

POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE LEADERSHIP OF KARO REGENT ANTONIUS GINTING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL BUREAUCRACY AND *GOVERNANCE*

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the importance of political leadership in encouraging changes in local governance through a transformational leadership approach applied by the Regent of Karo, Antonius Ginting. The research aims to analyze the implementation of transformational leadership, its role in realizing the principles of *good governance*, and its implications for the effectiveness of the bureaucracy and the community of Karo Regency. The method used is qualitative research with an exploratory approach through interviews, observations, and documentation. The results of the study show that Antonius Ginting applies the characteristics of transformational leadership through a change in the bureaucratic work culture that is more disciplined, responsive, and oriented to public services. Its implementation can be seen in strengthening the supervision of apparatus performance, increasing coordination between regional apparatus organizations, and developing governance innovations. The leadership also encourages the application of the principles of transparency, accountability, and participation in local government. The implications can be seen in increasing bureaucratic effectiveness, the quality of public services, and the government's responsiveness to the needs of the community. These findings confirm that transformational leadership plays an important role in bureaucratic reform and strengthening more professional and adaptive local governance.

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INTRODUCTION

Political leadership is a leader's ability to influence, direct, and manage society and political institutions to achieve government goals. In the context of democracy, political leadership is not only related to decision-making and public policymaking, but also includes the ability to maintain political stability, build consensus, and represent the interests of the community. Therefore, a leader is required to have a clear vision, good communication skills, and integrity in exercising power responsibly. (Raudhoturrahmah & Faizah, 2025)

One of the leadership models that is widely used to analyze changes in public organizations is transformational leadership. According to James MacGregor Burns and Bernard M. Bass, transformational leadership emphasizes the leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and move his followers beyond personal interests to achieve a common goal. This leadership model is relevant to be applied in local government because it is able to encourage innovation, change in work culture, and increase bureaucratic effectiveness in facing increasingly complex public service demands. (Gaol & Tumanggor, 2022)

Bass (1985) explains that transformational leadership consists of four main dimensions. First, *idealized influence*, which is the ability of leaders to be role models through integrity, commitment, and consistency of actions. Second, *inspirational motivation*, which is the ability to convey a clear vision and arouse the work spirit of subordinates. Third, *intellectual stimulation*, which is an encouragement to subordinates to think critically, creatively, and innovatively in solving problems. Fourth, *individualized consideration*, which is attention to the needs, potential, and development of individuals in the organization. These four dimensions form the foundation of leadership that is able to create a productive and adaptive organizational culture. (Sihite et al., 2020)

The dynamics of leadership in Karo Regency show changes that follow social developments and government needs. Since independence, Karo Regency has been led by a number of regents with diverse leadership backgrounds and characters. In recent years, regional leadership orientations have increasingly emphasized bureaucratic professionalism, governance effectiveness, and the acceleration of development. This can be seen in the leadership of Regent Antonius Ginting who carries the vision of the development of Karo that is cultured, faithful, modern, superior, and prosperous.

As a regent who has a background in the fields of police and health, Antonius Ginting shows a leadership style that tends to be technocratic and bureaucratic. This approach is reflected in his efforts to strengthen the professionalism of the apparatus and run the government based on a formal bureaucratic mechanism. In practice, the involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the decision-making process and implementation of government programs is relatively limited. This policy can be understood as a strategy to maintain bureaucratic neutrality, minimize intervention in the interests of certain groups, and ensure that the implementation of development programs runs more effectively, measurably, and oriented to the public interest. (Abun et al., 2026)

Political leadership is the ability of a leader to influence, direct, and manage the community and government institutions to achieve regional development goals. In the context of local government, leadership is not only related to public policy-making, but also the ability to build an effective bureaucracy, maintain government stability, and realize quality public services. One of the relevant approaches in answering these demands is transformational leadership that emphasizes change, innovation, and human resource empowerment. (Sjamsoeddin et al., 2023)

