

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR CHURCH LEADERS: A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM IN SALATIGA

Edi Purwanto¹*

¹Department of Management, Universitas Pembangunan Jaya, South Tangerang, Indonesia

Diajukan: 06 Maret 2026 / Disetujui: 30 Maret 2026

Abstract

Rapid social transformation requires religious organizations to develop adaptive and visionary leadership capable of empowering communities sustainably. Church leaders play a strategic role not only in nurturing the spiritual life of congregations but also in strengthening the social contributions of churches within society. However, many church leaders have limited access to structured leadership training that can enhance their leadership capacity in responding to evolving social challenges. Therefore, this community engagement program aimed to strengthen the leadership capacity of church leaders through transformational leadership training. The training program was conducted in Salatiga, Central Java, Indonesia, in collaboration with GPIAI Salatiga as the partner. The program was held over two days and involved more than 80 church leaders and religious community leaders representing various churches and houses of worship in Salatiga and surrounding areas. The program adopted a participatory training approach consisting of lectures, group discussions, leadership reflection sessions, and training evaluations. The training materials focused on transformational leadership principles, development of a shared ministry vision, innovation in church ministry, and strategies for empowering congregational members in community service. The results indicate that the training significantly improved participants' understanding of transformational leadership concepts and their application in church ministry. In addition, the program facilitated the development of collaborative networks among church leaders from different congregations and denominations in Salatiga. The findings demonstrate that leadership training can serve as an effective strategy for strengthening the capacity of religious community leaders to develop innovative, collaborative, and socially impactful ministry initiatives.

Keywords: Transformational leadership; leadership training; church leaders; community empowerment; community engagement.

Abstrak

Perubahan sosial yang cepat menuntut organisasi keagamaan untuk memiliki kepemimpinan yang adaptif, visioner, dan mampu memberdayakan komunitas secara berkelanjutan. Pemimpin gereja memiliki peran strategis tidak hanya dalam pembinaan spiritual jemaat tetapi juga dalam mendorong kontribusi sosial gereja bagi masyarakat. Namun, banyak pemimpin gereja belum memiliki akses terhadap pelatihan kepemimpinan yang sistematis yang dapat meningkatkan kapasitas kepemimpinan mereka dalam menghadapi tantangan sosial yang terus berkembang. Oleh karena itu, kegiatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kapasitas kepemimpinan para pemimpin gereja melalui pelatihan kepemimpinan transformasional. Program pelatihan dilaksanakan di Kota Salatiga, Jawa Tengah, bekerja sama dengan GPIAI Salatiga sebagai mitra. Kegiatan berlangsung selama dua hari dan diikuti oleh lebih dari 80 pemimpin gereja dan pemimpin komunitas keagamaan dari berbagai gereja dan rumah ibadat di Salatiga dan sekitarnya. Metode pelaksanaan menggunakan pendekatan pelatihan partisipatif yang meliputi pemaparan materi, diskusi kelompok, refleksi kepemimpinan, dan evaluasi kegiatan. Materi pelatihan berfokus pada konsep kepemimpinan transformasional, pengembangan visi pelayanan gereja, inovasi pelayanan, serta pemberdayaan jemaat dalam pelayanan komunitas. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan adanya peningkatan pemahaman peserta mengenai prinsip-prinsip kepemimpinan transformasional dan penerapannya dalam pelayanan gereja. Selain itu, kegiatan ini juga memperkuat jaringan kolaborasi antar pemimpin gereja dari berbagai denominasi di Salatiga. Program ini menunjukkan bahwa pelatihan kepemimpinan dapat menjadi strategi efektif dalam meningkatkan kapasitas pemimpin komunitas keagamaan untuk mendorong pelayanan gereja yang lebih inovatif, kolaboratif, dan berdampak bagi masyarakat.

¹Korespondensi Penulis:
edi.purwanto@upj.ac.id

Kata Kunci: Kepemimpinan transformasional; pelatihan kepemimpinan; pemimpin gereja; pemberdayaan komunitas; pengabdian kepada masyarakat.

