

# Transformational Leadership Training for Church Leaders in A Community Engagement Context

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This community engagement program aimed to strengthen the leadership capacity of church leaders through transformational leadership training within a local association of church leaders in South Tangerang, Indonesia.

**Research Methodology:** The program was conducted on February 19, 2026, using a hybrid format combining offline and online participation. More than 50 church leaders, including pastors, ministry coordinators and theology students, participated in the study. Training was conducted using a participatory educational approach through lectures, theological reflection, interactive discussions, and case-based dialogue. The materials focused on four dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

**Results:** The training improved participants' understanding of transformational leadership, shifting their perspective from administrative responsibilities to vision-driven, relational, and empowering leadership, while also strengthening collaboration among churches and encouraging shared ministry initiatives.

**Conclusions:** Transformational leadership training can serve as an effective community engagement strategy to enhance leadership capacity in faith-based organizations. Integrating leadership theory with biblical perspectives provides practical guidance for church leaders to manage ministry, foster collaboration, and promote sustainable organizational development.

**Limitations:** The activity involved participants from a limited regional network and relied primarily on qualitative feedback rather than on long-term evaluation.

**Contributions:** This study contributes to community development practices in religious organizations and highlights the importance of leadership education in strengthening faith-based institutions.

**Keywords:** *Church Leadership, Community Engagement, Leadership Development, Religious Organizations, Transformational Leadership*

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## 1. Introduction

Faith-based organizations play a significant role in shaping social values, strengthening community relationships, and promoting ethical leadership. Numerous studies have highlighted that religious organizations function as important actors in social development, contributing to social welfare, humanitarian services, and community empowerment initiatives (Heist & Cnaan, 2016; Tomalin, 2021). Churches, in particular, function not only as spiritual institutions but also as social organizations that contribute to education, social services and community development.

Research on faith-based community development shows that churches often serve as local institutions that mobilize social capital, encourage community participation, and address socio-economic challenges within their communities ([Msebi, 2022](#); [Rakotoarison, Dietrich, & Hiilamo, 2021](#)). In many societies, religious institutions serve as important agents of social cohesion and moral formation, helping foster solidarity, reconciliation, and collective responsibility among community members ([Tarpeh & Hustedde, 2021](#)). Consequently, the effectiveness of church leadership has a substantial influence on the sustainability and impact of religious organizations within local communities, particularly in shaping ethical behavior and motivating social engagement ([Jahani & Parayandeh, 2024](#)).

In recent years, churches have faced increasingly complex challenges, including generational shifts, rapid social change, and a growing need for community engagement beyond traditional congregational activities. Scholars have noted that religious institutions worldwide are experiencing changing patterns of participation, shifting cultural expectations, and evolving forms of religious engagement that require adaptive leadership and institutional innovation ([Stolz, 2020](#); [Voas & Chaves, 2016](#)). These developments are further intensified by broader societal transformations, such as globalization, digitalization, and generational changes, which influence how younger generations relate to religious institutions and spiritual communities ([Campbell, 2017](#); [Putri & Abriand, 2024](#)).

These challenges require church leaders to possess not only theological knowledge but also organizational and leadership competencies that enable them to guide congregations effectively in dynamic social contexts ([Aboramadan, Hamid, Kundi, & El Hamalawi, 2022](#)). Research in the field of nonprofit and religious leadership highlights that leaders of faith-based organizations must integrate spiritual guidance with managerial skills, strategic planning, and community engagement capacities to sustain organizational relevance and social impact ([Rozi, Riza, Azizah, Sundari, & Nasikhin, 2025](#)).

