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**Empowering Rural Women through Transformative Leadership:
Insights from KWT Pawon Gendis**

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EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN THROUGH TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP: INSIGHTS FROM KWT PAWON GENDIS

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Abstract

This research focuses on women's empowerment in rural communities, specifically in the context of transformational leadership applied by Dwi Martuti Rahayu in KWT Pawon Gendis, a farm women's group in Salakmalang Village. The issue raised is how transformational leadership can be adapted and applied in a more local social context, with the aim of exploring the dimensions of transformational leadership that are effective in empowering women in the village. This research used a qualitative approach with a case study method, with data collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation analysis. This research showed that Dwi Martuti Rahayu successfully applied four main dimensions of transformational leadership-Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Individualized Consideration, and Intellectual Stimulation, which were instrumental in increasing women's capacity and participation in social and economic activities, visualised in the dynamics of her activities. The discussion shows that while transformational leadership theory is generally applied in the context of formal organizations, its application in rural communities has proven effective, with the important caveat that it must be tailored to local needs and challenges. The research make a significant contribution to the development of transformational leadership-based empowerment models in rural contexts and potentially pave the way for further research in this area.

Keywords: Transformative; Leadership; Women; Communication visualizations; Village development; Kulon Progo.



A. Introduction

Leadership is the process of motivating people to take action (Martin, 2013). How a leader can influence a person's behavior can reveal whether or not leadership is effective. Leadership style, not necessarily gender-based, can demonstrate how a person leads (Denmark, 1993). Today's leaders are aware of transformative leadership styles, which can positively influence organizations by developing emotional attitudes, behaviors, and values that motivate others to change in order to advance organizational goals (Debebe, 2011). Transformative leadership is a strategy that generates interest in the organization (Rodrigues & Ferreira, 2015). Employees develop a sense of self and learn to respect, admire, and trust their managers.

Employees are more motivated and want to work alone when they have a transformative leader, even if it is female (Hopkins et al., 2008). Leaders who exhibit charismatic behaviors inspire motivation, provide intellectual stimulation, and provide a sense of purpose (Whichelo, 2021). Transformative leaders treat members or staff as individuals, reflecting an effective transformational leadership style (Kruahong et al., 2023). A transformational leader creates and supports the organization's vision and drives the achievement of organizational goals with the support of the workforce (Rodrigues & Ferreira, 2015). Effective transformational leaders inspire and motivate people to believe in and emulate them by using their positions of authority and power.

Transformational leaders actively drive change by leveraging their perspectives and strengths, as exemplified by Dwi Martuti Rahayu in Yogyakarta. As a resident of Kalibawang District, Kulon Progo, Rahayu has successfully empowered the local community, especially women, through the Pawon Gendis Women Farmers Group (KWT), her leadership is made clear in the visualization of her activities. Her success is well-built, and the visualization of her independence and recording in the media triggers the enthusiasm of the local community, particularly women, through the Pawon Gendis Women Farmers Group (KWT). KWT is a truly independent group, formed not as part of a program but sparked by Rahayu's passion for processing local food products, which gained recognition and sparked the interest of other women in the area.

Seeing the potential for economic improvement through local products, KWT Pawon Gendis became a platform for learning and collaboration. Women-led community empowerment is a process that evolves over time (Ardiani & Rusmala Dibyorini, 2021). Rahayu's leadership is rooted in her belief that leadership is a transformative process that inspires change, with effectiveness measured by how much a leader can influence behavior and drive community transformation. The characteristics of effective transformational leadership include exhibiting charismatic behavior, generating inspirational motivation, providing intellectual stimulation, and offering individualized attention to team members (Bansode et al., 2018; Tiwari, 2022; Xu et al., 2021). A transformational leader formulates and facilitates the organization's vision while providing the passion and guidance needed to achieve organizational goals, with encouragement supported by the group's members (Bourke & Luloff, 1997; Shetty, 2017). Effective transformational leaders use their authority and power to energize and motivate individuals, fostering trust and inspiring followers to emulate their behavior, ultimately leading to community development (Arintyas, 2024; Tristanti et al., 2023).

