

## VISIONARY LEADERSHIP AND THE INTERNALIZATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURAL VALUES

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### Abstract

This literature study examines how visionary leadership translates organizational vision into internalized values that manifest in daily behavior and shape organizational identity. The analysis identifies several interconnected mechanisms. First, vision articulation through compelling narratives engages members cognitively and emotionally. Second, leader modeling provides consistent behavioral examples, as members closely observe and imitate leader actions especially during difficult situations. Third, integration of values into recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and reward systems signals organizational commitment to values. Fourth, rituals and routines create repeated opportunities for value rehearsal and reinforcement. Fifth, organizational storytelling transmits values across generations through memorable exemplars. Sixth, physical artifacts and symbols serve as constant visual reminders. The internalization process progresses through compliance, identification, and full internalization stages. Major success factors include leader consistency, leadership continuity, and dialogic management of diverse interpretations. Primary obstacles include inconsistency between leader words and deeds, leadership turnover, and diversity of member backgrounds without proper management. Successful internalization ultimately manifests in strong organizational identity where members voluntarily become value ambassadors. The study concludes that systemic integration of all mechanisms is essential, as isolated interventions typically fail to produce lasting internalization.

**Keywords:** visionary leadership; internalization; organizational values; organizational identity; leader modeling; value transmission.

### Introduction

Every organization needs a collective guide that directs members' behavior in carrying out their daily activities. This guide is often called organizational cultural values, which serve as a frame of reference for deciding what is right and wrong, good and bad, and what to prioritize at work. These values do not appear automatically once an organization is founded; they must be instilled, maintained, and passed on from one generation of employees to the next. Without strong internalization, these values become merely formal documents with no real driving force. The gap between declared values and values practiced in daily life is a classic problem faced by many organization (Leal & Moraes, 2016). Under these conditions, leadership becomes important because leaders influence organizational members to direct their behavior in line with the goals and values the organization wants to achieve together (Radjawane & Darmawan, 2022). This is where visionary leadership emerges as a decisive factor, because it is the leader who holds the authority and influence to shape and communicate values and to ensure they live in every action of the organization's members.

Visionary leaders are able to look far ahead, imagine a better future for the organization, and formulate an inspiring vision. This vision is not merely a numerical target or material achievement, but a picture of the organization's future identity, including the values it will uphold (Marina et al., 2023). A leader with a clear vision can articulate the organization's direction in a way that evokes enthusiasm and a sense of belonging. In dynamic organizations, leaders also need to adjust their leadership style so that the decisions they make remain aligned with the vision (Darmawan, 2024). However, a good vision is

not enough if it is only delivered in an annual speech or written on a poster on the office wall. A vision must be translated into concrete actions, operational policies, and daily routines. This translation process is the most challenging, because it requires consistency, role modeling, and the ability to connect the abstraction of the vision with the concreteness of employee behavior on the production floor, in meeting rooms, or in interactions with customers. Ethical role modeling makes a vision more credible, because members see leaders practicing what they say (Rojak & Darmawan, 2021).

The internalization of organizational cultural values is a psychological journey in which external values originating from leaders or formal documents become an individual's internal beliefs. Organizational culture is reflected in employee behavior in achieving shared goals, so the values that develop in each organization can influence how employees carry out their work (Hariani, 2021). A person who has internalized a value no longer needs external supervision to behave in line with it, because the value has become part of them, shaping personal identity and pride. In organizations, this internalization is collective. When most members have internalized the same values, a distinctive organizational identity forms, something that sets one organization apart from another (Eddine et al., 2023). This identity then becomes a source of cohesion, stability, and competitive advantage. Values that are shared and believed in are usually followed by better commitment and job satisfaction, so performance also improves (Damayanti & Darmawan, 2025). However, collective internalization does not happen in a short time. It requires repeated interaction between leaders and members, and among members, in which values are continually affirmed, exemplified, celebrated when practiced, and corrected when violated.

