

# A Review Of Islamic Perspectives on Transformational Leadership

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## Abstract

Leaders are frequently known for providing compelling organization that inspires followers to take action to achieve the vision. This topic has become very relevant in the literature and is frequently discussed in Islamic management and empirically in the study of organisational behaviour to produce productive and effective employees. Recently, the leadership literature has been confronted with the challenge of dealing with the ever-expanding spread of transformations that are altering relationships between leaders and employees. The purpose of this study is to investigate transformational leadership from an Islamic and empirical perspective. According to this study's findings, transformational leadership has a significant impact on employee positive behaviour. As a result, leaders who use a transformational style can inspire employees to engage in positive behaviour and improve employees' career development in 21st-century organizations.

**Keywords:** Transformational leadership, Islamic, organization, behaviour

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## Introduction

Leadership philosophy roles exist at various levels of organizations in many fields. There are overall philosophy leadership (encompassing strategic leadership, direction setting and vision-setting), leadership at the operational level (involving day-to-day operations as well as managing processes, resources, teams, and projects) and staff leadership (focusing on the development of people within the organization, including leaders) (Morgan & Anokhin, 2020; Taghvaei & Talebi, 2023). Transformational leadership is management leadership known in organizations that can change the organization through the transformation process of its followers (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Consequently, transformational leaders are seen as change contributors (Avolio, Bass & Jung, 1999; Bass, 1985) who have a clear vision of how organizations should be (Bass, 1985; Leithwood, 1994). According to Zaim et al., (2022) and Salamun and Ab Rahman (2022), leadership is a complex phenomenon that pays significant attention to moral, ethical, social, and cultural aspects. Meanwhile in Islamic perspective, Beekun and Badawi (1999), propose that the characteristics of effective Islamic leadership in organisation are derived from four fundamental principles, namely Faith (correct faith and belief), Islam (following the commands of Islam), Taqwa (God-consciousness), and Ihsan

(goodness and compassion while feeling the presence of Allah). According to Ahmad (2009), he observed that the effective transformational leadership qualities practiced by the Prophet Muhammad are: (i) seeking guidance and knowledge to guide the affairs of the followers, and (ii) delegating tasks and ensuring their proper execution. Meanwhile, Aabed (2006) identified ten personal qualities of an Islamic leader, namely, faith (*yaqīn*), mutual consultation (*shūrā*), knowledge, justice, self-sacrifice, humility, eloquence, patience, gentleness, and effort. Therefore, Islamic leadership perspective and contemporary provides the moral based for leadership ability, talent, creativity, and innovation to promote and encourage productivity (Javed, Malik & Alharbi, 2020).

Lately, there have been organizations placing primary concern on several components of transformational leadership values in Islam and Western. In Islam, leadership transformational is a trust (*amanah*), and the position of individuals responsible involves a method that determines group decisions towards the correct goals. According to Freeman (1984), transformational leadership is described as a social process in which leaders strive to achieve specific organizational goals by gaining support from relevant stakeholders, especially followers, while considering Islamic principles and teachings. According to Taghvaei and Talebi (2023), transformational leaders are often characterized as leaders who strive to motivate and gain the commitment of their followers. This is achieved by sharing a vision, raising expectations, and creating a sense of trust so that followers will perform at a level that exceeds their own expectations. Parry and Proctor-Thomson (2002), leaders in such a culture serve as role models and consistently advocate organisational goals, vision, and purpose, which all employees accept as essential components. Therefore, transformational leadership related with management philosophy that calls on and inspires employees to develop new methods to improve organizational success, support new problem-solving approaches, freedom to make decisions and increase organizational competitiveness in various levels (Speranza & Pierce, 2019; Khan et al., 2020).

In 1978, leadership scholars extensively presented the concepts of transformational leadership. This proposal stemmed from the idea of a transformational model capable of elevating both leaders and followers to higher levels of motivation and values (Barbuto, 2005; Bass & Avolio, 1997; Shamir, House & Arthur, 1993) and transforming followers into leaders (Bennis, 2001). Next, in 2011, Mike Figliuolo published the book *One Piece of Paper* which introduced four important aspects of leadership philosophy. It refers to aspects of leading oneself, leading thoughts, leading other individuals and leading a balanced life (Figliuolo, 2011; Speranza & Pierce, 2019). In this sense, Figliuolo touches on popular leadership practices to increase self-awareness, lived moral perspective, balanced life processing, and relational transparency (Walumbwa et al., 2004). This situation shows that management philosophy in the context of leadership is very important to manifest the improvement trend in leadership practice continuously.

