

Transformational Leadership Style in Human Resource Management: A Case Study in a Multinational Company

Transformational
Leadership Style

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ABSTRACT

Transformational leadership has been recognized as a key factor in enhancing organizational effectiveness and driving innovation across industries. In the context of multinational companies, this leadership style becomes even more important given the complexities arising from cultural differences, regulations, and workforce expectations. This study aims to identify these challenges and formulate effective strategies for transformational leaders in managing a diverse workforce in multinational companies. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a case study approach, where data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five informants from various organizational levels in a multinational company. The results show that transformational leadership contributes to increased employee engagement and productivity, although its implementation faces significant challenges, such as cultural differences and regulations across countries. Therefore, more flexible and technology-based strategies need to be developed to optimize the effectiveness of transformational leadership in a global context. These findings contribute to the development of transformational leadership theory and provide practical guidance for management strategies in multinational companies to manage human resources more adaptively and innovatively.

Keywords: Human Resource Management; Multinational Corporations; Transformational Leadership

ABSTRAK

Kepemimpinan transformasional telah diakui sebagai faktor kunci dalam meningkatkan efektivitas organisasi dan mendorong inovasi di berbagai industri. Dalam konteks perusahaan multinasional, gaya kepemimpinan ini menjadi semakin penting mengingat kompleksitas yang timbul akibat perbedaan budaya, regulasi, dan ekspektasi tenaga kerja. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi tantangan-tantangan tersebut dan merumuskan strategi yang efektif bagi para pemimpin transformasional dalam mengelola tenaga kerja yang beragam di perusahaan multinasional. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus, di mana data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan lima informan dari berbagai tingkatan organisasi dalam perusahaan multinasional. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan transformasional berkontribusi terhadap peningkatan keterlibatan dan produktivitas karyawan, meskipun penerapannya menghadapi tantangan yang signifikan, seperti perbedaan budaya dan regulasi antar negara. Oleh karena itu, strategi yang

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lebih fleksibel dan berbasis teknologi perlu dikembangkan untuk mengoptimalkan efektivitas kepemimpinan transformasional dalam konteks global. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi bagi pengembangan teori kepemimpinan transformasional serta memberikan panduan praktis bagi manajemen strategis dalam perusahaan multinasional untuk mengelola sumber daya manusia secara lebih adaptif dan inovatif.

***Kata kunci:** Kepemimpinan Transformasional; Manajemen Sumber Daya Manusia; Perusahaan Multinasional*

INTRODUCTION

Transformational leadership has been a significant topic in management and organizational studies for the past few decades. This leadership style emphasizes a leader's ability to inspire and motivate employees toward positive change and the achievement of shared goals. Affandie (2022); Komalasari & Annisa (2023) argue that transformational leaders enhance employees' awareness of collective values and encourage them to transcend personal interests for the benefit of the organization. In the context of globalization, multinational companies face complex challenges that require continuous adaptation and innovation. Therefore, the implementation of transformational leadership is considered crucial for effectively managing human resources in this dynamic business environment. Effective Human Resource (HR) management is key to an organization's success in achieving a competitive advantage. Akbar & Hermiati (2023); Sidik et al. (2024) state that HR plays a strategic role in developing organizational capabilities through talent management, culture, and change. In multinational companies, HR management becomes more challenging due to cultural differences, legal systems, and business practices across countries. Transformational leadership helps bridge these differences by fostering a shared vision and building employee commitment across cultures. Moreover, transformational leaders drive innovation and adaptability, which are essential for competing in the global market (Manu, 2022; Celestin & Sujatha, 2024).

Several empirical studies have shown a positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational performance. For example, studies by Akbar et al. (2021); Baskoro et al. (2023) found that transformational leadership significantly contributes to organizational learning and technological innovation, which, in turn, enhances company performance. Similarly, research by Alamir et al. (2019); Mach et al. (2022) indicates that transformational leadership positively impacts team performance by increasing motivation and group cohesion. These findings reaffirm the crucial role of transformational leaders in driving organizational effectiveness. However, implementing transformational leadership in multinational companies is not without challenges. Cultural differences and complex organizational structures can influence the effectiveness of this leadership style. A study by Almohaisen et al. (2023); Babalola et al. (2023) emphasizes that cultural context affects employees' perceptions of and responses to leadership behavior. Therefore, leaders in multinational companies must demonstrate cultural sensitivity and the ability to adapt their approach to the local context. Additionally, support from top management and organizational policies that facilitate transformational leadership are essential for ensuring successful implementation.

