

THE IMPACT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL AND AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP ON ACADEMIC SERVICE QUALITY: A CASE STUDY FROM PADANGSIDIMPUAN, INDONESIA

Muhammad Syahril Harahap¹, Sri Milfayetty², Mariani³, Febriani Hastini Nasution⁴

¹²³Department of Educational Management, Postgraduate Program, Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan, Indonesia

⁴Faculty of Mathematic and Science Education, Institut Pendidikan Tapanuli Selatan, Padangsidimpuan, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: muhammadsyahrilharahap@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of transformational-authentic leadership on academic service quality in higher education institutions. Integrating the theoretical frameworks of transformational and authentic leadership, this research explores how ethical vision-driven leadership affects dimensions of academic services, particularly from the perspective of staff and faculty. Using a quantitative approach with 250 respondents across three universities in Padangsidimpuan City, North Sumatra, Indonesia data were analyzed using SPSS with descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Results show that transformational-authentic leadership positively and significantly predicts academic service quality, with authentic relational transparency and authentic individualized consideration emerging as key contributors. The study contributes to leadership and service quality literature by proposing a hybrid leadership model as a strategic lever to elevate institutional service performance.

Keywords: *Transformational Leadershi, Authentic Leadership, Academic Service Quality, Higher Education, Private Universities*

1. INTRODUCTION

The evolving landscape of higher education is increasingly characterized by heightened expectations for accountability, quality assurance, and continuous innovation in academic service delivery (Mgaiwa, 2021). In an era defined by globalization, digitization, and intensified competition among institutions, the pressure to deliver high-quality, student-centered services has never been greater. Universities and colleges are not only expected to provide robust academic programs, but also to ensure that their administrative, instructional, and support services meet the dynamic needs of diverse stakeholders (Cheng, 2015). Within this context, leadership has emerged as a pivotal factor in shaping organizational performance, particularly in relation to service quality outcomes.

Transformational leadership, with its emphasis on vision, motivation, and capacity-building, has been widely acknowledged as a driver of institutional change and effectiveness. Leaders who adopt this style are known to inspire followers toward shared goals, stimulate intellectual engagement, and provide individualized support (Bass & Riggio, 2005; Crowley, 2022; Vinet & Zhedanov, 2011). However, the complexity of modern academic environments also demands a deeper emphasis on ethical behavior, relational integrity, and personal authenticity—dimensions that are central to authentic leadership theory. Authentic leadership, grounded in self-awareness, moral perspective, balanced decision-making, and relational transparency, has gained increasing scholarly attention for its potential to foster trust, psychological safety, and organizational commitment (Alvesson & Einola, 2022; McOyoo, 2022).

This study advances the notion that a hybrid leadership paradigm—transformational-authentic leadership—offers a more holistic and contextually relevant model for today's academic institutions. By synthesizing the visionary and motivational elements of transformational leadership with the ethical and relational depth of authentic leadership, this model aligns leadership behaviors with the evolving expectations of higher education stakeholders. It is posited that such a leadership approach can significantly enhance the design, delivery, and perception of academic services, fostering cultures of excellence, inclusivity, and sustainable innovation within educational organizations.

1.1. Transformational Authentic Leadership

Bass and Avolio (2004) conceptualize transformational leadership through three key components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. This model emphasizes a leader's ability to inspire and elevate followers' commitment toward organizational goals. Authentic leadership, as defined by Walumbwa et al. (2008), is grounded in self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced information processing. Unlike charismatic leadership, authentic leaders are characterized by their ethical grounding and consistency between values and behavior (Pitchford et al., 2020). Transformational-authentic leadership represents a hybrid model that integrates the visionary, motivational aspects of transformational leadership with the ethical, relational focus of authentic leadership. While transformational leaders inspire and stimulate change through idealized influence and intellectual stimulation, authentic leaders emphasize self-awareness, transparency, and moral integrity (Avolio, B. J., & Bass, 2004; Gardner et al., 2021; Samwel Muguna, 2022; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Combining these approaches fosters a leadership style that is both performance-driven and values-based. In higher education, where trust, accountability, and innovation are essential, this integrated leadership model offers a powerful framework to enhance academic service quality and build resilient, ethically grounded institutional cultures. The Authentic-Transformational Leadership model consists of the following key indicators:

- 1 AII (Authentic Individual Influence): Being a trustworthy and ethical role model.
- 2 AIS (Authentic Intellectual Stimulation): Encouraging innovation and critical thinking.
- 3 AIC (Authentic Individual Consideration): Paying attention to individual needs and development.
- 4 AIM (Authentic Inspirational Motivation): Inspiring others through vision and authenticity.