There is deep and ongoing research related to the new paradigms of leadership, the latest approaches, and techniques in management that can create a competitive advantage or a much-needed niche in the organizational environment. According to Savovic (2017) and Wood (2019), it is emphasized that effective transformational leadership has four essential elements, namely (i) idealized influence, (ii) inspirational motivation to enhance confidence, (iii) intellectual stimulation, and (iv) individualized consideration (Khan et al., 2020). Idealized

influence is shown when a leader efficiently makes provision of accurate sense of mission and appropriately visualizes it. Inspirational motivation can be defined as leadership attitude which deals with emotional traits of employees, builds confidence in employees about their performances, appropriately communicates and provides actual feedback. Individual consideration refers to the support of leader for each follower. It may include training and coaching, allocating tasks according to the competence of each individual and supervision of performances. Intellectual stimulation describes the effort of leader to motivate and encourage his employees to be more adaptive and follow new technical approaches according to the varied situation. From an Islamic perspective, this element is often associated with a leader's ability to focus on employees' capability to creatively solve problems, extend assistance, provide employees with future action plans that inspire them to enhance their commitment to efficient and effective task execution. On the other hand, is often linked to a leader's ability to provide instruction and advice to inspire changes in attitude while fostering alignment with the organizational vision (such as role played by a leader to lead followers towards goodness by doing what Allah has commanded and abstaining from what Allah has prohibited) (Salamun & Ab Rahman, 2022). This is considered so because leadership is often characterized as the most important instrument in Islam that facilitates the realization of an ideal society based on justice and compassion (Ali, 2009; Khan et al., 2020). Therefore, leaders should strive to influence others to accept the decisions and directions set to achieve the goals of the group or organization (Zaim et al., 2022; Salamun & Ab Rahman, 2022). The purpose of this study is to examine transformational leadership in context Islamic and empirical. The use of the term context implies a diverse nature, and it interprets that transformational leadership occurs in various situations, whether in the context of Islamic or organizations.

## Literature Review

Humans were created to worship Allah (Quran 20:14) and to act as Allah vicegerents (Khalifah) on this Earth (Quran 2:30). Leadership in Islam also serves as an element used by leaders to influence behaviour to achieve the objectives of the organization (Ali, 2007) and explored the relationship between transformational leadership and *akhlaq* from both theoretical and Islamic perspectives. The Leadership Theory of al-Ghazali (al-Ghazali, 2013) explains that the concept of "murshid" (leader) is bound by the bonds of brotherhood that must be perfected according to what is mandated by Allah S.W.T. This terminology means individuals coming together to interact and care for each other as human beings, practising qualities such as love, kindness, and compassion in doing good deeds and refraining from bad deeds.

In Western perspective theory, transformational leadership was initially introduced by James V. Downton and further developed by James MacGregor Burns in 1978. Burns stated that transformational leadership is a process in which leaders and employees mutually develop each other towards elevating moral, ethical, motivational, and aspirational levels to a higher degree (Antonakis & Day, 2018, Rasdi & Yean, 2020). This theory combines trait theory and behavioural theory. Trait theory refers to leaders who can influence their followers through the qualities or charisma they possess and become role models for their followers. Behavioural theory, refers to the leader's ability to influence followers by demonstrating admirable

behaviours and consistently striving to achieve the values, mission, and vision of the organization (Abdelrahman et al., 2023).

While the transformational leadership model developed by Slocum and Hellriegel (2007) is based on Bass's model for understanding the factors that shape transformational leadership. This model provides a systematic and situational framework for leadership in organizations like schools. According to Slocum and Hellriegel (2007), transformational leadership, as per Slocum and Hellriegel (2007), is divided into four main dimensions that indicate a leader's attitude towards individual consideration, building intellectual stimulation, stimulating motivation, and fostering ideal influence among followers. The essence of the transformational leadership model introduced by Slocum and Hellriegel (2007) involves a leader's ability to influence their followers through practised leadership behaviours. It involves setting an example in envisioning the organization's future, inspiring followers, especially in matters related to innovative thinking and new ideas, developing followers into better leaders, and guiding the organization towards becoming a community that can respond to challenges. These factors make a transformational leader a person of high integrity, thus becoming a source of inspiration in promoting human capital development by fostering attitude changes that stem from the heart.

