



Review of Empirical Research on Transformational Leadership and Organizational Performance of Local Government

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ABSTRACT: This review aims to present a systematic review of empirical research on transformational leadership (TL) and local government performance (LGP) to synthesize the fragmented knowledge and propose a unifying framework for future research. This research adopts a systematic literature review methodology. A total of 22 articles were reviewed after being filtered from 59 articles found through an exhaustive search of online databases: Scopus, Emerald Insight, Science Direct, JSTOR, Taylor and Francis, and Google Scholar. Inclusion criteria were peer-reviewed empirical studies published in English from 2012 to 2024. Exclusion criteria were articles that did not provide empirical results on the relationship between TL and LGP and were published older than 2012. A matrix table was developed to extract and organize information from the articles. The findings revealed three main vital themes. First, general organizational performance is the background most studied in the TL-LGP. Second, almost all studies use quantitative methods to analyze the data collected. Third, in general, the empirical results reported the influence of TL on LGP. A lot of background context still needs to be studied, and qualitative and mixed-method methods will be challenging for future research.

Keywords: Transformational, Leadership, Organizational, Performance, Government



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INTRODUCTION

Almost all countries have local governments in their structure. Still, there are many differences in the names, forms, and structures of local governments in countries worldwide, i.e., villages, municipalities, special authorities, counties, public-private partnerships, joint administrations, historic districts, and multiple others ([Agranoff, 2014](#)). Despite this, they share similarities in the responsibilities to manage and deliver vital public services ([Walker & Andrews, 2015](#)). Local governments are responsible for serving the various needs of their communities ([Fazlagić & Szczepankiewicz, 2020](#)), developing their community ([Agboeze et al., 2021](#)), driving sustainable development ([Salvador & Sancho, 2021](#)), protecting and maintaining the environment ([Myung & Lee, 2017](#)), and various other responsibilities related to the social economy of the community. Considering the vital role of local government, its performance must be a severe concern and pursued continuously.

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The performance of the local government is assessed based on the input, output, and outcome of the services it provides to the community, where the input is related to the means mobilized by the local government, the output is characterized by adaptation to the quantity and quality of services provided by the local government to the community and the outcome is characterized primarily by efforts to achieve public interests, social justice, and regulation of economic activities ([Maurel et al., 2014](#)). Local government performance (LGP) measurement has various qualities, such as transparency and accountability, efficiency, effectivity, and program success (Bernstein, 2001). Many previous studies have assessed and reported LGP on a specific topic, for example, health ([Wang & Tao, 2019](#)), sustainable village development ([Sabet & Khaksar, 2024](#)), facing crises ([Narbón-Perpiñá et al., 2019](#)), financial management ([Zamzami & Rakhman, 2023](#)), and environmental management ([Panya et al., 2018](#)). In all forms of LGP, various determinants influence it; leadership style is essential ([Cepiku & Mastrodascio, 2020](#)).

Leaders are the main driving factor for organizations to achieve expected performance. Researchers have widely studied various leadership styles for organizational performance, but transformational leadership (TL) is the most commonly used approach to improve organizational performance ([Ngoc Khuong et al., 2022](#)). The concept of TL comes from Burns (1978), introduced by Downton (1973), as leadership that motivates behavior by changing the attitudes and assumptions of their followers, distinguishing it from reward-based and transactional leadership. TL transforms followers' needs, values, and preferences from self-interest goals to collective goals. They tend to involve followers in commitment to these goals, willingness to make personal sacrifices for the sake of the collective goal, and ultimately going above and beyond the call of duty ([Lai et al., 2020](#)). TLs influence individuals' perception of organizational goals as essential and attainable ([Steinmann et al., 2018](#)). A Deng et al. (2023) meta-analysis concluded that TL affects various individual aspects, such as motivation, commitment, creativity, and job satisfaction, ultimately improving organizational performance. Therefore, TL is widely viewed as the most effective leadership style to improve organizational performance, especially in the context of rapid environmental change ([Cao & Le, 2024](#)).