1.2. Academic Service Quality

Academic service quality encompasses both administrative and instructional service dimensions perceived by stakeholders, particularly students. Drawing from the SERVQUAL framework, dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibility are considered core to evaluating academic services (Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A. and Berry, 1988).

1.3. Theoretical Linkages

Although transformational leadership fosters commitment and change, authentic leadership offers a moral compass and emotional depth. The integration of these two approaches may generate leadership that not only inspires but also sustains high-quality service environments rooted in ethical and student-centered values.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design with a correlational approach. The primary aim was to examine the relationship between transformational-authentic leadership and the quality of academic services in higher education institutions in Padangsidimpuan, Indonesia. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, and responses were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The use of linear regression further enabled the study to assess the predictive power of the independent variables on the dependent variable, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding of causal relationships within the observed context. This approach aligns with recent studies such as Nurtjahjani et al. (2025) and Harefa et al. (2022), which used similar designs to analyze leadership impacts on academic outcomes in Indonesian higher education.

2.2 Participants

A total of 250 academic and administrative staff members from three higher education institutions in Padangsididimpuan city participated. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, ensuring representation across academic units.

2.3 Instruments

Leadership Style: The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X) was adapted and integrated with items from the Authentic Transformasional Leadership Questionnaire (ATLQ) Model as shown at figure

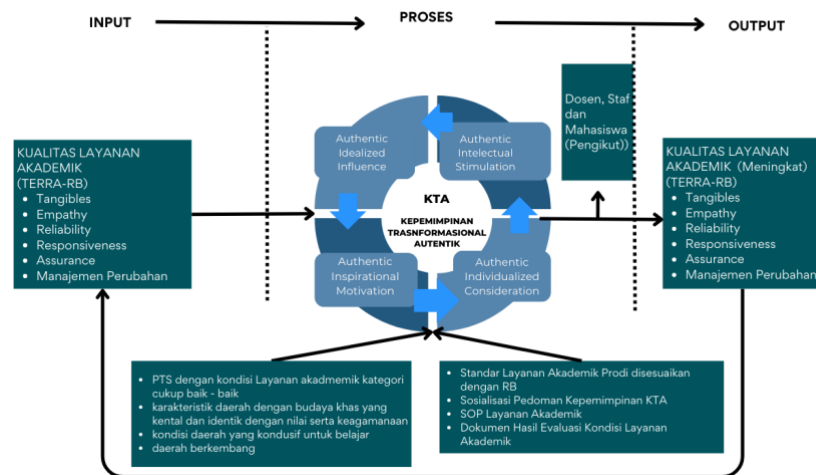


Figure 1. A diagram of the applied concept of Authentic-Transformational Leadership (ATL)

Academic Service Quality: A modified SERVQUAL scale and change management as adopt form Indonesian policy Reformasi Birokrasi tailored to higher education settings was used. All items were rated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

2.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics were employed to profile the respondents and to summarize the distribution of variables. The reliability of the measurement instruments was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with all constructs exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Construct validity was evaluated through item-total correlations and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), using Principal Component Analysis with varimax rotation. Items with factor loadings below 0.50 were excluded from further analysis. To examine relationships among key variables, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. Additionally, multiple linear regression was employed to assess the predictive effects of transformational-authentic leadership and change management on academic service quality. Prior to regression analysis, key assumptions—normality, and homoscedasticity—were tested to ensure the robustness and validity of the model.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

Descriptive Statistics

The sample consisted of 250 respondents, comprising 70 service-academic staff and 180 students. The gender distribution was relatively balanced, with 52% male and 48% female respondents. Among the service-academic staff, the majority held at least a bachelor's degree (76%), with an average of 8.3 years of work experience

Reliability and Validity Testing

Cronbach's alpha values indicated high internal consistency for all constructs:

Table 1. Reliability of Authentic-Transformational Leadership

Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretasi	N of Items
.751	Reliabel	30

Table 2. Reliability Academic Service Quality

Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretasi	N of Items
.771	Reliabel	30

- Authentic Transformational Leadership ($\alpha = 0.771$)
- Academic Service Quality ($\alpha = 0.91$)

Item-total correlation values were above 0.30, indicating good construct validity. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) supported the construct structure, with Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of 0.912 and Bartlett's test of sphericity being significant ($p < 0.001$).