The Indonesian context, research on transformational leadership and HR management in multinational companies remains relatively limited. However, studies by Alanazi et al. (2023); Putri et al. (2024) suggest that transformational leadership positively influences innovation and company performance in Indonesia. This finding highlights the potential benefits of applying this leadership style in the local context. Moreover, with the growing number of multinational companies operating in Indonesia, understanding the dynamics of leadership and HR management is becoming increasingly important. Further research is needed to explore how transformational leadership can be adapted and effectively implemented in multinational companies in

Indonesia. Building on this background, this study aims to analyze the role of transformational leadership in HR management within multinational companies. Using a case study approach, this research will examine how transformational leaders address challenges in a multinational context and how they influence employee performance and engagement. The findings of this study are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the field of management, particularly in leadership strategies and HR management within multinational companies (Nuryani et al., 2023). Additionally, these findings may serve as a reference for practitioners in developing effective leadership development programs tailored to Indonesia's cultural context.

Although transformational leadership is widely recognized as an effective approach to managing organizational change, its application in multinational companies often encounters various obstacles. One of the main challenges is the lack of an in-depth understanding of how transformational leadership can be adapted to diverse cultural contexts. Moreover, empirical research on the effectiveness of this leadership style in multinational environments remains limited, particularly in developing countries such as Indonesia (Fajriyani et al., 2023). This gap highlights the need for further studies to understand the dynamics of transformational leadership implementation in multinational companies, especially within the Indonesian context. Without a comprehensive understanding, implementing transformational leadership risks failing to achieve the desired outcomes and may even lead to employee resistance. Therefore, this study aims to fill the existing literature gap by exploring the role of transformational leadership in HR management within multinational companies in Indonesia (Mutmainah et al., 2025).

In addition to cultural challenges, transformational leaders in multinational companies also face differences in regulations and workforce expectations across countries. A lack of a comprehensive strategy to manage this diversity can result in misaligned HR policies and practices Hermawan & Rustiana (2019) potentially leading to employee dissatisfaction and reduced productivity. Furthermore, variations in legal systems and labor regulations between countries add to the complexity of managing a multinational workforce. Without the right approach, companies risk internal conflicts and declining performance. Therefore, this study aims to identify these challenges and develop effective strategies for transformational leaders to manage a diverse workforce in multinational companies.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research design to analyze transformational leadership roles in human resource management sources in multinational companies. This approach was chosen because it allows for in-depth exploration of informants' experiences and perspectives related to the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2019). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five informants who hold strategic roles in their organizations. Data analysis was conducted using a thematic approach to identify key patterns in the implementation of transformational policies in a multinational corporate environment. The main research instrument was an interview guideline developed based on literature related to transformational leadership and human resource management. To ensure data validity, source triangulation techniques were used by comparing information from various informants to verify consistency in the findings. The results of this analysis provide a systematic interpretation of how transformational leadership contributes to organizational effectiveness. The research procedure was carried out in several steps to ensure the overall data collected. The first stage involved identifying and selecting informants based on the relevance of their roles in multinational companies. Next, interviews were conducted, each lasting approximately 45–60 minutes, with questions specific to the informant's experiences and perspectives on transformational leadership. The collected data were analyzed using a structured approach, including data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, in line with the selected analysis method (Amankwaa et al., 2019). The

findings of this study offer an in-depth understanding of the role of transformational leadership in fostering a more innovative work environment and promoting human resource development.

RESULTS

Transformational leadership in human resource management within multinational companies plays a crucial role in enhancing organizational effectiveness. According to the Human Resources Director, this leadership approach is implemented through innovation, increased employee engagement, and continuous leadership development. Senior leaders serve as role models by inspiring employees and providing growth opportunities through mentorship and training programs. Research shows that transformational leadership boosts employee engagement by up to 20%, which positively influences employee retention. In an operational context, this leadership style significantly impacts team productivity and effectiveness. The Country Manager stated that fostering innovation and teamwork has led to a 15% increase in productivity over the past year. Unlike traditional hierarchical and compliance-oriented leadership, transformational leadership is more flexible and adaptive. However, its implementation in multinational companies faces challenges, particularly resistance to change. To address this, open communication and employee involvement in the change process are essential strategies for ensuring successful transformation.

