

## TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE IN BANGLADESHI HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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### ABSTRACT

*Effective transformational leadership and strategic organizational change are key drivers of Bangladeshi Higher Education (BHE), as understanding their role can address gaps in innovation, effectiveness and sustainability. The influence of leadership reveals ongoing challenges and offers insights to enhance institutional adaptability and the overall quality of higher education delivery. While previous studies focused on short-term outcomes, the long-term effects of transformational leadership in BHE are not well understood, especially regarding achieving lasting reforms across higher education. This study uses longitudinal data from 1994-2023 to assess whether meaningful changes have occurred in BHE and how they relate to transformational leadership practices. Key indicators such as Impact Score, Policy Effectiveness, Innovation Index and Adoption/Sustainability Ratings are evaluated to determine the durability and effectiveness of institutional reforms. Findings indicate that sustainability lags behind other measures, which limits the long-term effects of transformational leadership. Even though policy effectiveness and innovation remain moderately strong and adoption rates fluctuate, it is important to strengthen sustainability integration and support mechanisms that encourage change in order to make sure that innovations and*

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*policies lead to long-lasting, meaningful changes in Bangladeshi higher education institutions. Overall, the analysis points out the significance of prioritizing sustainability in Bangladeshi higher education and stimulating transformation through training, incentives and strong leadership. By combining longitudinal evidence with actionable strategies, this study provides practical approaches to enhance institutional performance and integrate sustainability across higher education.*

**Keywords:** *Transformational leadership, Strategic organizational change, Bangladeshi higher education institutions, Sustainability, Institutional adaptability.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The core and recognized component of knowledge creation, innovation capacity and socioeconomic development have been higher education for a long time. The changes in higher education reflect the overall development of Bangladesh. When Bangladesh gained independence in 1971, it started with a very limited higher education; there were very few public universities, funding was low and insufficient research facilities. Over the past five decades, a series of reforms have strengthened governance and broadened access through initiatives such as institutional accreditation, strategic planning, and quality assurance measures (University Grants Commission [UGC], 2020). Even though Bangladesh's higher education system has improved over time, it still faces challenges such as out-of-date curricula, a lack of innovation, and inadequate sustainability strategies (Rahnuma, 2020).

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In this situation, transformational leadership has emerged as a key approach to achieving a meaningful organizational change. Transformational leadership is one kind of a style of leadership that inspires and motivates others to go beyond self-interest, align with a shared institutional vision, and strive for higher levels of performance (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

The core elements of transformational leadership are idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and personalized attention. Transformational leadership helps higher education institutions enhance innovation, adaptability, and teamwork, key qualities for managing complex societal and economic shifts (Kirkbride, 2006).

In Bangladesh, the effectiveness of leadership is noticeable in how well universities were able to handle challenges and adapt to changes during the time of COVID-19 pandemic (Islam & Haque, 2022). However, most of the research focuses on short-term outcomes such as teaching effectiveness, governance or policy implementation but not focus on the long-term impacts (Hasan, Alam & Sharmin, 2024). Even though Bangladesh has introduced projects like the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP) to improve innovation and quality, the results are uneven across institutions in the long term (World Bank, 2019). This paper aims to analyse the data of 1994 to 2023 to see the long-term impact of transformational leadership and organizational change in Bangladeshi higher education Institutions. It analyses whether such leadership and organizational change have led to lasting reforms through the indicators like impact score, adoption rate, policy effectiveness, innovation index, and sustainability ratings. Through this

analysis, the research seeks to enhance understanding of how effective leadership practices can strengthen policy outcomes, institutional flexibility, and long-term growth in Bangladeshi higher education.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Transformational Leadership Theory**

Transformational leadership (TL) is a widely recognized leadership model that emphasizes vision, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration as key drivers of organizational development (Bass & Riggio, 2006). By motivating followers to exceed expectations and aligning organizational goals with individual commitment, TL is considered one of the most influential theories for fostering innovation and guiding organizations through change. Its relevance for higher education lies in its potential to navigate complex academic governance structures and promote adaptability in uncertain environments.