Correlation Analysis

The total number of research subjects was 180 students. The control group consisted of 90 students from Universities A and C, with 45 students from each institution. The experimental group comprised 90 students from University B. The results of the study are as follows:

Table 3. Paired Sample t-Test Results for the Control Group

		Paired Samples Test							
		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	pre – posttest kontrol	-.15133	3.07352	.32398	-.79507	.49240	-.467	89	.642

Table 4. Paired Sample t-Test Results for the Experimental Group

		Paired Samples Test							
		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	pre – post Eks	-10.86567	6.66551	.70261	-12.26173	-9.46960	-15.465	89	.000

Field testing revealed that the data were both normally distributed and homogeneous, allowing for further analysis using a paired sample t-test. The control group, consisting of 90 students, received only a pre-test and post-test without any treatment. Paired sample t-test analysis showed no significant difference between pre- and post-test results, with a sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.624 ($p > 0.05$). Overall, the findings align with the study's objective to assess the effectiveness of the KTA model in improving academic service quality at private universities in Padangsidempuan. The results indicate that the KTA model is effective in enhancing academic service quality. In the experimental group, a significant difference was found between pre-test and post-test scores, with a sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a significant improvement after the treatment. In contrast, the control group, which did not receive any treatment, showed no significant change between pre- and post-test scores, with a sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.624 ($p > 0.05$). Each indicator of the Authentic-Transformational Leadership elements—AII (Authentic Individual Influence), AIS (Authentic Intellectual Stimulation), AIC (Authentic Individual Consideration), and AIM (Authentic Inspirational Motivation)—had a positive impact on enhancing academic service quality at private universities in Padangsidempuan. All indicators showed significance levels below 0.05, confirming their effectiveness.

Regression Analysis

Each indicator within the elements of the KTA model—including AII (Authentic Individual Influence), AIS (Authentic Intellectual Stimulation), AIC (Authentic Individual Consideration), and AIM (Authentic Inspirational Motivation)—demonstrated a positive impact on improving the academic service quality of private universities (PTS) in Padangsidempuan City, as shown in the following data:

Table 5: Impact of Each KTA Indicator on Academic Service Quality

		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
AIS	Between Groups	2.071	28	.074	2.601	.001
	Within Groups	1.734	61	.028		
	Total	3.805	89			
AIC	Between Groups	2.258	28	.081	2.500	.001
	Within Groups	1.968	61	.032		
	Total	4.226	89			
AIM	Between Groups	1.343	28	.048	2.131	.007
	Within Groups	1.373	61	.023		
	Total	2.717	89			
AII	Between Groups	.148	28	.005	.683	.050
	Within Groups	.471	61	.008		
	Total	.619	89			

It is evident that the significance values of all KTA indicators are less than 0.05, indicating that each indicator significantly contributes to improving academic service quality. The extent of the KTA model's influence is presented in the following table:

Table 6. The Influence Level of the KTA Model on Academic Service Quality

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.543 ^a	.295	.261	3.85772

a. Predictors: (Constant), AIM, AII, AIC, AIS

As shown in Table 6, the R Square value is 0.295, indicating that the model explains approximately 29.5% of the variation in academic service quality, with the remaining variation accounted for by other variables. Of the 29.5% impact on academic service quality, the data for each KTA indicator is as follows:

Table 7: Impact of Each KTA Indicator on Academic Service Quality (KLA)

Coefficients ^a											
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	21.816	16.546		1.319	.191					
	AII	3.958	4.980	.191	1.196	.045	.132	.129	.109	.970	1.031
	AIS	5.808	6.595	.368	.881	.000	.501	.095	.080	.090	11.121
	AIC	3.414	6.094	.166	.560	.000	.491	.061	.051	.095	10.546
	AIM	4.583	6.618	.278	1.750	.000	.362	.187	.159	.799	1.252

a. Dependent Variable: KLA

The impact of each KTA indicator on Academic Service Quality is 19.1% for AII, 36.8% for AIS, 16.6% for AIC, and 27.8% for AIM. The regression analysis equation is as follows:

$$Y = B1X1 + B2X2 + B3X3 + B4X4 + C$$

This becomes:

$$Y = 0.191 \text{ AII} + 0.268 \text{ AIS} + 0.166 \text{ AIC} + 0.278 \text{ AIM} + 29.5$$

3.2. Discussion

In contrast, the control group, which consisted of the same number of participants (90 students) and received only a pre-test and post-test without any intervention, showed no statistically significant improvement, with a p-value of 0.624 ($p > 0.05$). This outcome highlights the substantial impact of the Authentic-Transformational Leadership (KTA) model in driving changes in academic service quality. Each dimension of the KTA model—Authentic Individual Influence (AII), Authentic Intellectual Stimulation (AIS), Authentic Individual Consideration (AIC), and Authentic Inspirational Motivation (AIM)—demonstrated a statistically significant positive effect, with all significance levels below 0.05. These findings align with previous studies emphasizing the role of transformational and authentic leadership in fostering educational effectiveness, motivation, and service excellence in higher education institutions.