Therefore, leadership within faith-based organizations requires a leadership approach capable of inspiring, empowering, and mobilizing community members toward shared goals. Transformational leadership theory has frequently been applied in religious leadership studies because it emphasizes vision, motivation, and the empowerment of followers to pursue collective missions and values ([Bass & Riggio, 2006](#)). Recent studies have emphasized that transformational leadership remains a relevant framework for leadership development in nonprofit and religious organizations because it promotes a shared vision, empowerment, and collaborative participation among organizational members ([Banks, McCauley, Gardner, & Guler, 2016](#); [Eva, Robin, Sendjaya, Van Dierendonck, & Liden, 2019](#); [Hoch, Bommer, Dulebohn, & Wu, 2018](#)). Empirical research indicates that transformational leadership can strengthen organizational commitment ([Afolabi & Afolabi, 2024](#); [Bannor, 2024](#); [Urfa & Tarigan, 2026](#)), enhance volunteer participation, and foster collaborative community engagement in faith-based organizations.

Among contemporary leadership theories, transformational leadership has received considerable scholarly attention because of its ability to inspire organizational change and collective motivation ([Nurtini & Sutisna, 2025](#)). Transformational leadership emphasizes the role of leaders in motivating followers to transcend personal interests and pursue broader organizational goals through vision, inspiration, and empowerment. Empirical studies have shown that transformational leadership can improve organizational commitment, innovation, and team performance across different organizational contexts ([Hoch et al., 2018](#); [Killins, Johnk, & Egly, 2020](#)). The concept of transformational leadership was originally introduced by ([Burns, 1978](#)) and further developed by ([Bass & Avolio, 1994](#)). According to [Bass and Riggio \(2006\)](#), transformational leadership consists of four key dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Idealized influence refers to a leader's ability to act as a role model and build trust among followers.

Inspirational motivation involves articulating a compelling vision that inspires followers to pursue their collective goals. Intellectual stimulation encourages followers to challenge assumptions and develop innovative solutions, whereas individualized consideration emphasizes mentoring and personal development. Recent studies continue to confirm that these four dimensions remain central to transformational leadership practices and are strongly associated with employee engagement,

organizational commitment, and innovation in contemporary organizations ([Al-Husseini, El Beltagi, & Moizer, 2021](#); [Banks et al., 2016](#); [Gaybullaev & Strode, 2026](#)).

In nonprofit and community-based organizations, transformational leadership plays a particularly important role because these organizations rely heavily on shared values, volunteer participation, and collaborative decision-making. Research shows that transformational leadership strengthens mission alignment, increases member commitment, and enhances organizational effectiveness in nonprofit settings ([Budiati, Indah, & Jahidi, 2016](#)). In addition, leadership development programs have been found to significantly improve leaders' strategic thinking, communication skills, and capacity to mobilize community engagement ([Brown, Vogel, & Akben, 2022](#)).

Within church contexts, transformational leadership is particularly relevant because it aligns with mission-driven organizational cultures that emphasize shared values and a collective purpose. Several empirical studies have shown that transformational leadership practices can strengthen pastoral effectiveness, improve congregational engagement, and support organizational development within churches ([Afolabi & Afolabi, 2024](#); [Bannor, 2024](#)). These findings suggest that transformational leadership provides a useful framework for understanding leadership practices in religious institutions ([Hardana, 2024](#)).

From a theological perspective, Christian leadership traditions emphasize humility, service, and moral exemplarity as essential elements of leadership practice. Biblical narratives often present leadership models that prioritize service over authority. For example, the account of Jesus washing the disciples' feet (John 13:3–17) illustrates a leadership model grounded in humility and service rather than in hierarchical power. Similarly, the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount demonstrate visionary leadership that challenges social norms and encourages ethical transformation in communities.

Historical figures within the Christian tradition also demonstrate leadership practices consistent with transformational leadership principles. Leaders such as Francis of Assisi, John Wesley, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Mother Teresa exemplified moral courage, compassion, and commitment to social transformation. Their leadership influenced not only religious communities but also broader social movements aimed at addressing poverty, injustice and humanitarian needs.

