

Comparing Agile Leadership and Transformational Leadership: A Literature Review on Leadership Effectiveness

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Input : February 15, 2025
Accepted: March 20, 2025

Revised : March 15, 2025
Published : March 5, 2025

ABSTRACT

In an increasingly complex business world, leadership plays a key role in determining organizational effectiveness. Agile Leadership and Transformational Leadership are two leadership approaches that have unique characteristics in managing change and achieving business goals. Agile Leadership emphasizes flexibility, rapid adaptation, and decentralized decision-making, making it suitable for dynamic environments such as the technology and startup industries. Meanwhile, Transformational Leadership is oriented towards long-term vision and gradual organizational cultural change with leaders as the main inspirators. Both approaches have their own advantages, but also face challenges in their implementation, such as cultural resistance in Agile Leadership and dependence on charismatic leaders in Transformational Leadership. This study uses a literature study method to compare the effectiveness of the two leadership models in various organizational contexts. The results of the analysis show that the combination of Agile Leadership and Transformational Leadership can create a balance between organizational agility and long-term stability. By understanding the advantages and limitations of each model, organizations can implement a more adaptive and innovation-oriented leadership strategy to face increasingly dynamic market changes.

Keywords: Agile Leadership, Transformational Leadership, leadership, organization, innovation

INTRODUCTION

In the ever-evolving business world, leadership plays a central role in determining the success of an organization. Various leadership models have emerged in response to the dynamic challenges faced by companies in the digital and globalization era. Agile Leadership and Transformational Leadership are two approaches that are gaining increasing attention because of their ability to improve organizational effectiveness. Agile Leadership emphasizes flexibility, experimentation, and rapid decision-making to adapt to continuous change (Ncube et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Transformational Leadership focuses on empowering individuals and creating an inspiring vision to drive innovation and loyalty within the organization (Melinda, 2024). These two approaches have unique characteristics that differentiate leadership strategies in managing change and achieving business goals.

However, critical questions arise regarding the relative effectiveness of these two leadership styles in different organizational contexts. Agile Leadership is often associated



with technology-based industries and work environments that require rapid response to market changes, while Transformational Leadership is more often applied in organizations that require long-term cultural change and increased employee engagement (Atlantika et al., 2024). While both have the potential to improve organizational performance, a deeper understanding of the strengths and limitations of each approach is needed to determine the most appropriate leadership strategy in a given context. Therefore, this study aims to explore the comparison between Agile Leadership and Transformational Leadership to provide a more comprehensive insight into leadership effectiveness in the modern business world.

In an increasingly complex business environment, Agile Leadership focuses not only on flexibility and speed in decision-making, but also on the ability to create a work culture that supports continuous innovation and experimentation. According to Neto et al (2022), leaders who adopt Agile Leadership must be able to create an environment that encourages openness, transparency, and empowerment of teams in taking initiatives and being accountable for the results achieved. This requires a shift from a traditional hierarchical approach to a more adaptive and collaborative structure, where decisions are made based on real-time data and input from various stakeholders. Thus, organizations that implement Agile Leadership are better able to respond to market disruptions and accelerate the innovation cycle than organizations that still rely on conventional leadership models (Suhara et al., 2024).

However, the implementation of Agile Leadership also has its own challenges, especially in organizations that still rely on bureaucratic structures and rigid procedures. Schulze & Pinkow (2020) emphasize that the change towards more agile leadership often faces resistance from traditional leaders who are accustomed to tight control systems and centralized decision-making. In addition, research conducted by Kaya (2023) shows that the effectiveness of Agile Leadership is highly dependent on the readiness of the organization to adopt a mindset that is oriented towards learning and adaptation. Therefore, although Agile Leadership promises competitive advantage in a dynamic business environment, its success still depends on the readiness of the organization's culture, adaptive leadership skills, and willingness to fundamentally change the way of working.

