

Original Research Article

Implementation of Transformative Leadership by Local Government Heads on the Program of Tetangga Keren in Blitar City

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Abstract: Regional autonomy in Blitar City aims to accelerate the fulfillment of public interests through improved services, empowerment, and community participation. This study seeks to describe and analyze the transformational leadership of local government officials in the *Tetangga Keren* Program in Blitar City and to identify the factors influencing such leadership. The research method employed is a qualitative approach, defined as a process of generating explanations through observable individual behaviors by describing the conditions of the studied objects. The focus of this research lies in the role of local government heads as those responsible for implementing the RT KEREN program (Program of Tetangga Keren), as stipulated in Blitar Mayor Regulation No. 6 of 2022 concerning the *RT Keren* Program. The findings reveal that transformational leadership of local government officials is a crucial element in ensuring the program operates optimally, sustainably, and delivers tangible impacts to the community. Transformational leadership strategically drives social, cultural, and governance changes at the grassroots level, namely the Neighborhood Unit (RT). One key indicator of transformational leadership is *idealized influence*, in which local leaders serve as role models of integrity, possess a clear vision, and inspire as well as motivate all stakeholders, including program implementers and the community within the RT. The contribution of this study is twofold. First, in the theoretical aspect, it enriches the academic discourse in public administration and public policy related to transformational leadership and provides additional references concerning the roles and responsibilities of civil servants. Second, in the practical aspect, it offers insights beneficial for other government agencies, particularly as a response to studies on transformational leadership at the local government level, and serves as a benchmark for similar research.

Keywords: Transformative Leadership, Local Government, Program of Tetangga Keren.

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INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and rapid social change, transformational leadership has become an important aspect of local government management. Transformational leadership refers to the ability of a leader to inspire, motivate, and bring about significant change for their followers, thereby improving performance and achieving higher goals. In this context, regional heads are crucial in implementing transformative leadership to empower the community and encourage innovation and active participation in regional development. The broad autonomy granted to regions aims to accelerate the realization of public interests through improved services, empowerment, and

community participation. In addition, regions are expected to become more competitive through maximum autonomy, while upholding the principles of democracy, equality, justice, special privileges, and regional diversity. This autonomy enables local governments to accelerate regional development. Implementing decentralization provides the broadest possible authority in that regions have the authority to regulate and control all government administration except for the central government. Local governments are empowered to formulate regional policies on service delivery, development, and community empowerment to improve the community's welfare.

Development and empowerment in the RT KEREN program in Blitar City involve a process in which the community takes the initiative to start development planning and social activities to improve their situation and conditions. This can be achieved if the community itself also participates. Furthermore, Blitar Mayor Regulation No. 6 of 2022 on the RT KEREN Program states that there are seven principles in the program's implementation: transparency, participation, accountability, sustainability, orderliness, usefulness, and compliance with regulations. There are always two parties involved in empowerment and leadership. In the context of leadership, some seek to influence, and those who are influenced. In the context of empowerment, some seek to empower those who will be empowered (Yustiono, 2006). Similarly, according to Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, in their book *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*, it is crucial to have political leaders who enable the creation of effective and fair policies to achieve sustainable and inclusive development.

One leadership approach that has been the focus of research since the early 1980s is the transformational approach. This approach is part of the "new leadership" paradigm (Bryman, 1992). However, most private and government organizations and institutions are struggling to find leaders who can do the job well. As a practical rule, it may not be easy to distinguish between formal and informal leadership patterns within an organization. This is because some "leaders" who practice formal organizational management have leadership patterns that are almost identical to those of informal organizations. The transformational approach is a process of transforming individuals. Transformational leadership is a comprehensive and integrated leadership ability required by individuals, groups, and organizations to produce transformation characterized by change at every activity stage (Hacker & Roberts, 2003). This approach encompasses values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. Transformational leadership involves assessing employee motivation, meeting their needs, and viewing them holistically. This approach is a process that displays charismatic and visionary leadership.

Transformational leaders play an important role in accelerating change, but followers and leaders are closely connected and cannot be separated from the change process (Northouse, 2021). Leaders have a transformational style when they can change ordinary situations, discuss lofty goals, and relate to freedom, justice, and equality. Transformational leaders tell their followers they need to do more than pursue their own interests. Therefore, leaders are expected to improve the effectiveness of their organizations or institutions by using transformational leadership styles to lead the organizations they manage. According to Koehler & Pankowski (1997), *transformational leadership is "a process of inspiring change and empowering followers to achieve greater heights, to improve themselves and*

organizational processes. It is an enabling process that causes followers to accept responsibility and accountability for the processes to which they are assigned." Based on the core understanding, transformational leadership is a process of inspiring change in followers, empowering followers, achieving greater results, and fostering a sense of togetherness and responsibility in reflecting transformational leadership.

