

# Transformational Leadership of the Regent of West Bandung for the 2022-2023 Period in Post-Pandemic Economic Recovery

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**Abstract.** *This study aims to analyze the transformational leadership of the West Bandung Regent for the 2022–2023 period in the context of community economic recovery after the pandemic. Transformational leadership with four main dimensions, namely ideal influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration is used as an analytical framework to see the extent to which leadership style can encourage economic recovery in a participatory, innovative, and inclusive manner. The research method used is qualitative with a descriptive-analytical approach. Data collection techniques are carried out through documentation and in-depth interviews with informants from government, academics, business actors, media, and the community. Data analysis techniques are carried out thematically and inductively to trace the meaning of leadership actions and their impact on program implementation. The results of the study show that the Regent's leadership reflects a transformational character. The ideal influence dimension is seen in the courage to directly lead the economic assistance program. Inspirational motivation is reflected in the vision of regional development that drives community participation. Intellectual stimulation is realized through digital-based entrepreneurship training. Individual consideration is seen in dialogue activities with business actors at the local level. This leadership is able to improve bureaucratic performance and community involvement in economic programs. However, equal access to assistance and minimal business assistance are still obstacles. The conclusion of this study is that transformational leadership plays an important role in rebuilding the regional economy and needs to be further developed by strengthening the evaluation system and distributing information evenly throughout the region.*

**Keywords:** *Transformational Leadership, West Bandung Regent, Community Economic Recovery*

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## INTRODUCTION

Leadership in the public sector has long been recognized as a decisive factor in shaping organizational performance, policy effectiveness, and development outcomes, particularly during periods of crisis and transition. In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, governments worldwide have faced unprecedented economic, social, and institutional challenges that demand adaptive, visionary, and ethically grounded leadership. The pandemic disrupted global and local economies, weakened small and medium enterprises, increased unemployment and poverty rates, and exacerbated regional inequalities (Ferdian & Wikarta, 2023; Muharom et al., 2024; Galbi et al., 2021; Harefa, 2023; Manik et al., 2021).

In this context, local governments play a critical role as frontline actors responsible for translating national recovery agendas into concrete policies that directly affect communities.

Consequently, the quality of leadership exercised by regional heads becomes central to determining whether economic recovery efforts are inclusive, resilient, and sustainable. Recent literature emphasizes that crisis contexts require leadership styles that go beyond routine administrative management and instead promote transformation, innovation, and collective action (Chatzipanagiotou & Katsarou, 2023; Belias et al., 2024).

Transformational leadership, originally conceptualized by Ytterstad & Olaisen (2023) and further developed by Bass & Avolio (1994), has gained increasing attention in public administration studies as a framework capable of explaining how leaders mobilize followers, articulate compelling visions, and stimulate organizational learning. Empirical studies suggest that transformational leadership in government settings is positively associated with policy innovation, bureaucratic performance, public trust, and collaborative governance (Wright & Pandey, 2010; Hassan et al., 2014).

These findings underscore the relevance of examining transformational leadership within local government contexts, particularly in times of economic recovery following systemic shocks such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite broad recognition of leadership importance, regional economic recovery remains a complex and multidimensional problem. Post-pandemic recovery is not solely an economic issue but also a social and institutional one, involving the restoration of livelihoods, strengthening of local businesses, reduction of inequality, and rebuilding of public confidence in government (Romero et al., 2025; Romero-Leiton et al., 2025; Leach et al., 2021).

Many regions in developing countries, including Indonesia, have faced compounded challenges due to limited fiscal capacity, uneven development, and structural vulnerabilities that predated the pandemic (Rahmawati & Santosa, 2021; Olivia et al., 2020; Ikhsan et al., 2024). West Bandung Regency represents one such case, where the pandemic intensified poverty levels, caused stagnation among micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and widened disparities between sub-regions. These conditions demand leadership that is capable of responding rapidly while simultaneously fostering long-term development orientation.

The main research problem addressed in this study concerns how transformational leadership is implemented by regional heads to address post-pandemic economic recovery challenges at the local level. While numerous policy instruments and recovery programs have been introduced, their effectiveness often depends on leadership capacity to coordinate actors, motivate bureaucratic apparatuses, and engage communities meaningfully (Munro et al., 2008; Gqamane & Taylor, 2013). Conventional, transactional, or hierarchical leadership approaches frequently prove insufficient in crisis contexts, as they tend to prioritize compliance and short-term outputs rather than learning, innovation, and shared ownership of policy goals.

As a result, many recovery initiatives risk becoming fragmented, top-down, and disconnected from local needs. A general solution proposed in public administration and leadership literature is the adoption of leadership models that emphasize transformation rather than control. Transformational leadership offers a normative and analytical framework for understanding how leaders can inspire followers to transcend self-interest, embrace change, and commit to collective goals (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In government settings, this leadership style is believed to encourage bureaucratic reform, enhance policy responsiveness, and strengthen collaboration across sectors (Trottier et al., 2008; Altaf & Shabir, 2023).