From an operational managerial perspective, transformational leadership fosters creativity and innovation within work teams by providing constructive feedback and opportunities for personal growth. A supervisor in the product development division explained that this approach involves frequent feedback and challenges tailored to employees' skills, which encourages creativity and development. However, implementing transformational leadership is not always smooth, as some employees are accustomed to rigid leadership systems, requiring time to build trust in the new model. Once trust is established, employees become more independent and proactive in generating innovative ideas. This leadership style also significantly impacts experienced employees. A senior analyst in the finance department noted that the previous leadership system was more top-down, limiting employee initiative. With the shift to transformational leadership, management has become more receptive to employee feedback and contributions in decision-making, leading to increased motivation and engagement. Furthermore, this leadership style promotes collaboration, enhancing cross-departmental teamwork and overall organizational effectiveness.

Transformational leadership in multinational companies is evolving alongside technological advancements and increasingly flexible work patterns. A senior HR consultant noted that many companies are integrating digital leadership into transformational approaches to accommodate hybrid and remote work systems, requiring leaders to be more flexible in motivating and guiding teams virtually. The successful implementation of transformational leadership depends on effective communication, trust between leaders and subordinates, and adaptability to diverse work cultures. Its effectiveness can be measured through employee engagement surveys, team performance evaluations, and employee retention rates. Additionally, transformational leadership fosters innovation within teams and enhances customer satisfaction with the company's products and services. Ultimately, it not only improves internal organizational effectiveness but also strengthens the company's competitiveness in the global market.

Transformational leadership in multinational companies is implemented through various strategies aimed at increasing employee engagement and productivity. The Human Resources Director stated that the company applies this approach by focusing on innovation and continuous leadership development. Mentorship programs and training are among the primary initiatives designed to provide employees with opportunities for professional growth. This aligns with the organization's goal of fostering a more dynamic and competitive work environment. Based on interviews, the

implementation of transformational leadership has led to a 20% increase in employee engagement, which has, in turn, improved employee retention. The impact of transformational leadership extends beyond employee engagement, influencing overall organizational productivity. A Country Manager noted that this approach enhances innovation and teamwork, resulting in a 15% increase in productivity over the past year. The key difference between transformational and traditional leadership lies in its flexibility in accommodating organizational change. While traditional leadership is more hierarchical, transformational leadership emphasizes employee empowerment and encourages initiative. Given the cultural differences among countries within multinational companies, adapting leadership approaches is essential for effective human resource management strategies.

The main challenge in implementing transformational leadership in multinational companies is resistance to change. A supervisor in the product development division revealed that not all employees easily accept a more flexible and participatory leadership approach. Some are still accustomed to an instructive and hierarchical leadership model, making it necessary to build trust in the new system over time. However, with consistent implementation, work teams have shown improvements in independence and creativity. Employees have become more proactive in presenting ideas and finding innovative solutions, contributing to the accelerated development of company products. From the perspective of employees with more than five years of experience, transformational leadership has changed communication patterns and involvement in decision-making. Before its implementation, the management system was more top-down, with limited opportunities for employees to contribute to organizational strategies. However, the shift in leadership style has fostered a more collaborative work environment, where employees feel valued and encouraged to innovate. Additionally, transformational leadership has positively impacted work motivation, as employees feel more supported in their professional development. Employee relationships have become stronger, enabling more effective cross-departmental teamwork.

With technological advancements, transformational leadership in multinational companies is increasingly integrating digital leadership approaches. A senior HR consultant mentioned that the rise of hybrid and remote work trends has driven leaders to be more flexible in managing teams virtually. The effective use of communication technology is key to maintaining employee engagement despite a distributed work environment. Furthermore, transformational leaders in the digital era must possess adaptive leadership skills and the ability to manage cultural differences within global teams. Given these changes, companies must continue developing leadership strategies that align with the industry's increasingly complex challenges.

