

# Islamic Adaptive Transformational Leadership (IATL): A Contextual Leadership Model for the Internationalization of Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions

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## *Abstract*

*This article introduces the concept of Islamic Adaptive Transformational Leadership (IATL) as a contextual leadership model grounded in Islamic values and organizational culture within Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions (PTM). Triggered by empirical findings revealing the non-significant statistical effect of conventional Transformational Leadership on internationalization outcomes, IATL emerges as a theoretical alternative that aligns leadership practices with the principles of collective deliberation (musyawarah), collegiality, and value-based governance rooted in Muhammadiyah's identity. This study not only contributes to contextual leadership theory but also addresses the theoretical-practical gap in leading faith-based institutions toward global competitiveness.*

**Keyword:** IATL, Contextual Leadership Model, Internationalization, MHEI (PTM Institution)

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Globalization has positioned internationalization as a core agenda in higher education worldwide. As institutions seek to enhance global engagement, leadership models become critical in steering organizational transformation. Transformational Leadership, widely recognized for fostering innovation, change, and high performance, is often applied as a universal model in various organizational settings. However, its applicability in culturally and religiously embedded institutions, such as those within the Muhammadiyah network, requires critical reassessment.

Muhammadiyah, as one of the largest Islamic movements in Indonesia, operates a vast network of higher education institutions that are ideologically rooted in Islamic teachings and organizational norms emphasizing musyawarah (deliberation), kolektif kolegal (collegiality), and social responsibility. Applying a universal leadership framework in such a context without adaptation risks undermining its cultural coherence and practical effectiveness. This article proposes Islamic Adaptive Transformational Leadership (IATL) as a more culturally resonant leadership model suited for the internationalization of PTM.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Transformational Leadership, as conceptualized by Bass and Avolio (1994), consists of four core dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These components emphasize visionary leadership, emotional appeal, innovation, and personal development, which are associated with improved organizational outcomes across various sectors (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Nonetheless, the model has been critiqued for its limited sensitivity to local culture, belief systems, and social structures (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008). In the context of Islamic educational institutions like PTM, leadership must engage deeply with religious values, collective decision-making or collegial collectivity (kolektif kolegal), deliberation (musyawarah) and the moral mission of education (amar ma'ruf nahi munkar). The dominant Western paradigm of Transformational Leadership, which tends to emphasize individual charisma and hierarchical influence, often clashes with Muhammadiyah's embedded principles of egalitarianism and community consensus.

Scholars such as Beekun and Badawi (2005) and Ali (2009) have advocated for models of Islamic leadership that integrate spirituality, ethical governance, and communal responsibility. These models highlight that effective leadership in Muslim contexts must embody akhlaq (moral character), ta'awun (cooperation), and shura (consultation). Therefore, adapting transformational principles within Islamic frameworks becomes imperative to maintain both effectiveness and legitimacy.

Recent empirical findings in Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions suggest that conventional Transformational Leadership does not significantly influence internationalization outcomes (Author,

2025). This reinforces the need for a leadership model that is both transformative and contextually grounded in Islamic and Muhammadiyah organizational values.

### III. Conceptualizing Islamic Adaptive Transformational Leadership (IATL)

Islamic Adaptive Transformational Leadership (IATL) emerges as a response to the epistemological and practical limitations of applying generic leadership models in faith-based educational institutions. IATL synthesizes transformational principles with Islamic ethics and Muhammadiyah's organizational culture, aiming to produce leaders who are both globally oriented and locally grounded.

The Islamic Adaptive Transformational Leadership (IATL) model is built upon three interrelated foundational pillars that reflect the unique context of Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions (PTM).

1. Islamic values serve as the core foundation of this model, derived from the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and Muhammadiyah's progressive interpretation of Islam (Islam Berkemajuan). These values emphasize justice, inclusivity, equality, and the advancement of both spiritual and intellectual capacities as ethical foundations for leadership and decision-making within the academic environment.

2. The model is grounded in the organizational culture of Muhammadiyah, which strongly upholds the principles of musyawarah (collective deliberation), amanah (integrity and accountability), and collegial, non-hierarchical leadership. This culture rejects individual domination in leadership and instead emphasizes collective decision-making that embodies communal values and shared responsibilities. In this context, leadership is not merely seen as an individual's ability to influence others, but rather as a collective mechanism to achieve the common good.

