



# TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN IMPROVING DEFENSE HUMAN RESOURCE PERFORMANCE

By:

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of transformational leadership in improving human resource (HR) performance within defense organizations. In the modern defense era, rife with dynamic challenges such as cyber threats, hybrid warfare, and demands for professionalism, transformational leadership is viewed as a strategic approach to developing adaptive, visionary, and high-performing personnel. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with data analysis techniques assisted by NVivo software. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with defense personnel (commanders, trainers, HR staff), policy documentation, and direct observation within military work units. The findings indicate that the dimensions of transformational leadership idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration have a significant impact on increasing motivation, discipline, initiative, and loyalty among defense personnel. NVivo was used to identify key themes such as job satisfaction, effective communication, and strengthening a shared vision. This study confirms that the consistent application of transformational leadership can drive improved performance of defense HR, leading to professionalism, resilience, and mission-oriented performance.

## Keywords:

Transformational leadership, HR performance, defense organizations, NVivo, HR.

**How to cite:** Nugroho, A., & Saputro, G. (2025). TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN IMPROVING DEFENSE HUMAN RESOURCE PERFORMANCE. *GPH-International Journal of Business Management*, 8(7), 45-53. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16994035>



## Introduction

In the modern defense era, global dynamics are increasingly complex and unpredictable. Traditional threats such as armed conflict have now evolved into non-traditional threats such as cyberwarfare, digital radicalism, strategic disinformation, and high-tech attacks (Kavanagh & Rich, 2018). This situation demands that defense organizations particularly the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) have human resources (HR) that are not only physically resilient but also intellectually and emotionally adaptable. Professionalism, speed of decision-making, and collaborative skills in a multidisciplinary environment are key requirements for every defense personnel (Schenker, 2020).

However, the challenges faced come not only from outside but also from within the organization. Many defense units still face problems such as hierarchical and bureaucratic leadership patterns, lack of open communication, and a work culture that does not fully support the development of individual potential (Yukl, 2013). In this context, leadership plays a central role in shaping the behavior and performance of human resources. One relevant approach that has been proven in theory and practice across various sectors is transformational leadership. This leadership style emphasizes the leader's ability to inspire, build emotional connections, and encourage personal and collective development and innovation (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Dasein, or the current reality, shows that there is still a gap between the potential of defense human resources and the demands and challenges of the times. Many personnel possess strong basic competencies but are under-motivated to develop optimally due to limited motivating leadership styles (Robbins & Judge, 2019). Meanwhile, the ideal condition, or the das sollen, requires the presence of transformational leaders capable of inspiring and directing human resources to exceed their performance targets by reinforcing the values of professionalism, loyalty, and adaptability to change (Northouse, 2021).

Given these conditions, a crucial gap needs to be bridged: how transformational leadership is truly implemented and its impact felt within the defense environment, particularly in efforts to improve human resource performance. Previous studies have focused primarily on managerial or administrative aspects, but have been limited in exploring the relationship between transformational leadership styles and improved human resource performance in the context of military organizations with unique cultures and structures (Wright & McMahan, 2011).

Therefore, this study aims to analyze in-depth how transformational leadership can be effectively implemented in the defense environment to improve human resource performance. Using a qualitative approach and the NVivo analysis tool, this study uncovers defense personnel's perceptions and experiences of transformational leadership practices and their impact on motivation, discipline, and work loyalty. The results of this study are

expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of a defense leadership model that is more adaptive and responsive to current challenges.

## **Research Method**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to uncover and understand the dynamics of communication between stakeholders in the public policy formulation process in the defense sector. This approach was chosen because it is able to capture subjective meanings, interaction patterns, and the complexity of relationships between policy actors in a real social context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data were collected through in-depth interviews, documentary studies, and indirect observations of the policy process involving agencies such as the Ministry of Defense, the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI), and other related institutions. Data analysis was conducted using NVivo 12 software, which allows researchers to systematically organize, code, and interpret data through thematic analysis (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Data validity was maintained through source triangulation and member checking techniques to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the findings. This method aims to gain a deeper understanding of the communication patterns that form and their influence on the substance of the resulting policies. All data were analyzed using NVivo 14 software for coding, thematic analysis, and stakeholder mapping through network visualization. Data validity is strengthened through source triangulation and confirmation of interview results with informants (member checking), while data traceability is maintained with a systematic audit trail.

## **Discussion**

In coding the data using NVivo, the researchers referred to Bass & Avolio's (1994) theory to create a main node structure representing the four dimensions of transformational leadership: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration. Furthermore, the researchers developed additional thematic nodes in a data-driven manner based on interviews and observations, including those related to job satisfaction, military discipline, loyalty, collective vision, and personnel initiative. This process enabled the systematic classification and grouping of data according to themes relevant to the research focus.