### **2.2 Transformational Leadership in Higher Education**

Within higher education institutions (HEIs), TL has been linked to enhanced faculty motivation, academic innovation, and organizational resilience. A recent scoping review highlights that TL positively influences job satisfaction, performance, and creativity among academic staff, although implementation can be challenging in contexts with shared governance and faculty autonomy (Da Bou, Sam, & Kheuy, 2024). Similarly, Jun et al. (2023) demonstrate that TL encourages followers' innovative behavior, with "commitment to change" acting as a mediator –

underscoring the importance of leadership in translating vision into lasting academic practice.

### **2.3 Organizational Change and Innovation**

The link between TL and organizational change has been widely examined, with many studies showing that effective leaders foster environments that encourage innovation and institutional transformation. Yu and Xiang (2024) argue that TL strengthens organizational resilience, which in turn mediates its effect on innovation. However, the literature also notes that while leaders can successfully initiate reforms, sustaining these changes over time often requires additional structural and cultural support. This insight is particularly relevant for higher education, where policy innovations often face challenges of uneven adoption and limited institutionalization.

### **2.4 Bangladeshi Higher Education Context**

Bangladesh has witnessed significant growth in its higher education sector since independence, marked by an increase in both public and private universities. However, concerns about quality, governance, and accountability persist. The World Bank's *Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP)* (2019) documented notable achievements, including infrastructure development, faculty training, and the establishment of Internal Quality Assurance Cells (IQACs). Yet, the report also revealed that while reforms improved short-term outputs, their sustainability across institutions remained uneven – pointing to gaps in leadership capacity to embed reforms into long-term practice.

## **2.5 Leadership and Institutional Adaptability in Bangladesh**

Research specific to Bangladeshi higher education highlights the role of leadership in short-term adaptability. For instance, Islam and Haque (2022) show that responsible leadership significantly influenced faculty readiness and teaching satisfaction during the COVID-19 shift to online education. Although such studies confirm that leadership matters for immediate resilience, they are largely cross-sectional and event-specific. The absence of longitudinal evidence leaves unanswered questions about whether leadership-driven reforms in Bangladeshi higher education persist beyond crisis contexts.

## **2.6 Measurement and Methodological Approaches**

To capture the impact of leadership on organizational change, recent studies recommend using multidimensional indicators such as policy effectiveness, innovation indices, impact scores, and sustainability ratings (Chowdhury, Islam, & Kamal, 2023). The integration of big data analytics and longitudinal higher education management information systems (HEMIS) has been proposed to track reform adoption across time. These methodological advances suggest the need for robust, long-term evaluation frameworks that go beyond immediate performance measures and emphasize institutional sustainability.

## **2.7 Research Gaps**

Overall, the literature establishes a strong theoretical and empirical case for the role of TL in fostering innovation and short-term adaptability. However, significant gaps remain. First,

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most studies in Bangladesh focus on immediate outputs rather than durable reforms. Second, empirical evidence linking leadership practices to long-term sustainability indicators is scarce. Third, there is little longitudinal work that spans multiple decades and systematically connects TL to institutional change outcomes. This study directly addresses these gaps by examining the period 1994–2023 with indicators such as Impact Score, Policy Effectiveness, Innovation Index, and Sustainability Ratings, thereby providing unique insights into the durability of transformational leadership in Bangladeshi higher education.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a secondary quantitative approach using longitudinal data from 1994 to 2023 to examine whether transformational leadership has driven meaningful change in Bangladeshi higher education institutions (BHE). The dataset includes five indicators—Impact Score, Adoption Rate, Policy Effectiveness, Innovation Index, and Sustainability Rating—adapted from leadership and organizational change literature. Data were organized, screened, and standardized to ensure temporal consistency and comparability across years. The methodological design draws on previous research frameworks, ensuring that the selected variables accurately represent the long-term influence of transformational leadership practices on institutional outcomes.

#### **3.1 Data Analysis**

The data analysis was designed to evaluate the extent of organizational transformation under the influence of leadership

practices. Microsoft Excel and SPSS software were used for quantitative analysis. Descriptive trend analysis was first conducted through line and bar graphs to visualize temporal shifts in impact score, policy effectiveness, innovation index, and sustainability rating. These visualizations provide an initial understanding of how leadership-related variables evolved over three decades. Correlation analysis was then used to examine the relationship between impact score and innovation index, exploring whether stronger leadership aligns with higher innovation capacity. To further test the causal effect of leadership on institutional progress, a regression model was developed where sustainability rating served as the dependent variable, and impact score, policy effectiveness, and innovation index acted as independent variables. The overall analytical sequence is illustrated in the following flowchart.

