



The Impact of Transformational Leadership Style on Organizational Commitment in the Education Sector

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ABSTRACT

This study arises from the urgent need for a leadership model that can strengthen employee loyalty and engagement amidst high turnover rates and dynamic changes in the higher education ecosystem. This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey design. Data were collected from 400 respondents (lecturers and administrative staff) in PTS in East Java, using instruments. Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS, SmartPLS 4). The results show that transformational leadership has a significant positive effect on organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.75$, $p < 0.001$), with $R^2 = 0.56$, $f^2 = 0.36$, and $Q^2 = 0.41$. These results confirm that private higher education leaders need to implement a more inspirational, participatory, and human resource empowerment-oriented leadership style to strengthen organizational commitment and reduce the risk of turnover.

INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership has a crucial role in determining the success of organizations, especially those in the education sector. In the face of complicated environmental dynamics, it is thought that the appropriate leadership model improves employee performance and organizational commitment. Transformational leadership is one well-known leadership style that prioritizes inspiration, vision, intellectual stimulation, and personalized attention (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Khan et al., 2022). Numerous global studies have demonstrated a strong correlation between transformational leadership and higher levels of engagement, job satisfaction, and employee loyalty (Nguni et al., 2006; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Northouse, 2025). Globally, employee engagement in the education sector remains low. Gallup (2020) reported that only 34% of lecturers and academic staff in higher education felt truly engaged with their institutions. UNESCO (2021) emphasized that 21st-century educational institutions are required not only to deliver academic content but also to develop adaptive and visionary leadership capacity capable of responding to the challenges of the times and increasing engagement and commitment to the institution. In addition, school and college leadership is key to increasing organizational effectiveness, especially in developing countries that face gaps in education quality.

In Indonesia, the education sector, including private schools, courses, and private universities, contributes significantly to human resource development. Statistics Indonesia (BPS) (2022) noted that the formal and non-formal education sectors employ more than 7 million workers, or approximately 6.3% of the national workforce. However, a report by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2022) indicates that private universities face high levels of lecturer turnover, reflecting weak organizational commitment. This impacts the consistency of academic quality and educational services. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this situation. The World Bank (2021) reported that more than 80% of educational institutions in developing countries experienced a decline in service quality due to low adaptability and engagement of teaching staff. In Indonesia, research by Samara and Nasir (2024) showed that approximately 39.5% of lecturers at the Faculty of Health Sciences (Fikes) of State Islamic University (UIN) Jakarta in 2022 reported high levels of work fatigue during online learning, which also impacted their commitment to the institution.

Research on the influence of transformational leadership on organizational commitment has been extensively conducted globally (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Al Zefeiti, 2017; Walumbwa et al., 2008), focusing on Western and African contexts. Studies at the Asian regional level, such as those by Nguni et al. (2006), are generally limited to the primary and secondary education sectors. Meanwhile, research has also been conducted in Indonesia (Nugraha et al., 2025; Cahyono et al., 2020), but most have focused on public high schools or universities using covariance-based regression or SEM approaches. Although transformative leadership and organizational commitment have been positively correlated in a number of Indonesian research (Setyawan & Rahmawati, 2021), the findings have been mixed. According to some research, the link is dependent on mediating elements like motivation or job satisfaction (Rochayati & Masman, 2025).

Furthermore, most studies still focus on the business or government sectors, while in-depth studies in the education sector, particularly private universities, are relatively limited. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how transformational leadership styles affect organizational commitment in the context of education, particularly in Indonesian private colleges. Additionally, this study aims to increase the body of empirical data supporting the theory of transformational leadership's application in developing nations and offer useful advice for college administrators on how to develop leadership tactics that can strengthen organizational commitment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Transformational Leadership Style

Burns (1978) first proposed the idea of transformative leadership, and Bass (1990) expanded on it. According to Bass and Riggio (2006), transformational leaders are distinguished by their capacity to inspire followers in four key ways: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and personalized consideration. Numerous studies attest to transformational leadership's beneficial effects in raising worker loyalty, job happiness, and engagement (Nguni et al., 2006; Northouse, 2025). According to Leithwood and Jantzi (2005), transformational leadership is crucial for bringing about organizational cultural change in academic institutions. In many nations, there is a positive correlation between transformational leadership and the dedication and performance of lecturers (Ardiansyah & Suhud, 2022; Mishra & Upadhyay, 2022).