By focusing on values, vision, and empowerment, transformational leadership provides a pathway for addressing complex recovery challenges that require coordinated action among government, business actors, civil society, academia, and the media. Previous studies have explored specific mechanisms through which transformational leadership contributes to organizational and policy outcomes. The dimension of idealized influence highlights the role of leaders as moral exemplars who build trust and legitimacy through integrity and consistency (Mohi & Zhang, 2023; Zheng et al., 2022; Onyebu, 2025).

Inspirational motivation emphasizes the articulation of a clear and compelling vision that aligns individual efforts with collective aspirations, thereby increasing commitment and morale. Intellectual stimulation encourages creativity, critical thinking, and openness to new ideas, which are essential for policy innovation and adaptive governance (Chukwuma & Zondo, 2024). Individualized consideration focuses on leaders' attentiveness to the needs and capacities of followers, fostering capacity building and inclusive participation. Together, these dimensions have been shown to enhance organizational learning and performance in public sector organizations (Hussain et al., 2023).

In the context of economic recovery, these dimensions translate into concrete leadership practices such as supporting MSME innovation, facilitating cross-sectoral collaboration, and ensuring that recovery programs are inclusive of vulnerable groups. Empirical research in local government settings demonstrates that transformational leaders are more likely to promote participatory planning, collaborative networks, and integrated development strategies (Torfing et al., 2019; Giannakos et al., 2022; Abbas & Kumari, 2023). Such approaches are particularly relevant for post-pandemic recovery, where no single actor possesses sufficient resources or knowledge to address complex socioeconomic problems alone.

Hence, transformational leadership emerges as a theoretically grounded and practically relevant solution to the challenges faced by regions like West Bandung Regency. Several empirical studies in Indonesia have confirmed the relevance of transformational leadership theory in the context of regional governance. Thamrin et al. (2024) found that transformational leadership practiced by the Regent of Sragen contributed to improved bureaucratic performance and community participation in local development programs. Similarly, Basri et al. (2022) demonstrated that transformational leadership in West Bandung Regency positively influenced policy coordination and stakeholder engagement.

However, these studies tend to focus on general governance performance or administrative reform rather than specifically examining post-pandemic economic recovery. As such, they provide important insights but do not fully address how transformational leadership operates under crisis recovery conditions. A review of the existing literature reveals a notable research gap. While transformational leadership has been widely studied in public sector contexts, empirical investigations that explicitly link the four dimensions of transformational leadership to post-pandemic economic recovery at the regional level remain limited, particularly in developing country contexts.

Moreover, few studies provide in-depth qualitative analysis of how leadership practices are translated into concrete recovery programs and collaborative mechanisms involving multiple stakeholders. This gap suggests the need for context-sensitive research that captures the dynamics of leadership practice, policy implementation, and stakeholder interaction in real-world recovery settings.

## **METHODS**

### **Method and Design of the research.**

This paper employs a descriptive-analytical research design of a qualitative approach to explore transformational leadership manifested by the Regent of West Bandung Regency in the 2022-2023 years after the economic crisis caused by the pandemic. The qualitative paradigm is appropriate since the study is aimed at shedding light on leadership practices, definitions, and relationships in a real governance context instead of testing hypotheses or measuring relationships. The study is placed as a single case study, which focuses on West Bandung Regency as a limited area in terms of locality, leader agent, and timeframe. This design will allow a close-textured, contextually sensitive study of leadership procedures and policy implementation within a certain area. The case is not supposed to provide statistical representativeness but should be informative analytically to identify the ways the transformational leadership is practiced in local government during crisis recovery phase.

## **Time and Place of Study The study took place between the years 1986 and 2002**

West Bandung Regency has been selected as the research example because it has had significant socio-economic challenges following the Covid-19 pandemic, especially in the sustainability of MSMEs, disruption of employment, and inequality in economic recovery. The 2022-2023 phase is associated with the most crucial stage of the period during which the local government shifted to the recovery-oriented policies of development instead of emergency response. The researcher elicited retrospective consideration of the leadership actions during recovery programmes implementation up to the month of June 2024 by collecting data between January and June 2024. This time frame provided enough time so that informants could evaluate leadership practices, and it was also not too long to be irrelevant to policies in process.

## **The Informant Selection and Sampling Strategy**

The selection of informants was done using purposive sampling; this was guided by the relevance, experience and hands-on participation in post-pandemic economic recovery programs within West Bandung Regency. The penta-helix framework of governance informed the sampling strategy because it emphasizes the importance of cooperation between the government, academia, business, media, and civil society in the development of the region. In line with this, the informants were: (1) regional government officials as participants in policy formulation and implementation; (2) members with academic expertise in the field of governance and regional development; (3) MSME actors and business representatives who were recipients or affected by economic recovery initiatives; (4) media practitioners who were involved in the public communication of government policies; and (5) community representatives involved or affected by economic recovery initiatives. There was the inclusion of these various groups of stakeholders in order to encompass different opinions to the leadership practices of the Regent and their perceived effects. The selection of informants continued until informational saturation was achieved, i.e. the additional information gained through further interview was not of any substantial new information about the subject of research.