3. the model is responsive to global imperatives, particularly the demands of internationalization in higher education. Muhammadiyah universities must remain competitive and collaborative at the global level, especially in areas such as academic mobility, international research collaboration, and the integration of digital technologies. Thus, leadership that is both adaptive and transformational must not only align with local and spiritual values but also be capable of addressing global challenges through contextual and sustainable strategies.

These three pillars position IATL as a leadership model highly relevant to PTM, as it integrates normative Islamic values, the structural realities of Muhammadiyah's organizational culture, and the external dynamics of higher education internationalization. Accordingly, IATL offers a leadership approach that is not only transformational in the general sense but also adaptive to the socio-cultural and religious context in which Muhammadiyah universities operate.

The four adapted dimensions of IATL are as follows; **First**, Spiritualized Idealized Influence. Leaders serve as moral exemplars, embodying sincerity (ikhlas), humility (tawadhu'), and a deep commitment to Islamic mission and educational reform. (2) **Second** Inspirational Motivation through Islamic Worldview. Leaders communicate a compelling vision aligned with the goals of dakwah, tajdid (renewal), and global engagement, while nurturing a sense of collective identity and purpose. **Third**, Collective Intellectual Stimulation. Innovation and critical thinking are cultivated through participatory processes, fostering creativity via musyawarah rather than top-down mandates. **Four**, Individualized Consideration within Ummah Ethics. Leaders provide personalized support guided by values of compassion (rahmah), justice ('adl), and communal well-being.

IATL also introduces the concept of adaptive capacity, referring to the ability of leaders to mediate between tradition and modernity, faith and science, local relevance and global competitiveness.

### IV. Theoretical Contribution and Practical Implications

Islamic Adaptive Transformational Leadership contributes to leadership theory by contextualizing transformational constructs within a faith-based organizational setting. It provides a framework that respects the epistemology of Islamic education and leverages the unique strengths of Muhammadiyah institutions.

Practically, IATL offers guidance for PTM leaders in responding to the complex demands of internationalization without compromising their ideological foundations. It emphasizes that international competitiveness can be achieved not by imitating Western leadership paradigms, but by innovating from within the Islamic tradition.

#### Adopting IATL can help PTM institutions:

Adopting IATL for Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions: A Spiritually Rooted and Globally Competitive Internationalization Strategy

In an increasingly interconnected world, higher education institutions face pressures to internationalize rapidly to remain competitive. Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions (PTM), as faith-based institutions, must strike a delicate balance between engaging globally and staying rooted in their Islamic ethos. The concept of Internationalization at Home Through Locality (IATL) offers a model that is both ideologically coherent and strategically responsive to global shifts. It allows PTM institutions to internationalize in ways that are spiritually grounded, culturally relevant, and globally impactful.

### 1. Reinforcing Institutional Identity through Global Engagement

One of the primary tensions in global higher education is the homogenization of institutional identity due to international accreditation, rankings, and partnerships driven by Western-centric norms (Stromquist & Bruns, 2022). Many institutions, in pursuit of global visibility, often dilute their cultural and religious heritage. IATL addresses this by advocating for collaborative differentiation, where global engagement is designed to emphasize rather than compromise institutional uniqueness.

For PTM, this uniqueness is grounded in Islamic values, community engagement, and ethical governance. These can serve as distinct elements in international collaborations. For instance, a PTM university could lead joint research on ethical finance, Islamic social entrepreneurship, or disaster relief informed by Islamic humanitarianism—areas with growing global interest (Sa'di & Nugroho, 2021).

Recent research supports this strategy: according to de Wit et al. (2023), institutions that embrace their cultural identity while internationalizing tend to create more sustainable and authentic global partnerships. Moreover, Tauchert (2021) argues that non-Western higher education institutions that internationalize through local value systems create a more diversified global knowledge ecosystem.

### 2. Leadership Development Rooted in Spirituality and Adaptiveness

Successful internationalization requires visionary leadership. However, many faith-based institutions struggle with succession planning, especially when transitioning from charismatic founders to institutional leaders (Sakurai, 2020). IATL offers a framework for leadership development that integrates spiritual maturity, ethical commitment, and adaptive capability.