Organizational Commitment

The psychological bond that a person has with their organization, which affects performance, loyalty, and retention, is known as organizational commitment. Three dimensions of organizational commitment are distinguished by Meyer and Allen (1997): normative commitment (moral obligation to stay), continuation commitment (knowledge of the consequences of quitting the organization), and affective commitment (emotional attachment). International research indicates that, especially in the field of education, organizational commitment is strongly correlated with both productivity and service quality (Meyer et al., 2002). The significant turnover of academics and other educational professionals in Indonesia is indicative of a lack of organizational commitment (Nusantara, 2025). Consequently, boosting organizational commitment is a crucial tactic for enhancing educational institutions' competitiveness.

The Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Commitment

By establishing a clear vision, providing emotional support, and giving employees a sense of purpose in their work, transformational leadership can theoretically increase organizational commitment (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013). Numerous empirical studies also demonstrate a positive correlation between organizational commitment and transformational leadership. Globally, for example, studies conducted in Africa have shown that transformational leadership can increase teacher commitment (Nguni et al., 2006), while a study conducted in Saudi Arabia showed that this leadership style significantly influences lecturer commitment (Al-Malki & Juan, 2018). According to research conducted in China, university professors' organizational commitment and transformative leadership are positively correlated (Liu, 2015). In the meantime, a study conducted in Indonesia by Setyawan and Rahmawati (2021) showed that transformative leadership directly affects professor performance and organizational commitment. Other research, however, has shown conflicting findings, indicating that transformational leadership's impact is more potent when it is mediated by additional elements like motivation or job satisfaction (Rochayati & Masman, 2025). Therefore, there is still a need to strengthen empirical evidence, particularly in private universities in Indonesia, which has been relatively rarely studied to date.

Based on the theory and results of previous studies, this research proposes a conceptual model as follows:

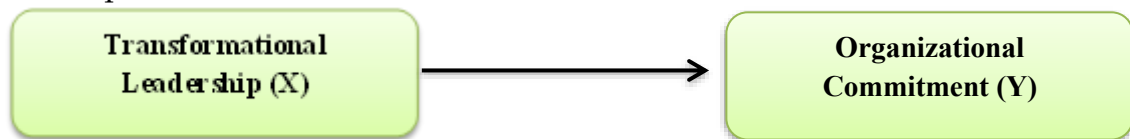


Figure 1. Conceptual Research Model

Transformational leadership is predicted to increase organizational commitment, particularly through a positive influence on the affective, normative, and sustainability dimensions of commitment, so the hypothesis proposed in this study is H1: Transformational leadership style has a significant positive influence on organizational commitment in the education sector.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study analyzes the causal relationship between organizational commitment and transformational leadership style in the education sector using a quantitative methodology and an explanatory survey method. Because it enables thorough testing of correlations between latent variables using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approaches, this approach was used (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Population and Sample

The research population consisted of lecturers and administrative staff at private universities (PTS) in East Java. This region was chosen because East Java is the province with the second-largest number of private universities in Indonesia (BPS, 2022), yet faces a relatively high rate of teaching staff turnover (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). The sampling technique used proportional stratified random sampling. The sample size was determined using the Cochran (1977) formula with a margin of error (e) of 5% and a 95% confidence level. Based on this calculation, the following results were obtained:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \times p(1-p)}{e^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2} = 384.16 \approx 385$$

This resulted in a minimum requirement of 385 respondents. To ensure the adequacy of the SEM analysis, the number of respondents was increased to 400. Data were collected during February–April 2025 through an online questionnaire (Google Form) and printed questionnaires distributed directly to several private universities. Prior to full distribution, a pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents to ensure the clarity of the questions.

Variables and Instruments

The independent variable (X) in this study is transformational leadership style, measured using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) by Bass & Avolio (2004), which consists of four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The dependent variable (Y) is organizational commitment, measured using the Meyer & Allen (1997) scale, which includes three dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. The instrument uses a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis method employed in this study was Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). Measurement model analysis (outer model) was used to test the validity and reliability of indicators, descriptive analysis was used to describe the respondent profile (gender, age, tenure, and lecturer/staff status), and structural model analysis (inner model) was used to measure R², Q², f, and path coefficients in order to investigate the relationships between latent variables. To make sure the research tool consistently and accurately measured the constructs being studied, validity and reliability tests were carried out. The criterion of an outer loading value above 0.70 and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) greater than 0.50 were used to test convergent validity. In the meantime, a Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) value less than 0.90 and the Fornell-Larcker criteria were used to assess discriminant validity. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite dependability values are used to quantify construct dependability; an instrument is considered dependable if its value is at least 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014).