## **Data Collection Techniques**

The information was gathered using in-depth interviews and documentation studies thus making methodological triangulation possible. The semi-structured form of in-depth interviews was used which provided both consistency across the interviews and the ability to investigate research issues brought up by the informants. The interview questions focused on leadership behaviour, decision making processes, stakeholder involvement, program implementation and challenges faced during economic recovery. The interviews were done either through the face-to-face method or through the online communication medium depending on the availability of the informants and practicality. Documentation research involved an analytical review of governmental publications, regional development strategies, policy reports, programme directives, verbal communications, press releases and media reports on the post-pandemic economic recovery and government leadership actions. Instead of being used as a background information, these documents were considered to be empirical data which mirror institutional priorities, policy narratives, and governance practices.

## **Data Analysis Procedures**

Data analysis has followed qualitative analysis process which is thematic and done on an iterative basis. Interview data and documentary information were initially sorted and processed to get acquainted with the content. Relevant utterances, incidents and policy responses were then coded in such a way that they could identify recurring trends that were linked to leadership practices and recovery efforts. It was mainly an inductive analysis that allowed themes to be found within the data, but that was analytically informed by the four dimensions of transformational leadership as outlined by Bass and Avolio in idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration. These dimensions were an analytical lens, but not a strict coding frame and made the researcher understand leadership

practices by mapping them onto theory without being insensitive to contextual differences or empirical complexity. Further interest was given to the challenges, limitations, and divergent views raised by the informants to prevent confirmatory or normative interpretations. This method guaranteed depth in analysis and made sure that the practices of leadership were critically analyzed and not described only.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Transformational Leadership of the Regent of West Bandung Seen from the Idealized Influence

Idealized influence is one dimension in transformational leadership theory that emphasizes the importance of charisma and exemplary leadership in influencing followers. This dimension refers to the leader's ability to be a respected, admired, and trusted role model. In this context, leaders not only give instructions, but also demonstrate consistent noble values in daily actions. Bass and Avolio explain that leader charisma is formed through followers' perceptions of the integrity, courage, and commitment shown by the leader. An idealized leader will create a strong emotional bond and encourage followers to show their best performance in order to achieve common goals. This kind of leader is able to generate collective enthusiasm and trust in the vision he brings.

#### Direct Presence, Courage, and Moral Commitment in Leadership Practice

In an interview conducted with Hengki Kurniawan as the Regent of West Bandung for the 2022-2023 period, he emphasized that charisma is not just a communication style, but also a commitment to be present in the community. The results of the interview with Hengki Kurniawan are as follows:

*"In my opinion, charisma is not just about style or how to speak, but how we are consistent in acting, keeping promises, and being present in the community when they need us. For example, when the pandemic had just ended and many of our people lost their jobs or were struggling economically, I did not stay behind a desk. I went directly to the field, visited markets, talked to MSMEs, and even helped distribute basic food assistance and business capital. I want the community to feel that their leader is present, not just seen on billboards or social media."*

This statement shows how Hengki Kurniawan positions himself as a responsive and empathetic leader. His courage to go directly to the field after the pandemic to meet MSME actors and help distribute aid is a reflection of actions that are consistent with transformational leadership values. This approach encourages the creation of a strong sense of trust between the community and the leader.

Another proof of Hengki Kurniawan's charisma is seen in his bold move when he decided to implement an open-close system in the tourism sector during the pandemic. Despite the risks and warnings from the Governor of West Java, he still made the decision to save the fate of thousands of workers in the sector. Hengki stated, "Leaders must dare to take risks," which shows his courage and commitment in facing difficult situations. This decision is a real representation of influential leadership that is able to motivate and inspire, because it is based on a sincere intention to restore the socio-economic conditions of the community. Steps like this foster a sense of admiration and trust in the community towards his leadership.

In the context of government, Hengki Kurniawan also shows exemplary behavior by encouraging bureaucratic reform through a humanistic approach. He emphasized the importance of ASN getting out of their comfort zone and serving the community more quickly and efficiently. He said,

*"I avoid a work culture that is too bureaucratic and invite ASN to dare to get out of their comfort zone."*

This action indicates how ideal influence is demonstrated within the internal scope of the bureaucracy. By setting an example and creating a positive work culture, Hengki has succeeded

in building loyalty and work enthusiasm among ASN, so that government effectiveness has increased. Values such as honesty, courage, and hard work are the hallmarks of his leadership style.

