

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AS A DRIVER OF EMPLOYEE ADAPTATION IN THE FACE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

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Abstract

Transformational leadership has become a major theme in various modern management studies, especially when organizations face complex dynamics of change. This paper highlights how the transformational leadership style facilitates employee adaptation, while also examining the obstacles that arise in its implementation. The results of the literature review show that transformational leaders are able to build intrinsic motivation, strengthen commitment, and create new meaning that makes it easier for employees to adjust to the direction of the organization. These mechanisms are rooted in clarity of vision, consistent communication, and empowerment that fosters a sense of psychological autonomy. However, this process faces serious challenges, ranging from emotional resistance and communication limitations to value misalignment that can slow the acceptance of change. In addition, external factors such as environmental uncertainty and perceptions of justice also shape complex obstacles, while leadership fatigue becomes a latent risk that is often overlooked. Therefore, the success of organizational transformation depends on the synergy between leadership strategy, individual readiness, and structural support that enables the adaptation process to proceed sustainably. These findings reaffirm that the success of change originates from strategic design and involves the human dimension that is at the center of organizational life.

Keywords: transformational leadership, adaptation, employees, organizational change, motivation, communication, justice.

Introduction

Organizational change is a phenomenon that continuously occurs in the modern workplace due to globalization, digitalization, and increasingly competitive market dynamics. Employees are expected to adjust their ways of working, mindsets, and behaviors to align with the company's strategic direction. Digital leadership helps employees prepare themselves when new technology changes the way work is done (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2023). Without psychological and social readiness, change often triggers resistance that reduces productivity and loyalty (Self et al., 2007). Organizations that ignore this readiness usually find that change is accepted slowly and only on the surface. Employees may follow new procedures because they are required to, but they do not truly believe in the reasons behind them. Preparing employees early is therefore a basic requirement, not an extra step. It gives people time to understand the purpose of change, ask questions, and adjust their expectations before the new way of working begins.

Structural transformation in organizations usually involves restructuring work units, implementing new technology, or changing business strategy. Leadership that is oriented toward digital change helps organizations carry out such transformation more efficiently and with better teamwork (Darmawan & Gardi, 2024). This process can create high uncertainty for employees, especially regarding job security, new roles, and the possible loss of established systems. Leaders also need to adjust their approach to the situation so that change is managed well (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2022). These conditions create a need for a leadership style that can provide inspiration and collective motivation so that all members direct their energy toward a shared vision (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Transformational leadership has emerged as an important factor in facilitating employee readiness to face change. It has also been linked to higher participation and clearer communication when an organization is changing (Hariani et al., 2025). More broadly, transformational leadership can be understood as a social practice that encourages changes in how individuals understand shared goals (Rojak et al., 2022). This leadership style is characterized by the ability to arouse enthusiasm, articulate a clear vision, and develop self-confidence in individuals. Leaders also need to balance keeping current work stable with encouraging new ideas for long-term growth (Irfan & Darmawan, 2024). With these characteristics, transformational leaders play a major role in encouraging employee enthusiasm so that they can face transition challenges without losing motivation (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013).

In modern organizational dynamics, employee adaptation is determined not only by technical skills but also by emotional and cognitive readiness strengthened through leaders' direction. Leaders who involve and value all employees, including those of different ages, can keep motivation high during adaptation (Darmawan, 2025). When leaders can communicate the goals of change in an inspiring way, employees find it easier to accept the new direction and even see it as an opportunity for career growth. Good collaboration within teams also helps employees adapt together rather than alone (Mardikaningsih et al., 2025). This makes transformational leadership a catalyst that triggers collective readiness in facing major transitions (Nguyen et al., 2019).

Many companies fail in implementing change because of a lack of support from employees who feel unprepared. Ethical leadership shapes a positive and lasting work culture, which makes change easier to accept (Mardikaningsih et al., 2022). This unpreparedness is usually triggered by anxiety, loss of trust, and weakened attachment to organizational goals. Leaders who act ethically and responsibly toward others help rebuild that trust (Rojak & Darmawan, 2021). In such situations, leaders who can foster hope and set an ethical example become crucial so that employees remain committed to the new direction (Herold et al., 2008).