PTM institutions are well positioned to design mentoring and leadership training programs that align with Muhammadiyah's *tarjih* (interpretive reasoning) tradition and *musyawarah* (deliberation) culture. These principles support participative and morally anchored leadership that is crucial in responding to the complexities of international cooperation. This study explores how financial literacy can shape ethical behavior among Gen Z, particularly in digital consumer environments. It strengthens the argument that value-based education and ethical leadership cultivation—central to IATL should begin at the foundational level and reflect in institutional leadership models as well. "Visionary education must not only equip youth with technical knowledge, but also instill financial ethics and long-term responsibility" (Elliyana, Kurnia, & Ismayanti, 2024, p. 53).

As emphasized by Youssef et al. (2022), spiritual leadership enhances organizational resilience and employee commitment in academic institutions undergoing global transformations. Additionally, Mulyani and Subekti (2023) highlight that in Indonesian Islamic universities, spiritual grounding strengthens leaders' ability to manage cross-cultural academic partnerships without value erosion.

Through IATL, PTM can prepare a cadre of leaders who are not only globally competent but also spiritually principled—ensuring institutional integrity while navigating transnational networks.

### 3. Local Wisdom as a Strategic Asset in Globalization

One of IATL's most important contributions is its insistence that global strategies must be deeply embedded in local realities. Internationalization must not be pursued at the expense of social relevance. PTM institutions should anchor their global activities in the aspirations of local communities and indigenous knowledge systems.

Ela Elliyana et al (2025) emphasizes the need to integrate environmental and social governance (ESG) strategies that are contextualized within regional socio-economic realities, rather than adopting global ESG frameworks in a one-size-fits-all fashion. This supports IATL's proposition that global initiatives must be locally grounded and ethically aligned with community values. "Sustainability strategies are most effective when aligned with local needs, institutional ethics, and stakeholder engagement at the grassroots level" (Elliyana et al., 2025, p. 12).

Rather than mimicking Western mobility or research models, PTM institutions can co-develop international programs that address challenges faced by Muslim communities, such as education access, poverty alleviation, or public health equity. For example, community-based learning modules within

international exchange programs can include Islamic community service (pengabdian masyarakat) or ecopasantren development, merging local Islamic practices with global sustainability goals (Azra, 2020). This aligns with Altinyelken et al. (2021), who emphasize that higher education in the Global South must be “situated” to resist epistemic dependency and foster local-global synergies. Similarly, Ng and Tan (2023) argue that internationalization is most impactful when it builds upon community engagement and local problem-solving.

By rooting its global strategies in Muhammadiyah’s long-standing tradition of Islam Berkemajuan (Progressive Islam), PTM institutions can contribute not only to global competitiveness but also to a just and inclusive global order.

Building a Distinctive and Values-Driven Global Presence

Adopting IATL offers Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions a clear roadmap for internationalization that is rooted in faith, relevant to local contexts, and responsive to global challenges. It transforms global engagement from a race for visibility to a meaningful participation in shaping global discourses on ethics, justice, and education.

By practicing IATL, PTM institutions can build a distinctive global identity that resonates with the broader vision of Muhammadiyah as a modern Islamic movement: advancing civilization through education, morality, and service. Rather than being passive recipients of globalization, PTM can emerge as active agents—redefining what it means to be both global and faithful.

This approach represents not only a strategic imperative but also a moral responsibility: to ensure that higher education serves humanity, upholds dignity, and fosters harmony between the global and the local.

## V.CONCLUSION

Islamic Adaptive Transformational Leadership (IATL) represents an innovative, culturally embedded leadership model tailored to the needs of Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions in the era of globalization. Rooted in Islamic values, collective leadership practices, and adaptive engagement, IATL offers a practical and theoretical alternative to conventional leadership paradigms.

By responding to the empirical inadequacy of standard Transformational Leadership in PTM, IATL reframes leadership as a spiritual, ethical, and strategic act that honors both religious commitments and global aspirations. As higher education becomes increasingly interconnected, such contextually grounded models will be essential in leading faith-based institutions toward meaningful internationalization.

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