Visionary leadership contributes to value internalization through several mechanisms. First, visionary leaders define values that align with the long-term vision, so that the values carry greater meaning than mere rules of conduct. Transformational leaders play a role in changing an organization's value system because they invite members to understand the meaning behind change (Rojak et al., 2022). Second, visionary leaders serve as primary role models. When a leader consistently demonstrates behavior that reflects the values upheld, the message conveyed is far stronger than a thousand words of instruction. Employees observe, imitate, and gradually turn that behavior into habit (Darmawan et al., 2020). Third, visionary leaders integrate values into organizational systems, including recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and rewards. This systemic integration ensures that values are not just expectations but real criteria that affect members' careers and well-being, thereby accelerating internalization. Fair rewards also sustain motivation and job satisfaction, so members are more willing to maintain behavior that matches the values (Irfan et al., 2023).

The gap between the leader's vision and the reality of everyday behavior often arises from a failure to bridge different levels of abstraction. The vision sits at a very abstract level, containing grand aspirations about the future. Cultural values sit at a more concrete level, containing guiding principles. Meanwhile, everyday behavior is the most concrete, consisting of specific actions in specific situations. Effective leaders need a clear vision and the ability to communicate it attractively so that all members of the organization can easily understand it (Darmawan et al., 2022). Without a bridge connecting these three levels, the vision remains a dream, values remain slogans, and behavior remains undirected. Effective visionary leaders are those who can provide that bridge through narratives, metaphors, rituals, and concrete examples that translate abstraction into action. They also create spaces for discussion where members of the organization can jointly interpret what values mean in their diverse work situations, so that internalization becomes a participatory social process. Leaders can also give members autonomy so they can interpret values according to their own work and find new ways to carry them out (Darmawan, 2024).

Although much of the literature affirms the importance of visionary leadership for organizational culture, the specific mechanism by which a leader's vision is translated into internalized values down to the level of everyday behavior is still not systematically explained. Most studies treat leadership and culture as two separate variables or only state a correlational relationship without examining the process. As a result, organizational practitioners are often confused when their efforts to instill values do not produce the expected results even though the leader already has a clear vision. There is a gap in

understanding the role of nonverbal communication, reward systems, job design, and organizational routines in translating vision into values and values into behavior. A work culture that lasts requires leadership combined with organizational systems that adjust easily (Mardikaningsih & Radjawane, 2025). Management at the managerial and organizational levels also affects the results achieved, so both need to be studied together (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2025). Without mapping this mechanism, leadership and culture development interventions tend to be general and ineffective.

Another problem lies in the assumption that value internalization is linear and predictable, when in reality, organizational members interpret the same vision and values differently depending on their background, experience, and position in the organizational structure. A frontline employee may interpret the value of customer service differently from a policy manager, because the two face different work realities. This interpretive conflict, if not managed well, can hinder collective internalization and even create conflicting subcultures. Visionary leaders need to recognize this diversity of interpretation and create dialogue that allows meanings to be synthesized without imposing rigid uniformity. Inclusive leadership helps every group, including older employees, feel valued so they are willing to engage and stay (Darmawan, 2025). However, the literature still rarely discusses effective leadership strategies for managing diverse interpretations in the value internalization process.

The dynamics of the modern workplace, marked by rapid change, virtual teams, a multigenerational workforce, and growing demands for meaning in work, make the internalization of organizational cultural values increasingly crucial and increasingly difficult. Today's employees do not work only for pay; they seek identity, purpose, and a sense of belonging. Organizations that can offer this through a strong, internalized culture will be better able to attract and retain top talent (Darmawan, 2024). Under these conditions, employees' ability to adapt to change becomes more important because it also determines the continuity of their engagement in the organization (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2023). On the other hand, the fragmentation of the work environment, such as remote work and temporary contracts, weakens traditional mechanisms of cultural transmission such as face-to-face interaction and direct observation of leaders. Therefore, a new understanding is needed of how visionary leadership can adapt to these conditions to remain effective in internalizing values. A systematic literature study is needed to consolidate existing knowledge and identify the right direction for further development.

This study aims to describe the mechanism by which the vision of visionary leadership is translated into organizational cultural values that are internalized and manifested in members' everyday behavior. This aim includes identifying the channels through which vision is transmitted into values, including symbolic communication, leader role modeling, human resource system design, and the creation of rituals and routines. The study also seeks to map the factors that facilitate or hinder internalization, such as clarity of vision, consistency of the leader's actions, and members' involvement in interpreting values. The expected theoretical contribution is an enrichment of the visionary leadership model by incorporating a micro-cultural dimension. Practically, the results of this synthesis are expected to provide guidance for organizational leaders in designing more effective and measurable culture development strategies.