Transformational Leadership has long been considered an effective approach in shaping an innovative and adaptive organizational culture. Through its four main components idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration transformational leaders are able to build strong relationships with their teams and encourage continuous individual development (Bakker et al., 2023). In the context of organizational change, this leadership enables companies to not only survive but also thrive through the creation of a clear vision and empowerment of employees to achieve common goals. Samodien et al (2024) emphasize that transformational leaders act not only as managers, but also as agents of change who shape new values, norms, and expectations in the organization. Thus, Transformational Leadership is a very relevant model for organizations that want to strengthen competitiveness and innovation amidst increasingly complex market dynamics.

However, despite its various advantages, Transformational Leadership also faces challenges in its implementation. One of the main criticisms of this model is the high dependence on charisma and the individual ability of the leader to inspire and direct change (Fourie & Hohne, 2019). If leaders who apply this style do not have sufficient capacity to maintain strong relationships with their employees, then the effectiveness of leadership can decrease significantly. In addition, research by Alimuddin (2024) shows that in some cases, transformational leaders can create expectations that are too high and

cause excessive pressure on employees, leading to burnout and decreased productivity. Therefore, although Transformational Leadership has been proven effective in increasing motivation and innovation, organizations must still pay attention to the balance between inspiration and employee psychological sustainability so that its positive impact can last in the long term.

In comparing the effectiveness of Agile Leadership and Transformational Leadership, it is important to understand the organizational context and team dynamics that influence leadership outcomes. Agile Leadership tends to be more effective in rapidly changing environments, such as the technology industry or startups, where rapid decision-making, continuous iteration, and team collaboration are key to success (Magdalena et al., 2023). In contrast, Transformational Leadership is more appropriate in organizations that require deep and long-term cultural change, such as educational institutions or companies with strong hierarchical structures (Lee & Ding, 2023). Transformational Leadership's advantages in building long-term vision and increasing employee motivation can help organizations navigate major changes, but it may be less responsive in situations that require instant adaptation to a dynamic market.

On the other hand, both leadership models have limitations that can affect their effectiveness in certain contexts. Agile Leadership, although it encourages flexibility and innovation, can struggle in organizations with rigid bureaucratic structures or in industries that are highly regulated (Wati, 2025). Without a strong cultural foundation, implementing Agile Leadership can lead to unclear roles and responsibilities, which ultimately hinders team effectiveness. Meanwhile, Transformational Leadership often relies on the individual leader's ability to inspire and motivate employees, meaning its effectiveness can be reduced if not balanced with a system that supports continuous change (Lai et al., 2020). Therefore, choosing the right leadership style must consider contextual factors, such as organizational structure, work culture, and the need for speed of adaptation to change.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method to analyze the comparative effectiveness of Agile Leadership and Transformational Leadership in various organizational contexts. Literature studies were chosen because they allow for in-depth exploration of previously stated theories and empirical findings, so that patterns, differences, and factors that influence the effectiveness of both leadership models can be identified (Sarief et al., 2023).

Data sources come from academic journals, books, and research reports obtained through scientific databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, with a focus on the latest literature (2015–2025) to maintain relevance. Content analysis and thematic analysis techniques are used to group findings based on categories such as leadership characteristics, organizational effectiveness, and implementation challenges.

Data analysis was conducted descriptively and comparatively, where this study summarizes the basic concepts, identifies the main differences between Agile Leadership and Transformational Leadership, and assesses the effectiveness of each in different contexts. To increase validity, source triangulation was applied to compare various literatures and avoid bias. Thus, this study provides insight into the advantages and limitations of both leadership styles and their implications for organizations facing dynamic change.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Comparison of Characteristics and Basic Principles of Agile Leadership and Transformational Leadership

1. Leadership Approaches and Principles

Agile and Transformational leadership approaches have fundamental differences in how they manage organizations and teams. Agile Leadership focuses on flexibility, rapid iteration, and empowering teams to make independent decisions, allowing organizations to adapt to dynamic changes. Agile leaders create an open and transparent work environment, encourage collaboration, and ensure that decisions are made based on rapid feedback. This approach is particularly effective in fast-paced industries such as technology and startups, where innovation and adaptability are key to success. Nur Faliza et al (2025) highlighted that organizations that implement Agile Leadership tend to have shorter innovation cycles, high employee engagement, and more decentralized structures. Research by Siregar et al (2023) also supports that implementing Agile leadership on a large scale helps organizations improve work efficiency, reduce bureaucracy, and increase team satisfaction.