Transformational leadership has proven effective in creating a positive work climate when an organization undergoes a major transition. A leader who acts genuinely and openly also encourages a better work climate and more voluntary helpful behavior among employees (Mardikaningsih et al., 2022). Employees led with this approach show a higher level of engagement, readiness to adapt, and willingness to support innovation. Leaders who pay attention to employee welfare also help keep productivity high during change (Darmawan et al., 2022). Therefore, understanding the role of transformational leadership in the employee adaptation process is an important issue to be examined further (Carter et al., 2013).

Although transformational leadership has been widely applied, a serious problem remains: the gap between the leader's vision and employees' readiness to change. Many employees interpret change as a threat to their work comfort, which gives rise to resistance. Low commitment and job satisfaction can also weaken employee performance when change feels threatening (Damayanti & Darmawan, 2025). This phenomenon can lead to internal conflict, decreased productivity, and even the desire to leave the organization (Oreg et al., 2011).

In addition, leaders often struggle to align inspiring communication with real conditions in the field. Leaders who rely on the situation at hand are better able to make decisions when conditions keep changing (Darmawan, 2024). If the narrative built by the leader is perceived as unrealistic, employees will lose trust and leadership effectiveness declines. Adjusting leadership style to the situation and to the team's diverse backgrounds has been shown to improve team performance (Gardi et al., 2024). Another problem is leaders' limited ability to adapt their leadership style to individuals' psychological needs, which ultimately hinders the collective adaptation process (van der Voet, 2014).

The study of transformational leadership and employee adaptation is very important because an organization's success in facing change is determined by the readiness of all its members. The way a team thinks, works together, and is led also shapes how well the group performs during change (Darmawan & Marsal, 2025). Without emotional support and motivation from leaders,

employees are likely to experience psychological tension that disrupts both individual and team performance (Yukl, 2013).

In addition, the urgency of this topic keeps increasing along with the acceleration of change in the digital and global era. Data-based information also helps leaders read changing conditions and respond to them more accurately (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2025). When leaders fail to guide employees with a transformational approach, the risk of strategy implementation failure increases significantly. Systems that can adjust quickly and a sustainable work culture also determine how well an organization keeps up with change (Mardikaningsih & Radjawane, 2025). Therefore, understanding the dynamics between leadership style and employee adaptation is an issue that deserves serious attention from both academics and practitioners (Harms & Credé, 2010).

This paper aims to understand how transformational leadership can facilitate employee adaptation when facing organizational change and to identify the main obstacles leaders experience in the process. The discussion is expected to give a clear picture of the leader's role and to offer a practical basis for leaders who must guide employees through change. It is also expected to help readers see which leadership practices support adaptation and which problems need to be anticipated. Leaders often know that change is necessary, but they are not always sure how to bring employees along with them. By examining both the supporting practices and the common obstacles, this paper tries to show where leadership efforts usually succeed and where they tend to fail. The discussion also considers how employees' feelings, expectations, and level of trust shape their response to change, since these factors strongly affect whether a leader's vision is accepted. With this understanding, organizations can prepare more suitable strategies to help employees accept change and keep performing well. The findings are also expected to be useful for academics who study leadership and for practitioners who must apply it in real organizations.

Method

The method used in this study is based on a systematic literature review. The process begins with collecting various scientific publications that discuss transformational leadership and employee adaptation to organizational change. This approach allows the study to bring together findings from many sources and to see how they relate to one another. The sources reviewed include international journals published between 2000 and 2024, with selection criteria that emphasize the quality of publications that have undergone peer review. To ensure completeness of the data, the search was conducted through academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and ScienceDirect, so that only relevant articles were included (Tranfield et al., 2003). Using more than one database reduces the risk of missing important studies, and the peer-review requirement helps keep the quality of the sources consistent. Clear selection criteria also make the process easier to repeat, so other researchers can check whether the same sources would be found. In this way, the review rests on a transparent and orderly collection of sources rather than on a selective choice of studies.