In the following description, Koehler & Pankowski (1997:104-108) state that the characteristics and skills of leaders play an important role in the success of an organization in achieving performance. Transformational leaders are agents of change who can build a *shared vision and mission* for the organization and empower human resources to improve their quality to achieve performance that exceeds expectations. This statement is in line with the vision of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Blitar, namely "Blitar City is Cool, Excellent, Prosperous, and Dignified," which includes the mission of "Improving cool human resources, competitive, physically and mentally healthy, intelligent, and of good character" and "Economic independence oriented towards the creative economy, tourism, and digital-based trade," which focuses on RT as the driving force in community empowerment.

According to Bass & Riggio (2006), there are four characteristics of transformational leadership that an organization must develop: first, *Idealized Influence*, second, *Inspirational Motivation*, third, *Intellectual Stimulation*, and fourth, *Individualized Consideration*. Transformational leadership of local government officials plays a crucial role in the success of development and community empowerment, particularly in the RT KEREN Program in Blitar City, as the local government officials—in this case, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Blitar—are the decision-makers responsible for policy formulation, resource allocation, and decision-making. Based on the above issues, the main objectives of this study are: to describe and analyze the transformational leadership of local government leaders in the RT KEREN program in Blitar City. Describe and analyze the factors influencing the transformative leadership of local government officials in the RT KEREN Program in Blitar City. Research Benefits this study are expected to provide the following benefits: Theoretical Aspect this research is expected to contribute to the development of public administration and public policy knowledge related to transformational leadership and provide additional references related to the duties of civil servants; Practical Aspect this research is expected to provide contributions and benefits to the Blitar City Government or other government agencies, particularly in the form of recommendations and feedback related to the study of transformational leadership of local government heads, and can serve as a benchmark for similar research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Transformational leadership is strong leadership, that is, leadership that has a clear vision (forward-looking perspective). A vision is a difficult-to-achieve future dream. Transformational leadership is creative and innovative with a future vision, identifies environmental changes, transforms those changes into organizational changes, and develops, motivates, and inspires individuals within the organization. Responsible for initiatives and management. Usman (2009) states that transformational leadership consists of two words: leadership and transformational. The term conversion comes from the word conversion. It means to change or transform something into another format. Different concepts from theory define transformational leadership. This is supported by Isnaini Muallidin (2019:68). Transformational leadership is conceptual and theoretical, involving followers, inspiring them, promising to achieve the organization's vision and goals, and training, guiding, and supporting tasks. Bass and Riggio reinforce this view with the following statement: "Transformational leadership involves inspiring followers to commit to a shared vision and goals for an organization or unit, challenging them to be innovative problem solvers, and developing followers' leadership capacity via coaching, mentoring, and provision of both challenge and support" Characteristics of Transformational Leadership; According to Bass and Riggio, transformational leadership in their theory can be seen through four core components that are always present, namely:

Idealized Influence

Transformational leaders behave in a way that influences their followers so that they admire, respect, and trust them. There are two aspects to this ideal influence: the leader's behavior and the elements associated with the leader. Additionally, leaders with high ideal influence are willing to take risks, consistent, and not arbitrary; they are reliable in doing what is right and capable of demonstrating ethical and moral behavioral standards.

Inspirational Motivation

Transformational leaders behave in a way that motivates and inspires those around them by providing meaning and challenges to work for. Team spirit is stimulated, enthusiasm and optimism are displayed, so leaders gain followers actively involved in intense communication patterns and demonstrate commitment to shared goals and vision.

Intellectual Stimulation

Transformational leaders encourage their followers to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways. Creativity is encouraged, and there is no public criticism of individual mistakes. New ideas and creative solutions to problems are gathered from followers and used to overcome problems and find

solutions. Followers are encouraged to try new approaches, and their ideas are not criticized because they differ from the leaders' *individual Consideration*. Transformational leaders pay special attention to each follower's needs for achievement and growth by acting as coaches or mentors, followers and potential colleagues are developed to a higher level, and leaders' behavior demonstrates acceptance of individual differences.

Benefits of Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership, according to Yukl (2010: 290), describes transformational leadership as a process in which leaders and subordinates develop each other's high levels of morality and motivation. In general, transformational leadership has several positive impacts on organizations. Meanwhile, according to Vinot T., a good leader is someone who: Panikan in Pasolong (2016:116) are: (1) Focusing on the future, (2) Emphasizing or focusing on determining direction, (3) Always asking "what will happen," (4) Providing vision and inspiration, (5) Leading people, and (6) Prioritizing hierarchy and delegating authority.