According to Burns (1978) and Bass (1985), transformational leadership is the ability of leaders to inspire, motivate, and encourage followers to achieve common goals through four main dimensions, namely *idealized influence*, *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation*, and *individualized consideration*. Through this dimension, leaders are not only oriented towards achieving organizational targets, but also strive to build a work culture that is productive, innovative, and with integrity. This leadership model is considered relevant in dealing with various bureaucratic problems such as low apparatus discipline, slow public services, and weak public trust in the government. (Simbolon et al., 2022)

The leadership of Karo Regent Antonius Ginting is interesting to study because it presents a relatively different approach compared to the previous leader. As a retired National Police officer with the rank of Brigadier General who has managerial experience in the health sector, Antonius Ginting brings the vision of the development of Karo Regency that is cultured, faithful, modern, superior, and prosperous. In the early days of his administration, he

emphasized bureaucratic reform, improving the quality of public services, strengthening the discipline of state civil servants (ASN), and accelerating infrastructure development as the foundation for local government transformation.

The implementation of this vision can be seen through various priority programs in 100 working days, including improving ASN discipline, strengthening digital-based public services, waste handling, workforce empowerment, providing BPJS Kesehatan for the community, basic infrastructure development, and development collaboration through the *pentahelix* approach. These programs show that there are efforts to build a bureaucracy that is more responsive, effective, and oriented to the needs of the community. In addition, a leadership approach that emphasizes cross-organizational coordination of regional apparatus and community involvement reflects the characteristics of transformational leadership. (Siburian et al., 2023)

Nevertheless, Karo Regency still faces various complex structural problems. Flood problems due to suboptimal drainage systems, damage to road infrastructure, waste management, the impact of volcanic activity on Mount Sinabung, low local income, and bureaucratic reform challenges are still issues that require serious attention. In the social dimension, the increasing cases of narcotics, gambling, crime, and various forms of disturbance of public order also show that the transformation of governance has not fully resulted in equitable and sustainable change.

As an empirical comparison, the success of Tri Rismaharini's transformational leadership in the city of Surabaya shows that bureaucratic and governance changes can be realized through visionary, innovative, and close leadership to the community. Surabaya's various successes in the fields of infrastructure, environmental management, public services, and improving the quality of life of the community are examples of how transformational leadership is able to produce real change. This comparison is important to see the extent to which transformational leadership characteristics are also present in the leadership of Antonius Ginting in Karo Regency.

Based on these conditions, research on transformational leadership by Antonius Ginting is important to analyze how the dimensions of transformational leadership are implemented in local government and their implications for the effectiveness of bureaucracy and local *governance*. This research also aims to assess the extent to which the leadership is able to encourage the principles of *good governance*, strengthen bureaucratic reform, improve the quality of public services, and answer various development challenges faced by Karo Regency in the early days of its government.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method with an exploratory case study approach to understand in depth the phenomenon of transformational leadership of Karo Regent Antonius Ginting and its implications for local bureaucracy and *governance*. This approach was chosen because the phenomenon studied is contextual, dynamic, and still relatively limited in study, allowing researchers to explore processes, patterns, strategies, and relationships between political leadership, bureaucratic change, and local governance. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research object. (Judijanto et al., 2024; Mahendra et al., 2024)

The research was carried out in Karo Regency, North Sumatra Province, which was chosen because it represented the dynamics of political leadership transformation at the local level. Antonius Ginting's leadership is considered interesting to study because it shows a shift from an administrative leadership pattern to a leadership oriented towards bureaucratic reform, improving public services, and strengthening government accountability. Karo Regency is a strategic context to analyze how political leadership contributes to institutional change and the improvement of the quality of local *governance*.