Introduction

Contemporary societies are experiencing rapid social transformation driven by globalization, digital technology, and changing patterns of community interaction. These developments create new challenges for social institutions, including religious organizations. Churches and faith-based communities are increasingly expected not only to nurture the spiritual life of their congregations but also to contribute actively to broader social development (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013; Clarke & Ware, 2015). In this context, leadership within religious organizations plays a critical role in shaping the ability of communities to respond effectively to social change and to create meaningful societal impact (Hayati et al., 2014).

Leadership in religious communities requires more than administrative management or routine organizational coordination. It demands the ability to inspire collective vision, empower community members, and foster innovation in ministry and social engagement. One leadership approach that has gained increasing attention in organizational and leadership studies is transformational leadership. Transformational leadership emphasizes the role of leaders in inspiring followers, stimulating intellectual engagement, and encouraging individuals to pursue shared goals beyond personal interests (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The concept is commonly characterized by four key dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2019). These elements enable leaders to mobilize members of an organization toward meaningful transformation and long-term organizational growth.

Within church ministry and faith-based community leadership, transformational leadership has significant potential to support sustainable community development. Church growth is no longer measured solely by the number of congregants but also by the quality of spiritual formation, the level of community participation, and the social impact generated through church initiatives (Olarinmoye, 2012; Raney & Raveloharimisy, 2016). Effective church leadership, therefore, requires the capacity to articulate a compelling vision, develop collaborative ministry teams, encourage innovation in ministry strategies, and cultivate the next generation of leaders within the community (Ohazulike, 2023).

The city of Salatiga in Central Java, Indonesia, represents a unique social context characterized by religious diversity and relatively harmonious interfaith relations. Salatiga has frequently been recognized as one of the most tolerant cities in Indonesia and has attracted scholarly attention as a model of multicultural coexistence and religious moderation (Nugroho et al., 2024; Anas et al., 2025). Various churches and houses of worship coexist within the city, actively contributing to both spiritual life and community development. Studies on interfaith relations in Salatiga reveal that religious leaders, community organizations, and local institutions play a crucial role in fostering dialogue, mutual respect, and social cohesion among diverse religious communities (Wafir, 2025). Consequently, religious leaders in Salatiga hold strategic roles in promoting social harmony, strengthening moral values, and supporting community development initiatives. However, despite their important societal role, many church leaders and religious community leaders still have limited opportunities to participate in systematic leadership training programs that could enhance their leadership capacity and enable them to respond more effectively to contemporary social challenges.

Preliminary observations and discussions with local church networks indicate several challenges faced by religious leaders in carrying out their ministry and community leadership roles. First, many leaders rely primarily on pastoral experience and traditional leadership practices rather than structured leadership frameworks informed by contemporary leadership theory. Second, churches and religious communities often struggle to develop clear and sustainable ministry visions

that align with the evolving needs of society. Third, rapid technological change and shifting social dynamics require churches to innovate in their ministry approaches, particularly in engaging younger generations and urban communities. These challenges highlight the importance of leadership development initiatives aimed at strengthening the capacity of church leaders to lead effectively in contemporary contexts.

To address these challenges, a community engagement program was implemented in the form of transformational leadership training for church leaders and religious community leaders in Salatiga. The program was designed as a capacity-building initiative aimed at enhancing participants' leadership knowledge, skills, and strategic perspectives in developing sustainable ministry and community engagement. The training program, entitled "*Transformational Leadership: Strategies for Sustainable Growth*," was conducted over two days and involved more than eighty church leaders and religious community leaders representing various churches and houses of worship in Salatiga.

The program was implemented in collaboration with GPIAI Salatiga as the local community partner, which promotes community empowerment through leadership development and training initiatives. The training adopted a participatory learning approach that included interactive lectures, group discussions, leadership reflection sessions, and case-based learning related to church leadership practices.