Leadership is one of the subjects studied in public administration. Leadership is considered important in government research because good and effective leadership improves the performance of public sector organizations. Based on this, researchers assess the importance of transformational leadership in processes that positively impact organizations. This encourages leaders with a transformational style to (1) make members more aware of the importance of work results and (2) prioritize the interests of the organization or team over their own priorities. To change and motivate members. Personal interests and (3) Revitalize members' needs in the workplace (Yukl, 2009, p. 305).

RESEARCH METHOD

a. Research Approach

This research is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is defined as a research process that produces data and explanations in the form of written or oral texts and observable behavior from people by explaining the state of the object being studied (Zuriah, 2007: 92). This research is aimed at natural phenomena or symptoms that can be observed in the field rather than in a laboratory (Mahmud, 2011, p. 89).

Qualitative research methods are used for research related to cases and problems. This method will obtain detailed data and information to achieve the research objectives. This research aims to solve problems through a learning process from old systems to new systems using an *all-systems thinking* approach. Maani and Cavana share two approaches to system thinking: complex system thinking and soft system thinking. Complicated systems analyze well-structured problems and are more suitable for quantitative data studies.

b. Scope of the Research

The scope of this research is limited to two main variables, the first being Transformational Leadership (covering four aspects outlined in Bass and Riggio's theory) and the second, the variable of Local Government Head as the individual responsible for implementing the RT Keren program in Blitar City, as outlined in Blitar City Regulation No. 6 of 2022 on the RT Keren Program in Blitar City.

c. Research Location

Selecting the research location for the "program was a strategic decision. The study was conducted at the Blitar City Mayor's Office () and the Blitar City Secretariat Office (Kantor Sekretariat Daerah Kota Blitar), based on the Consideration that the selected locations have a direct connection to the research theme being proposed and allow the researcher to access the required data easily.

d. Sampling Technique

In this research, the method used is a *non-probability sampling* model with a *convenience sampling* technique. Sugiyono (2016:85) states, "*Purpose sampling* is a technique for selecting a data source from a specific perspective. This condition aligns with the field criteria used as the research location, where not all informants align with the phenomenon being studied. Therefore, specific considerations or criteria must be established and met by the informants selected.

Data analysis is a series of steps to simplify and systematize data into a more structured form by categorizing units into hypotheses according to the data. Data analysis techniques are the compilation of data obtained from various methods and means, which are then organized, documented, and grouped into easy-to-understand descriptions, identifying what is important and can be used as lessons, and drawing conclusions for the research. Data analysis is conducted in several steps according to the theory of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). Data analysis involves *data condensation*, *data display*, and *conclusion drawing and verification*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Results

Blitar City, also known as Patria City, Lahar City, and Proklamator City, was officially established on April 1, 1906. This date was later designated as Blitar City's anniversary. Despite its municipal government status, the city's social mechanisms do not necessarily mirror those of larger cities. Indeed, its size does not reflect that of a sufficiently large city. Blitar City is classified into small and large cities. Factually, it is no longer a small city but has not yet become a large city.

Research Findings

In the implementation of the RT KEREN Policy outlined in Blitar City Regulation No. 6 of 2022 on the RT KEREN Program in Blitar City, transformative

leadership from local government officials is essential to ensure the program runs optimally, sustainably, and has a tangible impact on the community. Transformative leadership strategically drives social, cultural, and governance changes at the grassroots level, namely the Neighborhood Association (RT).

One of the key indicators of transformative leadership is *idealized influence*. In this context, local leaders are expected to serve as role models of integrity, possess a clear vision, and be able to inspire and motivate all stakeholders, including program implementers and the community within the RT. This idealized influence is reflected in the local leader's commitment to bringing about positive change through policies that prioritize the community and their willingness to actively participate in providing concrete examples during program implementation.

With leadership grounded in idealistic values and exemplary conduct, implementing the RT KEREN Program is not merely an administrative tool but also a collective movement that strengthens community participation, reinforces RT institutional capacity, and fosters local-need-based independence and innovation. As stated by the Mayor of Blitar,

"As Mayor of Blitar, I firmly believe that integrity and leadership are not merely demonstrated through words, but through concrete commitments in public policy. The RT Keren program is not just a project, but an implementation of the vision and mission of the City of Blitar as outlined in the 2021–2026 Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD). I place Neighborhood unit (RT) and Community unit (RW) at the forefront of development because they are the direct representatives of community needs. I strive to be a model in building a government that prioritizes the people, guided by the principles of transparency, sustainability, and social justice. Through this program, I aim to demonstrate that integrity-driven development must begin at the grassroots level of society."

He then reiterated:

"I am committed to being a role model, not only within the bureaucracy but also among the community. In implementing the RT Keren Program, I always emphasize the importance of active and collaborative participation—that development cannot proceed in one direction. The principle I uphold is 'from the community, by the community, for the community.' With this principle, I hope that both local government officials and the community can see that my leadership is rooted in the values of mutual cooperation, empowerment, and local innovation. I am here not only as an administrative leader but also as a facilitator and supporter of residents' efforts to improve their own environment."