Despite the growing body of research on transformational leadership in nonprofit and religious organizations, few studies have examined structured leadership training programs implemented through community engagement approaches within local church networks. Previous studies have primarily focused on theoretical discussions or organizational outcomes, while empirical evidence from participatory leadership training in inter-church community settings remains scarce. In addition, few studies have integrated transformational leadership theory with biblical reflection in practical leadership development programs for church leaders.

This study addresses these gaps by implementing a transformational leadership training program within a local inter-church network and evaluating its outcomes using qualitative pre- and post-training reflections. The novelty of this study lies in the integration of transformational leadership theory, biblical perspectives, and participatory community engagement methods within a single leadership development program. Furthermore, this study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence of how community-based leadership training can strengthen leadership awareness, enhance collaboration among churches, and support sustainable leadership development in faith-based organizations.

## **2. Methodology**

This study employed a community engagement approach through leadership training activities conducted for church leaders within the local association of church leaders. The program was conducted on February 19, 2026, at a church in Pamulang, South Tangerang, Indonesia. Training was conducted in a hybrid format that combined offline participation at the venue with online participation via digital communication platforms. More than 50 participants attended the program, including pastors, church

leaders, ministry coordinators, and theology students from various churches in the Pamulang area. The training was designed to strengthen leadership capacity and encourage collaborative ministry among the region's churches.

The training program adopted a participatory educational approach. The learning methods included lectures, interactive discussions, theological reflections, and case-based dialogues. The main training materials focused on transformational leadership concepts and their practical applications in church ministry. The training materials covered several key topics, including (1) the definition and theoretical foundations of transformational leadership, (2) a comparison between transformational and transactional leadership, (3) the four dimensions of transformational leadership, (4) biblical examples of servant leadership, and (5) historical examples of transformational leadership in Christian history. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their leadership experiences and discuss practical strategies for applying the principles of transformational leadership in their church communities. Data for evaluating the program were collected through participant observations, discussion feedback, and qualitative reflections from the participants during the training sessions.

### 3. Results and Discussions

#### 3.1 Implementation of the Leadership Training Program

The community engagement program was successfully implemented on February 19, 2026, at a church in Pamulang, South Tangerang, Indonesia. The activity was organized in collaboration with the local association of church leaders, which serves as a network platform connecting churches in Pamulang. Training was conducted in a hybrid format that allowed participants to attend both onsite and online through digital communication platforms. More than 50 participants attended the program, including pastors, church leaders, ministry coordinators, and theology students from various churches in the region. The hybrid format proved effective in increasing accessibility and participation, particularly among church leaders who could not attend the event physically.

The training sessions were structured into several segments, including theoretical presentations, theological reflections, interactive discussions, and case-based dialogues. The participants were encouraged to share their leadership experiences and challenges within their respective church communities. This participatory learning approach created a collaborative learning environment that enabled the participants to actively engage in the leadership development process. Figure 1 illustrates the implementation of the leadership training program attended by church leaders from various congregations within the local association of the church leader network.



Figure 1. Transformational leadership training activity at a church in Pamulang

#### 3.2 Qualitative Pre-Training and Post-Training Evaluation

To evaluate the effectiveness of the training program, a qualitative pre- and post-training assessment approach was employed. Instead of relying on numerical scores alone, the evaluation focused on participants' initial understanding, their responses during the session, the quality of their reflections,

and the changes observed after training. Before the session began, the participants were invited to share their prior understanding of leadership in church ministry. Most participants initially described leadership in general terms, such as responsibility, service, authority, and pastoral duty. However, their responses indicated that many had not yet developed a clear conceptual understanding of transformational leadership as a distinct leadership framework.

In the pre-training stage, participants generally viewed church leadership as a matter of personal commitment, spiritual maturity, and administrative responsibility. While these views were important, the early discussion suggested that participants had limited familiarity with the specific dimensions of transformational leadership, such as inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Several participants also tended to associate effective leadership with charisma or positional authority rather than with the capacity to empower, mentor, and transform others.