Table 1. Indicators of Success of Transformational Leadership in Multinational Companies

Indicators	Evaluation Methods	Impact on Organization
Employee Engagement	Employee engagement surveys	Increase employee motivation and retention
Team Productivity	Target-based performance evaluations	Increase work effectiveness and more optimal work results
Organizational Innovation	Number of new ideas and innovative projects generated	Increase organizational competitiveness in the industry
Customer Satisfaction	Customer feedback and surveys	Increase customer loyalty to products and services
Employee Retention Rate	Employee turnover data	Reduce recruitment and training costs for new employees

Employee engagement is one of the main aspects of this evaluation, considering its significant impact on productivity and workforce retention. Additionally, innovation is also a key indicator, especially in fast-moving industries that require an adaptive leadership approach. Target-based team performance evaluation provides an overview of how effectively leaders guide their teams toward achieving organizational goals. On

the other hand, customer satisfaction can serve as an indirect measure of leadership effectiveness, as strong leadership often contributes to improved service and product quality.

Considering the findings of this study, transformational leadership plays a crucial role in managing human resources in multinational companies. In addition to increasing employee motivation and engagement, this approach enhances organizational effectiveness in addressing increasingly complex global challenges. However, the successful implementation of transformational leadership depends on adapting to cultural factors, ensuring effective communication, and a leader's ability to manage organizational change. Therefore, further research on optimal implementation strategies across various industry contexts can provide additional insights into the long-term impact of transformational leadership.

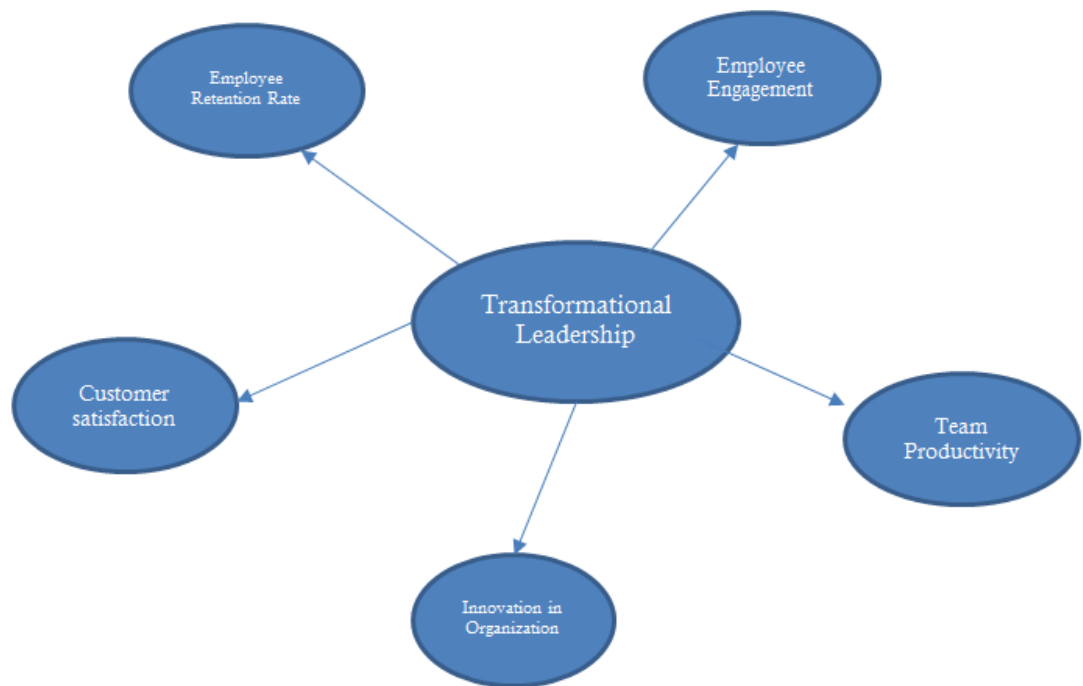


Figure 1. The Relationship between Transformational Leadership

The diagram illustrates that transformational leadership directly influences five key aspects. First, it enhances employee engagement by increasing motivation and retention through open communication and empowerment. Second, it optimizes team productivity by fostering collaboration and innovation. Third, it drives organizational innovation by encouraging the development of new ideas that strengthen the company's competitiveness in the global industry. Fourth, strong leadership indirectly impacts customer satisfaction by improving the quality of products and services. Lastly, it contributes to employee retention by reducing turnover rates, thereby improving cost efficiency in recruitment and training. This model highlights how transformational leadership serves as a fundamental component of human resource management strategies in multinational companies.