On the other hand, Transformational Leadership is oriented towards long-term vision and organizational culture change through inspirational influence and high commitment to shared values. Transformational leaders motivate their teams through strong communication and provide inspiring examples. They focus not only on achieving business goals but also on developing individuals within the team to reach their full potential. Djuraiddi & Laily (2020) emphasized that transformational leaders have a significant impact on improving employee morale, job satisfaction, and overall organizational performance. Muliawan & Ulum's (2024) study in their meta-analysis showed that Transformational Leadership consistently correlates positively with individual, team, and organizational performance, especially in the context of long-term strategic change. In addition, Praditya's (2022) study found that transformational leadership increases team effectiveness by increasing motivation and ownership of organizational goals.

In comparison, Agile Leadership is more suitable for dynamic environments, where changes occur quickly and require instant responses, while Transformational Leadership is more suitable for organizations that require gradual, long-term changes. In Agile Leadership, decisions tend to be decentralized and team-based, while in Transformational Leadership, leaders have a more dominant role as inspirators and drivers of change (Jemmy, 2024). Therefore, the selection of this leadership approach must be adjusted to the needs of the organization. Several studies also show that a combination of these two approaches can provide greater benefits. Nur Faliza et al (2025) revealed that organizations that combine the flexibility of Agile Leadership with the strategic vision of Transformational Leadership can achieve higher levels of innovation while maintaining organizational stability. Therefore, the combination of these two approaches can be an ideal solution for organizations that want to remain adaptive but still have a clear strategic direction to achieve long-term goals.

Table 1. Comparison and Conclusion of Agile Leadership and Transformational Leadership

Aspect	Agile Leadership	Transformational Leadership
Focus	Flexibility and speed of adaptation	Long term transformation
Return of decision	Decentralized, team-based	Focus on the leader as an inspirator
Approach to change	Iterative and fast feedback based	Step by step. Based on organizational values
Relationship with the team	Collaborative, autonomy-based	Inspirational, motivational and loyalty based

2. The Role of Leaders in Decision Making

In the context of leadership, the role of leaders in decision-making is greatly influenced by the approach used, both Agile Leadership and Transformational Leadership. In Agile Leadership, leaders function as facilitators and mentors who give the team the freedom to innovate and adapt to change (Bushuyeva et al., 2019). This model emphasizes the decentralization of decision-making, where decisions are made by individuals or teams closest to the information, so that the process is faster and more responsive. Leaders in Agile Leadership do not act as the main controller, but as supporters who help eliminate obstacles and create an environment conducive to innovation. Research conducted by Nengsih & SE (2025) shows that companies that adopt Agile leadership, such as Google and Spotify, have succeeded in increasing the speed of innovation and flexibility in responding to market changes. Agile Leadership allows organizations to be more flexible, reduce bureaucracy, and increase team motivation because they have autonomy in carrying out their duties.

In contrast, in Transformational Leadership, the leader plays a greater role as the main source of inspiration who has a major influence in shaping the direction and policies of the organization (Dari et al., 2023). This leadership is oriented towards a long-term vision, where decisions are often centered on the leader who sets the strategic direction that the team must follow. Although in some aspects the execution of decisions can be delegated, the overall process remains within the framework of the vision set by the leader. Bass (1990) in his theory of Transformational Leadership emphasizes that leaders who are able to inspire and motivate their teams can significantly improve organizational performance, especially in the context of major changes and strategic innovations (Harsoyo, 2022). A study by Nurdin & Rohendi (2016) also shows that Transformational Leadership contributes to increasing employee commitment and achieving organizational goals in the long term. However, this approach can cause delays in decision making because it relies on direction from the main leader, although it still provides clarity on the strategic direction for the organization.