Based on this context, the objectives of this study are threefold. First, the study aims to examine how transformational leadership training can enhance the leadership capacity of church leaders and religious community leaders. Second, it seeks to explore how leadership training contributes to the development of sustainable ministry strategies within religious communities. Third, the study aims to assess the broader impact of leadership capacity-building programs in strengthening networks of collaboration among religious leaders in a pluralistic urban context.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the literature on community empowerment and leadership development in faith-based organizations. In addition, the study provides practical insights for universities, community organizations, and development institutions interested in designing effective leadership training programs for religious and community leaders. By strengthening the leadership capacity of faith-based communities, such initiatives can play an important role in promoting social cohesion, community resilience, and sustainable community development.

Methodology

This article reports the implementation of a community engagement program aimed at strengthening the leadership capacity of church leaders through transformational leadership training. The program was designed as a capacity-building initiative that combines knowledge transfer, participatory learning, and collaborative reflection among religious community leaders.

The community engagement activity was conducted in Salatiga, Central Java, Indonesia, in collaboration with GPIAI Salatiga as the local partner responsible for coordinating participants and facilitating the training venue. The activity promotes community empowerment through leadership development initiatives. The program took place over two days (19–20 September 2025) and involved more than 80 church leaders and religious community leaders representing various churches and houses of worship in Salatiga and surrounding areas.

The implementation of the community service program consisted of several stages. The first stage was program preparation and coordination, which involved discussions with the community partner to identify the leadership challenges faced by church leaders and to design training materials that address these needs. This stage also included participant recruitment, logistical preparation, and

the development of training modules related to transformational leadership and church ministry development.

The second stage was the training implementation stage, in which participants attended a series of leadership training sessions under the theme “*Transformational Leadership: Strategies for Sustainable Growth*.” The training used a participatory approach that combined lectures, group discussions, leadership reflection sessions, and case-based learning related to church ministry practices. The training materials covered key topics, including the principles of transformational leadership, strategies for developing a shared ministry vision, innovation in church ministry, and approaches for empowering congregational members as partners in community service.

The third stage involved reflection and discussion sessions, where participants were encouraged to share their experiences and challenges in leading church communities. These sessions provided opportunities for knowledge exchange among participants from different denominations and ministry contexts. Through these discussions, participants explored practical strategies for applying transformational leadership principles in their respective church communities.

The final stage was program evaluation, which aimed to assess the effectiveness of the training activities and identify potential improvements for future programs. Participants provided feedback regarding the relevance of the training materials, the effectiveness of the learning approach, and the potential application of the leadership concepts in their ministry contexts.

To ensure a more systematic evaluation, the program employed a structured questionnaire combined with a pre-test and post-test design. The evaluation instrument consisted of two main components: (1) a knowledge assessment test and (2) a participant feedback questionnaire. The knowledge assessment was developed in the form of ten multiple-choice questions designed to measure participants’ understanding of transformational leadership concepts. The items covered four main themes: (a) basic principles of transformational leadership, (b) the four dimensions of transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration), (c) strategies for developing a shared ministry vision, and (d) approaches to empowering congregational members in community service. Sample items included questions such as: “Which of the following best describes inspirational motivation in leadership?” and “Which leadership approach emphasizes empowering followers to participate actively in organizational goals?”

The second component of the instrument was a feedback questionnaire using a Likert scale (1–5), which measured participants’ perceptions of (a) the clarity of training materials, (b) the relevance of the content to their ministry context, (c) the effectiveness of the participatory learning approach, and (d) the applicability of leadership concepts in real church settings. Open-ended questions were also included to capture participants’ reflections and suggestions for improvement. The development of the evaluation instrument was based on established concepts in transformational leadership literature (Bass & Riggio, 2006) and adapted to the context of church leadership training. Before implementation, the instrument was reviewed by the training facilitators and academic team to ensure content validity and alignment with the training objectives. Minor revisions were made to improve the clarity and contextual relevance of the items.

The pre-test was administered at the beginning of the training to measure baseline knowledge, while the post-test was conducted at the end of the program to assess learning improvement. The comparison of pre-test and post-test scores was used as an indicator of the effectiveness of the training in enhancing participants’ understanding of transformational leadership. Through these stages, the community engagement program sought to strengthen leadership capacity among church leaders while fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing among religious community leaders in Salatiga.