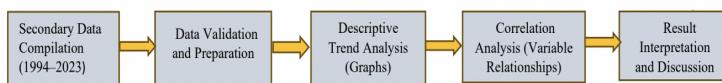


Figure 1. Flowchart of different phases employed in this study

The flowchart presented in Fig. 1 shows a 5-step research process and begins with secondary data compilation, which involves gathering existing institutional and leadership-related data from 1994 to 2023 to ensure a consistent longitudinal record. In the data validation and preparation stage, the dataset is cleaned, standardized, and checked for missing or inconsistent values to maintain analytical reliability. Next, descriptive trend analysis is performed through graphical representations such as line and bar charts. These graphs

visually illustrate year-to-year variations in key indicators—Impact Score, Policy Effectiveness, Innovation Index, and Sustainability Rating—allowing the identification of patterns, growth trends, or fluctuations over time. This visual step provides the foundation for understanding whether transformational leadership has led to noticeable institutional changes. Following this, correlation analysis measures the strength and direction of relationships among the selected variables, identifying whether leadership influence aligns with improvements in innovation or sustainability. Finally, the result interpretation and discussion stage synthesize all findings, linking statistical results with theoretical insights to determine whether transformational leadership has contributed to meaningful and lasting change in Bangladeshi higher education institutions.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



Figure 2. Decadal Comparison Leadership and Organizational Change Metrics

The decadal comparison of leadership and organizational change metrics (1994-2023) analyse the outcomes across three decades. From 1994 to 2003, there is a high impact score and policy effectiveness recorded by organizations, which reflects a structured policy alignment and a significant positive effect on organizational transformation. During 2004-2013, the innovation index reached its peak while policy effectiveness slightly declined. That explains this was a phase focused more on creating new ideas, teaching methods, technologies, or management practices rather than policy implementations. As a result, many innovative ideas may not have been sustained or properly institutionalized. On the other hand, the 2014-2023 decade shows a cut in innovation index as well as in policy effectiveness, adoption rate and impact score. But there is modest improvement in sustainability rating. This indicates that institutions have slowed the pace of implementing new changes but improved their ability to sustain and manage existing systems.

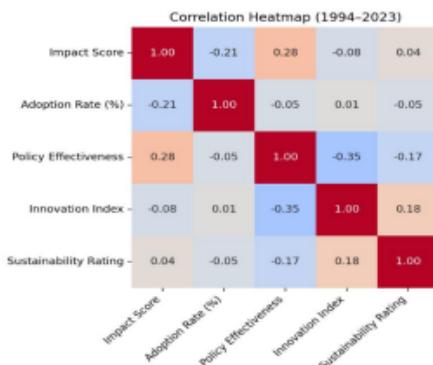


Figure 3. Correlation Heatmap (1994-2023)

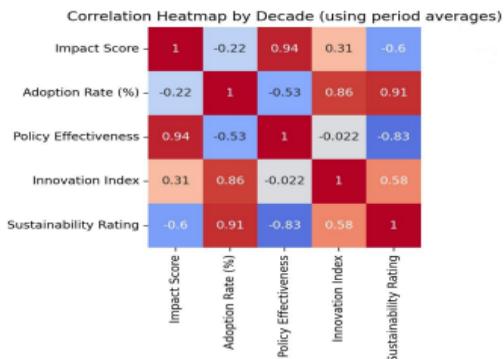


Figure 4. Correlation Heatmap (Decade)

The yearly heatmap (1994-2023) shows mostly weak and unclear connections between the variables. Impact score has a small positive connection with policy effectiveness (0.28) but almost no link with sustainability rating (0.04), which indicates that short-term effectiveness does not always improve sustainability. Policy effectiveness has a weak negative connection with innovation index (-0.35) and sustainability (-0.17), meaning that annual policy efforts don't always have a strong innovation and sustainability.