### **Relational Charisma, Community Trust, and Participatory Governance**

Sri Dustirawati, Head of the Cooperatives and SMEs Service, stated that Regent Hengki Kurniawan's charisma was felt from his warm and open communication style. The results of the interview with Sri Dustirawati are as follows:

*"His charisma is not in a rigid or formal sense, but emerges from a warm, open, and easily accepted communication style by various groups. When he comes to UMKM events or meetings with cooperatives, the atmosphere is always relaxed. This is what makes business actors feel appreciated, and from there a new spirit arises for them to rise. In my opinion, this is a form of charisma that is relevant in today's leaders who can move with a personal approach, not just authority."*

This leadership style makes it easier for the community and MSMEs to connect and feel appreciated. Activities such as promoting MSME products through the Regent's personal social media are real evidence that he leads with a personal and inspiring approach. This creates an atmosphere of trust and collective spirit that is very important in the post-pandemic economic recovery phase. Furthermore, programs such as "Warung Berkah" demonstrate Regent Hengki's courage in implementing innovative and directly impactful policies. According to Sri Dustirawati, this program not only targets the provision of physical assistance, but also builds a strong cooperative ecosystem. By requiring ASN to set aside 5% of their tukin to shop for local products, the Regent shows consistency in strengthening the local economy. The example given by the Regent in this program not only has an economic impact, but also forms a collective mindset regarding the importance of collaboration in regional development. This is a real example of how an ideal influential leader can move the government structure towards a more participatory and progressive direction.

In the same interview, Hengki Kurniawan conveyed the importance of collaboration between pentahelix elements as a foundation for economic recovery. He said,

*"I invite all elements of society, from the government, private sector, academics, to the community to work together so that the West Bandung economy can grow and develop."*

This statement strengthens the role of the Regent as a transformational leader who does not only rely on structural power, but also builds cross-sector partnerships. Through intense collaboration, Hengki builds an inclusive and innovative work ecosystem. This approach fosters trust from various elements of society and strengthens the social foundation for sustainable development.

One real form of ideal influence can also be seen from the success of vaccination achievements in West Bandung Regency, which was once the highest in West Java. In an emergency, Hengki implemented a morning, afternoon, evening, and night vaccination strategy. He told his staff, "If you can't, step down. Are you ready?" This statement reflects a firm, results-oriented, and responsible leadership style. This success is a symbol of courage and determination in facing a crisis, while also showing how an influential leader does not hesitate to put himself at the forefront. This strategy also proves the effectiveness of his approach in building motivation and collective awareness for the common good.

On the other hand, the role of an ideal influential leader is reflected in his/her willingness to listen and respond to criticism. Hengki stated that input from the public and the media is "vitamin, not poison." This attitude reflects openness and maturity in accepting constructive criticism. By opening communication channels such as the "Lapor Kang Hengki" application and being active on social media, Hengki creates an inclusive and participatory government environment. This exemplary behavior in listening and responding is one of the indicators of ideal

influence in transformational leadership. This strengthens social legitimacy and public trust in local government.

### **Critical Public Perception, Institutional Integrity, and Evidence-Based Leadership**

Representatives from the community also provided their views on Hengki Kurniawan as the Regent of West Bandung for the 2022-2023 period. Edi Junaedi, a resident of Batujajar District, stated that the community has various assessments of Hengki's figure. The results of the interview with Edi Junaedi are as follows:

*"Yes, people definitely look at him differently, some like him because he is an artist, there are also those who look at him because of his work in the government. I personally see that he is quite diligent in going to the field, and continues to be active on social media, so information from the government reaches the people quickly. However, I also think that managing an area as big as KBB can't just be a well-known capital, but you also have to be smart in managing the government."*

From the statement, it can be seen that the perception of a leader's ideal influence can vary depending on the background and experience of the community. Edi also added that popularity alone is not enough to lead a region as large as West Bandung Regency, it also requires qualified managerial skills. In this context, charisma must be accompanied by adequate capacity so that it can be accepted by all groups. Ideal influence becomes ineffective if it only relies on image without real and targeted policy support. Therefore, the integration between popularity and competence is the key to ideal transformational leadership.

The ideal influence is also reflected in the way Hengki Kurniawan builds public participation through community economic forums. Prana Ajisasdara, Chair of the West Bandung Regency MSME Forum, explained that since 2022, his party has been actively supporting people's economic programs initiated by the Regent. The results of the interview with Prana Ajisasdara are as follows:

*"Since 2022, we have been actively supporting the implementation of programs initiated by the Regent, such as Kios Warung Berkah, digital marketing training, and facilitating access to capital."*

Prana said that the Regent's approach in supporting MSME actors is not only instructional, but also dialogical and listens to aspirations. The MSME Forum also actively advocates for various MSME obstacles to technical services and gets a relatively quick response. This shows that the Regent's leadership is not top-down, but rather provides space for local community involvement. The success of programs such as MSME digitalization is also inseparable from inclusive policies and partnerships. Even according to internal data from the UMKM Forum, more than 28% of fostered UMKM now have access to digital marketing. This shows that idealized influence is also present in the form of creating a collaborative and adaptive ecosystem.