Results and Discussion

Implementation of the Transformational Leadership Training Program

The transformational leadership training program was successfully implemented over two days, on 19–20 September 2025, in Salatiga, Central Java. The program was organized in

collaboration with GPIAI Salatiga as the local partner. The training was attended by more than 80 church leaders and religious community leaders representing various churches and houses of worship in Salatiga and surrounding areas.

The training program adopted a participatory learning approach that combined interactive lectures, group discussions, leadership reflections, and case-based learning. This approach enabled participants to engage actively in the learning process while sharing experiences related to leadership practices within their respective church communities. The diversity of participants' backgrounds enriched the discussion sessions and created opportunities for collaborative learning among religious leaders from different denominations and ministries.

Figure 1 illustrates the implementation of the transformational leadership training program, including key activities such as interactive lecture sessions, group discussions, and participant engagement during reflective exercises. The figure highlights the participatory nature of the training, where participants actively interacted with facilitators and fellow leaders throughout the program.



Figure 1. Implementation of the Transformational Leadership Training Program in Salatiga

During the training sessions, participants were introduced to the core concepts of transformational leadership and their application in the context of church ministry and community engagement. The discussions highlighted the importance of leadership that inspires vision, empowers community members, and encourages innovation in responding to social change.

Increased Understanding of Transformational Leadership

One of the important outcomes of the transformational leadership training program was the increased awareness and understanding among participants regarding the principles of transformational leadership. Through interactive lectures, reflective discussions, and practical examples, participants were introduced to the four core dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The training sessions encouraged participants to reflect on their existing leadership practices and to consider more inspirational and participatory leadership approaches in their church ministries.

From an analytical perspective, this improvement can be interpreted as evidence of cognitive transformation among participants, which is a key outcome expected in transformational leadership development (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The increase in post-test scores indicates that participants not only received information but were able to internalize leadership concepts, particularly those related to inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation. This aligns with transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes the role of leaders in reshaping followers' values, beliefs, and perspectives toward collective goals.

Many participants expressed that the training helped them better understand the importance of leadership that inspires and empowers community members rather than relying solely on administrative authority. This shift reflects a transition from transactional or traditional leadership approaches toward a more transformational orientation, where leaders function as change agents within their communities. Such transformation is critical in faith-based organizations, where leadership effectiveness is closely tied to the ability to inspire moral commitment and collective participation (Banks et al., 2016).

The experiences observed during the training activities are consistent with previous studies that emphasize the positive role of transformational leadership in strengthening organizational commitment and engagement. For instance, Jiatong et al. (2022) indicates that transformational leadership can enhance motivation, engagement, and performance. Similarly, Kaya (2024) highlights its contribution to creativity and professional development. Compared to previous studies, the findings of this program extend the application of transformational leadership theory into the context of faith-based community engagement, particularly in Indonesian urban settings such as Salatiga. While prior research has largely focused on formal organizational settings, this study demonstrates that similar leadership mechanisms, such as vision-building and intellectual stimulation, are equally relevant in religious community contexts.

In faith-based organizations, transformational leadership has also been recognized as an effective leadership approach for strengthening community participation and organizational vitality. Previous research on church leadership demonstrates that transformational leadership practices can foster stronger commitment among members of religious communities and encourage active involvement in ministry and community outreach activities (Nguyen, 2017). These studies underline the relevance of transformational leadership principles for religious institutions that seek to remain socially responsive and community-oriented.

In the context of the leadership training conducted in Salatiga, the program provided participants with opportunities to connect leadership theory with practical ministry challenges. The training activities encouraged participants to explore how transformational leadership principles could be applied within their respective churches, particularly in inspiring congregational participation, developing shared ministry visions, and empowering members to contribute actively to community development initiatives.