The next stage involves a screening process based on abstracts, keywords, and topic suitability. Eligible articles were then analyzed to identify patterns, variables, and findings related to transformational leadership and employee adaptation. Screening at this stage removes articles that do not match the topic, so the analysis stays focused on the research questions. The literature analysis technique grouped the main findings into certain categories, for example employee motivation, readiness to accept change, and the obstacles faced by leaders. These categories reflect the main factors that shape how employees respond when leaders guide them through change. With this approach, the literature synthesis can produce a comprehensive understanding while allowing a critical evaluation of the contribution of each publication (Snyder, 2019). Grouping the findings makes it easier to see which issues are studied often and which are still rarely discussed. It also helps separate findings that are supported by many studies from those that rest on only a few. Through this step, the analysis does not simply summarize what each article says but also compares their strengths and limitations.

To maintain the validity of the results, source triangulation was carried out by comparing publications from various disciplines such as management, organizational psychology, and human resources. Looking at the same issue from different fields gives a more balanced picture of how leaders and employees respond to change. This process aims to ensure that the resulting description is not biased toward one particular theoretical perspective, but reflects a diversity of viewpoints. Thus, this literature study provides a strong conceptual foundation for understanding how transformational leadership relates to employee adaptation, as well as what challenges arise in situations of major change (Webster & Watson, 2002). Each discipline tends to emphasize different aspects, such as leader behavior, employee emotions, or work systems, so combining them reduces the chance of overlooking an important factor. Findings that appear repeatedly across disciplines can also be treated as more reliable than those found in only one field. This foundation is expected to make the discussion that follows more balanced and easier to apply by both researchers and practitioners.

Results and Discussion

Transformational Leadership as a Driver of Employee Adaptation

Transformational leadership has long been viewed as one of the approaches capable of fostering employee readiness in facing organizational change. Leaders need to understand the dynamics of change and technological development so that they can determine its use appropriately and guide the organization in meeting the demands of an ever-evolving environment (Irfan & Darmawan, 2024). This model is rooted in the idea that a leader can inspire followers to go beyond personal interests by instilling a shared vision, building trust, and creating a higher sense of meaning in every task (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Amid the currents of change that often create uncertainty, this leadership style acts as a catalyst that encourages employees to accept, and even embrace, change as part of personal and organizational development. By providing transcendental motivation and strengthening a sense of collective identity, transformational leaders create a more stable psychological condition so that employees do not become trapped in fear or resistance (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). The ability to present a clear vision of the future makes employees better prepared to adjust their behavior to the new demands that emerge, whether in work systems, technology, or patterns of collaboration among individuals. As the modern management literature has developed, empirical evidence shows that the transformational leadership style increases employee engagement, strengthens commitment to change, and reduces the tendency to reject innovations perceived as threatening work comfort (Wang et al., 2011). Thus, the conceptual foundation offered by this leadership model shows significant relevance in understanding how the adaptation process occurs in a more natural, structured, and sustainable way within organizations that continue to move dynamically.

Employee adaptation to organizational change does not occur instantly, but through a complex psychological process that includes interpretation, acceptance, and integration of new norms. Transformational leadership facilitates these stages by providing a motivational framework rooted in the dimensions of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The idealized influence dimension encourages leaders to become consistent role models, so that employees gain an exemplary figure in facing uncertainty. A leader's willingness to show a learning process, including the mistakes made, creates an environment that accepts imperfection as part of development (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2023). Meanwhile, inspirational motivation enables leaders to convey an attractive and convincing vision, which guides employee behavior toward self-adjustment (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013). Intellectual stimulation gives employees space to think creatively and find new ways of meeting the demands of change, so that resistance can be reduced. Individualized consideration pays special attention to the unique needs of each individual, allowing adaptation to proceed in a more personal way and in line with each person's capacity. Empirical studies support that the combination of these four dimensions accelerates the integration of new norms into employees' work patterns, while also

strengthening their feeling of being valued as an important part of the organization (Breevaart et al., 2014). With this framework, transformational leadership acts as a mechanism that not only drives change structurally, but also shapes the psychological readiness that is essential for the success of long-term adaptation.