Furthermore, Prana Ajisasdara revealed that the policy of local product shopping movement by ASN has a direct impact on the economic turnover of residents. He said that the direct involvement of the Regent in the movement strengthened the enthusiasm of the community and ASN. Results of the interview with Prana Ajisasdara:

*"We also support the local product shopping movement echoed by the Regent through ASN and the general public. This movement has a direct impact on the local economic cycle. From our internal monitoring, there was an average increase in turnover of 20-30% in food-beverage and craft MSMEs during the fourth quarter of 2022, compared to the previous period."*

This explanation illustrates that the ideal influence is also manifested in the courage of the leader to move the bureaucracy to side with the community. Not only making regulations, the Regent is directly present at bazaars, exhibitions, and training. This kind of approach is concrete evidence of a leader who is present and involved. Trust in a leader figure does not only grow from

promises, but from consistent presence in the process. This kind of influence encourages a collective spirit that has a direct impact on the resilience of the local economy. That is a form of charisma that is contextual and inspiring.

Amel Rahma, the admin of the Instagram account Info Bandung Barat, assessed that the presence of the Regent figure on social media has had a positive influence on the connection between the community and the government. As a digital media actor, she saw that the Regent's leadership content was very relevant and received public attention. The results of the interview with Amel Rahma are as follows:

*"As the admin of the @infobandungbarat account, we realize that social media now has a huge influence. So we routinely raise content about economic recovery programs, especially about MSMEs, capital assistance, digital training, and local product shopping movements. Our goal is for the public to know that there are real opportunities and programs that they can take advantage of, not just political promises. And the most effective thing is when we package the content in the form of infographics or short reels."*

From this presentation, it can be seen that social media is a bridge that strengthens citizen involvement in every program that is run. In addition, Amel Rahma added that when the "One RW One Business" program was launched, the Info Bandung Barat account received more than 70 mentions in just one week. This reflects the high public enthusiasm, and cannot be separated from the Regent's communication strategy. In terms of ideal influence, open communication and visualization of achievements are effective means of building trust. Leadership charisma is not only displayed in official forums, but also through a consistent and positive digital presence.

From the academic aspect, Dr. Yudi Rusfiana as the Vice Chancellor of IPDN said that Hengki Kurniawan's involvement in academic discussions was a reflection of leadership that was open to scientific input. He explained that IPDN and the local government have established a partnership in the study of economic recovery. The results of the interview with Dr. Yudi Rusfiana:

*"The role of academics in the context of post-pandemic economic recovery is very strategic. Academics are present not only as observers, but also as critical and constructive partners for the local government."*

According to him, the success of the program for MSMEs in West Bandung cannot be separated from the studies carried out collaboratively. Hengki is considered capable of accepting input and implementing it concretely in the form of policies. The charisma of a leader is not only measured by assertiveness, but also by humility to learn and work together. Ideal influence is built when leaders use science as the basis for decisions, not just popularity. This kind of openness strengthens the legitimacy of evidence-based public policy.

Dr. Yudi Rusfiana also highlighted how the direct involvement of the Regent is an important marker in the success of policy implementation. He revealed that Hengki's role does not stop at the launch, but also in the monitoring and evaluation process. The results of the interview with Dr. Yudi Rusfiana:

*"The success of these programs cannot be separated from Mr. Hengki's direct involvement in monitoring their implementation. He went to the field, ensuring that assistance reached the right hands, and did not just stop at paper reports."*

From this statement, it can be seen that ideal influence is not only present in vision and communication, but also in concrete actions. The attitude of a leader who does not hesitate to monitor directly is a symbol of integrity and honesty. This influence is very important in building trust in the bureaucracy and the community. Especially during the recovery period, the presence of a leader figure is very much needed to provide direction, enthusiasm, and honest supervision. Charisma like this is substantive and has a systemic impact on the culture of government organizations.

Ayu Heriza, Secretary of the West Bandung Regent, said that while accompanying Regent Hengki Kurniawan, she witnessed firsthand how integrity and moral principles were always the basis for every policy-making. She said that in closed meetings, the Regent always emphasized the importance of siding with the people, and was firm in preventing budget misuse. In her interview, Ayu stated:

*"For example, in closed meetings, he often emphasized that every policy must be pro-people, especially after the pandemic. He also did not hesitate to remind his staff not to misuse the budget. In fact, there was a time when he postponed a project because he was not sure that the project would have a direct impact on the community. For me, that is clear evidence of his moral integrity."*

This shows that ideal influence does not solely come from charismatic communication, but also from a commitment to moral values that are consistently demonstrated. The decision to postpone a project because of considerations of community benefits reflects high moral courage. This is one of the main indicators of impactful transformational leadership, namely the courage to choose the right action even though it is unpopular. This attitude also serves as a concrete example for the ranks below about the importance of ethics in governance. A leader who is able to maintain a moral line in a dilemma is a figure who should be emulated in local government.