The decade-averaged heatmap shows a bit clearer relationship among metrics. Impact score and policy effectiveness have a very high positive correlation (0.94), that highlights good policies that improve overall impact over a longer period. Adoption rate is strongly linked with innovation index (0.86) and sustainability rating (0.91), meaning that organizations that consistently adopt new practices tend to have higher innovation and better sustainability outcomes over time. But

policy effectiveness has a strong negative connection with sustainability (-0.83), and impact score shows a negative relation with sustainability (-0.60), showing that focusing on impact and policies sometimes may decrease sustainability.

Overall, long-term policies and consistent adoption improve impact and innovation, but may affect sustainability. Yearly data shows short-term changes, while decade averages reveal bigger, long-term trends. Using both gives a full picture of the relationships.

#### 4.1 Discussion

The overall analysis of leadership and organizational change metrics from 1994 to 2023 reveals how organizational focus and performance have shifted over time. In the first decade (1994-2003), organizations achieved high impact scores and strong policy effectiveness, which indicate that well-aligned policies played a major role in driving organizational transformation. Between 2004-2013, innovation peaked but policy effectiveness slightly declined. This suggests that organizations emphasized creativity, new technologies, and modern management practices rather than formal policy enforcement, which led to valuable innovations that were not always sustained or institutionalized. In the most recent decade (2014-2023), there was a visible drop in innovation, impact, and adoption rate, yet sustainability improved slightly. This reflects a period where organizations focused more on maintaining stability and long-term systems rather than rapid change.

The yearly heatmap supports this by showing weak short-term relationships among the variables, meaning yearly changes

often fail to show clear patterns. However, the decade-averaged heatmap reveals stronger long-term correlations. Strong links between impact score, policy effectiveness, and adoption rate indicate that consistent policies and steady adoption enhance innovation and impact. Yet, the negative relationship between policy effectiveness and sustainability suggests that while policies boost performance, they may sometimes compromise long-term sustainability goals. Overall, these findings highlight the importance of balancing innovation and sustainability through long-term, adaptable policy strategies.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The decadal comparison of leadership and organizational change metrics from 1994 to 2023 reveals a dynamic evolution in institutional development. During the first decade (1994–2003), organizations demonstrated strong policy alignment and structured leadership strategies that resulted in high impact scores and effective policy outcomes. This period can be characterized as one of transformation, where focused leadership and cohesive planning brought about measurable improvements in organizational performance and culture.

The second decade (2004–2013) marked a turning point, with innovation becoming the primary driver of change. Institutions invested heavily in new ideas, technological adoption, and creative management practices. However, this focus on innovation came at the cost of policy consistency and sustainability. The slight decline in policy effectiveness during this phase suggests that while organizations were highly experimental, many innovative practices were not

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systematically institutionalized, leading to challenges in long-term impact and stability.

In contrast, the third decade (2014–2023) saw a slowdown in innovation, policy effectiveness, adoption rate, and overall impact score. Yet, the improvement in sustainability rating indicates a strategic shift toward maintaining and refining existing systems rather than initiating new transformations. This phase reflects institutional maturity, where the emphasis transitioned from continuous change to consolidation and long-term stability. Overall, the three decades collectively demonstrate a movement from active policy-driven transformation to innovation-led experimentation, followed by a stabilization phase focused on sustainability and resilience.

### **5.1 Limitations**

Although the analysis provides meaningful insights, certain limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study relies on decadal aggregate data, which may overlook short-term fluctuations or contextual variations within each decade. Second, differences in data sources, evaluation criteria, and measurement standards across time may influence the accuracy of comparisons. Additionally, the analysis does not account for external socio-political or economic factors that might have affected institutional performance. Finally, the study primarily focuses on quantitative indicators, leaving qualitative aspects such as leadership behavior, organizational culture, and stakeholder perceptions underexplored.

## **5.2 Future Work**

Future research should aim to address these limitations by incorporating more granular, time specific data and mixed-method approaches. Qualitative assessments, including interviews and case studies, could offer deeper insights into how leadership dynamics and organizational culture shape policy and innovation outcomes. Further exploration of cross-sectoral differences would also help identify context-specific strategies that drive sustained improvement.

Moreover, developing integrated frameworks that balance innovation with sustainability will be essential for guiding future organizational change. Researchers could also examine the role of digital transformation, participatory governance, and adaptive leadership in maintaining institutional agility. Continuous data-driven evaluation and feedback mechanisms should be emphasised to ensure that future organizational strategies remain both innovative and sustainable.

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