During major change, obstacles often arise in the form of uncertainty about work identity and confusion over the roles that employees carry out. Transformational leadership reduces these obstacles through the formation of a strong collective identity. Leaders who emphasize the importance of shared goals are able to channel employees' psychological energy from anxiety toward constructive optimism. This is reflected in research showing that transformational leadership is positively correlated with an increased sense of belonging to the organization, which subsequently makes it easier to adapt to changes in procedures and work structures (Zhu et al., 2011). In addition, this leadership style strengthens the clarity of meaning behind each new policy introduced, so that employees understand the reasons behind the change and do not interpret it as a threat. In situations where open communication is practiced consistently, transformational leadership also helps reduce rumors and negative perceptions that often worsen resistance. This is in line with findings that transformational leaders increase employees' emotional engagement, making them more willing to accept restructuring policies that were previously seen as burdensome (Nielsen & Daniels, 2012). Thus, the mechanisms that work through the formation of collective identity, transparent communication, and the strengthening of a sense of meaning show how strategic transformational leadership is in preparing employees to adapt without losing their sense of psychological safety.

The success of employee adaptation to organizational change also depends on the leader's capacity to maintain individuals' intrinsic motivation. Transformational leadership fosters this motivation through empowerment strategies that emphasize the importance of each team member's contribution to achieving the larger goal. This empowerment creates a sense of psychological autonomy, which has been shown to increase employees' emotional attachment to the ongoing change (Deci & Ryan, 2008). In this process, leaders encourage employees to identify their personal potential and align it with the needs of the organization, so that change is not perceived as a threat but as an opportunity to grow. Support provided in the form of recognition, appreciation, and opportunities to voice aspirations becomes an important instrument in sustaining this motivation. Employee motivation in facing change can be influenced by social support in the workplace as well as opportunities to learn technology and develop skills that match the new demands (Darmawan & Mardikaningsih, 2023). Maintaining employee motivation is very important because motivation is the basis that drives a person to act, so high work motivation makes employees more active in carrying out their tasks (Irfan et al., 2023). Field studies show that employees who work under transformational leaders are more likely to internalize the values of change, making them part of their work identity (Ng, 2017). Thus, adaptation is no longer viewed merely as an administrative obligation, but as a self-development process that has personal meaning. This shows that the motivational dimension of transformational leadership is one of the main pillars that facilitates employees' transition from the old condition to the new system in a more positive and productive way.

One of the most powerful mechanisms through which transformational leadership facilitates employee adaptation is the process of collective identification, which is the condition in which individuals feel themselves to be an integral part of a shared goal. Bass and Riggio (2006) explain that transformational leaders form this identification by conveying an inclusive and symbolic vision that emphasizes the connection between individual goals and organizational goals. When employees begin to see the success of change as their own personal success, resistance declines drastically because change is no longer seen as an external instruction, but as an internal aspiration. This phenomenon is reinforced by the findings of Wang et al. (2011), which show that employees with a high level of collective identification adjust more easily to structural change, even when the change brings uncertainty. Furthermore, this identification process not only reduces resistance, but also encourages voluntary behaviors that support change, such as sharing ideas, helping coworkers, and

increasing flexibility in carrying out tasks. Thus, transformational leadership provides a psychosocial framework that enables employees to see change as a form of self-realization, not as an administrative burden.

In addition to building collective identification, transformational leadership also functions as a catalyst in reducing the anxiety that often arises during periods of transition. Organizational change is often accompanied by uncertainty that creates a sense of insecurity, both professionally and emotionally. According to Rafferty and Griffin (2006b), transformational leaders use clear, optimistic, and empathetic communication to ease this anxiety. By providing a convincing picture of the future direction, employees gain a sense of psychological certainty, even when their work environment is experiencing turbulence. The study by Long et al. (2014) shows that this leadership style has a positive correlation with perceived organizational support, which implies increased employee feelings of security in facing change. Consistent open communication allows employees to feel heard, so that fear of ambiguity can be overcome. This proves that the emotional dimension of transformational leadership plays a significant role in facilitating employees' mental and emotional readiness to adapt constructively.