Thus, the leadership of the Mayor of Blitar in implementing the RT KEREN Program demonstrates

transformative leadership characteristics, particularly in the *idealized influence* indicator. The values of integrity, exemplary behavior, and commitment to public service that favor the community are the main foundations of every policy taken. The regional head acts as an administrative authority and a role model who can inspire and provide real examples in the development process.

The emphasis on active participation, collaboration, and a spirit of cooperation in the program is a tangible manifestation of leadership rooted in openness, empowerment, and social justice principles. Through this approach, the RT KEREN Program is not merely a routine development agenda but a collective movement involving all elements of society from the grassroots level. The Head of the Blitar City BAPPEDA then stated that.

“As the Head of BAPPEDA City of Blitar, I see that the integrity and exemplary leadership of the Mayor in implementing the RT KEREN Program are very evident and consistent. One concrete example is the GOWES Sambang RT Keren activity, which is regularly held every quarter. In this activity, he does not merely make a symbolic appearance but actively engages with the RT communities receiving the benefits alongside the TAPD and implementation team. His presence on the ground demonstrates that the program is not merely designed behind a desk but is also closely monitored to ensure its effectiveness and alignment with community needs. This leadership is reflected in how the Mayor consistently prioritizes community participation as the cornerstone of community-based development. By engaging directly with residents and engaging in dialogue, he demonstrates that a leader is not just a policy maker but also a partner in development.”

Thus, implementing the RT KEREN Program in Blitar City does not merely reflect administrative policies but also prioritizes a humanistic and transformative leadership approach. The example set by the Mayor of Blitar, particularly through the *GOWES Sambang RT Keren* activity, is a tangible manifestation of *idealized influence* in transformative leadership.

The direct involvement of the regional head in every stage of program implementation demonstrates a high commitment to participatory principles and community empowerment. This affirms that effective leaders are capable of formulating policies and acting as partners who listen, understand, and encourage active citizen participation in development.

By making the community the main subject of development and placing the values of exemplary behavior, integrity, and emotional closeness as part of the leadership strategy, the RT KEREN Program can become an example of sustainable, responsive, inclusive, and community-empowering governance practices. The

Head of TAPEM Blitar City also shares the same opinion.

“As Head of the TAPEM Department, I assess that the integrity and exemplary leadership of local officials in implementing the RT KEREN Program are strong and consistent. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Blitar not only conceptualized this program but also actively participated in its implementation on the ground. One concrete example of this leadership is their active involvement in monitoring and evaluation activities at the village level, including directly receiving complaints or feedback from the community. For example, during a monitoring visit we accompanied, residents from Turi Village mentioned communication issues between the Community Development Group (Pokmas) and the RT. This was taken seriously by the local government leader, who ensured that the complaint would be addressed in the Evaluation Coordination Meeting, particularly regarding the clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the Supporting Staff. This open and responsive attitude reflects his integrity in fulfilling his mandate and realizing participatory and transparent governance.”

He further added that.

“Based on our observations in Tapem, the local government head has become a central figure who inspires local government officials down to the RT level in implementing the RT KEREN Program. He directly exemplifies the values of discipline, responsibility, and a service-oriented spirit that form the foundation of this program. Additionally, he actively fosters collaboration among stakeholders, ensuring that local government officials are not merely administrative implementers but also partners in driving change on the ground. This exemplary behavior is evident in how he addresses issues, such as in the case of miscommunication between the Community Development Group (Pokmas) and the RT, where he did not blame any party unilaterally but instead invited all elements to sit together and find a solution. This is an example of inclusive leadership and a model for practice.”

From these two statements, it can be explained that thanks to the consistent leadership and integrity of the local government officials. The leadership of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Blitar does not stop at the conceptual level. However, it is realized through direct involvement in monitoring, evaluation, and addressing issues that arise on the ground. This reflects a leadership model that is not distant from the community but is present as part of the solution and ongoing development.

Local leaders can demonstrate their role as central figures who inspire local government officials and village heads as the primary implementers of programs. The values of discipline, responsibility, openness, and a spirit of service exemplified by local

leaders form the foundation for strengthening a responsive and participatory bureaucracy.

Furthermore, the attitude of local leaders who do not blame certain parties when facing problems, but instead focus on collaborative problem-solving and system improvement, reflects the application of *idealized influence* in transformative leadership. Such exemplary behavior is key in building a culture of inclusive, transparent governance oriented toward community empowerment and service quality improvement.