Strengthening Vision and Innovation in Church Ministry

Another important outcome of the leadership training program was the increased awareness among participants regarding the importance of developing a clear and inspiring ministry vision. Analytically, this finding reflects the dimension of inspirational motivation within transformational leadership theory, where leaders articulate a compelling vision that aligns organizational members toward shared goals (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The training facilitated participants' ability to translate abstract leadership concepts into concrete ministry strategies, indicating a movement from conceptual understanding to practical application.

The training sessions encouraged participants to view church leadership as a form of community leadership that contributes not only to spiritual formation but also to social transformation. This result is consistent with previous studies on leadership in faith-based organizations, which emphasize that visionary leadership plays a central role in enhancing

community engagement and social impact (Clarke & Ware, 2015; Olarinmoye, 2012). However, this study adds empirical support by showing that even short-term leadership interventions can stimulate strategic thinking and innovation among religious leaders. Participants explored how churches can design ministry programs that respond to evolving social needs, including youth engagement and social outreach.

In addition to strengthening leadership vision, the training program also highlighted the importance of innovation in church ministry. Participants discussed how churches need to adapt to rapid social and technological changes, particularly in reaching younger generations and urban communities. The discussions addressed practical strategies such as utilizing digital communication platforms, strengthening community-based ministries, and developing collaborative initiatives between churches and local organizations.

Furthermore, the emphasis on innovation observed during the training aligns with the intellectual stimulation dimension of transformational leadership. Leaders who encourage critical thinking and creativity are more likely to foster adaptive and resilient organizations. This is particularly relevant in the context of rapid social change, where churches must continuously innovate to remain socially relevant (Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2019). Similarly, Jiatong et al. (2022) indicates that transformational leadership can promote innovative behavior within organizations by encouraging intellectual stimulation and collaborative problem-solving among members.

Within faith-based organizations, innovation in ministry is particularly important as religious institutions increasingly operate in complex and rapidly changing social environments. Studies on leadership in religious organizations suggest that leaders who promote vision-driven and innovative ministry approaches are more likely to encourage community participation and strengthen organizational vitality (Nguyen, 2017). These leadership practices enable churches to remain relevant to the needs of their congregations while also contributing to broader social initiatives.

In the context of the leadership training program in Salatiga, the discussions and reflection sessions provided opportunities for participants to explore how innovative leadership practices could be applied within their respective churches. Participants shared experiences regarding ministry challenges and discussed potential strategies for developing more inclusive and community-oriented church programs. Through this exchange of experiences, the training program helped participants recognize the importance of visionary and innovative leadership in strengthening church ministry and enhancing the social contribution of faith-based organizations.

Development of Inter-Church Leadership Networks

Another meaningful outcome of the community engagement program was the development of informal networks among church leaders from different congregations and denominations in Salatiga. From a theoretical standpoint, this finding can be linked to the relational and social capital aspects of transformational leadership. Transformational leaders not only influence individuals but also facilitate the development of collaborative networks that enhance collective capacity (Banks et al., 2016). The emergence of inter-church networks in this program indicates that leadership training can function as a catalyst for building social capital within religious communities.

During the discussion and reflection sessions, participants shared various experiences related to leadership practices, congregational development, and community service initiatives within their respective churches. Through these exchanges, participants were able to learn from one another and explore potential areas of collaboration. The training environment, therefore, functioned not only as a platform for leadership learning but also as a forum for strengthening social connections among religious leaders in the city. This outcome is consistent with previous research on faith-based organizations, which highlights the importance of inter-organizational collaboration in strengthening community development initiatives (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013). However, this study contributes further by demonstrating how leadership training programs can actively create spaces for such collaboration, rather than merely relying on existing institutional networks.

The emergence of such networks is important in pluralistic societies where cooperation among religious communities contributes to social harmony and community resilience. Studies on faith-based organizations emphasize that religious institutions often serve as important actors in community development, social service provision, and interfaith cooperation (Clarke & Ware, 2015). Collaborative relationships among religious leaders can therefore enhance the effectiveness of community-based initiatives and support broader efforts to promote social cohesion.

Research on interfaith engagement also highlights that dialogue and collaboration among religious leaders can play a crucial role in reducing social tensions and fostering mutual understanding in diverse societies. When religious leaders maintain constructive relationships and share experiences across institutional boundaries, they are better positioned to address community issues collectively and to promote values of tolerance and cooperation (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013).