After the training, the participants' responses showed a clearer and more structured understanding of transformational leadership. In the post-training reflections, participants explained that church leadership should not only focus on managing ministry activities but also on inspiring congregational members, building a shared vision, encouraging innovation in ministry, and paying personal attention to the growth of others. Their responses became more analytical and conceptually grounded, indicating that the training broadened their leadership perspectives.

Qualitative observations during the discussion sessions also showed a noticeable shift in the way the participants interpreted leadership challenges within their churches. Before the training, the participants often described ministry challenges in practical terms, such as limited participation, generational differences, and communication difficulties. However, after the training, they began to reinterpret these challenges through the lens of transformational leadership. For example, limited congregational involvement was increasingly understood as a challenge of vision communication and member empowerment, while generational tensions were discussed in relation to the need for intellectual stimulation and adaptive leadership practices in the church.

The post-training discussion further revealed that the participants had become more aware of the importance of individualized pastoral care. Many participants emphasized that effective leadership in church contexts must involve listening, mentoring, and understanding the different needs of congregational members. This suggests that the training succeeded not only in improving conceptual understanding but also in strengthening participants' sensitivity to the relational and pastoral dimensions of leadership in the church.

The qualitative pre- and post-training evaluations indicated that the program contributed to a meaningful shift in participants' understanding of leadership. The participants moved from a relatively general and experience-based understanding of leadership to a more reflective, structured, and transformational perspective. This outcome confirms that leadership training grounded in both theoretical and biblical perspectives can effectively strengthen leadership awareness among the church leaders. Qualitative evaluation of the participants' reflections before and after the training revealed noticeable changes in their understanding of leadership practices in church ministry. Table 1 summarizes the key differences between the participants' perspectives before the training and the insights gained after the leadership development session.

Table 1. Qualitative comparison of participants' understanding before and after the training

Aspect	Before the Training	After the Training
Understanding of leadership	Leadership seen mainly as responsibility and service	Leadership understood as vision-driven, empowering, and transformative
Ministry vision	Vision not clearly articulated	Participants recognized the importance of communicating shared vision
Problem-solving in ministry	Challenges viewed as practical obstacles	Challenges reinterpreted through transformational leadership principles

Care for congregation members	Focus on general pastoral responsibility	Greater awareness of individualized mentoring and pastoral care
Collaboration among churches	Collaboration seen as optional	Collaboration seen as strategic and mission-supporting

### ***3.3 Participant Engagement and Learning Outcomes***

The training program generated high levels of participant engagement. Many participants actively contributed to the discussions by sharing practical leadership experiences from their ministry contexts. The interactive discussion sessions enabled the participants to critically reflect on their leadership practices and explore new approaches to leadership development. Participants reported that the training helped them gain a clearer understanding of transformational leadership principles and their relevance to church leadership.

In particular, the concepts of visionary leadership and inspirational motivation encouraged church leaders to rethink how they communicate their vision and mission within their congregations. Participants also highlighted the importance of intellectual stimulation in leadership, which involves encouraging critical thinking and creative problem solving within church communities. This aspect is particularly relevant in addressing contemporary challenges faced by churches, including generational differences, changing social dynamics, and the increasing complexity of ministry in urban contexts.

### ***3.4 Application of Transformational Leadership in Church Ministry***

The discussions during the training revealed several ways in which transformational leadership principles could be applied within church ministry. Participants emphasized that effective church leadership requires more than administrative competence; it also requires the ability to inspire, empower, and guide congregational members toward shared spiritual and social goals.