Community empowerment, especially in rural areas, is an empowerment process (Brabazon & Ewart, 2024; Wadley, 2020). Community empowerment in rural areas usually starts with self-development due to the culture of the community (Behera et al., 2024; Hua et al., 2018; Shetty, 2017). Communities are people who tend to be collective (Mbepera, 2021; Rakib, 2016). Rural communities usually tend to wait for others or fate (Duwa, 2021; Chaiechi & Wood, 2022).

A study on women's empowerment through Kelompok Wanita Tani (KWT) in Indonesia highlights these groups' positive impact on rural women's lives. KWTs contribute to economic development by creating jobs, increasing agricultural productivity, and adding value to products (Ardiani & Rusmala Dibyorini, 2021; Humaidi & Daryanto, 2021). KWT also enhances women's social roles, self-confidence, and networking skills (Purnamasari, 2014). Leadership styles in KWTs, particularly participatory and achievement-oriented approaches, correlate with group effectiveness



(Luthfitah et al., 2023). KWT provides access to knowledge, skills development, and education for women (Montuori & Donnelly, 2018). Successful women leaders in rural areas often combine feminine traits with transformational leadership styles (Shafira et al., 2023).

However, there are still challenges in implementing the concept of women's leadership in fully empowering women. Therefore, the village development initiated by a woman named Dwi Martuti Rahayu, commonly called mbak Tuti, in building the community, especially mothers, to be able to carry out activities independently and have economic value is something that is rarely done by the village community to be essential to study. Ms. Tuti's activities in building KWT Pawon Gendis in Kalibawang Kulonprogo District show that women can have their income. This makes women feel valuable, confident, and useful, rather than only depending on their husband's income. The activities built by Ms. Tuti helped many women cocoa farmers join KWT Pawon Gendis and fulfill their daily needs independently.

Ms. Tuti's leadership in KWT Pawon Gendis is based on the trust of the surrounding community in Salakmalang Hamlet, Banjarharjo Village, Kalibawang Kulonprogo. This trust is a result of her achievements in enhancing the independence of the community, especially the women in Salakmalang Hamlet. Sociologically, leadership is a product of social interaction, and the role of the leader in group dynamics is significant. As the head of KWT Pawon Gendis, Ms. Tuti plans, organizes, and provides direction to the group, fulfilling the roles of both trainer and coordinator. Her leadership exemplifies the principle of leading by example, providing mentorship while remaining actively engaged with the group (Mölders et al., 2018; Hakim et al., 2021).

KWT Pawon Gendis, as an informal, flexible farmers' group, operates through home-based businesses or home industries, where each member works independently. This aligns with the Indonesian Department of Agriculture's definition of farmer groups as collective efforts to improve business outcomes in similar environmental conditions (Mufriantie, 2021). The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the communication strategies a transformational female leader employs to drive social and economic change in

a rural context. Unlike previous studies on leadership in formal organizations, this study examines Ms. Rahayu's informal, community-driven leadership.

The study offers a unique perspective on women's leadership and empowerment in rural areas. By highlighting the leadership communication strategies of inspirational motivation, individualized attention, and intellectual stimulation, this study contributes to the transformational leadership discourse by showing that leadership functions not only as a managerial tool but also as an instrument for creating meaningful social change. The findings of this study expand on previous work (Niño-Torres, 2019) and challenge earlier studies by Wells and Tanner (1994), which argued that women in agriculture have leadership potential but are often underutilized. Furthermore, this study addresses the ongoing issue of low female participation in leadership roles in rural communities, where prejudice remains a significant barrier (Winifred, 2016).

This study is based on the premise that transformational leadership is crucial in shifting communities from dependency to independence. Transformational leaders use communication strategies such as charisma, motivation, and personalized mentoring to drive and sustain empowerment efforts (Tucker & Russell, 2004). Ms. Rahayu exemplifies these principles by enhancing women's economic productivity in her community while fostering a sense of self-worth and independence. Her leadership not only improves economic outcomes but also strengthens the self-confidence and competitiveness of group members, demonstrating that transformational leadership is vital for both organizational success and the personal development of individuals.

B. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach, as described by (Flick, 2014), which emphasizes its study on observing events in their natural settings. The primary objective of this approach is to explain how transformational leadership communication—comprising Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration (Montuori & Donnelly, 2018; Rafferty & Griffin, 2004)—can promote women's empowerment (Longtin et al., 2022). A phenomenological design was chosen



to uncover the essence of visualized and non-verbal human experiences related to transformational leadership communication, focusing on participants' subjective experiences to understand their perspectives better (Yılmaz et al., 2020). The study employed bracketing techniques to minimize personal bias, ensuring an objective analysis of participants' narratives, recurring themes, and communication patterns (Sugiyono, 2017).

Participants were selected using a purposive sampling method to identify individuals actively involved in leadership and communication activities within KWT Pawon Gendis, particularly leaders and members who play active roles in organizational activities. Data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Direct observation was conducted to capture both verbal and non-verbal communication processes in real-time (Wilmsen et al., 2012). In-depth interviews were carried out with leaders and members to explore their perspectives on transformational leadership (leadership-idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Individualized Consideration, and Intellectual Stimulation), including their experiences in expressing ideas, responding to members, and providing training and guidance for personal development. Document analysis involved reviewing activity reports, training guidelines, and internal organizational records to complement the primary data.

The collected data were analyzed thematically to identify key themes and patterns in leadership communication. A multi-faceted approach was applied by integrating direct observations, interviews, and document analysis findings to ensure a holistic understanding of transformational leadership practices. The focus of this study is to explore how the organization's leaders at KWT Pawon Gendis utilize verbal and non-verbal communication to convey ideas, respond to members, and deliver training and guidance that support women's empowerment in a rural community context. The study's validity is ensured through data triangulation from multiple sources, while in-depth analysis strengthens the findings. With this systematic approach, the study aims to provide a clear and comprehensive depiction of transformational leadership communication within the studied context.

C. Result and Discussion

The term Pawon Gendis is derived from Javanese, where pawon means kitchen or production area, and gendis refers to sugar or something sweet. Therefore, Pawon Gendis can be interpreted as a production space for creating sweet, delicious, and profitable products. The primary goal of KWT Pawon Gendis is to serve as a learning platform, particularly for housewives, enabling them to exchange knowledge and collaborate to utilize available resources productively. Unlike a Joint Business Group, where all members work on a single project with shared profits, KWT Pawon Gendis fosters cooperation in marketing, production, and the supply of raw materials, allowing individual members to run their business units while benefiting from collective support.

1. Result

KWT Pawon Gendis, a Women's Farmers Group (KWT), was established on May 17, 2013, in Salakmalang, Banjarharjo, Kalibawang, Kulon Progo, D.I. Yogyakarta, Indonesia, with 31 members as of July 2023. The group aims to provide a platform for women in the Salakmalang area to learn, collaborate, and engage in business activities to enhance family and community welfare. KWT Pawon Gendis focuses on processing abundant local raw materials, such as banana stumps, peels, cassava leaves, and durian seeds, into products like *banana bonggol peyek*, cassava leaf jerky, and rambutan seed nuts. These products serve as alternatives to rice and flour, supporting economic development and gaining recognition in local food processing competitions.

The group's initiator, Mrs. Sri Martuti Rahayu, has won several championships, motivating further innovation and the sale of products at traditional markets. Her success has led to invitations from the Kulon Progo Regency Food Security and Agricultural Forestry Extension Office (KP4K). Since its inception, KWT Pawon Gendis has undergone two management periods: 2013–2018 and the current period from 2019 to 2024. The organization's management includes a daily board with a chairperson, two secretaries, two treasurers, and specialized production, marketing, agriculture, public relations, processing, and education sections.



In addition to the management team, the group benefits from coaches and assistants. As evidenced by Dwi Martuti Rahayu, effective leadership is crucial in aligning members with the group's goals (Badu & Djafri, 2017). Initially, the abundance of underpriced local food ingredients was a challenge due to a lack of processing, but KWT Pawon Gendis has successfully transformed these ingredients into high-quality, well-packaged products that target higher-income market segments. KWT Pawon Gendis has also capitalized on local resources by processing cassava flour into *tiwul*, a traditional dish, and producing herbal products from gotu kola (*Centella asiatica*), which has become one of their flagship products. Gotu kola, often considered a weed, has many health benefits, including memory enhancement, anti-inflammatory properties, and treatment for various diseases. It has gained attention in cooking competitions and is valued for its nutritional and medicinal qualities.