A comparison between these two leadership models shows that Agile Leadership is more suitable for dynamic business environments, where decisions must be made quickly and iteratively, while Transformational Leadership is more suitable for organizations that require strong visionary direction with a focus on long-term transformation. Agile Leadership encourages high team involvement with full autonomy, while Transformational Leadership provides more structured direction, while still allowing room for flexible execution. A study by Permata & Nurhayati (2024) found that

organizations with Agile leadership have higher levels of employee satisfaction and are better able to survive amid market uncertainty than organizations with traditional leadership models. By understanding these differences, organizations can choose or combine the approaches that best suit their needs, depending on the industry context, organizational culture, and strategic goals they want to achieve.

Table 2 Comparison and Implications of Agile Leadership and Transformational Leadership

Aspect	Agile Leadership	Transformational Leadership
Decision approach	Decentralization	Centralized vision, flexible execution
The role of the leader	Faciliator and mentor	Main inspiration and director
Speed of decision making	Fast and iterative	It can be slower because it is based on the Vessar Cisi
Focus	Adaptation and innovation	Long term transformation
Team involvement	High, with autonomy	Moderate, within the limits of the leader's vision

3. Impact on Organizational Culture

Leadership plays a fundamental role in shaping organizational culture, which will ultimately determine work effectiveness, company values, and interactions between individuals within the organization. In this context, Agile Leadership and Transformational Leadership offer different approaches to creating an organizational culture that is in line with industry dynamics and business challenges. Agile Leadership places more emphasis on flexibility, rapid adaptation, and collaboration. Leaders with this style create a more dynamic work culture, where individuals have the freedom to contribute without a rigid hierarchy (Arifin & Purwanti., 2023). This creates a more inclusive work environment, allowing every team member to be involved in decision-making and increasing innovation and work efficiency.

In addition, Agile Leadership also creates a culture that is responsive to change, which is very suitable for fast-growing businesses such as startups and the technology industry. Research by Putra et al (2024) shows that companies that adopt agile leadership principles tend to be superior in dealing with market uncertainty. An iteration-based and continuous improvement approach allows organizations to quickly adapt to market trends, industry changes, and customer demand. Another impact is the creation of a culture based on experimentation and innovation, where failure is not seen as an obstacle, but as part of the learning process (Metris, 2024). This provides space for employees to try new ideas without fear of excessive negative consequences.

Furthermore, Agile Leadership also emphasizes employee empowerment, where leaders act as facilitators rather than as primary authorities, thereby increasing individual engagement and job satisfaction in the organization. This empowerment is in line with the concept of self-organizing teams where teams are given autonomy to determine their own way of working, thereby increasing productivity and quality of work. For example, companies like Google and Spotify implement Agile Leadership by adopting more flexible working methods, such as cross-functional teams and the Scrum or Kanban approach to increase agility in facing business challenges (Tarumingkeng, 2024). Thus, the organizational culture that is formed is more adaptive and innovative.

However, the Agile Leadership approach is not always ideal for all types of organizations. In larger organizations with strong long-term values, Transformational Leadership tends to be more effective. Unlike Agile Leadership which focuses on flexibility and rapid response, Transformational Leadership emphasizes the formation of a strong organizational culture based on a long-term vision. Transformational leaders work by instilling core values in the organization, so that employees feel more emotionally attached to the company's vision and mission (Inggria, 2021). This creates higher loyalty and commitment from employees to the organization.

In addition, Transformational Leadership also emphasizes individual development and hierarchical leadership, where leaders act as mentors and coaches for employees so that they can develop optimally (Maisyura et al., 2022). The long-term impact is the creation of a stable organizational culture, which can still adapt to change, but with a more systematic and strategic approach. Research conducted by Feri et al (2020) shows that transformational leadership is positively correlated with increased job satisfaction, motivation, and employee performance.