Furthermore, Ayu also highlighted the Regent's thoroughness and attention to the implementation of programs in the field. She said that Hengki Kurniawan often corrected data and directly checked reports of aid that was distributed. In her statement, Ayu explained ,

*"Mr. Hengki always asks for details, even about data on MSMEs receiving aid, he checks. Sometimes he memorizes the names of the MSMEs he meets".*

This kind of thoroughness shows that ideal influence is also formed by leadership that pays attention to micro aspects. Leaders who know directly who is being helped will build higher trust among the community. This also shows a professional attitude and commitment to data accuracy in decision making. In the context of bureaucracy, this kind of work style transmits a work culture based on responsibility and accountability.

The presence of a leader who knows the names of MSMEs is not only proof of personal attention, but also creates the impression that the government cares and does not work mechanically. When a regional head can directly mention who is being helped, the community will feel appreciated. This is an important aspect of idealized influence, namely the ability to build sincere emotional relationships with the community. Ayu Heriza explained that this attitude was not made up, but was consistently demonstrated by Hengki in various field activities. Social sensitivity and a strong memory for the names of residents are part of how he shows commitment. This creates an atmosphere of leadership that is down to earth and not distant. Leaders who are close and concrete in their actions will be much more respected than those who only speak on a formal stage. Therefore, idealized influence will be built even stronger from small actions that have a big psychological impact.

In various meetings, Hengki Kurniawan often not only provides direction, but also directly checks the technical readiness of the program. He wants to ensure that there is no misdirected assistance or activities that are merely formalities. Ayu Heriza said that the Regent is very serious about the program implementation report, not just receiving reports on paper. When the regional head pays attention to the technical level like this, then the ranks below are also encouraged to work seriously. In transformational leadership, this aspect is part of idealized influence which emphasizes the importance of exemplary work. When leaders show sincerity, collective spirit and professionalism will grow. This indicates that idealized influence is not something abstract, but rather born from a consistent work style and commitment to the quality of public service.

Overall, the narrative built by Hengki Kurniawan through his various policies and approaches shows the integration between words and deeds. Exemplary behavior, courage to make decisions, sensitivity to social conditions, and openness to criticism are the foundations of

his ideal influence. All interview informants emphasized that the Regent's presence was felt directly through actions, not just statements. In the post-pandemic era, the role of a leader is very important in rebuilding public enthusiasm and trust. Hengki's transformational leadership lies not only in policy innovation, but also in the way he greets and listens to his people. This kind of charisma emerges from consistency and siding with the common people. Therefore, the idealized influence dimension in Hengki Kurniawan's leadership can be said to have been realized in real terms. Empirical evidence from informants shows the alignment between vision and implementation.

Sri Dustirawati as the Head of the Cooperatives and SMEs Office of West Bandung Regency explained that in the process of economic recovery, the existence of a leader who can be a role model greatly determines the direction of the organization's movement. She said that one real form of Regent Hengki Kurniawan's commitment to restoring the local economy can be seen from the attention to the UMKM sector. Based on the data submitted, as many as 1,607 micro business units have received training and assistance, although in percentage terms it has only reached 2.76% of the total UMKM in West Bandung Regency. This indicates that the reach of intervention is still limited, but it has shown serious initial efforts from the local government. In an interview, Sri said:

*"Actually, we have also conducted training and mentoring. This year, there are 1,607 micro-enterprises that have participated in training and mentoring. But if we look at the total number of MSMEs in KBB, the percentage is still only around 2.76%. This means that there are still many that have not been touched. This is a big homework for us, because the challenges ahead are increasingly complex."*

The statement shows that the challenges in economic recovery lie not only in technical aspects, but also in leadership. Hengki Kurniawan is considered successful in building a collective spirit through exemplary behavior and consistency in action. Sri Dustirawati also highlighted that other-challenges come from low digital literacy and weak business management in most MSME actors. In this situation, the Regent does not only provide direction from behind the desk, but encourages regional officials to be more proactive and provide solutions. According to Sri, Hengki Kurniawan leads with a down-to-earth approach and is not distant from the community. This is a real form of ideal influence, namely a leader who is present and directly involved in facing complex challenges.

Furthermore, Sri Dustirawati emphasized that although coordination between regional devices sometimes faces obstacles, Hengki Kurniawan actively builds open communication across sectors. In this case, the leadership shown is not merely symbolic, but reflective and collaborative. Sri said:

*"Another challenge also arises from the cross-sector coordination side. Sometimes programs from other agencies are not yet connected to the real needs of MSMEs in the field, which continue to change rapidly. But now communication between sectors has started to improve, so we can slowly overcome this problem."*

This statement shows that the Regent's leadership style prioritizes openness, strengthening coordination, and building an inclusive work ecosystem. With leadership that provides space for dialogue and learning, regional apparatus are encouraged to innovate and adjust programs to the real needs of the community. In the context of idealized influence, Hengki Kurniawan has become a symbol of integrity and role model, not only through public communication, but also through the formation of an adaptive bureaucratic culture.