The District Head of Kepanjenkidul stated:

"In our view at the Kepanjenkidul Sub-district, the integrity and exemplary leadership of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Blitar are very evident, particularly in the implementation of the RT KEREN Program. They are not merely present at the conceptual or ceremonial level but are actively involved in the program's implementation on the ground. We often witness how they directly visit RT neighborhoods, engage in dialogue with residents, and monitor the program's progress firsthand. This demonstrates that they do not merely issue instructions from behind a desk but also set a concrete example for us as implementers in the field. Their firmness in decision-making, consistency in fulfilling commitments, and openness to feedback from below reflect their integrity as leaders. This also serves as a motivator for us at the sub-district and village levels to work more effectively."

He also emphasized

"The Mayor and Deputy Mayor have become role models, not only for us as government officials but also for the wider community. Their leadership emphasizes the values of discipline, commitment, and sensitivity to the needs of the community. When a leader is willing to listen and be present among the people, trust and emulation naturally grow. We have witnessed firsthand how his leadership style directly impacts our work culture. There is a moral incentive to always act honestly, fairly, and professionally because the example comes from above. Even at the RT and RW levels, neighborhood leaders are now more enthusiastic about conducting resident data collection, designing community programs, and maintaining active communication—because they see directly how their leaders set the example."

The success of the RT KEREN Program in Blitar City is inseparable from the central role and exemplary leadership demonstrated by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Blitar. Their direct involvement in the implementation process on the ground, willingness to engage in dialogue with the community, and openness to feedback from below are tangible manifestations of integrity-driven and transformative leadership.

The presence of regional leaders is not merely symbolic, but rather as consistent role models who

embody the values of discipline, social sensitivity, and commitment to public service. Such leadership strengthens coordination among regional agencies and fosters a more honest, fair, and professional work culture, from the district to the neighborhood and community levels.

Thus, local leaders who can serve as role models and sources of inspiration for all elements of government and society demonstrate *the idealized influence* of transformative leadership. This exemplary behavior is an important foundation for building public trust, strengthening community participation, and creating responsive governance that is responsive to the real needs of the people of Blitar City.

The perception of the community and the apparatus towards the commitment of the regional head shows a high appreciation for the integrity demonstrated in running the government. The regional head is seen as a figure who upholds the values of justice, honesty, and orientation towards public service. This commitment is reflected in policies that prioritize the interests of the community, an open attitude towards citizens' aspirations, and consistency in providing equitable services without discrimination. As stated by the Mayor of Blitar.

"I believe that the trust of the community and government officials is built through consistent commitment to the values of justice, honesty, and public service. In every policy, including RT Keren, I emphasize transparency, equitable access, and providing equal opportunities for all RTs and RWs to develop. By opening up opportunities for community participation in designing and managing development programs in their respective areas, I want to ensure that no one is left behind. The community and government officials can assess for themselves that my approach has not only been administrative but also empathetic, fair, and wholeheartedly serving."

Thus, the commitment of local leaders to the values of justice, honesty, and public service is realized through administrative policies and an empathetic approach focused on equity and participation. In implementing the RT KEREN Program, local leaders consistently ensure openness, transparency, and fairness in access and involvement of all community elements.

The trust that has grown among the community and government officials results from leadership that has made these fundamental values a guideline for every action and decision. By providing equal space for all RTs and RWs to participate in development actively, local leaders have proven that equitable public services can only be achieved through sincere, open leadership that is responsive to the community's real needs.

The Head of the Regional Development Planning Agency (BAPPEDA) of Blitar City also emphasized that.

"In general, the public's perception of the Mayor's commitment is very positive. He is known for consistently prioritizing values of justice and honesty, especially in the distribution of the RT KEREN program, which is implemented based on the principle of need, not interest. There is no intervention or special treatment in determining the RT recipients. All decisions are made based on objective indicators and verified data. From the perspective of public service, his direct presence among the community demonstrates a high commitment to transparency and accountability in service delivery. The community feels that the government is not merely administrative but also emotionally and socially present. This is an important value that strengthens the relationship between the government and the community in building a participatory and competitive Blitar City."

The Head of TAPEM also shares the same view

"Based on our field observations, the public's and government officials' perceptions of the local leader's commitment are generally very positive. The public sees that the local leader is not just creating programs but is truly present and cares about their implementation. Of course, there are dynamics in the process, such as discrepancies between community proposals and actual activities, but the public appreciates that the local leader is open to criticism and complaints. From the officials' perspective, the enthusiasm and commitment of local leaders serve as a moral and ethical driving force in delivering public services. The value of justice is demonstrated through the consultative mechanisms established at every stage of the program, the value of honesty is reflected in the openness of information and reporting, and the value of public service is realized through the presence of the government down to the neighborhood level. In general, we observe that the community and the bureaucracy feel that the leadership of the local government is trustworthy and worthy of emulation in building good governance."