Abels (1996) has long promoted TL in local government to overcome various problems related to the demands of changing times. The role of TL in local government is related to three main elements of effective policymaking: power, structure, and process. Local government leaders must be experts in effectively controlling or directing these three elements, forcing them to leave the traditional managerial/supervisory role to move into the role of community mobilizer and policy facilitator ([Abels, 1996](#)). Several studies have examined TL in local government at both individual and organizational levels. At the individual level, TL has been shown to have a positive effect on self-efficacy and well-being ([Nielsen & Munir, 2009](#)), employee innovation ([Bak et al., 2022](#); [Khan & Khan, 2019](#)), employee performance ([Caillier, 2014](#); [Sismiati et al., 2022](#)), employee commitment ([Ennis et al., 2018](#); [Kim, 2014](#)), and job satisfaction ([Mickson et al., 2021](#)). At the organizational level, TL has been shown to have a positive effect on organizational learning and knowledge sharing ([Khan & Khan, 2019](#)), transparency and citizen engagement ([Chatfield & Brajawidagda, 2013](#)), procedural justice and organizational affective commitment ([Kim & Kim, 2015](#)), public trust ([Yang et al., 2023](#)), organizational innovation ([Chen et al., 2016](#)).

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Literature reviews on TL have been conducted by researchers in various contexts, such as education ([Alainati et al., 2023](#); [Anderson, 2017](#); [Saad Alessa, 2021](#)), health ([Ystaas et al., 2023](#)), employee performance ([Mahmud et al., 2023](#)), job satisfaction (Putra, 2024), and employee creativity ([Bashir & Nazir, 2024](#)). Although there have been many studies on TL in the context of local government, a literature review has yet to be found. Comprehensive and unified knowledge of the results of these studies has yet to be understood. This study seeks to provide a review of previous research by asking the following research questions:

RQ1 : *What was the background and method of the investigation on the relationship between transformational leadership and the performance of local government organization?*

RQ2 : *How the relationship between transformational leadership and the performance of local government organization?*

METHOD

This study's objective is to comprehensively evaluate the current literature on the correlation between TL and LGP. This review will be conducted methodically, transparently, replicable, and scientifically. To accomplish this objective, we adhered to the principles outlined in a systematic literature study on leadership and management ([Elkhwesky et al., 2022](#); [Greige Frangieh & Khayr Yaacoub, 2017](#)). We adhered to the literature review methodology proposed by vom Brocke et al. (2009) to conduct a thorough and impartial exploration of pertinent empirical research on the relationship between TL and LGP. According to a recent study conducted by Dreyer et al. (2019) and Manfredi Latilla et al. (2018), the criteria proposed by vom Brocke et al. (2009) provide researchers with a means to guarantee the pertinence, excellence, and methodological soundness of their research.

The steps we took in this literature study were:

1. In the first step, we define the scope of the review. Inclusion criteria were empirical studies of transformational leadership and local government performance that were peer-reviewed and published in English from 2012 to 2024. Exclusion criteria were articles that did not provide empirical results on the relationship between TL and LGP and were published older than 2012.
2. The second step was to identify keywords. We formulated the search string based on the research question. There are three keywords: “transformational leadership,” “local government,” and “performance.” We added an asterisk at the end of each word to anticipate an 'exact search.' The three keywords were connected with the boolean operators AND to produce the following search string: (“transformational* leadership*”) AND (“local* government*”) AND (“performance*”).
3. The third step was a literature search conducted online on available databases. To perform computerized searches for relevant publications, we relied on several large databases: Scopus,

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Emerald Insight, Science Direct, JSTOR, Taylor and Francis, and Google Scholar. The preliminary search yielded 59 papers that were deemed potentially relevant.

- The fourth step was verification of eligibility. We conducted a thorough examination of titles and abstracts to exclude any instances of duplication, literature review articles, and papers that were to subjects unrelated to the topic being investigated. Following this filtration process, a total of 30 articles stood. Subsequently, the primary content of the remaining papers was perused and assessed employing comparable predetermined criteria for inclusion and exclusion. After conducting a thorough text assessment, the number of documents was cut to 22.