Sri Dustirawati also emphasized how the Regent showed a solution-oriented attitude in dealing with regional budget limitations. Hengki is considered capable of encouraging collaboration with the private sector and training institutions to close the gap in resources. This approach shows how a transformational leader does not stop at discourse, but is able to respond to crises in realistic yet innovative ways. In Sri's view, Hengki's leadership is not only felt by the

internal bureaucracy, but also by the MSME community who are starting to get space and support in facing challenges.

Thus, it can be concluded that the ideal influence of Regent Hengki Kurniawan is reflected in down-to-earth, communicative, collaborative, and utility-oriented leadership. The approach used prioritizes direct presence in the community, utilization of digital communication channels, collaboration with pentahelix elements, and decision-making based on moral values. Support from MSME actors, academics, the general public, and internal teams shows that his leadership is respected because of the consistency of his actions. When a leader is present not only as a symbol, but as an implementer and person in charge, then the ideal influence grows naturally.

The values of integrity, courage, and empathy are the main strengths in building public trust. Transformational leadership that emphasizes ideal dimensions of influence like this can be a model for other regions in the context of inclusive and service-oriented governance. Hengki Kurniawan, in this case, has shown that charisma is not only inherited, but is built through dedication and real action.

### **Idealized Influence as Moral Legitimacy and Embodied Leadership in Crisis Contexts**

Transformational leadership theory assumes that idealized influence refers to the ability of a leader to act as a morally and ethically positive role model and person, thus, inspiring admiration, confidence, and respect in the followers (Mudd-Fegett & Mudd, 2024). The results of this study strongly support this theoretical assumption and go further to show that in the context of post-crisis local governance, idealized influence is most often represented by embodied moral presence as opposed to abstract charisma.

The empirical data received in the current study show that the leadership legitimacy of the Regent was always perceived through direct behavior, namely, visiting markets personally, speaking with MSME actors, controlling provision of aid, and leading vaccination campaigns, but not by formal power or symbolic communication. Such behaviors were seen as expressions of moral accountability and bravery especially when faced with light periods of ambiguity as well as socioeconomic susceptibility. These interpretations are in line with the postulation by Groves & LaRocca (2011) that transformational leadership is based on moral purpose and shared values rather than transactional exchanges.

The ethical standards applied to leaders are also increased by the post-pandemic environment. According to the crisis leadership scholarship, in the case of collective trauma, followers not only consider the results of the leaders but also their readiness to take risks and bear responsibility. Informants understood the decision-making of the Regent in these sensitive situations like the open-close tourism policy and intensive strategies in vaccination as an example of moral courage and not as political risk-taking. This continues to affirm the idea that idealized influence is created when the leaders are perceived to be acting in the best interest of the group instead of personal or political security in times of crisis recovery.

Notable, the research shows that the participants who followed the leaders failed to refer to charisma as eloquence or popularity. Instead, charisma is re-defined as a fit of words and actions, thus repeating the intent of Colquitt & Baer (2023) in stating that credibility is maintained through the integrity of behavior in a leader. The fact that the Regent did not intentionally distance himself or herself to the community and the bureaucracy was a plus to his perceptions of being genuine and trustworthy. Idealized influence is therefore a sort of moral legitimacy, which is based on visible sacrifice, presence and ethical commitment.

The given contribution to the transformational leadership scholarship highlights the fact that idealized influence within the local government environments is highly contextual and performative in nature, but not symbolic. It implies that leadership legitimacy is renegotiated on daily basis, especially during the recovery periods when trust has to be restored.

## **Relational, Participatory, and Digital Dimensions of Idealized Influence**

In addition to moral presence, the empirical data demonstrates that the idealized influence in the context of West Bandung is highly relational and participatory. The idealized influence theory of transformational leadership, assumes that there exists an emotional connection between the followers and the leaders (Bakker et al., 2023; Zadok et al., 2024). However, the modern literature on the subject of public leadership is becoming more concerned with the primacy of interaction, dialogue, and co-production. The given research provides strong empirical support of this opinion.

The opinions of informants who belonged to the MSME community, civil servants, academia, and media actors have invariably offered the same description of the leadership style of the Regent, who is open, warm, and dialogical. Programmes like Warung Berkah, MSME digitalization programmes, and local product shopping movements were not perceived only as policy tools, but as platforms to relate and feel that the stakeholders could be recognized and engaged. The given phenomenon proves that the idealized influence is strengthened when the practices of leadership encouraged participation and the shared ownership of developmental processes.