For example, large companies like Apple and Tesla implement transformational leadership by building a strong vision-based culture. Steve Jobs and Elon Musk, for example, not only lead with aggressive business strategies but also instill corporate values that shape their work culture in the long term (Wijayati, 2022). With this approach, companies are not only able to survive in a competitive industry but also have sustainable competitiveness.

In comparison, Agile Leadership is more suitable for organizations that require high flexibility, such as startups and technology-based companies, while Transformational Leadership is more ideal for large organizations that prioritize stability and long-term value. The main difference between the two lies in how they build a work culture. Agile Leadership is oriented towards collaboration, rapid adaptation, and experimentation, while Transformational Leadership focuses more on the formation of values, loyalty, and leadership development within the organization.

However, in practice, the combination of these two leadership models can produce optimal impact. The combination of transformational leadership elements with agile principles can increase the effectiveness of the organization in dealing with change and strengthen the long-term value of the company (Karimi et al., 2023; Ansari et al., 2024). For example, companies can apply Agile Leadership in product development teams that require rapid innovation, while Transformational Leadership can be used at the executive management level to ensure the continuity of the company's vision. Thus, the selection of the right leadership model must be adjusted to the needs of the organization, industry, and the challenges faced. The combination of the two allows the organization to remain flexible in dealing with change, while maintaining a strong work culture based on long-term values.

Table 3. Comparison and Implications in Various Industries

Aspect	Agile Leadership	Transformational Leadership
Main focus	Flexibility, adaptation, experimentation	Long-term vision, stability, organizational values
Leadership style	Collaborative, team-based, decentralized	Inspirational, motivating, individual development
Response to change	Fast and iterative	Stable, focus on long-term change

Employee engagement	Individual empowerment, teamwork	High loyalty and commitment
Suitable for industry	Startups, technology, innovative companies	Large companies, strong value-based organizations

Effectiveness of Agile Leadership and Transformational Leadership in Various Organizational Contexts

1. The Most Appropriate Organizational and Industry Context

Agile Leadership and Transformational Leadership are two leadership approaches that have different effectiveness depending on the organizational and industry context. Agile Leadership is more effective in dynamic, fast-changing, and innovation-based environments, such as the technology industry, startups, and companies that implement Agile methodology in project management. According to Permata (2024) Agile Leadership is very relevant in the modern business ecosystem that requires flexibility and rapid adaptation to market changes. In this context, Agile leaders are required to have high adaptability, be able to collaborate flexibly with teams, and encourage experimentation through rapid iteration. This is in line with Dutameru's research (2023), which shows that organizations that implement Agile Leadership tend to be more innovative and responsive to change compared to organizations that still rely on traditional leadership. Companies such as Google and Spotify have successfully implemented Agile Leadership to increase innovation with a collaborative work system that is responsive to market changes.

On the other hand, Transformational Leadership is more suitable for organizations that have a more established structure and require long-term cultural change, such as large companies, educational institutions, and governments. Riza et al (2024) explained that Transformational leaders play a role in creating a long-term vision, motivating and developing individuals in the organization, and gradually building profound cultural change. This leadership model is more suitable for companies that want to carry out organizational reforms with maintained stability. Research by Masrifah & Kuswinarno (2024) shows that Transformational Leadership has a positive impact on increasing employee loyalty and building a work environment that is more oriented towards individual development. This is reflected in the leadership of Steve Jobs at Apple and Jack Welch at General Electric, who succeeded in bringing about long-term change through a strong vision and continuous human resource development. In addition, educational and government institutions often adopt this model to ensure that the changes that occur are not only strategic but also create a sustainable impact.