The group's innovation in utilizing this local plant underscores the growing trend of returning to natural, locally sourced products in the community. Dwi Martuti Rahayu is the leader of KWT Pawon Gendis and the owner of Won.dis Chocolate Shop is an ordinary housewife with exceptional determination. She transformed KWT Pawon Gendis into an independent group, not driven by external programs but by her passion for local food and success in cooking competitions. Her leadership and achievements have inspired many women in the community to learn and contribute, turning the group into a successful model of local empowerment through food processing.

a. Leadership communication practices in KWT Pawon Gendis

Mbak Tuti's leadership journey as the head of KWT Pawon Gendis illustrates an inspiring story of transformation and empowerment. Despite being a high school graduate from a rural village, she became a catalyst for change in her community. After working in a factory in Bekasi, she returned to her village and started a laundry and motorbike washing business to sustain her family. Her creativity and determination are visually communicated through her innovative experiments with unconventional food products, such as banana peels and rambutan seeds, consistently earning her top accolades in cooking competitions. These visual markers of success fueled her drive to

innovate further. In time, her experiments with gotu kola leaves attracted the attention of her neighbors, inspiring them to collaborate. This growing interest culminated in the establishment of the Pawon Gendis Women Farmers Group (KWT) in 2013. Mbak Tuti's exceptional contributions to food security were recognized nationally when she received the prestigious Anugerah Adhikarya Pangan Nusantara Award in 2015.



Figure 1. Ms Tuti received the Adhikarya Pangan Nusantara award in 2015

Source: KWT Pawon Gendis

The founding of KWT Pawon Gendis was anchored in the trust and admiration generated by Mbak Tuti's accomplishments. She became a role model for women in her village, demonstrating that through creativity and determination, economic independence is achievable. The group held regular meetings every second Monday of the month to discuss activities and share insights into maximizing local food resources. Unlike conventional joint business groups, KWT allowed its members to operate independently from their homes. For example, Mbak Tuti introduced hydroponic farming by initially demonstrating it in her yard. Once members were trained, they replicated the activity in their respective spaces. Furthermore, KWT collaborated with Karang Taruna, the local youth group, to establish a children's studio. This initiative provided communal facilities, including a mini-library, fostering both social and educational engagement.

Communication within KWT Pawon Gendis blended traditional methods with modern technology. Regular meetings remained a cornerstone,

but WhatsApp groups facilitated faster information exchange. However, not all members owned smartphones, which occasionally impeded communication. To address this, Mbak Tuti and other members relayed information directly to ensure inclusivity. These efforts underscore the collaborative spirit of KWT, enabling its members to overcome logistical challenges and focus on meaningful economic and social initiatives.

Mbak Tuti's innovative endeavors extended to creating chocolate-based products infused with gotu kola, a wild plant often overlooked in agricultural settings. The economic impact of KWT on its members became evident through various success stories. Mrs. Ari Artanti, for instance, transitioned from running an "angkringan" street food stall to establishing a thriving catering business. She credited Mbak Tuti's guidance for her success, noting, "*Alhamdulillah, my income has grown by over 100%*" (Ari Artanti, interviewed, July 16, 2023). Similarly, Mrs. Fitri, a former housewife, now manages a profitable business selling tempeh koro and chicken porridge with marketing support from KWT.

The authors' observations revealed that six additional KWT members experienced significant economic improvement since joining. Mursini, one such member, shared her transformation: "My work used to involve helping my mother sell at the market and taking care of the children. Now I work at Won.dis. Besides earning additional income, I've gained confidence in serving guests and planting hydroponic crops" (Mursini, interviewed, July 16, 2023). These narratives highlight the profound impact of KWT Pawon Gendis. Through visionary leadership and a collaborative approach, Mbak Tuti empowered her community to embrace innovation and achieve financial independence, setting a benchmark for rural development initiatives.

b. Dimensions of transformative leadership

Transformational leadership involves a dynamic interaction between the leader and the followers, where both are engaged in continuous change and growth. In the case of KWT Pawon Gendis leaders, transformational

leadership is exemplified through some deep understanding of the needs and aspirations of group members, namely in the dimensions of:

1) *Idealised influence* (Idealised influence/ charisma)

Idealized influence is the behavior of leaders with strong self-confidence, high commitment, a clear vision, diligence, hard work, and militant consistency, who can show significant, big, and great ideas. At this level, the KWT leader's behavior pattern becomes a role model for the group members. Transformational leadership has a clear vision and sense of purpose so that transformational leaders can win their followers' trust and respect.