## Method

This study uses a qualitative literature study approach to explore the process by which the vision of visionary leadership is translated into internalized cultural values. Following the guidelines set out by Snyder (2019), a literature review as a research methodology requires a series of systematic steps, from formulating questions and searching for relevant sources to evaluating source quality and synthesizing findings. The analytical procedure in this study follows the principles of qualitative research described by Mohajan (2018), in which textual data are treated as a source of meaning that must be interpreted in depth. Thematic analysis is used as the main technique, in which the researcher conducts open coding of each article to produce initial labels. These labels are then grouped into more abstract categories, such as vision communication mechanisms, the modeling process, systemic integration, and cultural rituals. These categories are then synthesized to build a

conceptual framework that explains how a leader's vision is transformed into members' behavior. The analysis process is iterative, with the researcher moving back and forth between data and concepts to ensure that the resulting framework is truly grounded in the existing literature. The final result of this process is a theoretical model described in the discussion section.

## Results and Discussion

Translating the vision of visionary leadership into cultural values begins with effective articulation. It is not enough for a leader to hold a big idea in their head; they must be able to formulate that vision in language that is understandable, relevant, and moving to followers. Leaders need to understand employees' abilities, willingness, and needs so they can give appropriate direction and guidance in understanding and applying the organization's vision (Retnowati et al., 2022). Good articulation uses strong narratives, fitting metaphors, and consistent repetition across various forums. A vision articulated in this way is not only accepted cognitively but also touches the emotions of the listeners. This emotional involvement is important because value internalization is not merely a matter of understanding meaning, but also of feeling that the value is worthwhile and worth fighting for. Reliable visionary leaders use success stories, failure stories from which lessons are drawn, and personal anecdotes to make the vision feel real and close to the everyday experience of organizational members (Brauer & Brauer, 2014).

Once the vision has been articulated, the next step is role modeling by the leader. Organizational members observe every action of the leader, especially in difficult situations where values are tested. When a leader who upholds integrity consistently turns down a financially lucrative offer that violates ethics, the message conveyed is very strong. Conversely, if a leader professes collaboration but in practice always makes decisions alone without consultation, a dissonance arises that damages credibility (Grojean et al., 2004). Effective modeling requires the leader to be fully aware that they are always being observed, even and especially in small matters such as how they greet subordinates, punctuality, or how they handle conflict. Long-term consistency between words and actions is the foundation of trust, without which value internalization is impossible.

The third mechanism is integrating values into the organization's human resource systems. Visions and values that are not reflected in recruitment policies, new employee orientation, training, performance appraisal, and reward systems will be difficult to internalize. The recruitment process, for example, must screen candidates whose personal values align with organizational values so that person-organization fit is achieved from the start. New employee orientation becomes a critical moment for instilling values through intensive exposure to the organization's history, figures, and rituals. The performance appraisal system must include value-based behavioral dimensions as evaluation criteria, not merely quantitative targets. Performance refers to employees' work results, assessed against qualifications set by the organization (Putra et al., 2022). Rewards must be explicitly given to those who show behavior that reflects the values, even if their quantitative results are not as high as those of their peers. Appropriate appraisal and rewards sustain employee motivation, and sustained motivation affects performance, including among older employees (Darmawan & Mardikaningsih, 2023). This systemic integration sends a signal that values are a serious matter with real consequences.

Organizational rituals and routines function as vehicles for continuous repetition and reinforcement of values. Rituals, such as morning assemblies, weekly meetings, or annual award ceremonies, provide shared moments in which values are celebrated, narrated, and practiced symbolically. Smaller routines, such as starting a meeting by sharing an inspiring story, the way feedback is given, or the way problems are solved together, are everyday practices that subtly shape behavior (Barnhill et al., 2020). Shared rituals also build togetherness and cooperation within teams, so group performance is better maintained (Darmawan & Marsal, 2025). Through repeated participation in these rituals and routines, organizational members gradually adopt values as habits without needing to think at length. This process resembles language learning, in which a person eventually no longer needs to translate from the mother tongue because the new language has become automatic. Well-designed rituals and routines are internalization engines that work below the level of awareness.