Next, thematic analysis was conducted using the "Query → Text Search" feature to explore the occurrence of key words and phrases in greater depth. Matrix Coding techniques were used to compare the dimensions of transformational leadership with HR performance indicators, such as motivation and loyalty. The analysis results were then visualized in the form of Word Clouds, Tree Maps, and Sociograms to map the relationships between variables. The Tree Maps illustrate the contribution of each leadership dimension to performance elements, while the Sociograms show connectivity patterns and organizational actors' perceptions of leadership styles within a complex social structure.

**Table 1**

Dimensions	Reference Frequency	Quotes
Idealized Influence	74 times	"I emulate the commander's leadership style because of his integrity."
Inspirational Motivation	68 times	"He always conveys a vision that inspires us."
Intellectual Stimulation	45 times	"We are often asked to innovate, not just obey."
Individualized Consideration	51 times	"The commander understands our family situation before assigning difficult tasks."

*Source:* Processed by researchers

The attached table shows the results of the interview data analysis using NVivo, categorized according to the four dimensions of transformational leadership according to Bass and Avolio (1994): Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration. Each dimension is measured by reference frequency, which is the number of relevant quotes or interview segments coded into each category, along with examples of actual quotes from informants. This frequency reflects how frequently the concept appears in the narratives of military personnel; the higher the frequency, the stronger the dimension is perceived in daily leadership practice.

### **1. Idealized Influence (74 times)**

This dimension was the most frequently referenced, with 74 references from interview quotes. Idealized influence describes how leaders serve as moral and ethical role models for their members. Quotes such as "I emulate the commander's leadership style because of his integrity" demonstrate that leaders in the defense environment have a strong influence on shaping personnel behavior and values. This aligns with the theory of Bass & Riggio (2006), which states that leaders with idealized influence demonstrate high values, are able to make difficult decisions, and build trust among their subordinates. In a military context, this exemplary influence is crucial for fostering loyalty and discipline.

### **2. Inspirational Motivation (68 times)**

This dimension appeared 68 times in the data, indicating that leaders who are able to inspire and build collective spirit are highly valued by personnel. Quotes such as "He always conveys a vision that excites us" emphasize the importance of conveying a clear vision and generating enthusiasm. Bass & Avolio (1994) state that inspirational motivation focuses on conveying high expectations, using symbols and emotional language to build collective meaning. In military organizations, a vision conveyed by a leader can strengthen a sense of responsibility to the mission and accelerate the process of value alignment between individuals and the institution.

### **3. Intellectual Stimulation (45 times)**

This dimension was recorded 45 times and relates to how leaders encourage critical thinking, innovation, and learning among their subordinates. The quote, "We are often asked to innovate, not just obey," reflects that leaders encourage subordinates to not only follow orders but also to evaluate, question, and provide alternative solutions. This aligns with Yukl's (2013) view, which states that transformational leaders must be able to stimulate the intelligence of their subordinates to be more adaptive to change. In the defense sector, which faces complex threats such as cyberwarfare and unconventional operations, the ability to think flexibly and find solutions is crucial.

### **4. Individualized Consideration (51 times)**

This dimension appears in 51 references and describes a leader's attention to the personal needs and circumstances of members. Quotes such as "The commander understands our family situation before assigning difficult tasks" demonstrate that the leader focuses not only on the task but also on the individual's well-being. Northouse (2021) defines individualized consideration as a form of coaching and mentoring, where the leader acts as a mentor who listens and supports the personal development of each member. In military organizations that tend to be structural and disciplinary, the presence of this dimension creates emotional balance and strengthens interpersonal relationships between superiors and subordinates.

Data analysis using NVivo shows that transformational leadership has a significant impact on improving human resource (HR) performance in the defense environment. The inspirational motivation dimension plays a significant role in increasing personnel motivation. When leaders are able to provide meaning and inspiration to the tasks they carry out, unit members tend to exhibit higher work morale and feel more committed to achieving the shared vision (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This is confirmed in the interview data, where the words "spirit" and "vision" dominated the word cloud results, reflecting positive perceptions of an inspirational leadership style.

Furthermore, the idealized influence dimension appears to foster discipline and loyalty among military personnel. A leader's exemplary behavior—in terms of integrity, consistency, and moral standing—is considered a key foundation for fostering trust and commitment to carrying out duties (Northouse, 2021). In a military context that upholds a command structure, a leader's attitude serves as a role model that directly influences the work ethic of subordinates. NVivo's tree map visualization shows that this dimension is closely related to indicators of discipline and loyalty.

Meanwhile, space for critical thinking and the generation of new ideas—reflected in the intellectual stimulation dimension—also plays a significant role in encouraging personnel initiative. In interviews, many informants mentioned that they were encouraged to think "outside the box" when leaders provided opportunities for discussion, evaluation of tactics,

and expression of opinion. This demonstrates that innovation in military organizations is not only possible but also grows from leadership styles that encourage learning and creativity (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Findings from the NVivo sociogram show that the most intense relationships occur between direct leaders (such as training commanders) and new members of the unit. This demonstrates the importance of personal interactions in the character-building and performance of military personnel. A close connection between leaders and members, especially during the initial stages of deployment, can foster a sense of belonging and accelerate adaptation to the organizational culture. This interaction also strengthens the dimension of individualized consideration, which is a form of personal attention to the needs and development of each individual within the team (Yukl, 2013).