The research informants were selected by *purposive sampling* based on their knowledge, experience, and involvement in the governance process and social life of the community. The informants consisted of the Regent and Deputy Regent of Karo, heads of agencies and local government officials, implementing civil servants, academics, influencers, NGO activists, traders, and people affected by government policies such as the refugees of the Mount Sinabung eruption. The diversity of informants allows researchers to gain a comprehensive perspective on the

implementation of transformational leadership, changes in bureaucratic culture, *good governance* practices, and their impact on public services and public trust.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Implementation of Transformational Leadership of the Karo Regent in Regional Government

The implementation of the transformational leadership of Karo Regent Antonius Ginting began to be seen from the beginning of his administration through a 100-day working program focused on strengthening the foundation of government, improving the quality of public services, and building public trust in local governments. The program is not only oriented to administrative achievement, but is also geared towards strengthening effective, responsive, and collaborative governance through the involvement of various stakeholders in regional development. (Fadiah et al., 2020)

In its implementation, Antonius Ginting implemented various bureaucratic reform measures, such as improving the discipline of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN), strengthening coordination between regional apparatus organizations (OPD), digitizing public services, and handling various regional problems such as waste management, parking order, administrative services, and illegal building control. This approach shows that there are efforts to build a bureaucracy that is more professional, adaptive, and oriented to the needs of the community.

Based on the results of an interview with the Regent Antonius Ginting, bureaucratic transformation is understood as a fundamental effort to improve the behavior and performance of ASN to be in line with the vision of effective and results-oriented public services. The initial focus of his leadership was the enforcement of apparatus discipline through stricter supervision, leadership examples, and the inculcation of integrity and work ethics values. According to him, the success of government policies is highly dependent on the commitment and discipline of the apparatus as the main implementers of public services (Interview with Regent Antonius Ginting, 2025).

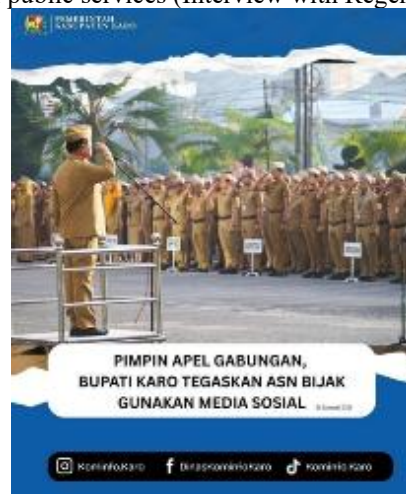


Figure 4. 3 Joint ASN Apples with the Regent of Karo

This view was reinforced by the Deputy Regent of the Tarigan Command who explained that the previous bureaucratic condition still faced the problem of low work discipline, such as late attendance and non-compliance with working hours. To overcome this, local governments implement more intensive supervision, including involving Satpol PP and providing direct examples through the presence of regents and deputy regents in government events and activities. This step is in line with the *idealized influence* dimension in transformational leadership theory that places leaders as role models for their subordinates.

Bureaucratic transformation is also realized through changes in work culture that emphasizes public service orientation and service acceleration. One of the innovations implemented is the *one day service policy* to improve the

efficiency of administrative services to the community. In addition, each regional apparatus organization is encouraged to improve the quality of services, responsiveness to community problems, and accountability in the implementation of work programs. Thus, Antonius Ginting's transformational leadership not only focuses on improving the internal bureaucracy, but also on improving the quality of public services and strengthening the principles of *good governance* in Karo Regency. (Siregar, 2022)

The leading *by example strategy* implemented by the Regent and Deputy Regent of Karo through time discipline, direct involvement in the apple, and supervision of ASN reflects the dimension of *idealized influence* in transformational leadership theory. Leaders not only give instructions, but also become role models for bureaucratic apparatus. This approach is in line with Burns and Bass' concept of transformational leadership which emphasizes the leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and transform subordinate values to align with the organization's vision. (Adi et al., 2023)

The implementation of Antonius Ginting's transformational leadership can be seen through a change in the bureaucratic work culture that is more disciplined, professional, and oriented towards public service. These efforts are realized through routine apples, direct supervision, sudden inspections of ASN, and the acceleration of the public service system. These steps show a transformation from a bureaucratic pattern that tends to be passive to a bureaucracy that is more responsive and adaptive to the needs of the community. This condition is in line with the characteristics of transformational leadership that encourage subordinates to work beyond conventional work patterns.