Mbak Tuti is well aware of her ideals and desires to empower the surrounding community, especially women in her village. This can also be done by establishing the Pawon Gendis Women Farmers Group, where these ideals also inspire the vision and mission of KWT Pawon Gendis. Dwi Martuti Rahayu is a figure who has a tremendous influence on her surroundings, both professionally and socially. As a leader, she can influence others in a charismatic way, creating respect and admiration in the eyes of her subordinates.

In the context of Idealized Influence, Dwi Martuti Rahayu demonstrates leadership qualities that reflect the deep trust and respect of those around her. She not only leads with words but also with tangible actions, always prioritizing truth and justice in every decision taken. Her decisions always concern the common good and focus on achieving more significant goals. This makes her a respected leader, even by those initially skeptical of the new leadership. Mrs. Ari Tantiani also said that before KWT Pawon Gendis was formed, Mrs. Tuti had told her about her desire to form KWT, *"So in the past when Ms. Tuti told me, if you want to make a group, I immediately said, let me join, I was invited, like that, because I saw that Ms. Tuti was successful with her business"* (Ari Tantiani, interviewed, July 16, 2023). The same thing was also said by another KWT member, Mrs. Ramilah, who joined KWT Pawon Gendis because she saw Ms. Tuti had more income from managing local-based food. She said, *"I joined KWT because I saw Ms. Tuti had enough income from processing food from the village here, and often*

participated in competitions and won" (Ramilah, interviewed, July 17, 2023). Dwi gives instructions and fosters a sense of belonging in every individual involved, making them an integral part of the journey. This kind of leadership creates deep loyalty from his followers.

2) Inspirational motivation

Inspirational motivation behavior is one of the transformational leader behaviors that inspires, motivates, and modifies the behavior of group members to achieve unimaginable possibilities. Mbak Tuti, as the head of KWT, always motivates group members to become more confident in doing group or individual tasks that can improve their abilities. This can be seen from the interviews with her and several group members, such as how group members explained that mbak Tuti often provides challenges and motivation to improve. This was experienced by Mrs. Fitri, who said, *"I was asked to join the competition, and I won twice. Finally, I was confident in selling cilok, selling chicken porridge, even though I didn't think of opening a business before"* (Fitri, interviewed, July 16, 2023). In another interview, Mrs. Yuliatun also revealed that in KWT, we become good at speaking and expressing our opinions. *"I used to be afraid to speak in front of many people, but in KWT with Ms. Tuti, we are alternately forced to speak to open forums, become MCs, read prayers, and others, so now I am not afraid to be afraid at all"* (Yuliatun, interviewed, July 16, 2023). The same thing was also said by Mrs. Mursini, who said, *"I was taught how to speak, express opinions, and also how to speak when meeting or serving guests"* (Mursini, interviewed, July 16, 2023).

Dwi's Inspirational Motivation encourages people to go further and try harder because they believe that success will positively impact many. Thus, Dwi motivates and creates a sense of belonging to a common goal. As a leader, Dwi Martuti Rahayu has a far-reaching vision and always manages to convey it in a motivating way. She doesn't just talk about the vision but also positively energizes others to make it a reality. With her ability to deliver an inspiring vision, Dwi focuses the team's attention on more prominent and meaningful things that go beyond personal achievement.

3) Intellectual stimulation

Dwi Martuti Rahayu is a leader who always encourages her members to think critically and creatively. She not only provides solutions to problems but also encourages her team to search for their own answers, dig deeper into their thinking, and explore possibilities. In this way, Dwi introduces Intellectual Stimulation in every aspect of her leadership, creating an environment where new and innovative ideas thrive. Dwi always encourages team members to express their opinions in every meeting or discussion, even if the ideas seem different or unconventional. He believes diversity of thought is the key to finding more innovative solutions. Dwi not only values creativity but also provides space for experimentation and learning through failure. In addition, Dwi Martuti Rahayu facilitates opportunities for her members to continue learning and growing.