Sustained internal communication also plays an important role in translating vision into behavior. For this communication to be effective, leaders need good communication skills and an understanding of employees' responses and level of acceptance of the vision and values conveyed (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2022). Well-used digital leadership also helps communication and teamwork run more efficiently (Mardikaningsih et al., 2025). It is not enough for a visionary leader to state the vision once and stop. They must keep repeating it, refreshing it, and linking strategic decisions to it. Every new policy announcement, every change of direction, and every important achievement must be referred back to the vision and values. This repetition must not come across as patronizing but should become a natural part of organizational conversation. Besides top-down communication from the leader, horizontal communication among members is also important. Leaders can encourage informal communication networks in which values are discussed, interpreted, and healthily debated (Moss et al., 2017). Digitally oriented leadership opens more channels for members to discuss and collaborate (Darmawan & Gardi, 2024). This debate over interpretation actually strengthens internalization because members become active in making sense of values rather than passively receiving them.

Organizational storytelling is a very powerful instrument for transmitting values from one generation to the next. Every organization has stories about founders who struggled in hard times, about ordinary employees who performed heroic acts, or about moments of crisis that were overcome thanks to steadfastness to certain values. These stories, when told and retold, become founding myths that shape collective identity. Visionary leaders act as guardians and retellers of these stories, ensuring that new generations of the organization do not lose their cultural roots (Wright & Dziak, 2016). Stories are more effective than formal instructions because they engage emotions, are easy to remember, and provide a concrete template for how values are applied in real situations. The characters in stories become role models that are easier to follow because they are ordinary people, not perfect superheroes.

Trust in organizations does not always grow naturally, but can be built through a history of interaction, leadership patterns, and reward systems applied consistently (Putra et al., 2021). Consistent leadership and work culture also foster employee loyalty (Hariani & Irfan, 2022). Reward and recognition systems need to be designed to give incentives to behavior that aligns with values. Rewards do not always have to be material; public recognition in organizational forums is often more meaningful. Visionary leaders actively look for examples of behavior that reflect the values, then highlight them as models for the whole organization. Conversely, when values are violated, sanctions must be applied consistently without favoritism. Consistency in giving sanctions is even more important than consistency in giving rewards, because unfairness in handling violations can damage trust in the entire system. This system of rewards and sanctions must be clearly documented and applied transparently, so that organizational members understand precisely the consequences of each behavioral choice.

The creation of physical artifacts and symbols also contributes to value internalization. An open-plan office without partitions reflects the values of collaboration and transparency. A casual uniform or dress code reflects the values of creativity and freedom of expression. Logos, mascots, value posters, and other ceremonial objects serve as constant visual reminders of what matters to the organization. These artifacts work at a subconscious level, shaping the psychological atmosphere in which members operate every day (Hajkazemi et al., 2024). Visionary leaders pay attention to these details and ensure that the physical environment is consistent with the values upheld. Inconsistency between the stated values and the visible physical environment can create confusion and reduce the credibility of internalization efforts.

The internalization process does not happen instantly but through identifiable stages. The first stage is compliance, in which members behave in line with values because of supervision and sanctions. The second stage is identification, in which members begin to adopt values because they want to be part of the group and be respected by the leader. The third stage is full internalization, in which values have become part of the self-concept so that value-consistent behavior emerges naturally without external prompting. Visionary leaders need to understand that different members may be at different stages and require different approaches. For new members, supervision and explicit instruction may be needed. For long-standing members who have already internalized the values, trust and autonomy matter more. These differences in approach must be managed wisely without creating an impression of unfairness.

The factor that most often hinders internalization is inconsistency between what the leader says and what the leader does. Organizational members are very sensitive to hypocrisy, and they will trust actions more than words. A leader who voices the value of simplicity but lives in a luxurious house with luxury cars will lose credibility. A leader who calls for collaboration but always imposes their own opinion will be passively resisted. This inconsistency is even more damaging than having no vision at all, because it creates cynicism in which members regard the entire cultural effort as mere theater (McGuire et al., 2008). Authentic leaders, whose actions match the values they state, build a positive work climate and encourage members' positive behavior beyond their formal duties (Mardikaningsih et al., 2022). Therefore, the absolute requirement for the success of visionary leadership in internalizing values is the leader's unshakeable personal integrity, even when tests come at the most unexpected moments.