The fifth step was analyzing and synthesizing the literature. For that purpose, a matrix table was constructed (Table 1). We analyzed each piece of literature by breaking down and identifying the necessary information motion. Then, we synthesized them by integrating them and identifying the conclusions that can be drawn from the articles as a group. The review's findings led to the proposal of a comprehensive framework that elucidates the correlation between TL and LGP.

Table 1. Literature Review Matrix Table

Authors	Local Government/ Country	Background	Methods	Respondent	TL-LGP Relationship
Adiwijaya et al. (2023)	Central Bureau of Statistics in Lampung, Indonesia	Organizational change	Quantitative/ SEM-PLS	138 employees	TL had direct effect on readiness to change and organizational commitment, and indirect effect on readiness to change through organizational commitment
Basri et al. (2022)	Villages in Riau province, Indonesia	Good governance	Quantitative/ SEM-PLS	328 village managers	TL had no effect on good governance
Dema et al. (2021)	Sub-district government, Indonesia	Good governance	Quantitative/ Descriptive	32 sub-district managers	TL is useful in creating good governance.
Omar Elmasry & Bakri (2019)	Government sector in Gaza strip, Palestine	Good governance	Quantitative/ SEM-PLS	342 general managers	All TL behaviours had direct effect on good governance except for inspirational motivation
Lumban Gaol & Tumanggor (2022)	Central and Local Government	Organizational change	Descriptive qualitative	Unknown numbers of informants	The role of TL in making changes has been carried out well

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Authors	Local Government/ Country	Background	Methods	Respondent	TL-LGP Relationship
Katywa & Strydom (2021)	agencies in Indonesia Metropolitan Municipality, South Africa	Service delivery efficiency	Quantitative/ Regression	83 employees	Only two of four TL dimensions had effect on efficient service delivery.
Kim & Kim (2015)	Local governments in South Korea	Organizational culture	Quantitative/ factor analysis	560 employees	TL has a significant positive effect on procedural justice (PJ) and organizational affective commitment (OAC)
Kim & Yoon (2015)	Seoul Metropolitan Government, South Korea	Organizational Innovation	Quantitative/ Regression	1576 employees	TL was a significant factor affecting employees' perceptions of the organizational culture of innovation
Maqdllyan & Setiawan (2023)	Regional Central Bureau of Statistics, in Indonesia	Organizational Innovation	Quantitative/ SEM-PLS	125 employees	TL had no effect on organizational innovation
Muchiri & Ayoko (2013)	Local government of Australia	Demographic diversity	Quantitative/ Regression	177 employees	TL moderated relationships between organisational tenure and organisational citizenship behaviours, organisational tenure and general productivity, women in work unit and organisational citizenship behaviours, and women in work unit and general productivity.

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Muchiri et al. (2012)	Local councils, Australia	General organizational performance	Quantitative/hierarchical multiple regression	177 employees	TL predicted performance outcomes, collective efficacy/outcomes expectancies and organisational commitment
Munahar et al. (2023)	South Aceh District Government, Indonesia	General organizational performance	Quantitative/SEM-AMOS	183 employees	TL affects government performance
Muterera (2013)	County governments in the United States	General organizational performance	Quantitative/Regression	372 chief executives	TL behaviors have a significant impact on organizational performance
Nawang Sari et al. (2015)	Local Government Units in East Java Province, Indonesia	General organizational performance	Quantitative/GSCA	192 managers, 192 staff	TL had direct affects on government performance and transparency, and indirect affects on government performance through transparency
Ngabito et al. (2021)	Local Government Units in Gorontalo Province, Indonesia	General organizational performance	Quantitative/SEM-PLS	63 managers	TL had direct affects on the performance of the apparatus, good governance has a positive and significant effect on transformational leadership style
Njiri et al. (2021)	County governments in Kenya	Public participation	Quantitative/Regression	296 citizens	TL style affects the public participation
Peter & Placido (2023)	Local Government Unit in the Province of La Union, Philippines	Crisis management	Mixed method	20 municipal heads and 13 board members	TL who is technologically innovated had negative effects on crisis management