First, the dimension of idealized influence was reflected in discussions about the importance of integrity and moral examples in church leadership. Participants recognized that church leaders are expected to model ethical behavior and spiritual maturity, which strengthens trust within the congregation. Second, the dimension of inspirational motivation was highlighted through conversations about vision-driven ministries. Participants agreed that church leaders must articulate a clear vision that inspires members to actively participate in ministry and community service. Third, intellectual stimulation was identified as an important leadership practice for encouraging innovation in church programs. Participants discussed the need for church leaders to remain open to new ideas and creative approaches to ministry, particularly in engaging with younger generations. Finally, the dimension of individualized consideration was recognized as a core value of pastoral leadership. Many participants emphasized the importance of personal care, mentoring, and counseling as essential elements in church leadership.

### ***3.5 Strengthening Collaboration Among Churches***

Another significant outcome of the training program was the strengthening of collaboration among churches within the local association of the church leader network. The participants expressed a strong interest in continuing collaborative initiatives that address social issues and community development challenges. The training created a platform for church leaders to exchange experiences and build relationships across denominational boundaries in the region. Participants discussed the potential for future collaborative programs, such as leadership mentoring, community outreach initiatives, and joint social service activities. This collaborative spirit reflects one of the key principles of transformational leadership, which emphasizes a collective vision and shared responsibility in achieving organizational goals. By fostering inter-church cooperation, the program contributed to strengthening social capital within the church community in Pamulang.

### ***3.6 Implications for Leadership Development in Faith-Based Organizations***

The results of this community engagement program demonstrate that leadership-training initiatives can play an important role in strengthening leadership capacity within faith-based organizations. The integration of leadership theory with biblical perspectives provides a meaningful framework for church leaders' leadership development. Transformational leadership training enables church leaders to

develop a more strategic and inspirational approach to ministry. By emphasizing vision, empowerment, and collaboration, transformational leadership can help churches respond more effectively to contemporary social challenges while maintaining their spiritual mission. The program highlights the importance of continuous leadership development in church communities. Providing accessible leadership training opportunities can help equip church leaders with the skills and perspectives needed to lead their congregations effectively in a rapidly changing social environment.

### **3.7 Discussion**

The results of this community engagement program indicate that leadership training initiatives can play an important role in strengthening leadership awareness and collaborative practices among the church leaders. Qualitative evaluation conducted through pre-training and post-training reflections showed that participants developed a deeper understanding of leadership as a vision-oriented and relational practice rather than merely an administrative responsibility. This transformation in leadership perception is consistent with studies emphasizing the importance of leadership development programs in strengthening leadership capacity within nonprofit and community organizations. Leadership training initiatives have been shown to enhance leaders' ability to guide organizational change, strengthen teamwork, and improve community engagement ([Demircioglu & Chowdhury, 2021](#); [Eva et al., 2019](#)).

The findings of this study also demonstrate that transformational leadership concepts can provide a relevant framework for leadership development in church communities. Transformational leadership emphasizes inspiring followers, fostering a collective vision, and encouraging personal development among organizational members. Previous studies have reported that transformational leadership practices are strongly associated with higher levels of organizational commitment, volunteer engagement, and collaborative participation in nonprofit organizations ([Hoch et al., 2018](#); [Killins et al., 2020](#)). These leadership characteristics are particularly important in religious organizations, where leadership effectiveness often depends on relational trust, moral influence, and shared mission values.

The improvement in participants' understanding of visionary leadership and inspirational motivation observed in this program is consistent with previous community training initiatives. For example, a community leadership development program in faith-based organizations reported that participatory training methods, such as dialogue sessions, reflective learning, and collaborative discussions, significantly increased leadership awareness and community problem-solving capacity among local leaders. Similarly, a study on leadership education within religious institutions found that leadership training programs can improve leaders' ability to communicate their vision, mobilize community participation, and develop collaborative ministry practices ([Brown et al., 2022](#); [Demircioglu & Chowdhury, 2021](#)).