For instance, Bass and Riggio (2005) argue that transformational leadership enhances organizational performance by inspiring followers through individualized attention and intellectual stimulation, which is echoed in this study's positive outcomes on academic service dimensions. Similarly, Walumbwa et al. (2008) found that authentic leadership positively influences follower engagement, trust, and performance outcomes—core elements reflected in the improved academic service delivery observed here. Moreover, studies Wong et al. (2020) and Alonderiene & Majauskaite (2016) confirmed that leadership styles emphasizing authenticity and transformation are particularly effective in higher education contexts, as they align with the values of academic integrity, empowerment, and continuous improvement. The findings from Padangsidimpuan-based private universities reinforce this perspective, highlighting the importance of contextually responsive leadership in less urbanized academic settings. This research contributes to the growing body of literature advocating for leadership models that combine authenticity and transformational traits, particularly within Southeast Asian academic environments, where cultural sensitivity, trust, and relational leadership remain central to organizational success. Challenges in Implementing the Authentic-Transformational Leadership Model. Despite its proven effectiveness, the implementation of authentic-transformational leadership faces several challenges, including resistance to change, limited resources, and differences in organizational culture (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Therefore, leaders of private universities in Padangsidimpuan must adopt adaptive and flexible strategies to ensure the successful application of this leadership model.

The authentic-transformational leadership model has been proven effective in improving academic service quality in private universities. By emphasizing values such as openness, integrity, and innovation, leaders can foster a more conducive academic environment. As stated by Burns (1978), transformational leadership is oriented toward change that benefits all elements of the organization, including faculty, students, and administrative staff. The findings of this study affirm that transformational-authentic leadership significantly contribute to the improvement of academic service quality in higher education institutions. The strong predictive value of transformational-authentic leadership ($\beta = 0.295$) underscores the importance of leaders who not only provide vision and motivation but also demonstrate ethical consistency and relational transparency. These results align with previous studies (Arenas et al., 2017; Farid et al., 2020; Gardner et al., 2021; McOyoo, 2022) that emphasize the synergy of transformational and authentic leadership in creating high-performing, values-driven organizations. The influence of the KTA model on academic service quality was found to be 0.295, indicating that the model accounts for 29.5% of the variance, with the remaining 70.5% explained by other factors. Within this 29.5%, each KTA indicator contributed as follows: AII (19.1%), AIS (36.8%), AIC (16.6%), and AIM (27.8%). AIS emerged as the most influential indicator, reflecting a leader's ability to provide authentic intellectual stimulation—such as inspiring members, encouraging open expression of ideas, and offering unique problem-solving approaches. AIC had the lowest influence, focusing on individualized, authentic attention such as appreciation based on progress and personal development. The findings of this study align with its primary objective of assessing the effectiveness of the Kepemimpinan Transformasional-Autentik (KTA) model in enhancing academic service quality at private universities (PTS) in Padangsidimpuan. The data analysis confirms that the KTA model is effective in this context.

In University B, the dean's successful implementation of the KTA model led to notable improvements in communication, academic support, and team motivation. These outcomes are consistent with the research by Changar and Sesen (2024), which demonstrated that authentic leadership positively influences service quality, both directly and indirectly through organizational commitment. Their study also highlighted the role of work engagement as a moderating factor in this relationship. Conversely, in the control group, deans continued to apply rigid transactional leadership styles, relying heavily on routine practices. This approach contrasts with the authentic-transformational leadership model, which emphasizes adaptability and responsiveness. The reliance on transactional leadership may

limit innovation and responsiveness to the dynamic needs of academic environments. The KTA model's emphasis on empowering academic staff, building trust through open communication, and fostering a shared vision aligns with the findings of Shafi & Wahid (2023), who reported that transformational leadership and organizational commitment are significant predictors of lecturer performance in higher education institutions. Additionally, the systematic review by Ahmed (2023) underscores the positive impact of authentic leadership on performance, satisfaction, and trust within educational settings. Furthermore, the implementation of the KTA model in a non-metropolitan context like Padangsidimpuan highlights its adaptability and relevance across diverse educational settings. The study by Elrehail et al. (2018) supports this, indicating that transformational and authentic leadership styles positively impact innovation in higher education, particularly when knowledge sharing is prevalent. In summary, the current study not only confirms the practical relevance of the KTA model but also contributes to the broader discourse on leadership in higher education by demonstrating how transformational and authentic leadership can be effectively applied in underrepresented educational regions. In the context of higher education in non-metropolitan regions like Padangsidimpuan, where institutional development often faces structural limitations, the implementation of such values-driven leadership models becomes even more critical. As Alonderiene & Majauskaite (2016) suggest, leadership in universities must go beyond administration and actively shape organizational culture and quality standards. Thus, the current study not only confirms the practical relevance of the KTA model, but also contributes to broader leadership discourse by demonstrating how transformational and authentic leadership can be localized and effectively applied in underrepresented educational regions.