In the context of Salatiga, which is widely recognized as a city characterized by religious diversity and relatively harmonious interfaith relations, the establishment of networks among church leaders has particular significance. The interactions that emerged during the leadership training program encouraged participants to consider future collaborative initiatives, including joint community service activities, inter-church leadership discussions, and shared programs addressing social issues within the community.

Through these interactions, the training program contributed to strengthening relationships among church leaders while fostering a spirit of collaboration and mutual support. Such networks can serve as an important foundation for future initiatives aimed at strengthening community engagement, promoting social harmony, and expanding the social contributions of faith-based organizations in Salatiga.

Evaluation of Participants' Learning Outcomes (Pre-Test and Post-Test)

To evaluate participants' learning outcomes during the transformational leadership training program, a simple knowledge assessment was conducted using a pre-test and post-test design. The pre-test was administered at the beginning of the training session to measure participants' initial understanding of transformational leadership concepts, while the post-test was conducted at the end of the program to assess the improvement in participants' knowledge after attending the training.

The assessment consisted of ten multiple-choice questions covering key topics discussed during the training, including the basic principles of transformational leadership, the four core dimensions of transformational leadership, strategies for developing a shared ministry vision, and approaches to empowering congregational members in church ministry.

A total of 82 participants completed both the pre-test and post-test assessments. The results show a clear improvement in participants' understanding of transformational leadership concepts after participating in the training program.

Table 1. Pre-Test and Post-Test Results of Participants

Indicator	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Number of participants	82	82
Average score	56.4	84.7
Highest score	78	98
Lowest score	32	65
Percentage of participants scoring ≥ 70	28%	87%

The results (Table 1 and Figure 2) indicate a substantial improvement in participants' understanding of transformational leadership concepts. From an analytical perspective, the increase in average scores from 56.4 to 84.7 represents a significant learning gain, suggesting that the training intervention was effective in facilitating knowledge acquisition. This supports the argument

that structured leadership training programs can produce measurable cognitive outcomes, even within short-duration community engagement activities.

When compared with previous studies on leadership training effectiveness, these findings are consistent with research indicating that participatory and experiential learning approaches are particularly effective in adult education and leadership development contexts (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). The combination of lectures, discussions, and reflective exercises appears to have contributed to deeper learning and retention among participants.

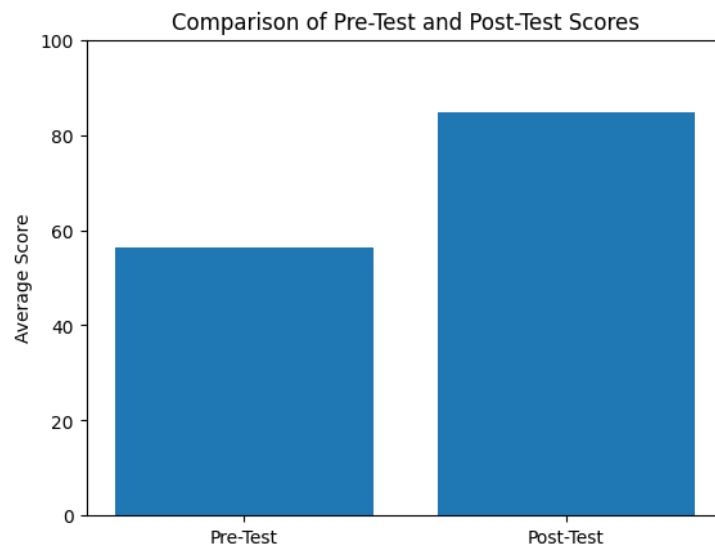


Figure 2. Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

These results suggest that the training activities were effective in improving participants' conceptual understanding of transformational leadership and its application in church ministry. The combination of lectures, interactive discussions, and leadership reflection sessions contributed to a more engaging learning process, enabling participants to grasp key leadership concepts and relate them to their ministry experiences.