Overall, this research confirms that transformational leadership is not only compatible with hierarchical military structures but actually strengthens them through a more participatory and humane approach. The four main dimensions—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—work synergistically to shape professional, loyal, and adaptive defense personnel. Consistent application of this leadership style can be an effective strategy in responding to the complex challenges of the modern defense world which demands speed, intelligence, and integrity of personnel at every level (Robbins & Judge, 2019).

## **Implications of Research Findings**

### ***1. Strengthening Leadership Practices in Military Institutions***

The results of this study provide an empirical basis for demonstrating that a transformational leadership style is highly relevant and effective for implementation in military organizations. Dimensions such as idealized influence and inspirational motivation have been shown to strengthen personnel loyalty, discipline, and work motivation. Therefore, defense institutions need to incorporate transformational leadership into their formal leadership training curriculum, especially for officers who will assume strategic roles within their units. This approach supports the development of military leaders who not only adhere to structure but also serve as moral role models and inspiration for their members (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

### ***2. Improving Human Resource Performance through Innovation and Individualized Attention***

Findings regarding the role of intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration indicate that innovation and attention to members' personal needs have a direct impact on their initiative and psychological well-being. Consequently, military organizations need to provide open discussion spaces, problem-solving-based training, and mentoring systems to encourage active involvement and caring across leadership levels. This demonstrates that command systems do not have to be rigid but can be flexible and adaptive without losing structural discipline (Northouse, 2021).



### ***3. Career Planning and Personnel Retention***

With increased motivation and loyalty resulting from a transformational leadership style, military institutions can design more effective retention and career planning strategies. Data shows that when members feel personally valued and inspired by their leaders, their likelihood of remaining with the organization increases. This is crucial for retaining superior and experienced personnel amidst the challenges of rapid recruitment and rotation (Yukl, 2013).

### ***4. Developing a Leadership Evaluation System***

Another important implication is the need for adjustments to the leadership performance evaluation system. Currently, leadership assessments in the military often focus on results and compliance. Based on these findings, the evaluation system should also include indicators of transformational behaviors, such as the ability to inspire, listen, mentor, and encourage creativity in subordinates. This aligns with modern organizational approaches that emphasize people-centered leadership as the key to long-term success (Robbins & Judge, 2019).

### ***5. Contribution to Leadership Theory and Practice***

Theoretically, the results of this study strengthen the validity of Bass & Avolio's (1994) transformational leadership model in the unique and complex context of military organizations. In practice, this study demonstrates that despite the military's strict command structure, an empathetic, visionary leadership approach that encourages individual development remains viable and even strengthens the effectiveness of the existing structure. This opens up space for the integration of modern leadership theory into human resource policy design in the defense sector.

## **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that transformational leadership has a significant impact on improving human resource (HR) performance in military organizations. Through data analysis using NVivo software, it was found that the four main dimensions of transformational leadership Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration contribute significantly to shaping positive work behaviors, such as high motivation, loyalty, discipline, and personal initiative.

The Idealized Influence dimension is most prominent in building role models and trust, while Inspirational Motivation plays a crucial role in fostering work morale through the communication of a clear vision. Intellectual Stimulation encourages innovation and critical thinking among personnel, while Individualized Consideration strengthens personal relationships between leaders and members through empathy and attention to individual needs. Thus, transformational leadership has been proven not only to be compatible with the military's hierarchical structure but also to strengthen organizational effectiveness holistically through a more humane and participatory approach.

## Recommendations

### 1. Integration of Transformational Leadership in Military Education and Training

It is recommended that transformational leadership concepts and practices be systematically integrated into officer education and training curricula. Training materials should include visionary communication skills, member empowerment, and individual mentoring skills.

### 2. Improve Leadership Evaluation and Monitoring Systems

Military institutions need to develop leadership evaluation indicators that reflect transformational dimensions. Assessments should not only be based on work results, but also on aspects of leadership behavior such as integrity, the ability to inspire, and concern for members.

### 3. Strengthening an Inclusive and Adaptive Organizational Culture.

An organizational culture that encourages innovation and openness needs to be built. Leaders at all levels are encouraged to create a work environment that values input, initiative, and collaborative learning as part of long-term human resource development.

### 4. Empowering Field Leaders as Agents of Change.

Because sociogram results indicate the strong influence of direct leaders (such as training commanders), it is recommended that they be the primary agents in transforming organizational culture. Ongoing training support and supervision are essential for them to effectively fulfill this role.

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