Slocum and Hellriegel's theory are built on four key constructs based on Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) theories and is aligned with Leithwood's (1994) theory. The use of this theory is driven through these four constructs, including inspirational motivation, which arises from the impact of a leader's behaviour demonstrated through communication, thinking, and positive role modelling (Burn, 1978, Bass, 1985). Inspiration among followers is triggered when leaders frequently involve their followers in the efforts to achieve a shared mission through actions and words and through guidance that exposes awareness of challenges and understanding of what is being done. Next is the building of intellectual stimulation, which consistently encourages followers to think outside the box or beyond conventions to become more innovative and creative (Slocum & Hellriegel, 2007). This illustrates that a transformational leader is someone who dares to question assumptions and explores new ideas and approaches to address any situation in a novel way. Through intellectual stimulation, leaders continuously develop the wisdom and rationality of their followers to make them more creative, particularly in problem-solving aspects. Transformational leaders often focus on what the problem is and how it can be solved, rather than who should be blamed. The intellectual capacity of a transformational leader fosters creativity, rationality, and problem-solving skills by considering multiple perspectives, ultimately enhancing the thinking and intellect of followers.

Furthermore, fostering ideal influence involves demonstrating behaviour that serves as inspiration and role modelling for followers (Slocum, 2007). Typically, followers are more easily influenced, believe in, and admire leaders who set a positive example to the point that others may prioritize the needs of others over their own and exhibit high levels of moral and ethical standards. Indirectly, the charisma exhibited by a transformational leader can increase pride, confidence, respect, the ability to discern what is important, and the capacity to discuss and channel missions and visions that inspire followers. Individual consideration is a principle that demands a leader's sensitivity to organizational members as individuals and respect for differences among them, not making it an obstacle in reaching agreements to achieve organizational goals.

Next, the Leader-Member Exchange Theory by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) suggests that a leader will develop an exchange relationship over time with each subordinate (Dienesch & Liden, 1986, Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Social exchange theory provides a basis for explaining how exchange relationships develop gradually over time as a leader interacts with each subordinate. In a high exchange relationship, there is a high level of trust and respect. Leaders provide desired outcomes for subordinates (e.g., interesting tasks, additional responsibilities, more rewards), and in return subordinates are expected to be committed to the work and loyal to the leader. In low-quality exchange relationships, subordinates are only expected to perform the formal requirements of their jobs, and additional benefits are not provided by the leader. The application of this theory in organizations is often referred to as transformational leadership present within individuals. The recommendations of this theory are supported by research-based articles related to transformational leadership management.

A study by Soudabe and Fatemeh (2017) involving 204 employees of Pasargad Bank in Iran found that leaders who implement transformational leadership styles influence the respect, admiration, and loyalty among their followers, thereby creating a strong sense of responsibility to achieve their organization's mission and vision. Furthermore, a study by Allameh, Heydari, and Davoodi (2012), involving a sample of 150 participants, including 43 elementary school teachers, 35 guidance schoolteachers, and 72 high school teachers in Abade Township, Iran, reported that leaders who envision a desired future, speak optimistically, and encourage followers to perform as required can enhance feelings of competence, significance, autonomy, and effectiveness in their tasks. This leads employees to demonstrate their ability to achieve these goals. Furthermore, a study conducted by Khan et al., (2020) on the impact of transformational leadership on performance involving a sample of 308 employees working in the telecommunication sector. The results indicate that transformational leadership is an effective approach in initiating organizational change and development. Findings explain that transformational leaders were found to be proactive in making changes and responsible for organizational transformation. Overall, it was found that transformational leadership has a positive effect on the followers' and organization's performance.

## Islamic Perspective on Transformational Leadership

In the perspective of Islamic and philosophy, the aspect of leadership has been given extensive attention. From this perspective, leadership is considered highly significant and is used as the primary instrument for realizing service to the organisations and community. Responsible leaders strive to promote and uphold justice. In the Arabic language, leadership is known by the terms, *al-Imamah*, and *khalifah* (Muhamat@Kawangit, 2010, Abdullah et al., 2023). *Al-Wilayah* is derived from the word "*Wali*" and its plural form, "*Awliya*", means protector or guardian. While, the word "*al-Imamah*" is derived from the verb "*Amma*", which means to be in front of, and it is taken from the root meaning of "*Amam*". When someone becomes an Imam, it implies that there will inevitably be others who follow them, whether through their actions, words, or writings. Therefore, the position of *Imam* or *Imamah* signifies leadership within a specific community or group.