DISCUSSION

This study confirms that transformational leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of human resource (HR) management in multinational companies. These findings align with previous research, which indicates that transformational leaders can inspire and motivate employees through a clear vision and individual empowerment, thereby improving overall organizational performance (Acharya & Anand, 2020). In the context of multinational companies, where cultural diversity and operational complexity pose major challenges, this leadership style has proven effective

in creating an inclusive and productive work environment. This supports the view that transformational leadership can serve as a key strategy in addressing the dynamics of globalization and international competition.

However, the implementation of transformational leadership in multinational companies is not without challenges, particularly those related to cultural differences and varying regulations across countries. This study identifies that a lack of in-depth understanding of how to adapt this leadership style in diverse cultural contexts can hinder its effectiveness (Alamri, 2023). Differences in values, norms, and work practices between countries require leadership strategies to be adjusted to the local context. Without proper adaptation, transformational efforts risk facing employee resistance and failing to achieve the desired outcomes. Therefore, leaders in multinational companies must possess cultural sensitivity and flexibility in their approaches.

In addition to cultural challenges, differences in regulations and workforce expectations across various countries also present significant obstacles to the implementation of transformational leadership. This study finds that discrepancies in policies and HR management practices due to differences in labor laws and regulations can lead to employee dissatisfaction and decreased productivity (Wau, 2022). To address this, a comprehensive and adaptive strategy is needed—one that considers regulatory diversity and expectations in each operational country. Such an approach will help create policies that are both consistent and flexible, thereby supporting the effectiveness of transformational leadership across all company branches.

The study's findings also indicate that effective communication and employee empowerment are key to overcoming resistance to change, which often arises in the implementation of transformational leadership. Leaders who can establish open and transparent communication are more likely to succeed in fostering a collaborative and innovative work environment (Amankwaa et al., 2019). Additionally, by providing employees with opportunities to participate in decision-making and personal development, leaders can enhance employee loyalty and commitment to the organization. This strategy not only improves individual performance but also contributes to the overall success of the organization.

In addressing the challenges of globalization and digitalization, integrating transformational leadership with technology has become increasingly important. This study suggests that transformational leaders who leverage digital technology in their leadership strategies can enhance operational efficiency and employee engagement, particularly in hybrid and remote work settings (Alamir et al., 2019; Ashilova et al., 2019; Abawari et al., 2024). The use of digital communication platforms and online collaboration tools enables leaders to effectively reach and motivate geographically dispersed teams. Thus, adapting to technological advancements has become a vital component in the application of transformational leadership in the modern era.

Overall, this study affirms that transformational leadership plays a strategic role in HR management within multinational companies. However, its success largely depends on leaders' ability to navigate cultural, regulatory, and technological challenges inherent in global operations. By developing cultural sensitivity, policy flexibility, effective communication, and technological integration, transformational leaders can create an adaptive and innovative work environment. Ultimately, this will enhance organizational performance and competitiveness in an increasingly competitive global market.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that transformational leadership significantly impacts the effectiveness of human resource management in multinational companies. The findings indicate that this leadership style not only enhances employee engagement and loyalty but also contributes to organizational innovation and productivity. However, implementing transformational leadership in multinational companies presents complex challenges, particularly those related to cultural differences, regulatory requirements, and workforce expectations. Therefore, an adaptive strategy is essential to ensure its

effective application in diverse environments. By gaining a deeper understanding of these challenges, this study provides insights that can help refine and adjust leadership approaches in multinational organizations. Theoretically, it enriches the literature on transformational leadership by highlighting the challenges and strategies necessary for its successful implementation in multinational companies. Additionally, the findings offer practical contributions to strategic management, particularly in developing leadership models that are more responsive to global dynamics. These insights can be utilized by organizational leaders to design policies that are more inclusive, flexible, and oriented toward employee empowerment. However, this study has limitations regarding the scope of industries and the scale of organizations examined, making further evaluation necessary before generalizing the results. Therefore, future research is recommended to explore transformational leadership across various industry sectors and integrate digital technology as part of a global leadership strategy.

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