RESEARCH RESULT

Table 1 below presents the profile of respondents collected from lecturers and administrative staff at 12 private universities in East Java based on several demographic characteristics, including gender, age, length of service, and employment status.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	210	52.5%
	Female	190	47.5%
Age	< 30 years	80	20.0%
	31–40 years	150	37.5%
	41–50 years	110	27.5%
	> 50 years	60	15.0%
Length of Service	< 5 years	100	25.0%
	5–10 years	160	40.0%
	> 10 years	140	35.0%
Employment Status	Lecturer	260	65.0%
	Administrative Staff	140	35.0%

Source: Data Processing Results (2025)

Based on Table 1, the majority of respondents were male, 210 people (52.5%), while female respondents numbered 190 people (47.5%). In terms of age, the majority of respondents were in the 31–40 years range with a total of 150 people (37.5%), followed by 41–50 years old (27.5%), under 30 years old (20.0%), and respondents over 50 years old (15.0%). Based on length of service, respondents with 5–10 years of work experience dominated with a total of 160 people (40.0%). Meanwhile, respondents with more than 10 years of work experience were recorded at 140 people (35.0%), and those with less than 5 years of work experience were 100 people (25.0%). Based on employment status, the majority of respondents worked as lecturers with a total of 260 people (65.0%), while the rest were administrative staff at 140 people (35.0%). These data show that respondents are dominated by lecturers of productive age (30–39 years) and medium work experience (5–10 years).

Table 2. Results of Convergent Validity and Construct Reliability Tests

Construct	Indicator	Outer Loading	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Criteria
Transformational Leadership	Idealized Influence	0.82	0.62	0.89	0.91	Valid and Reliable
	Inspirational Motivation	0.88				
	Intellectual Stimulation	0.76				

	Individualized Consideration	0.72				
Organizational Commitment	Affective Commitment	0.89	0.65	0.87	0.90	Valid and Reliable
	Continuance Commitment	0.78				
	Normative Commitment	0.74				

Source: Data Processing Results (2025)

According to Table 2's results for the convergent validity and construct reliability tests, all indicators had outer loading values greater than 0.70 and AVE values greater than 0.50 for each construct. This indicates that the constructions can be accurately measured by the indicators in the study tool. Moreover, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values greater than 0.70 also demonstrate construct reliability. These findings show that the study tool is reliable and valid, making it suitable for measuring organizational commitment and transformational leadership traits.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Construct	Transformational Leadership	Organizational Commitment
Transformational Leadership	0.79	0.68
Organizational Commitment	0.68	0.81

Source: Data Processing Results (2025)

Table 4. Discriminant Validity (HTMT Ratio)

Construct Relationship	HTMT	Criteria
Transformational Leadership → Organizational Commitment	0.78	< 0.90 (valid)

Source: Data Processing Results (2025)

The Fornell-Larcker criteria (Table 3) and the HTMT ratio (Table 4) were used to test discriminant validity. The findings indicated that the HTMT value was less than 0.90 and that the AVE root value on the diagonal was greater than the correlation between constructs. Consequently, the study tool satisfied the criteria for discriminant validity.

Table 5. Structural Model Test Results

Variable	Indicator	Value	Category
Organizational Commitment	R ²	0.56	Moderate
	Q ²	0.41	Strong
Transformational Leadership → Organizational Commitment	Effect Size (f ²)	0.36	Large

Source: Data Processing Results (2025)

Table 5 shows that the organizational commitment R² value is 0.56, which is regarded as moderate. This indicates that transformative leadership accounts for 56% of the variance in organizational commitment. Variables not included in the research model have an impact on the remaining 44%. The model has substantial predictive significance, as indicated by the Q² value of 0.41, which is higher than 0.35. The effect size (f²) value of 0.36, which is regarded as large, supports this and shows that transformational leadership significantly increases organizational commitment.

Table 6. Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
H1: Transformational Leadership → Organizational Commitment	0.75	15.32	0.000	Accepted (significant)

Source: Data Processing Results (2025)

The path coefficient of transformational leadership's impact on organizational commitment is 0.75, according to Table 6's hypothesis test results, with a t-statistic value of 15.32 (>1.96) and a p-value of 0.000. As a result, the research hypothesis (H1) is accepted, indicating that transformational leadership significantly improves organizational commitment and that the more transformational leadership is used in the education sector, the greater the organizational commitment.