Transformational leadership also facilitates employee adaptation through increasing individual and group learning capacity. According to Vera and Crossan (2004), transformational leaders tend to encourage the creation of a continuous learning climate, in which employees are encouraged to experiment, try new approaches, and learn lessons from failure. A work environment that is open to exploration enables employees to develop new skills that are relevant to the demands of change. Providing autonomy, responsibility, and adequate support can increase employees' abilities and confidence in developing their own capacity (Darmawan, 2024). The findings of Eisenbeiss, van Knippenberg, and Boerner (2008) underline that this leadership style increases the level of employee creativity and innovation, which is a main prerequisite for successful adaptation to new systems. Through guidance, leaders help individuals identify learning opportunities from every situation, while linking the results to collective goals. This shows that adaptation is reflected not only in compliance with new rules, but also in individuals' ability to proactively improve their own capacity. Therefore, transformational leadership can be regarded as the foundation for forming a learning organization that is resilient to future challenges of change.

Another dimension that strengthens adaptation is trust. Trust is a main prerequisite that enables employees to accept change more openly. Trust creates conditions that allow open communication about weaknesses and failures in a process without excessive fear of being blamed (Putra et al., 2021). Effective leadership is needed to build employee loyalty and support the performance of organizational members (Hariani & Irfan, 2022). Podsakoff et al. (1990) showed that transformational leaders succeed in building trust through consistency of action, integrity of communication, and fairness in decision-making. When employees believe that their leader has sincere intentions and is oriented toward their well-being, resistance to change can be significantly reduced. According to Burke et al. (2007), this trust creates a psychological condition that makes it easier for employees to collaborate and support new initiatives. Furthermore, trust also strengthens loyalty, which implies employees' willingness to tolerate the uncertainty that comes with change. Therefore, the trust built by transformational leadership is not only a social glue, but also an adaptive mechanism that channels employees' positive energy toward the successful implementation of change.

In addition to trust, transformational leadership facilitates employee adaptation through support for sustained emotional balance. Organizational change often creates psychological tension due to the pressure to adjust to new systems. Transformational leaders respond to this condition by creating a work atmosphere full of emotional support, in which employees' expressions of anxiety are not only tolerated but also met with attention. According to Hetland et al. (2011), leaders who consistently show empathy are able to reduce employees' stress levels, so that they are better able to focus on adaptive tasks. This emotional support includes acknowledging additional workloads, providing adequate pauses for adjustment, and being willing to listen to personal aspirations. When leaders

show sensitivity to the emotional condition of their subordinates, employees feel valued as individuals, not merely as resources. This contributes to increased psychological resilience, which is the capacity to recover from pressure and face new challenges with more optimism. Thus, transformational leadership can be seen as an important mechanism in creating the emotional balance that allows adaptation to occur more stably.

The inspirational dimension of transformational leadership has also proven to be an important factor in facilitating employee adaptation to change. Leaders who are able to articulate a vision with a motivating narrative provide clear direction while instilling meaning in every adaptive effort. Shamir, van Knippenberg, and Boerner (1993) state that inspirational narratives strengthen employees' intrinsic motivation, because they begin to see their work as something of transcendental value. In organizational change, this narrative helps employees understand why the transformation is needed, not merely how it is carried out. Arnold et al. (2007) found that inspiring leadership is closely related to employees' emotional engagement in supporting change programs. This shows that inspirational communication not only encourages compliance, but also strengthens commitment to shared goals. A vision packaged in the form of a stirring story makes adaptation no longer seen as a technical burden, but as a meaningful journey that contributes to a shared future. Employee contribution is reflected in their performance in organizational activities that support development and the achievement of established goals (Hariani, 2021). Thus, the inspirational aspect of transformational leadership becomes the key to forming a collective awareness that supports organizational transition.

Finally, transformational leadership facilitates employee adaptation through the creation of a work climate that fosters active participation. Change is more easily accepted when employees feel they have room to give input and take part in the decision-making process. According to Avolio and Yammarino (2013), transformational leaders encourage participation by providing two-way communication channels that allow employees' aspirations to be heard and considered. This involvement fosters a sense of ownership of the change, which subsequently increases commitment to supporting the implementation of new policies. In line with the findings of Nemanich and Keller (2000), participation facilitated by leaders accelerates the adaptation process because employees better understand the logic behind the change. This shows that transformational leadership does not only emphasize giving direction, but also the creation of a collaborative space that strengthens a sense of togetherness. In this way, employee adaptation does not take place passively, but as a collective process that involves fuller emotional, cognitive, and behavioral commitment.