Another inhibiting factor is overly frequent leadership change. Value internalization requires time, consistency, and repetition. When a visionary leader is replaced by another leader with a different vision and values, the internalization process already underway can be disrupted or even reversed. Organizational members become confused about which values are actually upheld, and they tend to revert to safe behavior that is not bound to any value. To address this, organizations need leadership succession mechanisms that preserve cultural continuity. Leadership that balances maintaining established practices with renewal helps the organization remain stable during transitions (Irfan & Darmawan, 2024). New leaders should preferably be chosen from within, from those who have internalized the values well, so that the transition of vision can proceed smoothly. If a new leader must come from outside, they need to be given time and support to learn and embrace the culture before making any changes.

Diversity in members' backgrounds can also challenge uniform value internalization. Leaders who share work-related information openly with all members of the organization can help build a shared understanding of the organization's goals, policies, and expectations (Mardikaningsih et al., 2022). Members from different generations, ethnic groups, or professions may interpret the same value differently. The value of speed, for example, may be interpreted as quick responses to customers by the sales team, but as on-time production processes by the manufacturing team (Milenkovic & Boykov, 2022). This conflict of meaning is not always bad, because it can enrich the collective understanding of a value. However, if left unmanaged, it can create subcultures that contradict one another. Visionary leaders need to create cross-unit dialogue forums where differences in interpretation can be discussed openly, so that a kind of agreement is reached on the core values that cannot be compromised, along with room for variation in interpretation at the level of application.

The process of value internalization is also closely related to the formation of organizational identity. Identity is the answer to the question of who we are as an organization. Values that are collectively internalized become the building blocks of this identity. When a member is asked about their job, they do not only name the organization but also explain which values the organization holds. A strong organizational identity gives a sense of pride and meaning that goes beyond the wages or allowances received. In building this attachment, employee loyalty needs to be developed through effective leadership (Hariani & Irfan, 2022). Members become brand ambassadors voluntarily, promoting the organization wherever they are (Weldon et al., 2023). Visionary leaders who succeed in building this collective identity will enjoy very high loyalty, in which members are willing to sacrifice more because they feel the organization is an extension of themselves. This is the culmination of a successful internalization process.

Successful value internalization can be measured through several behavioral indicators. First, members are able to make decisions that align with the values even when no written rule governs a particular situation. Second, members voluntarily correct coworkers who violate the values, without waiting for supervisor intervention. Third, members defend the organization's values when criticized by outsiders, using arguments that show a deep understanding of those values. Fourth, members consistently mention the organization's values when explaining their choices to others. Fifth, members show positive emotions such as pride and enthusiasm when discussing the values or when seeing others practice them. Visionary leaders can use these indicators to assess how far internalization efforts have succeeded and which areas still need more attention.

## Conclusion

This literature study concludes that visionary leadership transforms vision into internalized values that are realized in everyday behavior through a series of interrelated mechanisms. A clear and emotionally resonant articulation of the vision lays the foundation, while the leader's role modeling provides a concrete example to follow. Integrating values into human resource systems, rituals and routines, sustained communication, storytelling, reward systems, and physical artifacts reinforces and sustains the internalization process. This process unfolds gradually from compliance to identification to full internalization, with the key success factors being the leader's consistency, leadership continuity, and the dialogical management of diverse interpretations. The biggest obstacle is inconsistency between the leader's words and actions, which creates cynicism. Successful internalization is ultimately reflected in a strong organizational identity, in which members feel proud and voluntarily become ambassadors of the organization's values in all of their actions.

For organizations, the implication of these findings is the need for a systemic approach to developing a vision-based culture, rather than merely leadership training or the separate drafting of values. Leaders at all levels need to be involved in designing and implementing internalization mechanisms. For future research, it is recommended to conduct longitudinal empirical studies that observe the internalization process in real time in organizations undergoing cultural transformation. Comparative research across types of organizations (for example, private, public, and nonprofit) is also needed to test the generalizability of the findings. For practitioners, the operational recommendation is to begin with an audit of the gap between declared values and observed behavior, and then design interventions that cover all mechanisms simultaneously. Top leaders must become the main ambassadors of change, with consistency of behavior audited periodically by an independent party. In addition, leadership succession mechanisms that preserve cultural continuity need to be designed early.

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