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Authors	Local Government/ Country	Background	Methods	Respondent	TL-LGP Relationship
Pratiwi et al. (2020)	Local government in West Java Province, Indonesia	Fraud prevention	Quantitative/ Regression	28 managers	TL style positively influences the prevention of fraud
Rahim et al. (2022)	Kendari City Local Government, Indonesia	Organizational Innovation	Quantitative/ SEM-PLS	296 employees	TL has direct and indirect effect through employee creativity on organizational innovation,
Sienkiewicz-Malyjurek (2022)	Local governments in Poland	Networks resilience	Quantitative/ SEM-PLS	199 senior employees	TL had direct effects on social capital dan resilience, TL had indirect effects on resilience through social capital
Tran et al. (2019)	Local governments in Vietnam	Organizational outcomes	Quantitative/ SEM-PLS	410 employees	TL positively impact successful outcomes and innovation-driven culture
Valero et al. (2015)	Local governments, South Korea	Organizational resilience	Quantitative/ Regression	112 employees	TL style has a positive and statistically significant effect on perceived organizational resiliency

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Most of the empirical studies on TL-LGP relationships come from Indonesia ($n = 10$), South Korea ($n = 3$), and Australia ($n = 2$). One article each from Palestine, South Africa, the United States, Kenya, the Philippines, Poland and Vietnam. The oldest is from 2012, and the newest is in 2023. The most published years were 2015, 2021, 2022, and 2023 ($n = 4$ each), 2013 and 2019 ($n = 2$), and the least was 2020 ($n = 1$). Meanwhile, the most widely adopted methodology is quantitative ($n = 20$), and the others are mixed methods ($n = 1$) and qualitative ($n = 1$). Of the studies that used quantitative methods, most carried out data analysis using SEM-PLS ($n = 8$) and regression ($n = 7$). The number of respondents varied, from the most petite 32 to the most

significant 1576. The types of respondents also varied. Most were general local government employees ($n = 12$), several others were managers ($n = 7$) and members of the public ($n = 1$).

Empirical studies regarding the TL-LGP relationship have diverse backgrounds. The most common backgrounds were general organizational performance ($n = 5$), organizational innovation ($n = 3$), good governance ($n = 3$), and organizational change ($n = 2$). Other backgrounds are in the minority, namely crisis management, demographic diversity, fraud prevention, network resilience, organizational resilience, public participation, and service delivery efficiency. The results of most studies show a strong positive influence of TL on LGP in various qualifications. However, some find no influence of TL on LGP, namely Maqqliyan & Setiawan (2023), and that transformational leadership has a negative influence (Peter & Placido, 2023).

Several articles report empirical findings of the indirect influence of TL on LGP, namely through transparency ([Nawang Sari et al., 2015](#)), social capital ([Sienkiewicz-Malyjurek, 2022](#)), employee creativity ([Rahim et al., 2022](#)), and commitment organization ([Adiwijaya et al., 2023](#)). Apart from that, some find the moderating role of TL, namely on the relationship between organizational tenure and organizational citizenship behaviours, organizational tenure and general productivity, women in work units and organizational citizenship behaviours, and women in work units and general productivity ([Peter & Placido, 2023](#)).

Organizational performance, in general, is the most widely studied background in the TL-LGP relationship because the general performance of local governments covers many things that are of concern to the community and stakeholders, such as the efficiency, results, and effectiveness of government activities in social and economic management, as well as the management and services provided by the government in the process of carrying out its functions and implementing its will ([Yong & Lijun, 2011](#)). Meanwhile, TL is seen as being able to help improve organizational performance in an environment that is constantly changing and full of uncertainty ([Kılıç & Uludağ, 2021](#)). However, the assessment of organizational performance in general targets parameters that are too broad, so the results only provide a general picture of local government performance. Sometimes, government performance is not the same for each assessment parameter. Therefore, a more focused study will provide a more detailed understanding of the problem.