The improvement observed between the pre-test and post-test assessments also reflects the importance of structured leadership development programs for religious leaders. Training programs that combine theoretical understanding with practical reflection can play an important role in strengthening leadership capacity within faith-based organizations and supporting the development of more effective community-oriented ministry practices.

Implications for Community Empowerment

The implementation of the transformational leadership training program demonstrates how leadership development initiatives can contribute to strengthening the role of religious leaders in community empowerment. By introducing church leaders to transformational leadership concepts and practical leadership strategies, the program encouraged participants to reflect on their leadership responsibilities and explore new ways of guiding their congregations while addressing broader social needs within their communities.

Leadership development has been widely recognized as an important element in strengthening community-based organizations, including faith-based institutions. Religious organizations frequently serve as important platforms for mobilizing social participation, promoting ethical values, and facilitating community support systems in many societies (Göçmen, 2013; James, 2009). Strengthening the leadership capacity of religious leaders can therefore enhance the ability of faith-based organizations to contribute to community development and social well-being.

The training activities also highlighted the importance of collaborative partnerships between universities and local communities in implementing community empowerment initiatives. Academic institutions can provide theoretical frameworks and leadership knowledge, while local community leaders contribute contextual insights and practical experiences that are essential for effective program implementation. Community engagement programs that involve such partnerships have been recognized as valuable mechanisms for promoting knowledge exchange and supporting sustainable community development (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002).

In addition, transformational leadership emphasizes empowering individuals, encouraging participation, and fostering shared vision within organizations. These leadership characteristics are closely related to the principles of community empowerment, where leaders facilitate participation and collective problem-solving within their communities. Studies on transformational leadership indicate that leaders who encourage participation and intellectual stimulation can help strengthen community engagement and collective action (Banks et al., 2016).

In the context of Salatiga, where religious diversity and interfaith interaction play an important role in maintaining social harmony, leadership initiatives that promote collaboration and community participation can contribute positively to local community development. Leadership training programs for religious leaders can therefore serve as a strategic platform for strengthening the capacity of faith-based organizations to support social initiatives, encourage community participation, and contribute to inclusive and resilient community development.

Conclusion

This article describes the implementation of a transformational leadership training program designed to strengthen the leadership capacity of church leaders and religious community leaders in Salatiga, Central Java. The community engagement program demonstrates that structured leadership training can serve as an effective platform for enhancing participants' understanding of transformational leadership principles and their relevance to faith-based community leadership.

The training program introduced participants to leadership practices that emphasize vision, inspiration, innovation, and community empowerment. Through interactive learning activities, reflective discussions, and knowledge exchange among participants, the program provided opportunities for church leaders to deepen their understanding of how transformational leadership principles can be applied in church ministry and community engagement. Participants also became more aware of the importance of developing a clear ministry vision, encouraging active participation among congregational members, and adopting innovative approaches to ministry in response to contemporary social challenges.

In addition to strengthening leadership capacity, the program also facilitated the development of collaborative networks among church leaders from different congregations and denominations in Salatiga. These interactions created opportunities for dialogue, mutual learning, and potential collaboration in community service initiatives. Such networks are particularly important in pluralistic societies where religious institutions play a strategic role in promoting social harmony and community development.

From a practical perspective, this study offers several recommendations for future community engagement programs. First, universities can replicate similar leadership training initiatives by adopting participatory learning approaches that combine theoretical knowledge with reflective and experiential learning. Universities are encouraged to establish partnerships with local religious organizations to ensure contextual relevance and to co-design training modules that address real community needs. In addition, incorporating systematic evaluation tools, such as pre-test and post-test assessments, can help measure program effectiveness and improve future program design. Second, churches and faith-based organizations are encouraged to sustain leadership development beyond short-term training programs by establishing continuous learning mechanisms. These may include follow-up workshops, mentoring programs, peer learning groups, and inter-

church leadership forums that allow leaders to share experiences and collaboratively address ministry challenges. Such ongoing initiatives can help reinforce transformational leadership practices and ensure long-term impact on community engagement and ministry development. Third, collaborative networks formed during the training should be institutionalized through regular communication platforms and joint community service initiatives. Strengthening these networks can enhance cooperation among religious leaders and contribute to more coordinated and impactful community development efforts.