Authentic-transformational leadership enables deans to drive positive change by inspiring and motivating both staff and students. By acting as mentors and facilitators, these leaders support personal and professional growth, ultimately improving the quality of academic services. According to Bass and Steidlmeier (1999), authentic transformational leaders are able to align organizational goals with individual values, fostering trust and commitment within academic communities. In higher education settings, such leadership has been linked to enhanced job satisfaction, increased innovation, and improved institutional performance (Northouse, 2018). This finding supports the argument that leadership effectiveness must be complemented by system-wide procedural reforms to ensure institutional agility and responsiveness (Bryson, 2004). Taken together, these results indicate that leadership must operate in tandem to achieve meaningful improvements in academic service delivery. Higher education leaders should thus invest in leadership development programs that integrate both transformational and authentic principles, while also embedding adaptive change strategies tailored to local policy contexts.

4. CONCLUSION

This study advances the literature on leadership and service quality by introducing and empirically validating a hybrid leadership model that integrates transformational and authentic leadership styles. The findings demonstrate that this integrative approach significantly enhances academic service quality, offering a strategic framework for improving institutional performance in higher education. The study provides theoretical insights into leadership dynamics in academic contexts and practical implications for policy and leadership development. Future research is encouraged to examine the model's longitudinal impact and to incorporate diverse stakeholder perspectives, including students, to strengthen its generalizability and relevance.

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


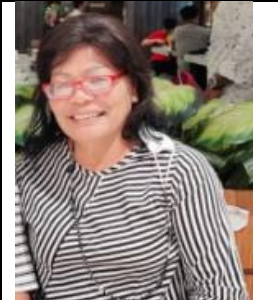


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	<p>Myhammad Syahril Harahap    is a Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Educational Management, Postgraduate Program, Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan, Indonesia & Lecturer, Department of Mathematic Education, Institut Pendidikan Tapanuli Selatan, Indonesia. His research focuses on mathematics education, Scaffolding in education, Scientific literacy, ICT-based learning, Quality in Educataion, STEM education and literacy. He can be contacted at email: muhammadsyahrilharahap@gmail.com; muhammadsyahrilharahap@ipts.ac.id.</p>
	<p>Sri Milfayetty    earned her Bachelor’s Degree in Counseling Guidance at the Medan Teachers’ Training College (1984), Master’s Degree at the Psychology Department, Padjadjaran University, Bandung (1990), and continued her Doctoral Degree majoring in Education Management at Jakarta State University (2010). She is a Psychology and Counseling Guidance Professor at the UNIMED Faculty of Education. Experience in writing scientific articles in journals, including Networking Model in Management Counseling Annual Proceedings of Selected Papers on the Practice of Educational Communications and Technology Presented at the Annual Convention of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology, The Effectiveness of an Integrative Model of Sustainable Collaboration to Improve Counselor Proficiency in Alleviating Client Problems. She can be contacted at email: milfayetty@unimed.ac.id.</p>
	<p>Mariani   is a Lecturer at the Faculty of Science and mathematics, Universitas Negeri Medan (UNIMED). Papers that have been published include: Development of Learning Devices Based on Realistic Mathematical Learning Models to Improve Mathematical Literary Ability. She can be contacted at email: marianisihombing57@gmail.com</p>

The Impact of Transformational and Authentic Leadership on Academic Service Quality: A Case Study from Padangsidempuan, Indonesia

Muhammad Syahril Harahap et al



Febriani Hastini Nasution   is a Lecturer at the Faculty of Science and mathematics, Institut Pendidikan Tapanuli Selatan. She has over 10 years of experience as an Academician with the Institut Pendidikan Tapanuli Selatan, where she is currently an Lector. Her current research interest includes students' learning and development at various levels and areas of physics education. Her publication topics including ecology, educational courses, educational institutions, physics , natural resources. She can be contacted at email: febrianihastininasution@gmail.com