Moon	Absence	Pain	Permission	Late
January	1	0	2	7
February	2	0	2	11
March	1	2	1	6
April	0	0	2	11
December	2	0	1	13

Table 1. Data on the Attendance and Late Levels of Employees of the Lau Simomo Village Head Office, Kabanjahe District in 2020

In the aspect of *local governance*, Antonius Ginting seeks to strengthen coordination between regional apparatus organizations (OPD), improve performance supervision, and encourage more integrated governance innovation. This leadership pattern has similarities with Ridwan Kamil's transformational leadership which emphasizes bureaucratic reform, policy innovation, and improving the quality of public services. Despite being in different regional contexts, both show the same orientation in bringing substantive changes in local government.

However, bureaucratic reform still faces a number of challenges, especially related to the placement of human resources that are not fully based on competencies and expertise backgrounds. This condition has the potential to affect the effectiveness of decision-making and organizational performance of the regional apparatus. Therefore, strengthening bureaucratic discipline needs to be balanced with improving the quality of human resources through placement of positions according to competencies, capacity development of apparatus, and performance evaluation that not only focuses on administrative targets, but also the quality of service to the community.

In addition to internal bureaucratic improvements, local governments need to strengthen public communication and community participation in government processes. Although development and policy information has been widely conveyed through social media, there are still various public complaints about the implementation of policies in the field. Therefore, a more open aspiration mechanism is needed, such as a public forum, an integrated complaint service, and an easily accessible official communication channel. Thus, the bureaucratic transformation carried out not only results in administrative changes, but is also able to increase public trust and the welfare of the people of Karo Regency

Transformational Leadership in Encouraging Good Governance Principles

The transformational leadership of the Regent of Karo Antonius Ginting shows a significant role in encouraging bureaucratic changes and strengthening *good governance* in the local government environment. These changes can be seen from the formation of a work culture that is more disciplined, responsive, and results-oriented

compared to the previous period which tended to be administrative and formalistic. The example shown by the regent in the aspects of discipline, integrity, and work ethics has an influence on the behavior of civil servants, especially in increasing punctuality, responsibility, and commitment to the implementation of work programs. In addition, the direct involvement of the regent in monitoring, evaluating, and directing the performance of the regional apparatus also strengthens bureaucratic accountability through more intensive coordination and supervision. (Haifa & Firdaus, 2025)

The bureaucratic transformation is also reflected in strengthening the professionalism of the apparatus, adjusting the coordination system between regional apparatus organizations, improving reporting mechanisms, and encouraging public service innovation. ASN within the Karo Regency Government assessed that consistent direction from regional leaders regarding the importance of work discipline and public service orientation has encouraged changes in bureaucratic work patterns to be more measurable and oriented to the interests of the community. The 100-day working program that was carried out at the beginning of the government period was also seen as the first step to show a commitment to change while emphasizing the direction of local government policies. (Daeli et al., 2025)

In the context of *local governance*, Antonius Ginting's leadership shows efforts to strengthen the relationship between local governments and communities through more adaptive and responsive governance. The social values of the Karo community such as togetherness, social responsibility, and family spirit are also reflected in the government's approach that seeks to bring services closer to the community. This condition shows that leadership transformation does not only touch the administrative aspect of the bureaucracy, but also seeks to build a more participatory government in accordance with the local socio-cultural character.

The implementation of the principles of *good governance* can be seen through increasing transparency, accountability, participation, compliance with regulations, and the effectiveness of government administration. Transparency is realized through a more open and measurable reporting system, while accountability is strengthened through regular evaluation of the achievements of regional apparatus programs. Community participation began to be built through public dialogue and more intensive communication between the government and the community. On the other hand, the implementation of apparatus duties remains guided by the applicable legal provisions, while the improvement of work discipline and orientation to results contributes to the acceleration of public services. (Mendrofa et al., 2024)

Nevertheless, the implementation of *good governance* in Karo Regency still faces a number of challenges. Several development sectors, especially tourism, are considered to have not shown significant innovation and changes. Therefore, bureaucratic transformation and governance need to be strengthened through the development of innovation, capacity building of apparatus, and more integrated development planning. The local government's efforts to build collaboration in the development of the agriculture, tourism, and technology sectors such as artificial intelligence show a commitment to continue to improve *good governance* practices to improve the welfare of the people of Karo Regency.