Obstacles That Hinder Transformational Leaders in Driving Change

One of the most significant obstacles faced by transformational leaders in guiding employees through organizational change is psychological resistance. Resistance arises when employees feel a loss of security due to shifts in work systems they have long known. According to Oreg, Vakola, and Armenakis (2011), individuals tend to maintain the status quo because of a need for emotional stability and predictability in the work environment. Transformational leaders who try to instill a new vision often face obstacles in the form of distrust or even open rejection from employees who are reluctant to let go of old patterns. This situation creates tension that can slow down the collective adaptation process. Even though leaders try to build an inspirational narrative, employees' fear of uncertainty often becomes a barrier that is difficult to break through. Thus, psychological resistance can be understood as a fundamental obstacle that tests the capacity of leadership to maintain a balance between the demands of change and employees' emotional needs.

In addition to psychological resistance, communication limitations are a significant obstacle. Transformational leadership depends on the leader's ability to convey the vision clearly and consistently. However, communication processes in organizations are often fragmented by bureaucracy, hierarchy, and differences in interpretation among individuals. According to Men (2014), failure to deliver a coherent message can lead to misunderstandings that worsen resistance to change. Transformational leaders face the challenge of ensuring that every level of the organization

understands the vision uniformly, especially when the organization has a complex structure. Inconsistent communication reduces the leader's credibility, so that employees doubt the purpose of the change. This shows that communication obstacles are not merely a technical matter, but also a matter of legitimacy that affects employees' belief in the leader's direction.

The next obstacle is the limited resources available to support change. Although transformational leaders are able to inspire employees with a strong vision, implementing change still requires support in the form of budget, technology, and training. According to Armenakis and Harris (2009), a lack of resources creates a gap between the leader's expectations and the operational reality faced by employees. This condition can reduce motivation because employees feel that the demands of change are not matched by adequate support. In many cases, leaders must face a dilemma between maintaining a grand vision or adjusting goals to the limitations of resources. This obstacle often becomes a critical point that determines the success or failure of the change process.

Another equally important obstacle is the diversity of organizational values and culture. A well-managed and well-developed organizational culture can strengthen employees' emotional attachment and commitment to the organization's goals, vision, and values (Hariani, 2023). Transformational leaders try to build a collective vision, but the diversity of employees' backgrounds often creates differences in interpreting the meaning of change. According to Erkutlu (2008), cultural factors have a major influence on individuals' acceptance of leadership styles. For example, in multinational organizations, interpretations of authority and participation can differ significantly across cultures. This diversity requires leaders to adjust their communication style and motivational strategies so that they can be widely accepted. Otherwise, a mismatch of values can create a serious obstacle in the form of cultural resistance that slows the integration of change. This makes cultural factors one of the biggest challenges in implementing transformational leadership consistently.

Another major obstacle faced by transformational leaders is change fatigue, which is the condition in which employees feel exhausted by a series of repeated changes in the organization. Rafferty and Griffin (2006a) explain that this fatigue arises from the accumulation of stress due to uncertainty, increased workload, and a decline in individuals' sense of control over their work. When employees are already emotionally exhausted, the leader's efforts to arouse enthusiasm become much more difficult. This situation gives rise to apathy, and even cynicism, toward the new initiatives introduced by the leader. The findings of Vakola and Nikolaou (2005) show that change fatigue significantly reduces employee engagement in supporting transformation. This obstacle is systemic because it erodes the collective energy that should be an important asset in implementing the leader's vision. Therefore, change fatigue becomes a serious challenge that requires special attention in every organizational transformation process.

Misalignment between the leader's vision and employees' expectations is also often an obstacle. Transformational leaders build an aspirational big picture, but not all employees interpret the vision positively. According to Tourish and Pinnington (2002), there is a risk that the vision conveyed is too far from employees' everyday reality, creating a perception gap. Employees may consider the vision utopian or irrelevant to their roles in the work structure. This condition creates doubt that can develop into resistance. Yukl (2013) adds that a vision that is not linked to employees' practical needs is often regarded as rhetoric without substance. This obstacle underlines the importance of alignment between the leader's aspirations and individuals' perceptions so that change can be accepted as something realistic and feasible.