These results are consistent with current understandings of public leadership that suggest that leadership power in governance is being decentralized and relational, as opposed to being hierarchical. The policy by the Regent is a lesson in how idealized power can be achieved by continued listening, responsiveness and collaborative interaction as an alternative to command-and-control processes. According to the informants, MSME forums and academic partnerships served as dialogic spaces, which enhanced the view of an inclusive and adaptive leadership.

This relational dimension is also enhanced by digital communication. The social media platforms play a pivotal role in maintaining the visibility, transparency, and contact between the government and the citizens. Unlike the anxieties in the political communication research community that the internet presence will be performative (Klinger et al., 2023), informants in this research saw online presence of the Regent to be substantive and informative, especially when associated with tangible programmes and outcomes. This confirms current research that digital leadership may be useful in improving trust in cases where it is consistent with offline behavior (Criado et al., 2013; Li et al., 2016; Eslamdoust et al., 2024).

However, the results also reveal the conditional relational influence. Community informants pointed out that with popularity and visibility there have to be managerial competence as well as effective policy implementation. This observation is an indication that Bass & Steidlmeier (1999) differentiate authentic and pseudo-transformational leadership. Idealized influence loses face when viewed as image-based instead of outcome-based; therefore, relational charisma needs to be supported by administrative competence continuously in order to make it permanent. Overall, this part of the paper proves the idea that idealized influence in modern local politics is co-created in the interaction of relationships with other people, participatory processes, and online communication, thus supporting the shift towards interactive and heroic leadership models.

## **Institutional Exemplarity, Bureaucratic Culture, and the Structural Limits of Idealized Influence**

One of the most important contributions of this work is the consideration of the functioning of idealized influence in institutional and bureaucratic organizations. Although the transformational leadership theory typically takes into consideration the dynamics between the leader and the team member, the results in this case demonstrate that idealized influence is manifested in institutional exemplarity as well, or the capacity of the leader to influence the organizational norms, ethics, and work culture by his/her own example.

The internal informants underscored how the Regent focused on integrity, accountability, and face-to-face supervision. Measures like the checking of accuracy of data, checking on the

implementation of programs, delaying of projects without a clear benefit to the populace were viewed as ethical indicators that strengthened the professionalism among the civil servants. This has manifested the argument put forward by Wright and Pandey (2010) that leadership influence in the public organizations is passed on by role modeling as opposed to directives.

Taking micro-level details into consideration by the Regent, including the recollection of the names of the actors of the MSMEs or the personal control over the aid distribution, were symbolic in terms of humanizing the governance processes. These measures enhanced a feeling of responsibility and seriousness among the subordinates, which is what Moynihan et al. (2012) refer to as mission-driven public service motivation. In this respect, idealized influence is one of the factors that lead to the formation of bureaucratic culture because it harmonizes individual action with social values. However, it is equally clear that the results also indicate crucial structural limitations restraining the transformative power of leadership impact. In spite of high moral and relational legitimacy, the scope of MSME training and assistance programs is low, which is significant only a small part of the total MSME population. This highlights one important point, structural capacity constraints cannot be counterbalanced by idealized influence alone (Reinsberg et al., 2019).

The literature on public administration asserts that the effectiveness of leadership depends on the institutional resources, coordination among the different agencies, as well as policy infrastructure. The case of West Bandung shows that idealized influence enlist motivation, trust and collaboration, but does not necessarily overcome structural issues, like budget limitations, digital illiteracy, and complexities of coordination. This discovery moderates normative suppositions of the transformational leadership theory that moral influence is bound to engender big-scale change. The recognition of these restrictions allows the study to not romanticize the idea of leadership charisma but instead places idealized influence in a realistic structure of governance. The leadership of the Regent is still effective, which requires institutional reinforcing and scaling of policies. This is in line with the current demands in the field of leadership research to combine the study of leadership with the concept of governance capacity and institutional design.

## CONCLUSION

**Idealized Influence** The ideal influence of Regent Hengki Kurniawan, Regent of West Bandung, Regent of West Bandung for the 2022–2023 period already has charisma and high morals. This is demonstrated by a down-to-earth leadership approach, daring to go directly to the community, and daring to take risks such as in the implementation of the “Warung Berkah” program for MSMEs affected by the pandemic. Hengki Kurniawan shows exemplary behavior by being present as a direct implementer, not just a symbol of power, and building two-way communication through digital platforms and public forums involving pentahelix elements. The values of integrity, empathy, and courage in making moral-based decisions are the strong foundations of his transformational leadership style. However, these two things have not fully provided inspiration and an example that is evenly distributed to subordinates and the wider community. This is demonstrated by the unequal access and impact of programs, such as capital assistance and training for MSME actors, of which only 1,607 units (2.76%) out of a total of 58,216 MSMEs received training and mentoring. In addition, there is still a gap in the internalization of leadership values in the bureaucracy and limited community participation in several regions.

## SUGGESTION

Thus, the ideal influence of the Regent still needs to be optimized so that it can touch comprehensively both at the bureaucratic level and all levels of society.

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