She encourages the team to develop new skills and explore areas beyond their expertise. Dwi believes that Intellectual Stimulation is not just about solving current problems but also preparing individuals to face more significant challenges in the future. By providing training, workshops, and opportunities to share knowledge, Dwi helps his members always think critically and creatively when dealing with any situation, as expressed by Mrs. Yuliatun, a worker of Won.Dis Cokelat, which is a business unit of KWT Pawon Gendis, *"In the past, when selling without Ms. Tuti, I was afraid, for example, if someone ordered something but couldn't make it, or if someone from outside invited a discussion, but I was left behind several times so I could learn from Ms. Tuti"* (Yuliatun, interviewed, July 16, 2023).

4) Individualised consideration

Individualized Consideration, a core element of transformational leadership, involves leaders attending to, nurturing, guiding, and training followers in a personalized manner to help achieve organizational goals. This dimension includes offering support, encouragement, and developmental experiences. Dwi Martuti Rahayu demonstrates individualized consideration by listening attentively when members discuss work-related and personal matters, creating an open environment where individuals feel valued and heard. Rather

than simply issuing instructions, Dwi prioritizes her team members' emotional and professional well-being, which fosters closer relationships, builds mutual trust, and narrows the gap between leader and followers.

Dwi's leadership style exemplifies the importance of recognizing diversity within her team by treating each member as unique. She understands that each member has distinct backgrounds, experiences, and motivations, so she tailors her support to meet their specific needs. Whether providing personal guidance, specialized training, or essential resources, Dwi is committed to helping each team member reach their full potential in a manner aligned with their unique characteristics and abilities.

Dwi is also mindful that KWT members have different family responsibilities, religious commitments, and busy lives. Therefore, she does not force members to participate in activities if they cannot attend. This approach is reflected in a statement from Mrs. Ari Tantiani, who explained, *"Not every time I can attend because if I have a catering order, I get permission, but if there is no activity, I will definitely attend. I am not forced always to participate"* (Ari Tantiani, interviewed, July 16, 2023). Similarly, Mrs. Mursini shared, *"If possible, I will keep attending; it's good to stay in touch. We often look forward to KWT activities. In the past, there was no KWT, and it was quiet"* (Mursini, interviewed, July 16, 2023). Dwi recognizes that she cannot force all members to attend every KWT activity. She understands that KWT's growth also relies on the business units run by its members, as she stated.

2. Discussion

The discussion of this study delves into the practical implications of transformational leadership in empowering women within rural communities, using Dwi Martuti Rahayu's leadership in KWT Pawon Gendis as a case study. Her application of transformational leadership principles, Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Individualized Consideration, and Intellectual Stimulation (Bass & Avolio, 1994) (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Montuori & Donnelly, 2018; Rafferty & Griffin, 2004), serves as a compelling example of how women leaders can drive social and economic change by leveraging local resources and employing effective communication-based leadership strategies. This study

highlights the adaptability of transformational leadership in resource-constrained environments and underscores its potential for broader application in diverse contexts.

Dwi's leadership embodies Idealized Influence by aligning her actions with the values she promotes, such as justice, honesty, and inclusivity. Her commitment to these principles has fostered trust and respect among KWT members, motivating them to follow her example. This supports Bass's (1990) assertion that transformational leaders inspire trust and serve as role models, even in non-formal, decentralized organizational structures like rural community groups. Furthermore, Dwi's Inspirational Motivation is evident in her ability to articulate a shared vision of economic and social empowerment for women, uniting group members toward common goals. Her passionate leadership style has proven that inspirational motivation can thrive in challenging rural settings, reinforcing that such leadership can significantly influence participation and commitment (Montuori & Donnelly, 2018).

The study also emphasizes the importance of Individualized Consideration in addressing the unique needs of rural communities. Dwi's personalized approach to mentoring group members ensures that everyone feels valued and heard, helping them realize their potential. This aligns with findings by Rafferty & Griffin (2004), which highlight the critical role of tailored support in transformational leadership. Moreover, her encouragement of critical thinking and innovation, as part of Intellectual Stimulation, fosters a culture of creativity and problem-solving within KWT. This echoes Wilmsen et al. (2012) and (Nomnga, 2021), who emphasize the necessity of participatory and collaborative approaches in rural empowerment efforts. However, implementing transformational leadership in rural settings presents significant challenges.