Figure 4. 5 Regents Attend Development Strategy Lunch Meeting

The leadership of Karo Regent Antonius Ginting shows indications of bureaucratic transformation, even though its implementation is not yet fully optimal. The leadership style that tends to be semi-militaristic is considered to have succeeded in creating a clear command structure, improving apparatus discipline, and strengthening bureaucratic supervision. However, command-oriented leadership patterns also have the potential to limit the space for innovation and decision-making at the lower levels because they still depend on leadership direction. This condition shows that bureaucratic transformation has not been fully followed by strengthening creativity and organizational independence.

Interview results with Elpis Brahmana, S.Pd., M.Psi., C.NLP. shows that the current leadership has brought improvements in the aspect of governance, especially in the dimensions of accountability and work discipline of the apparatus. The level of compliance with ASN's working hours and job responsibilities is considered better than before. These changes reflect the influence of transformational leadership that seeks to build a more professional, structured, and performance-oriented work culture.

In terms of the effectiveness of public policies, a number of innovations have begun to be seen, especially in the field of education. The local government encourages the improvement of the quality of human resources through excellent programs that facilitate junior high school students to continue their education to superior high schools. This policy shows a transformational vision oriented towards improving the quality of education. However, its implementation is still limited and uneven throughout Karo Regency so that the aspect of equity and program evaluation is still a challenge in realizing the effectiveness of the policy as a whole. (Gorang et al., 2022)

From the perspective of leadership theory, this condition shows that public leadership is not enough to rely solely on the leader figure. Thomas Carlyle's view emphasized the importance of charisma and the ability of leaders to build relationships with society, while Machiavelli highlighted the importance of effectiveness and the ability to make strategic decisions. The efforts of the local government in participating in the forum for agricultural development, tourism, and the use of *Artificial Intelligence* in the Lake Toba area show an adaptive response to development challenges. However, these initiatives still require more concrete implementation in order to produce a real impact on society. (Sumanti & Firmansyah, 2021)

From the aspect of public participation, the local government has provided various aspiration channels through social media, communication forums, as well as village and sub-district apparatus. The existence of these channels shows that there are efforts to open up space for community participation in the government process. However, the

effectiveness of participation still needs to be improved because the follow-up to the aspirations of the community has not always been optimal. Therefore, strengthening innovation, equitable policy distribution, effectiveness of program implementation, and improving the quality of community participation are important factors so that the leadership transformation carried out can truly realize the principles of *good governance* in a more substantive and sustainable manner.

Implications of Leadership on Bureaucratic Effectiveness and Impact on Society

Leadership in local government not only functions as a policy guide, but also plays an important role in shaping work culture, coordination patterns, and the quality of public services. The leadership style applied by regional heads will affect the effectiveness of the bureaucracy, including the level of responsiveness, efficiency, and ability of the apparatus in meeting the needs of the community. Therefore, leadership quality has a close relationship with bureaucratic performance and governance. (Azis et al., 2021)

The implications of leadership can also be seen from the impact felt by the community, such as improving the quality of public services, ease of access to information, and opening up space for participation in government processes. Effective leadership is able to encourage the bureaucracy to be more transparent, accountable, and quick in responding to various public problems. Thus, the relationship between leadership, bureaucratic effectiveness, and community satisfaction becomes an interrelated unit in realizing *good governance*.

The transformational leadership implemented by the Regent of Karo Antonius Ginting from 100 working days to one year of government shows significant implications for increasing bureaucratic effectiveness. This can be seen from the increase in discipline and performance of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN), especially through the enforcement of more structured bureaucratic governance. Behaviors that were previously thought to hinder productivity, such as wandering outside the office during working hours, began to diminish as supervision and a more disciplined work culture were strengthened. (Anggraini et al., 2024; Putra & Stuttgart, 2020)

In addition, firm leadership communication with the slogan "*can not have to be able*" is an important instrument in building the work ethic of the apparatus. This approach not only creates pressure to achieve work targets, but also motivates civil servants to be more proactive in finding solutions to various regional problems. This results-oriented leadership encourages bureaucracies to work faster, adaptively, and focus on solving problems facing society.