Another important finding of this study is the strengthening of collaboration among churches within the local association of the church leader network. Inter-organizational collaboration is widely recognized as an important element of community development. Research on faith-based community programs indicates that networks of religious organizations can strengthen social capital, enhance mutual learning, and increase the effectiveness of social initiatives conducted within local communities ([Tarpeh & Hustedde, 2021](#)). Through collaborative engagement, religious institutions can expand their social impact and contribute more effectively to addressing community challenges, such as poverty, social fragmentation, and youth disengagement.

Furthermore, the integration of leadership theory with theological reflection was perceived as particularly meaningful by the participants in this training program. The combination of organizational leadership concepts with spiritual and theological perspectives can strengthen leadership development within faith-based institutions because it aligns leadership practices with the moral values and mission orientation of such organizations. Studies on spiritual leadership have suggested that integrating leadership development with faith-based values can enhance leaders' sense of purpose, ethical commitment, and relational leadership practices within religious communities ([Sendjaya, Eva, Butar Butar, Robin, & Castles, 2019](#)).

The findings of this study confirm that transformational leadership training can serve as an effective community engagement strategy to strengthen leadership capacity within church networks. By combining leadership theory, theological reflection, and participatory learning methods, leadership development programs can help church leaders respond more effectively to contemporary social challenges while strengthening collaboration and community engagement.

### **3.8 Implications**

This study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that transformational leadership theory can be effectively applied to faith-based community engagement programs. The findings extend previous research by demonstrating that integrating transformational leadership concepts with biblical reflection enhances leadership awareness in religious organizational contexts. The study also highlights the relevance of participatory leadership training as a practical approach to operationalizing transformational leadership in community-based settings in the Philippines.

Practically, the findings suggest that church networks and faith-based organizations should implement structured leadership training programs to strengthen leadership capacity and collaboration. The participatory training model used in this program can be replicated in other church communities to enhance visionary leadership, member empowerment, and inter-organizational cooperation. Moreover, integrating leadership theory with theological reflection can help church leaders apply leadership principles more effectively in ministry contexts.

## **4. Conclusions**

### **4.1 Conclusion**

This community engagement program demonstrates that transformational leadership training effectively strengthens leadership understanding among church leaders within a local association of church leaders. Qualitative pre- and post-training reflections showed that participants shifted from viewing leadership primarily as an administrative responsibility to understanding it as vision-driven, relational, and empowering. Participants also demonstrated increased awareness of inspirational motivation, collaborative ministry practices and individualized pastoral care. Another key finding is the strengthening of collaboration among churches within the local association of the church leader network. The training created opportunities for participants to exchange experiences, develop shared ministry initiatives and build inter-church cooperation. These outcomes indicate that transformational leadership training can function as a catalyst for collaborative leadership and community engagement in faith-based organizations. The program confirms that integrating transformational leadership theory with biblical perspectives and participatory learning methods can enhance leadership capacity and support sustainable ministry development in church communities.

### **4.2 Research Limitations**

Despite the positive outcomes of this program, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the participants involved in this training were limited to church leaders within the Pamulang area, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other church networks or regions in Indonesia. Second, the program evaluation relied primarily on short-term feedback and learning assessments conducted immediately after the training session. The long-term impact on leadership practices within the participants' respective churches was not examined in this study. Finally, the evaluation methods used in this study were relatively simple and focused primarily on the descriptive analysis of participant responses.

### **4.3 Suggestions and Directions for Future Research**

Future community engagement initiatives could expand the scope of leadership training programs by involving participants from broader regional church networks or interdenominational organizations. Larger participant groups would allow for a more comprehensive evaluation of leadership development outcomes. Future studies should incorporate more rigorous evaluation methods, such as longitudinal assessments, structured leadership competency surveys, or mixed-method research designs combining qualitative and quantitative approaches.

These methods could provide deeper insights into how transformational leadership training influences leadership practices within church communities over time. Furthermore, future programs should explore the integration of mentoring systems, peer learning groups, and follow-up leadership workshops to sustain the impact of leadership training initiatives. Such initiatives may contribute to the long-term development of a transformational leadership culture within faith-based organizations.

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