DISCUSSION

This study found that transformational leadership style has a positive and significant impact on organizational commitment in private universities in East Java ($\beta = 0.75$; $p < 0.001$). This finding is in line with the transformational leadership theory by Bass & Riggio (2006), which states that transformational leaders can inspire, motivate, and pay attention to individual needs, increasing members' sense of attachment and trust. This supports the findings of previous research by Meyer and Allen (1997), who found that effective leadership can simultaneously increase all three dimensions of organizational commitment. Previous studies worldwide have long suggested a positive correlation between transformational leadership and organizational commitment. The results of this study also support these findings. A study by Walumbwa et al. (2008) found that transformational leadership increases commitment by increasing organizational identification and employee self-efficacy. Another study by Nguni, Slegers, and Denessen (2006) in Tanzania also found that teacher job satisfaction and

commitment increased with transformational leadership. Furthermore, Buil, Martínez, and Matute (2019) found that transformational leadership increases organizational commitment. A study by Akbari et al. (2017) also emphasized the importance of an inspirational leadership style in strengthening teacher loyalty. This demonstrates cross-cultural consistency in that transformational leadership helps employees become more consistent.

Furthermore, these findings align with research conducted by Saeed & Jun (2022) and Shahsavan & Safari (2017), which found that transformational leadership increases emotional engagement (affective commitment) and reduces turnover intentions in education. In other words, visionary, inspirational leadership that addresses individual needs will make lecturers and administrative staff more committed to the institution. In the context of private universities (PTS) in East Java, these findings are highly relevant. The relatively high turnover rate of teaching staff can be reduced if institutional leaders implement transformational leadership. Through a visionary, communicative, and exemplary approach, leaders can foster a sense of belonging and employee loyalty, thus positively impacting organizational stability and sustainability. Therefore, this study supports the idea that transformational leadership is an important component in building organizational commitment, especially in the education sector, which is highly dependent on the quality and loyalty of its teaching staff.

These findings suggest that leaders need to strengthen the implementation of transformational leadership by demonstrating exemplary behavior, integrity, and high ethics (idealized influence), thereby fostering trust and respect among lecturers and administrative staff. In addition, leaders must be able to communicate the institution's vision and mission clearly and link it to individual contributions to provide motivation, so that each lecturer and staff member feels a vital part of the shared goal. Intellectual stimulation is also necessary, providing space for new ideas without instilling fear of failure. Equally important, individualized consideration must be demonstrated through coaching, mentoring, and ongoing career development programs. To enhance organizational commitment, PTS leaders can strengthen employee emotional bonds (affective commitment) by creating an inclusive work culture, rewarding achievement, and engaging in collaborative activities that foster emotional loyalty. Continuance commitment, on the other hand, can be strengthened by providing incentives, rewards, and guarantees of competitive career development, providing employees with a logical reason to remain with the institution. Meanwhile, normative commitment can be fostered by instilling values of togetherness, moral responsibility, and professional ethics through training and familiarization with organizational culture. This is in line with Jyoti & Bhau (2015), who emphasized that transformational leadership increases commitment through the mediation of intrinsic motivation.

To support this implementation, systematic institutional policies are essential. PTS leaders are advised to develop leadership training programs for deans, heads of study programs, and heads of bureaus to ensure the sustainable internalization of transformational leadership competencies. Furthermore, a performance and contribution-based reward and recognition system should be implemented so that faculty and staff feel valued both formally and informally. Internal communication should be transparent and participatory to foster trust and openness between leaders and subordinates. Furthermore, employee retention policies, such as long-term contracts, further study scholarships, and promotion opportunities, can help reduce turnover rates and increase employee loyalty. Consistent implementation of transformational leadership will encourage increased faculty and staff loyalty, reduce turnover rates, and strengthen the institution's competitiveness in the competitive higher education market.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In private universities (PTS) in East Java, transformational leadership has a significant positive effect on organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.75$, $p < 0.001$; $R^2 = 0.56$). These results indicate that PTS leaders in Indonesia need to implement a leadership style that is inspirational, participatory, and oriented towards empowering human resources. Leadership that emphasizes a shared vision, provides intellectual challenges, and individual attention can reduce turnover and strengthen commitment. The results of this study are also relevant to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology because PTS is an important part of the higher education system in Indonesia. Programs to strengthen the leadership capacity of rectors, deans, and PTS unit leaders can be directed at developing a transformational leadership style to strengthen employee commitment and improve the quality of HR governance. Thus, the results of this study not only provide academic contributions but can also be used as a basis for formulating private higher education policies in Indonesia. Factors originating from the external environment of the company, such as workplace culture, work motivation, or job satisfaction, can be included in future research to evaluate their influence on organizational commitment.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Future research is recommended to include other mediating or moderating variables such as job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, or organizational culture to understand the more complex mechanisms through which transformational leadership influences organizational commitment

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