Thus, the two statements indicate that the public's and government officials' perceptions of the Mayor of Blitar's commitment are very positive and built on a strong foundation of trust. The Head of the Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda) of Blitar City emphasized that the local government consistently prioritizes the values of fairness and honesty, particularly in implementing the RT KEREN Program, which is distributed based on objective needs and verified data. There is no intervention or special treatment to determine the RT recipients. Additionally, the direct presence of local leaders in the community reinforces commitment to transparency and accountability in public service, fostering emotional closeness between the government and the community.

The District Head of Kepanjenkidul stated

"From what we have experienced on the ground, the community's perception of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor is very positive. The community believes that their leadership is not biased toward any particular group but prioritizes the principles of fairness and equality. The RT KEREN Program itself serves as evidence that public services in Blitar City are directed toward addressing the basic needs of the community at the grassroots level, namely the RT. Additionally, his direct involvement in listening to community aspirations and the policies implemented based on real community needs demonstrate a high commitment to the values of honesty and transparency. For us as public servants, this serves as a reminder that public service is not just about administration, but also about moral responsibility and standing with the community."

In line with this, the Head of the Government Administration Department also stated that the community evaluates local leaders for designing programs and demonstrating genuine concern for their implementation. Despite challenges in field implementation, such as discrepancies between community proposals and actual activities, the community still perceives local leaders as open to criticism and feedback. For civil servants, the commitment of local leaders serves as a moral and ethical example in providing professional public services. The value of justice is realized through inclusive consultation mechanisms, and the value of honesty is reflected in the openness of information and reporting. In contrast, the value of public service is evident in the government's tangible presence down to the neighborhood level.

Thus, the leadership of local government heads is deemed worthy of trust and emulation in building good governance, participatory, transparent, and public service-oriented governance that is fair in Blitar City.

The clarity and strength of the vision and mission conveyed by the local government leader are key elements in implementing the RT KEREN Program. The local government leader is assessed to have provided clear and inspiring policy direction, which serves as a technical guideline for local government officials and inspires community participation. The vision and mission outlined demonstrate a commitment to inclusive development, community-driven needs, and strengthening the role of RT and RW as the frontline in public service delivery. This clarity of direction serves as the foundation for fostering collaboration and reinforcing the spirit of cooperation in program implementation across the city of Blitar. As stated by the Mayor of Blitar, *"Certainly. From the outset, I have emphasized that the RT Keren Program is not merely a routine project, but a tangible manifestation of the Vision and Mission of the City of Blitar as outlined in the 2021–2026 Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD). This program is*

designed to optimize the development potential at the village level by positioning RT and RW as the main actors in development. Through this program, I aim to bring about a vision of a city that is competitive, self-reliant, and sustainable, born from the spirit of unity and mutual cooperation in the community. I firmly believe that the direction of development must originate from the grassroots level, and through the RT Keren Program, this vision can be implemented in a concrete and measurable way."

He also emphasized that

"I communicate the goals and objectives of this program in a down-to-earth and participatory manner, ensuring it is easily understood by all segments of society. I always emphasize that RT and RW are the frontline defenders of social and economic resilience, and therefore, they must be given the space to innovate and create. Through RT Keren, we encourage them to identify local potential, design creative solutions, and manage resources collaboratively. Additionally, we motivate the community by holding the RT Keren Award, which has been held twice. This award serves as a tangible form of appreciation and encouragement for the best implementers, while also serving as a means to disseminate best practices across regions."

Thus, local leaders have demonstrated a strong commitment to providing a clear and inspiring vision and mission in implementing the RT KEREN Program. The vision of Blitar City as a competitive, self-reliant, and sustainable city is concretely translated through policies that position RT and RW as the leading actors in community-based development. This commitment to the policy direction is communicated formally and through a communicative approach that is grounded and easily understood by all segments of society.

b. Discussion

The Rukun Tetangga Keren (RT KEREN) Program, initiated by the Blitar City Government through Blitar Mayor Regulation No. 6 of 2022, faces various challenges. In this program, the Blitar City Government provides RT funding assistance of Rp50 million per RT, allocated from village funds with a budget allocation ratio of 70% for physical and 30% for non-physical expenditures across all RTs in Blitar City. The implementation is carried out in phases: in 2021, it was implemented in 21 pilot RTs and became fully effective across all RTs in Blitar City in 2022. This program has three main components: first, physical development focused on improving RT environmental infrastructure; second, non-physical activities that support community *soft skills*, such as training; and third, community empowerment, where the results of physical development and non-physical training enable residents to create their own job opportunities, thereby becoming self-reliant. This condition can serve as a bonus for the government, boosting the city's revenue. The principles guiding the implementation of the RT Keren program

are: Transparency, Participation, Accountability, Sustainability, Orderliness, Budgeting, Benefits for the Community, and Compliance with Legal Regulations (as detailed in Chapter II).