One focus of TL studies on local government that has received much attention is the influence of TL on organizational change and innovation. Transformational leaders will encourage their followers to behave innovatively and creatively, thereby creating changes for the better of the organization ([Jun & Lee, 2023](#)). Likewise, in the context of local government, several literatures link TL with innovative and creative employee behavior, thus impacting change for local government. However, there are inconsistent results between Rahim et al. (2022), who found that transformational leadership significantly affected local government innovation. Maqqliyan and Setiawan (2023) found that transformational leadership had no significant effect on local government innovation. However, it was proven that transformational leadership affected local government readiness to change ([Adiwijaya et al., 2023](#)).

Organizational change is vital for all organizations. Change is a procedure organizations use to direct their performance to achieve ideal conditions. Organizational change occurs as a result of a

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changing environment, a reaction to an ongoing crisis, or is triggered by a leader ([Ameti, 2020](#)). The context of organizational change and innovation appears to be related to organizational performance, organizational resilience, fraud prevention, and crisis management. It shows that TL is relied on to improve organizational performance, build organizational resilience, and lead organizations to face crises and prevent fraud. However, every change has internal and external consequences, sometimes positive and sometimes negative ([Furxhi, 2021](#)). Therefore, TL must be able to face these challenges, especially the negative consequences of the changes being made.

Public participation is one challenging but rarely studied topic concerning TL and local government. Only one article was found to examine this topic, namely Njiiri et al. (2021). TL is tasked with moving members of the organization to make fundamental changes in the foundation and basis of the organization so that they are ready and have the necessary capabilities to move in a new direction and achieve a higher ideal peak performance ([Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016](#)). In the context of local government, these changes should be community-based, meaning that the local government is tasked with encouraging public participation ([Jun & Bryer, 2017](#)). This finding implies the need for more in-depth studies on the relationship between TL and the task of local government to mobilize public participation in various contexts of activities.

Almost all studies use quantitative methods to analyze the data collected. Quantitative methods provide fast, accurate, reliable, and objective results based on statistical calculations ([Rana et al., 2021](#)). However, quantitative methods are unsuitable for researching complex structures involving deep and fundamental issues. However, it is necessary to use qualitative methods because they are suitable for understanding people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviors, and interactions ([Pathak et al., 2013](#)). Leadership is related to all these attributes ([Gächter & Renner, 2018](#)). Unfortunately, very few studies on the TL-LGP relationship use qualitative or mixed methods.

In general, the empirical results reported by the collected articles are the influence of TL on LGP. This finding is in line with the results of research in a more general organizational context ([García-Morales et al., 2012](#); [Katou, 2015](#); [Kılıç & Uludağ, 2021](#)). However, some articles reported no effect of TL on LGP ([Maqdliyan & Setiawan, 2023](#)) or a negative effect of TL on LGP ([Peter & Placido, 2023](#)). Different results from other studies generally open up gaps for future research to confirm these results.

CONCLUSION

A total of 22 articles have reported empirical results on the relationship between TL and LGP in various settings and countries. The most widely studied context is general organizational performance. Some have studied the relationship between TL and local government change and innovation. However, a few studies have studied the relationship between TL and local government tasks to encourage public participation in various activity contexts. It implies that more in-depth studies on TL in local government to encourage public participation in government and other activities are needed. Most articles use quantitative methods and find a positive effect of TL on LGP. Many background contexts still need to be studied so that they can be suggestions for further research. Comprehensive and in-depth findings are minimal, so qualitative and mixed

methods will be challenging. Further research can also start from gaps in previous research results. Other literature studies may be needed to understand other leadership styles in the context of local government to get a broader and more diverse picture of leadership models and their effects on LGP.

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