Transformational leadership can be seen through Islamic history, just as the leadership of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) successfully led the Muslim community towards

its true-life objectives, this success is evident in how Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) transformed the Arab society during the era of *Jahiliyyah* (ignorance). Before his appointment as a Prophet, the moral state of that time had deteriorated to a very low level, with the prevalence of unhealthy activities that contradicted Islamic teachings, such as gambling, adultery, robbery, heinous killings, and oppression of the weak (Ibrahim, Md Sham & Ismail 2016). This situation began to change when Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was chosen as a Prophet.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) success in transforming darkness into the light of Islam started with the signing of the Aqabah I agreement in 621, followed by the Aqabah II agreement a year later (Olarak Akabe & Yeri ve Önemi, 2021). In the content of these agreements, the people of Medina invited the Prophet and his followers to come and live in their city. They even made the Prophet a peacemaker in the disputes that occurred among them (Sakdiah, 2016). They also expressed their willingness to defend the Prophet and his followers and joined him in moving from Mecca to their city, eventually making Yastrib (Medina) a centre of religion and changing its name to Al-Madinah.

The transformation of society from negative to positive or morally upright behaviours improved in parallel with the changing environment of Medina under the systematic and constitutional Islamic governance established by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). One of the early successes achieved by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in propagating Islam in Medina was the establishment of a mosque known as the Prophet's Mosque (Masjid Nabawi). Here, the light of Islam radiated, knowledge flourished, benevolence harmonized, and the moral standards of the Muslim community elevated worldwide (Taleb Saeed al-Olaqi, 2015). The establishment of this mosque was an initiative to spread Islam by making it a centre of worship, governance, the heartbeat of the Islamic movement, a hub for community activities, a place for seeking justice and rights, a military headquarters, a defence centre, a welfare centre, a centre for knowledge, and a place for connecting with Allah SWT and fostering human relations (Taleb Saeed al-Olaqi, 2015).

To maintain the unity of the Muslim community and inter-tribal harmony in Medina at that time, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) took steps to unite the Aus and Khazraj tribes of Medina, which had long-standing disputes, known as the Ansar (Olarak Akabe & Yeri ve Önemi, 2021). Furthermore, he established brotherhood between the Muhajirin (those who emigrated from Mecca) and the Ansar and entered into agreements with the Jewish community in Medina and other groups to ensure understanding among all members of society, irrespective of their ethnicity, nationality, or religion (Olarak Akabe & Yeri ve Önemi, 2021). The transformation of the Islamic state in Medina was further strengthened by the enactment of the Charter of Medina, considered the first constitution that established the essential principles of an Islamic state accommodating people of diverse backgrounds and beliefs. This charter aimed to organize the lives of the Medina community, strengthen their unity, and enable them to face external threats or opposition (Olarak Akabe & Yeri ve Önemi, 2021). It showcased the wisdom of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a statesman (Roziyah, 2007). The charter outlined various phases, including the responsibilities of the government and the governed, legislation, justice administration, defence arrangements, the position of the head of state, the treatment of non-Muslims, social security, and the formation of a unified community.

The history of Islam clearly demonstrates the results of the transformational leadership brought by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), leading to improved and prosperous

social life. This success was based on his qualities such as competence, wisdom, discipline in governance, and the establishment of good relations among the people by conducting state affairs diplomatically and with tolerance. Furthermore, the leadership concept introduced by him significantly altered the values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of individuals, organizations, and Islamic society in accordance with Islamic principles.

He successfully guided humanity towards one direction – the worship of the One God, fulfilling the needs and desires of people in terms of their spiritual, material, intellectual, and physical aspects. It's no wonder that the concept of his leadership as the Prophet has been recognized by people worldwide, including Western thinkers. In fact, he has been placed among the most influential individuals in history by Western (Olarak Akabe & Yeri ve Önemi, 2021). The *seerah* (biography) of the Prophet has proven that the greatness of his rule was based on the strength of faith, the nobility of character, and the efficiency of state administration.

## Organizational Perspective on Transformational Leadership

Leadership is a driving force within an organization that plays a crucial role in its success or failure, as well as in the well-being of society and the nation (Morgan & Anokhin, 2020). Leadership can be defined as the ability of a leader to influence followers towards achieving goals (Morgan & Anokhin, 2020; Taghvaei & Talebi, 2023) formally (such as through individual authority and position) and informally (through personal influence and unique skills possessed) (Morgan & Anokhin, 2020; Taghvaei & Talebi, 2023). On the other hand, transformation, refers to a change in form, whether in terms of nature, appearance, condition, and so on (Kamus Dewan, 2023). In terms of terminology, transformational leadership means changing something into a different and better form (Taghvaei & Talebi, 2023; Abdelrahman et al., 2023)