However, based on the researcher's field study from 2021 to 2023, several technical and substantive issues were identified, particularly during the period in question, which ultimately impacted the effectiveness and sustainability of the program, as follows:

First, there are still members of the community who are unaware of the RT Keren Development meetings conducted by the Community Development Group (Pokmas), indicating that the implementation process lacks transparency. As a result, both physical and non-physical developments may not fully reflect the wishes of the residents in the RT. Additionally, many residents still face difficulties consulting directly with the Blitar City Government, resulting in complaints being directed to the Mayor. This situation does not yet meet the principle of transparency. Second, regarding community participation, according to several facilitators, many invited residents did not attend the internal planning meeting for the RT Keren program in their RT.

Additionally, many residents were unenthusiastic or did not attend the training or construction process planned for the RT, and there was a lack of maintenance after the physical program was implemented. For example, a hanging garden was built on the side of the RT alley, but the plants were left to dry and were not watered. Third, from the community empowerment perspective, the role of facilitators in directing the program to focus on creating community independence—such as the development of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs)—is still not optimal. This has resulted in the RT KEREN program not fully addressing the sustainable economic empowerment of residents. Conversely, many residents still do not sufficiently consider the advice and input from facilitators.

In addition, the lack of guidance from facilitators to the community in utilizing the RuKo Biker application as a medium for conveying aspirations and complaints indicates gaps in two-way communication and the strengthening of digital systems that should improve the effectiveness of community-based public services at the neighborhood level.

Another issue lies in the inconsistency of training themes from year to year. For example, cake-making training provided in the first year was replaced with welding training in the following year. This pattern does not provide opportunities for the community to deepen its competencies in a particular field on an ongoing basis. Ideally, the first year focuses on basic cake-making training. In that case, the following year should continue with advanced material to increase

residents' competencies, and opportunities for developing skills-based MSMEs should be opened.

Issues also arise in the synchronization between physical outputs and non-physical activities. There have been cases where skill training, such as welding or haircutting, was conducted. However, follow-up actions did not lead to the provision of supporting facilities, such as welding tools, haircutting equipment, or business facilities. Instead, the budget was used to build neighborhood security posts or community gathering places that are not directly related to the training provided.

Given these challenges, transformative leadership is needed—leadership that not only sets policy directions but also inspires and facilitates change, ensuring that the RT Keren program for 2023–2025 runs more effectively. Transformative leadership can establish a clear vision, inspire change, and empower local officials, mentors, and the community to create a more focused, consistent, and sustainable program. Such leadership is crucial to ensure that the RT Keren Program is not merely an annual project but a tangible instrument of social transformation at the community level.

Given these various issues, transformative leadership is needed to act as a policy director, inspirer, and facilitator of change. Transformative leadership can build a clear vision, inspire change, and empower local officials, facilitators, and communities to work together to create more focused, consistent, and sustainable programs. Such leadership is essential to ensure that the RT KEREN Program is not merely an annual project but a real instrument of social transformation at the community level.

Idealized Influence. In the context of transformative leadership, *idealized influence* refers to a leader's ability to be a role model who upholds the values of integrity, honesty, and moral commitment in all their actions. In implementing the RT KEREN Program, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Blitar demonstrate the characteristics of idealized influence in the following ways: Respected leaders and local government officials demonstrate their status as respected leaders through direct involvement in program implementation. This is reflected in the *GOWES Sambang RT KEREN* activity, where the Mayor and his staff went directly to the RT neighborhood, engaged in dialogue with the community, and tangibly monitored program implementation. The direct presence of leaders among the community demonstrates that leadership is not merely symbolic but is manifested in concrete actions that inspire and enhance public trust.

Ethics, Morality, and Integrity:

The local government of Blitar City operates by upholding principles of ethics, justice, transparency, and integrity. In implementing the RT KEREN Program, the

local government emphasizes making fair and objective decisions without any intervention or special treatment toward specific RTs. All policies are implemented based on transparent and verified indicators, reflecting a high moral commitment to building a clean, integrity-driven government.

Working in line with the institution's vision and mission, the local government leader demonstrates alignment between program implementation and the vision and mission of the local government institution. The RT KEREN Program is a concrete manifestation of Blitar City's inclusive, competitive, and sustainable development vision. The local government consistently emphasizes that this program is not merely an annual routine but a strategic effort to empower communities at the grassroots level and encourage active citizen participation in community-based development.