The impact of this leadership is also beginning to be felt in various development sectors. Based on the informant's information, one example is the use of swamp land in the Payalah area which has been successfully developed into productive agricultural land through policy support and networks built by the local government. These findings show that transformational leadership not only affects internal changes in bureaucracy, but is also able to generate real benefits for society through increasing the effectiveness of development programs and public services. (Ariyanti et al., 2021; Wau, 2021)

Communication and transparency are one of the important aspects in the leadership of Karo Regent Antonius Ginting. The use of social media as a means of publication of government activities is considered to be able to increase accountability and information disclosure to the public. The publication of various activities of regional apparatus organizations (OPD) and ASN allows the public to directly monitor the performance of local governments, thus creating a more open public supervision mechanism. In addition, various awards received by local governments are also seen as a form of legitimacy for efforts to ensure transparency and improve the quality of public services.

The use of social media also has a positive impact on the image of local government leadership. Programs that touch the needs of the community, such as cleanliness mutual cooperation activities in the Gundaling area, have received a good response from the community. Transparency supported by digital communication not only expands the reach of government information, but also strengthens the government's trust and legitimacy in the eyes of the public. (Halim, 2024; Subhan & Yusuf, 2020)

The development of the digital space has also increased public participation in the government process. People are now more active in conveying criticism, suggestions, and aspirations through various social media platforms. This condition shows a shift towards more participatory governance, where the community is no longer just an object of policy, but also plays a role as a supervisor and evaluator of government performance. Local governments are also

considered more responsive in responding to various problems submitted by the community through digital media. (Sulistiyorini et al., 2025; Sulistyowati et al., 2024)

However, there are a number of dynamics that need to be considered. The role of local influencers in building policy narratives is considered not fully optimal in providing objective and balanced criticism. As a result, the formation of public opinion takes place more spontaneously through social media. However, this condition also shows the increasing awareness of the public to be involved in overseeing the running of the government. Criticism from community groups with different political views also continues to emerge and become a natural part of open democratic life.

From a transformational leadership perspective, open and transparent communication is an important instrument in building the commitment of the apparatus and increasing public trust. The ease of access to information about government programs, policies, and services through social media, especially Facebook and local communities, shows that there are efforts to strengthen the relationship between the government and the community. This condition reflects the implementation of the principles of good governance through increased transparency, access to information, public participation, and more responsive and inclusive government communication.

CONCLUSION

Antonius Ginting's leadership shows the application of transformational leadership in local government which is marked by a change in bureaucratic work culture to be more disciplined, responsive, and oriented to public services. A firm leadership style is able to strengthen the coordination, supervision, and accountability of government apparatus and encourage various reforms in the education, infrastructure, agriculture, and community service sectors. In the context of local governance, the leadership begins to reflect the principles of good governance through increased transparency, public communication, community participation, and local government responsiveness to community needs, although it still requires strengthening innovation, equitable development, and policy consistency.

In the early days of his administration, changes in governance were seen through increasing the discipline and responsibility of civil servants, strengthening the supervision and performance evaluation system, and public information disclosure through local government digital media. The Karo Regency Government has also begun to improve public services, develop infrastructure in stages, develop excellent education programs, and strengthen communication and community participation through various aspiration forums. Bureaucratic arrangement through promotion and position mutation is also carried out to adjust the competence of the apparatus to the needs of the organization and the direction of regional development.

The results of the study show that Antonius Ginting's transformational leadership has an effect on increasing the motivation of government officials and public trust in the performance of local governments. Discipline-oriented, problem-solving, and public service leadership encourages civil servants to work more professionally, responsibly, and responsively. On the other hand, the community is beginning to benefit from various government programs, such as infrastructure improvement, agricultural sector development, improving the quality of public services, and information disclosure. This condition gradually strengthens the legitimacy and trust of the public in local governments, although continuous efforts are still needed so that the transformation of bureaucracy and governance can run more optimally and sustainably.

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