizational levels would have offered a more comprehensive understanding of how transformational leadership is experienced throughout the organization. This leadership-centric approach potentially introduces a bias toward leaders' self-perceptions rather than followers' experiences of leadership impact.

Second, the scope of this research was limited to a single administrative unit (HR Bureau) within one institution (UPI), which constrains the transferability of findings to other contexts. While this focused approach allowed for in-depth analysis of leadership evolution, it does not capture the diversity of leadership practices across different administrative units or educational institutions, particularly those with different organizational cultures or structural configurations.

Third, there were temporal limitations in the data collection process. The research was conducted over four months in early 2025, providing a snapshot rather than a longitudinal perspective on leadership practices. Additionally, interviews with YR relied on retrospective accounts of leadership experiences from 2015-2016, potentially introducing recall bias in the data. The geographic concentration at a single institution in West Java limits the applicability of findings to other regions with different cultural contexts or administrative traditions.

Finally, methodological constraints include the primary reliance on interviews and document analysis without direct observation of leadership practices. While ATLAS.ti software enhanced analytical rigor, the qualitative nature of the study means findings cannot be statistically generalized. Furthermore, the researcher's position as a member of the UPI academic community may have influenced participants' responses despite efforts to maintain objectivity through reflective practices. Future research could address these limitations through mixed-methods approaches, broader participant selection, and multi-institutional comparative studies.

Overall, these findings indicate that leadership practices at UPI HR Bureau show strategic integration between transformational and classical approaches. Transformational dimensions such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized attention proved to play an important role in shaping a collaborative, adaptive, and innovative work environment. At the same time, systematic work structures and attention to interpersonal relationships, as reflected in classical leadership characteristics, continue to contribute significantly to maintaining organizational efficiency, consistency, and stability. The combination of these two approaches creates a leadership foundation that is not only able to improve the motivation and quality of employee performance but also encourages the creation of a work culture based on evaluation, continuous learning, and readiness for digitalization. Thus, leadership in the HR Bureau is not only oriented towards achieving organizational targets, but also towards strengthening the human dimension and developing individual capacity in the context of an ever-evolving higher education bureaucracy.

Conclusion and Implications

This study examined the implementation of transformational leadership across three generations of leaders in the UPI Human Resources Bureau. The research revealed that transformational leadership dimensions—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—were consistently present but evolved in implementation across leadership periods. The first generation leader (2015-2016) established foundational trust and integrity-based leadership; the second generation (2020-2024) developed collaborative approaches and strengthened motivational systems; while the current generation (2024-2028) has focused on exemplary leadership in digital transformation initiatives. This evolutionary pattern demonstrates how transformational leadership adapts to changing organizational contexts while maintaining core philosophical principles. Regarding the influence on employee performance and organizational culture, the findings show that transformational leadership significantly enhanced staff motivation by shifting from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation, with employees internalizing organizational goals as personal objectives. This motivational impact directly translated to measurable improvements in output quality, timeliness, and initiative-taking. Moreover, the leadership approach fostered an evaluative culture and collaborative environment that supported continuous improvement.

The research identified three primary challenges in implementing transformational leadership in the bureaucratic setting: structural rigidity, resistance to change, and technological adaptation barriers. Leaders addressed these challenges through adaptive strategies, including regular reflection cycles, transparent communication about the rationale behind changes, and staged implementation of technological initiatives with continuous support. The successful navigation of these challenges demonstrates the adaptability of transformational leadership within administrative constraints. A significant finding was the effective integration between traditional leadership approaches (initiating structure and consideration) and transformational elements. The synthesis created what participants described as "structured innovation" and "formalized systems of caring," where clear operational frameworks enabled rather than restricted creativity, and administrative procedures were redesigned to facilitate personal growth. This integration proved particularly valuable in the Bureau's digital transformation process.

Based on these findings, several recommendations for future research emerge. First, longitudinal studies tracking leadership evolution over extended periods would provide deeper insights into the sustainability of transformational approaches across leadership transitions. Second, comparative studies across multiple administrative units or institutions would enhance the transferability of findings. Third, research incorporating perspectives from staff at various organizational levels would offer a more comprehensive understanding of how transformational leadership is experienced throughout the hierarchy. Finally, mixed-methods approaches combining qualitative insights with quantitative measures of performance outcomes would strengthen the evidence base for transformational leadership effectiveness in higher education administrative contexts. These extensions would address the limitations of the current study while building upon its foundation to further develop models of effective leadership for educational institutions navigating rapid change.

Clarity and Accuracy

This research analyzes the implementation of transformational leadership across three generations of leaders in the Human Resources Bureau at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (spanning 2015-2016, 2020-2024, and 2024-2028). Employing a theoretical framework that integrates Bass & Riggio's (2005) Transformational Leadership Theory and the Ohio State Leadership Studies, this qualitative investigation gathered data through semi-structured interviews with three Bureau heads and policy document analysis. Data were analyzed using a thematic approach facilitated by ATLAS.ti software, generating a network of relationships between transformational leadership dimensions (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) and organizational performance metrics.

The findings reveal a clear evolutionary pattern of leadership: the first-generation leader established foundational trust through integrity-based leadership, the second-generation leader developed collaborative approaches and motivational systems, while the current leader focuses on exemplary leadership in digital transformation initiatives. Transformational leadership demonstrably enhanced employees' intrinsic motivation, output quality, timeliness, and initiative-taking. The effective integration of traditional and transformational leadership approaches created what participants described as "structured innovation" and "formalized systems of caring," wherein clear operational frameworks enabled creativity within regulatory boundaries. Leaders successfully addressed challenges of bureaucratic rigidity, resistance to change, and technological adaptation barriers through adaptive strategies, including regular reflection cycles, transparent communication, and staged implementation of technological initiatives with continuous support.

Despite limitations in participant selection, scope, and methodology, this study demonstrates that leadership practices in the UPI HR Bureau successfully integrate transformational and classical approaches strategically. Transformational dimensions played a crucial role in shaping a collaborative and innovative work environment, while systematic work structures and positive interpersonal relationships maintained organizational efficiency. This combination created a leadership foundation that enhanced employee performance and established a culture of continuous evaluation. For future research, longitudinal studies tracking leadership evolution over extended periods, multi-institutional comparative research, investigations incorporating perspectives from staff across various organizational levels, and mixed-methods approaches combining qualitative insights with quantitative performance metrics are recommended.

Disclosure Statement

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