The inclusive leadership style, which avoids blaming specific parties and prioritizes collaborative problem-solving, has made the local government leader a role model, both in the eyes of government officials and the community. The values of discipline, honesty, and professionalism demonstrated by local leaders have a positive moral impact on the work culture of the bureaucracy down to the sub-district and neighborhood levels. The community also perceives leaders as not merely administrative officials but as caring, empathetic, and worthy role models. Local leaders grant each region the flexibility to adapt program implementation to the characteristics of their respective environments. This approach opens space for experimentation and creativity, encouraging the community to follow instructions and design innovative and adaptive solutions. The emergence of various initiatives such as reading corners, waste banks, and digital reporting applications is a tangible manifestation of creating a creative climate at the community level.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of interviews and analysis of the implementation of the RT KEREN Program in Blitar City, it can be concluded that the local government has implemented transformational leadership comprehensively and consistently. This implementation is reflected through four leading indicators that form the framework of transformational leadership.

First, in the Idealized Influence indicator, local leaders demonstrate strong exemplary behavior and integrity through direct involvement in every stage of program implementation. An open, fair, and community-oriented attitude is the primary foundation for policy-making. Local leaders are present as leaders who not only lead administratively but also provide moral inspiration and exemplary values that impact the work ethic of officials and community participation.

Second, in the Inspirational Motivation indicator, local leaders can build a transparent, communicative, and down-to-earth vision that is easily understood by all levels of society. Local leaders foster collective motivation to achieve participatory development through inclusive and enthusiastic communication. Programs like *the RT Keren Award* are concrete examples of efforts to motivate program implementers and strengthen the spirit of unity among regions.

Third, in the Intellectual Stimulation indicator, local leaders demonstrate their role as facilitators of innovation by encouraging officials and the community to think critically, solution-oriented, and adaptively. These programs are not merely administrative routines but serve as spaces for learning and developing new ideas based on local needs and potential. Openness to criticism, opportunities for dialogue, and flexibility in program implementation reflect a progressive and reflective leadership approach.

Fourth, in the Individualized Consideration (Individual Support) indicator, local leaders demonstrate genuine attention to the needs and development of individuals, particularly neighborhood association leaders, facilitators, and the community. Local leaders demonstrate their commitment to sustainably building individual capacity by providing digital applications, technical training, intensive guidance, and measurable appreciation. This approach fosters a more supportive, collaborative, and inclusive work environment at the community level. However, implementing transformational leadership in the RT KEREN Program is not without internal and external challenges. Internally, challenges arise in the form of conventional bureaucratic mindsets, limited technical capacity of program implementers at the RT level, and a lack of integration of activities with community empowerment objectives. Externally, challenges include low public understanding of the essence of the program, complex social dynamics within RT communities, and disparities in participation across regions.

Local leaders responded to these challenges with a humanistic, participatory, and innovative approach. Integrating transformative leadership values and adaptive implementation strategies, the RT KEREN Program has developed into a community-based development model that promotes social justice, citizen independence, and improved public service quality at the grassroots level. Thus, the successful implementation of the RT KEREN Program in Blitar City shows that transformational leadership plays a strategic role in driving sustainable structural, cultural, and social change and building a more responsive, inclusive, and people-centered governance system.

Strengthening the Capacity of Government Officials and RT Administrators:

The Blitar City Government must continue to strengthen the technical, managerial, and leadership capacities of program implementers, particularly at the RT and village levels. Training, technical guidance, and field accompaniment must be conducted continuously to ensure program implementers can understand and apply transformational principles in program management.

Expansion and Equalization of Community Participation:

To address disparities in participation across regions, a more intensive, persuasive, and educational approach is needed for inactive RTs. The government can establish closer communication with these areas through direct visits, thematic dialogues, and empowerment based on specific local needs.

Strengthening the Evaluation and Feedback System:

Participatory monitoring and evaluation systems need to be improved so that program implementation can continue to be adjusted to dynamics in the field. Periodic evaluation forums involving the community, RT administrators, facilitators, and regional officials should be used as strategic spaces to receive input, resolve problems, and improve program implementation.

Inclusive Use of Technology:

The *RuKo Biker* application as a communication and reporting tool must continue to be developed to ensure ease of access and digital literacy for all users. The government can provide technology training for neighborhood association leaders and residents so that its use can be widespread and have maximum impact.

Strengthening a Culture of Appreciation and Replication of Best Practices:

Award programs such as *the RT Keren Award* should be expanded to recognize innovation and outstanding performance. In addition to serving as motivation, best practices from outstanding RTs should be documented and disseminated so other areas can replicate them as part of a collective learning process.

Consistency in Instilling Transformational Values:

Local leaders and government officials must consistently instill integrity, fairness, impartiality, and inclusive public service values. This is crucial to ensure that the work culture developed through the RT KEREN Program is not temporary but becomes deeply rooted as the foundation for governance in the future.

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