Cultural norms, limited infrastructure, and insufficient institutional support often hinder the scalability and sustainability of such leadership models. For example, rural communities frequently face barriers such as low levels of education, entrenched gender inequalities, and economic dependency on agriculture, making it difficult to fully leverage the benefits of transformational leadership (Yilmaz et al., 2020). This raises questions



about whether the theory, as it is traditionally applied in structured, resource-rich organizations, requires adaptation to the specific needs and limitations of rural contexts.

Despite these challenges, the study demonstrates that transformational leadership remains a powerful tool for fostering sustainable social change when adapted to local conditions. Dwi's leadership model showcases the potential for women in rural communities to lead transformative initiatives, reshaping social and economic dynamics by utilizing local resources and creating participatory environments. Such practices directly contribute to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 (gender equality) and Goal 1 (poverty eradication) (Arif & Bushra Bannian, 2022; Tiwari, 2022). By integrating localized, participatory approaches with transformational leadership principles, this model ensures that empowerment efforts are not only impactful but also sustainable (Mishra & Kiran, 2014; Nomnga, 2021).

The study's findings have broader implications for global development initiatives. Organizations like the United Nations and NGOs working on women's empowerment can draw valuable lessons from KWT Pawon Gendis. These include aligning leadership strategies with community needs and fostering inclusive participation. Additionally, the adaptability of Dwi's leadership approach highlights its potential for replication in countries facing similar challenges, such as gender disparities, limited educational opportunities, and rural poverty (Bansode et al., 2018) (Bansode et al., 2018; Chandra et al., 2024).

From an academic perspective, this study contributes to the literature on transformational leadership by extending its applicability beyond large, formal organizations to informal, resource-constrained settings. Practically, it offers insights for policymakers and practitioners designing empowerment programs in rural areas. These programs should prioritize structural changes and behavioral and mindset shifts among community members. Transformational leadership, emphasizing trust-building, motivation, and individual support, can strengthen social cohesion and foster resilience in rural communities.

Dwi Martuti Rahayu's leadership in KWT Pawon Gendis exemplifies the transformative potential of women leaders in addressing rural challenges.

Her efforts demonstrate that even in environments with limited resources, significant progress can be achieved through effective leadership strategies. This study reinforces that community-based and contextually adaptive leadership approaches are essential for creating sustainable social and economic change. Building on these insights, future initiatives can empower marginalized communities worldwide, advancing gender equality and poverty reduction globally.

D. Conclusion

This study investigates Dwi Martuti Rahayu's application of transformational leadership in empowering women at KWT Pawon Gendis, a women's farming group in Salakmalang Village. The findings highlight that Rahayu effectively applied the four key dimensions of transformational leadership: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Individualized Consideration, and Intellectual Stimulation to enhance the social and economic empowerment of the group members. These dimensions proved highly relevant and effective, underscoring that transformational leadership is not confined to large organizations but also holds significant potential in smaller, rural community settings.

However, the study also reveals that successfully applying this leadership model in rural areas requires adaptability to local conditions. These visual representations of leadership dynamics demonstrated that transformational leadership is not confined to large organizations but can be equally impactful in smaller, rural community settings. Rahayu's ability to understand and respond sensitively to the community's social and cultural dynamics allowed her to inspire and offer personalized support, further validating the flexibility of transformational leadership. Rahayu's sensitivity to local social and cultural dynamics and her ability to visually represent these through tailored initiatives allowed her to inspire and offer personalized support, reinforcing the adaptability and flexibility of transformational leadership.

Additionally, this study contributes to the literature on transformational leadership by expanding its application beyond formal organizations,



demonstrating its effectiveness in social empowerment and rural development. The findings emphasize the importance of personalized, empathy-driven leadership in fostering individual and community growth. Despite the challenges posed by limited resources in rural settings, the study suggests that transformational leadership can significantly impact community-based empowerment when paired with external support such as training and adequate resources. Overall, this study enhances the understanding of transformational leadership and offers practical insights for designing more effective empowerment programs. It paves the way for future research on adapting transformational leadership to diverse social contexts, particularly by integrating local factors into community leadership strategies.

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