In a comparison between these two leadership models, Agile Leadership is more suitable for organizations that require flexibility, rapid innovation, and adaptation to a dynamically changing environment, while Transformational Leadership is more effective in more stable organizations that require cultural change and long-term human resource development. Hardian & Hermawan (2022) found that leaders who are able to adopt a leadership style that suits the conditions of their organization tend to be more successful in achieving the company's strategic goals. Thus, the selection of a leadership model must be adjusted to the needs of the organization, both those that are oriented towards speed and innovation such as Agile Leadership and those that focus on cultural reform and long-term stability such as Transformational Leadership.

2. Impact on Organizational Performance and Adaptation

Agile Leadership and Transformational Leadership have a significant impact on organizational performance and adaptation, with different but complementary approaches. Agile Leadership focuses on flexibility, innovation, and rapid response to change. According to Lestari (2021), organizations that implement Agile leadership are able to adapt better to market dynamics through rapid decision-making and an experiment-based approach. A study conducted by Rismanto et al (2025) also shows that the Agile approach increases organizational agility in responding to customer needs and technological changes, which ultimately accelerates the innovation cycle and increases the company's competitiveness. In addition, research by Pratama (2024) highlights that organizations that adopt Agile principles, such as Scrum and Kanban, can improve operational efficiency by reducing bureaucracy and allowing teams to work in shorter iterations, resulting in solutions that are more relevant to the market.

On the other hand, Transformational Leadership emphasizes more on motivation, loyalty, and the long-term vision of the organization. Serang et al (2024) explained that transformational leaders inspire employees by giving meaning to their work, building a positive work culture, and increasing their engagement. Studies by (Nurdin & Rohendi, 2016; Mahyadi & Safrizal, 2023) in their meta-analysis found that Transformational Leadership contributed significantly to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and increased individual and team performance. In addition, research by Ammar et al (2025) showed that Transformational Leadership has a positive correlation with employee productivity and organizational effectiveness, because employees feel more empowered and encouraged to achieve higher goals. This approach has also been shown to reduce employee turnover rates, as confirmed by the study by Siswatiningsih et al (2018), which states that transformational leadership style strengthens employees' emotional attachment to the organization, creating stability in the long term.

By understanding this empirical evidence, organizations can integrate both leadership approaches to achieve optimal results. Agile Leadership allows organizations to remain agile in the face of market and technology changes, while Transformational Leadership creates a strong foundation through employee motivation and loyalty. The combination of the two will produce an organization that not only adapts quickly to new challenges but also has long-term stability and sustainable growth. A study by Ramadani et al (2024) emphasized that organizations that implement flexible and inspirational leadership tend to be more successful in facing modern business challenges, because they are able to combine innovation with organizational stability. This shows that an effective leadership approach does not only depend on one particular model, but rather on the organization's ability to adapt the leadership strategy that best suits their context and needs..

CONCLUSIONS

Agile Leadership and Transformational Leadership have different approaches to leadership, decision-making, and their impact on organizational culture. Agile Leadership emphasizes flexibility, rapid adaptation, and decentralization of decisions, making it more suitable for dynamic industries such as technology and startups. In contrast, Transformational Leadership is oriented towards long-term vision and gradual cultural change, with the leader as the main inspiration. In decision-making, Agile Leadership gives high autonomy to the team to accelerate the process and increase collaboration, while Transformational Leadership is more centralized to maintain the continuity of the organization's vision. In terms of organizational culture, Agile Leadership creates an innovative, collaborative, and experiment-based work environment, while

Transformational Leadership builds loyalty and commitment to the company's vision. Agile Leadership is more effective in a rapidly changing environment, while Transformational Leadership is more suitable for large organizations that require stability and gradual change. However, the combination of these two leadership models can provide a balance between flexibility and stability in the organization. The challenges faced by Agile Leadership include bureaucracy and resistance to an autonomous culture, while Transformational Leadership can face dependence on charismatic leaders. Therefore, organizations that are able to integrate these two leadership models will be better prepared to face increasingly complex and dynamic business challenges.

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