Another obstacle that frequently arises is internal conflict of interest. In the change process, the interests of departments or individuals are often not aligned, creating a tug-of-war that hinders the direction promoted by the transformational leader. According to Huy (2002), internal conflict can reduce the effectiveness of change strategies because each group tries to defend its position and resources. Transformational leaders face the challenge of balancing conflicting interests while maintaining the direction of transformation. This conflict not only slows down the adaptation process, but also has the potential to cause fragmentation that weakens organizational cohesion. In

such situations, leaders often face a dilemma between maintaining internal harmony and pushing for faster change. This obstacle shows that organizational change is not merely a matter of vision, but also of managing complex interests.

The final obstacle that needs attention in this section is the limited competence of the leaders themselves. Not every individual who occupies a leadership position has the personal capacity to apply the transformational style consistently. According to Bass and Riggio (2006), this style requires a combination of charismatic, intellectual, and empathic abilities that not every leader possesses. Limited competence can result in distortion in conveying the vision, weakness in building trust, or failure to set an example. Waldman et al. (2001) affirm that inconsistency in leader behavior is often a main cause of reduced credibility in the eyes of employees. This obstacle highlights that the success of transformational leadership depends not only on employee acceptance, but also on the personal quality of leaders in embodying the values they communicate.

Another significant obstacle is the uncertainty of the external environment that affects the organization's internal processes. Transformational leaders often build the direction of change based on certain assumptions about market conditions, regulations, or technological developments. However, unexpected external changes can damage the credibility of that strategy. According to Burnes (2017), external instability increases employees' doubts about the organization's ability to manage transformation. This situation strengthens resistance because employees feel that the leader does not have full control over the factors that determine the success of change. This view is supported by Judge and Douglas (2009), who found that environmental uncertainty worsens the psychological pressure experienced by employees during the transition period. Thus, external uncertainty is not only a strategic challenge, but also a psychological obstacle that limits the effectiveness of transformational leadership.

In addition to external factors, the issue of organizational justice is also often a serious obstacle. When employees feel that the distribution of resources or opportunities is unfair during the change process, they tend to develop a cynical attitude toward transformational leadership. Greenberg (2004) emphasizes that perceptions of fairness play a key role in determining the level of employees' trust in their leaders. If employees believe that the change process only benefits certain groups, the sense of togetherness that the leader is trying to build will weaken. Colquitt et al. (2013) add that perceptions of procedural justice have a direct influence on the level of employee commitment to supporting the organization's direction. This obstacle in the form of injustice is crucial because it can create internal polarization that slows the collective adaptation process.

The final obstacle is leadership fatigue, which is the condition in which transformational leaders themselves experience emotional exhaustion due to the constant demands to inspire, motivate, and maintain team stability. Leiter and Maslach (2005) show that emotional exhaustion is not only experienced by employees, but also by leaders who face intense pressure in maintaining the direction of change. When leaders experience a decline in psychological energy, this can reduce the quality of communication and the consistency of setting an example. Avolio and Yammarino (2013) emphasize that transformational leadership requires sustained energy, and without that capacity, the grand vision that has been built can lose its appeal. Thus, leader fatigue becomes an obstacle that is often hidden, yet has great potential to disrupt the smooth running of organizational change.

Conclusion

Transformational leadership has proven to be an important catalyst in facilitating employee adaptation when organizations face change. Through a clear vision, inspirational motivation, individual empowerment, and consistent communication, leaders can encourage employees to accept change as an opportunity, not a threat. However, this adaptation journey is not free of obstacles. There are serious challenges in the form of psychological resistance, communication limitations, value misalignment, and even fatigue experienced by the leaders themselves. All of these factors show that

the success of organizational transformation demands collective energy, solid trust, and a planned and sustainable leadership strategy. This conclusion shows that the human dimension in organizations remains the key to the success or failure of a transformation.

Organizations that are committed to change should pay attention to their leaders' capacity to maintain a balance between strategic demands and employees' emotional needs. The change process requires space for open dialogue, psychological support, and a fair distribution of resources so that it does not create internal polarization. In addition, it is important to sustain leaders' energy by providing adequate managerial support and mentoring systems. In this way, organizations do not only focus on the design of change, but also ensure the readiness of people as the main actors in the success of transformations.

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