The experience of implementing this leadership training program highlights the importance of capacity-building initiatives for faith-based community leaders. Universities, community organizations, and development institutions can play a significant role in facilitating leadership development programs that support religious leaders in contributing more effectively to community empowerment and social transformation. Future initiatives may expand this program by incorporating mentoring activities, follow-up leadership workshops, and broader participation from religious leaders in other regions. Such initiatives have the potential to strengthen the sustainability of leadership development programs and further enhance the social contributions of faith-based organizations in supporting community resilience and inclusive development.

References

- Anas, M., Saraswati, D., Ikhsan, M. A., & Fiaji, N. A. (2025). Acceptance of “the Others” in religious tolerance: Policies and implementation strategies in the inclusive city of Salatiga Indonesia. *Heliyon*, 11(2), e41826. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2025.e41826>
- Banks, G. C., McCauley, K. D., Gardner, W. L., & Guler, C. E. (2016). A meta-analytic review of authentic and transformational leadership: A test for redundancy. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 27(4), 634–652. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2016.02.006>
- Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational leadership* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Bielefeld, W., & Cleveland, W. S. (2013). Faith-Based Organizations as Service Providers and Their Relationship to Government. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 42(3), 468–494. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764013485160>
- Bringle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A. (2002). Campus–Community Partnerships: The Terms of Engagement. *Journal of Social Issues*, 58(3), 503–516. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-4560.00273>
- Clarke, M., & Ware, V.-A. (2015). Understanding faith-based organizations: How FBOs are contrasted with NGOs in international development literature. *Progress in Development Studies*, 15(1), 37–48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464993414546979>
- Göçmen, İ. (2013). The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Social Welfare Systems: A comparison of France, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 42(3), 495–516. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764013482046>
- Hansen, J. A., & Pihl-Thingvad, S. (2019). Managing employee innovative behaviour through transformational and transactional leadership styles. *Public Management Review*, 21(6), 918–944. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2018.1544272>
- Hayati, D., Charkhabi, M., & Naami, A. (2014). The relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement in governmental hospitals nurses: a survey study. *SpringerPlus*, 3, 25. <https://doi.org/10.1186/2193-1801-3-25>
- James, R. (2009). *What is Distinctive About FBOs?* (Issue February).
- Jiatong, W., Wang, Z., Alam, M., Murad, M., Gul, F., & Gill, S. A. (2022). The Impact of

Transformational Leadership on Affective Organizational Commitment and Job Performance: The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.831060>

Kaya, A. (2024). The association between transformational leadership and teachers' creativity: professional resilience and job satisfaction as mediators. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1514621>

Nguyen, T. H. (2017). The Impact of Transformational Leadership on a Religious Congregation of Women. In *Master in the School of Communication at Bellarmine University*.

Nugroho, M. A., Islam, U., & Salatiga, N. (2024). Religious Tolerance Model in Salatiga: Analysis of the Implementation of Religious Moderation Concept in a Multicultural City. *International Journal on Advanced Science, Education, and Religion*, 7(4), 27–43.

Ohazulike, G. A. (2023). The roles of faith-based organizations (fbos) in community development: a study of Awka South Local Government Area Anambra State. *International Journal of Health and Social Inquiry*, 9(1), 61–69.

Olarinmoye, O. O. (2012). Faith-Based Organizations and Development: Prospects and Constraints. *Transformation*, 29(1), 1–14.

Raney, A., & Raveloharimisy, J. (2016). The Contributions of Faith-Based Organizations to Development and the Humanitarian Field: An ADRA Case Study. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Best Practices in Global Development*, 2(1).

Wafir, A. (2025). Unity Lens Promoting Interfaith Tolerance Through Community- Based Initiatives: A Case Study of FKUB Salatiga. *Unity Lens*, 1(1), 20–25. <https://doi.org/10.58920/etflin000000>