During the Human Relations era in the 1930s-1950s, leaders were not only responsible for taking care of employee efficiency but also for considering values and employee needs. In the 1980s, human resource management (HRM) prioritized the interests of stakeholders in human resource strategy, i.e., shareholders, customers, various groups of workers, government, and society. The era of the 1990s saw the importance of human resources being raised, and HRM began to be associated with a strategic approach that connects human management with success in achieving objectives and improving the effectiveness of an organization. In this development, many HRM studies now include three (3) main areas: strategic, at the international level, and political influence (Che Yusoff, 2002). In today's global era, transformational leadership is frequently employed in organizations and is also practiced in the fields of education, business, and both public and private administration (Taghvaei & Talebi, 2023). The paradigm shift brought by transformational leadership signifies a more democratic, fair approach that enhances individual commitment and involvement. It can trigger a person's attitude and thinking towards their responsibilities, based on the awareness created by the leader among the followers, rather than solely due to rewards or threats (Abdelrahman et al., 2023; Taghvaei & Talebi, 2023). In other words, a transformational leader is also a change agent who catalyzes change within their organization. Such leadership is essential for an organization, especially in terms of the development and nurturing of managers and employees as individuals.

Transformational leadership is a new type of leadership seen as effective in revitalizing how organizations function by involving a two-way interaction process between leaders and followers (Taghvaei & Talebi, 2023). The term of transformational leadership was first used by Downton in 1973 (David, 2011; Dienesch & Liden, 1986, Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), which describes this style of leadership as giving importance to human relationships. In 1978, the model of transformational leadership was introduced by James Mc. Gregor Burns in his book "Leadership", focusing on the study of political leaders but now widely used in organizational psychology (David, 2011). According to Burn (1978), transformational leadership is a process in which leaders and followers help each other elevate their spirits and motivation to perform a task. The concept of transformational leadership places a greater emphasis on social needs, self-esteem, and self-actualization, as identified in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). Due to the importance of these needs, awareness and attention arise, prompting the development of new ways of thinking and behaviour that lead to desired changes. This change becomes evident when the concept of transformational leadership is not only focused on achieving goals and bringing about changes in the environment but also on transforming the individuals involved in the management of the organization, both followers and leaders alike.

The model of transformational leadership further evolved when Bass (1985) expanded on Burn (1978) research by explaining the psychological mechanisms underlying transformational leadership. Bass added to Burn original concept (1978) to help explain how transformational leadership can be measured and how it affects the motivation and performance of followers. Initially, Bass introduced three characteristics of transformational leadership: idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. However, through theory refinement and research, Bass and Avolio (1994) added inspirational motivation as the fourth characteristic. The development of the transformational leadership model has accelerated as numerous scholars have conducted research using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) as an instrument to measure leader behaviour based on the dimensions stated. All these dimensions are interrelated and need to be practiced in balance to ensure the goals of this leadership style are achieved (Dienesch & Liden, 1986, Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Therefore, effective leadership can be measured not only by the material benefits received by an organization but also by its ability to promote positive interactions among followers to achieve organizational goals and foster career development for employees.

## **Conclusion**

This study found that the transformational leadership style has a positive effect on followers and the organization. Leaders must have a clear vision and mission, consistent values, and clear objectives, along with self-confidence and confidence in their followers. They must also emphasize the human element in development and progress by meeting the needs of followers, harnessing their potential, and assisting them in self-improvement and achievement. The main strategy in the human strategic approach is focused on the implementation of best practices in matching (the best match) human capital with the organizational strategy at the horizontal and vertical levels.

To deal with an increasingly complex and rapidly changing work environment, leaders need organizational members who invest their attention and energy in meeting formal and



informal job demands. In the workplace, leaders have the potential to guide employee behavior through extra effort and by using all leadership skills and knowledge to ensure employees manage and complete their tasks. For example, a transformational leadership style can be practiced in an organization through four behaviors (ie, ideal influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration). Transformational leaders can change the behavior of their followers, encouraging them to exceed expectations (Bass, 1985, Khan et al., 2020). The effectiveness of transformational leadership has been studied in various theoretical and empirical studies, showing that it improves and influences task performance and employee behavior.

Based on Islamic theoretical and empirical discussions in the field of leadership, transformational leadership can be evaluated in organizations when leaders and followers are ready to achieve higher levels of morale and motivation. Through this leadership, leaders can provide high inspiration to followers to work hard and achieve common goals. In this context, transformational leaders can realize the organization's vision and mission, while followers play an important role in helping the organization achieve its objectives.

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