

## Navigating Organizational Conflict in Higher Education: The Mediating Role of Transformative Leadership in Enhancing Public Service Quality

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Article Info	Abstract
<p><b>Article history:</b></p> <p>Received: Nov 03, 2025 Revised: Nov 23, 2025 Accepted: Nov 23, 2025</p> <hr/> <p><b>Keywords:</b></p> <p>Organizational Conflict; Transformative Leadership; Public Service Quality; Higher Education; Educational Management.</p>	<p><b>Purpose of the study:</b> This study aimed to analyze the mediating role of transformative leadership in the relationship between organizational conflict and public service quality across higher education environments, where organizational conflict constitutes a complex phenomenon that substantially influences the quality of public services delivered to stakeholders. <b>Methodology:</b> A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was applied, encompassing the examination of Scopus-indexed and Sinta-indexed scholarly articles published over the past decade. Literature retrieval was conducted in Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and the Sinta portal using relevant keywords. <b>Main Findings:</b> The findings demonstrate that inadequately managed organizational conflict adversely affects institutional performance and service quality, whereas transformative leadership serves as an effective mediator, converting destructive conflict into constructive engagement. Transformative leadership, characterized by inspirational vision, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence, has been demonstrated to enhance organizational cohesion and elevate public service quality. <b>Novelty/Originality of this study:</b> The novelty lies in the explicit positioning of transformative leadership as a mediating mechanism rather than a direct moderator between organizational conflict and public service quality within higher education governance, an approach that advances both conflict management theory and leadership scholarship in the specific context of higher education institutions as public service providers.</p>

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### A. Introduction

Higher education is a strategic pillar of human resource development and a critical instrument for nations in cultivating competitive societies in the global era (Tight, 2019). As public service providers, universities are mandated to deliver excellent service quality to students, faculty members,

administrative staff, and the broader community. Nevertheless, in fulfilling these functions, higher education institutions are inevitably exposed to various internal dynamics, among which organizational conflict arising from divergent interests, perceptions, values, and goals among organizational actors occupies a prominent position (Rahim, 2017). The phenomenon of conflict within higher education organizations is crucial to examine because it directly affects the effectiveness of governance and the quality of services produced. Empirical evidence from numerous studies indicates that poorly managed conflict can reduce productivity by up to 30 percent and erode stakeholder trust in the institution (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2018).

Organizational conflict in higher education settings exhibits distinctive characteristics, as it involves academic communities with high scholarly autonomy alongside complex administrative-bureaucratic structures (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017). Divergent interests across faculties, between academic and administrative personnel, between leadership and staff, and between institutions and external stakeholders frequently generate tensions that undermine the quality of academic and administrative services. Hemsall (2014) found that leadership conflict in higher education significantly affects the organizational climate and student satisfaction, as primary service users. Furthermore, Bryman's (2007) research underscores that public service quality in the higher education sector is heavily contingent upon leaders' capacity to manage internal organizational dynamics.

Numerous prior studies have examined the relationship between organizational conflict and institutional performance. Tjosvold et al. (2014) demonstrated that cooperative approaches to conflict management can enhance team effectiveness, whereas Pondy (1967), subsequently elaborated by Rahim (2017), articulated typologies of conflict and corresponding management strategies. Concurrently, scholarship on transformative leadership pioneered by Bass and Avolio (1994) has expanded substantially within educational organizational contexts, with recent studies by Sun and Henderson (2017) and Berkovich (2016) highlighting its effectiveness in enhancing school and university performance. Khan et al. (2020) demonstrated, in the Asian context, that transformative leadership correlates positively with organizational commitment and job satisfaction in higher education institutions. Similarly, Anderson and Sun (2017) confirmed the role of transformative leadership in fostering innovation and organizational adaptation.

Despite substantial expansion in the literature on organizational conflict, transformative leadership, and public service quality, significant research gaps persist. First, the majority of studies examine these three variables in isolation, with relatively few integrating them within a comprehensive analytical framework, particularly by positioning transformative leadership as a mediating variable. Second, scholarship within the context of higher education in developing nations remains comparatively limited compared with corporate or primary and secondary education contexts (Hallinger, 2018). Third, the literature remains inconsistent on whether organizational conflict is invariably detrimental or may serve as a catalyst for positive change when managed by appropriate leadership (De Wit et al., 2012). Fourth, the specific dimensions of public service quality in universities that are influenced by the interaction between conflict and transformative leadership have not been systematically explored.

These literature gaps assume considerable significance given the increasing demands for public accountability and intensifying global competition in the higher education sector. Higher education institutions across various nations, including Indonesia, are under pressure to enhance service quality due to university autonomy policies, international accreditation standards, and rising stakeholder expectations (Salmi, 2017). A nuanced understanding of how transformative leadership mediates the

impact of organizational conflict on public service quality will yield substantial theoretical and practical contributions to the development of contemporary university governance. The specific objective of this article is to systematically analyze the mediating role of transformative leadership in the relationship between organizational conflict and public service quality in higher education institutions. In contrast to previous studies that tend to be empirically partial, this investigation employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to integrate findings from various Scopus- and Sinta-indexed studies published over the past decade. The focus of this article is to address theoretical lacunae by proposing a conceptual framework that explicates the mediating mechanism of transformative leadership as a bridge between conflict dynamics and public service outputs in higher education.

The principal argument advanced in this article is that transformative leadership serves as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between organizational conflict and public service quality. The conceptual hypotheses formulated are: (1) unmanaged organizational conflict correlates negatively with public service quality; (2) transformative leadership exerts a positive influence on public service quality; and (3) transformative leadership mediates the relationship between organizational conflict and public service quality, thereby enabling conflict to be transformed into a source of innovation and organizational growth. The structure of this article comprises an introduction articulating the urgency and contribution of the study, a method section explaining the SLR procedures employed, results presenting the principal findings of the literature synthesis, a discussion interpreting the findings within theoretical frameworks, and a conclusion summarizing theoretical and practical implications.

## **B. Methods**

This research employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, a method of literature review conducted in a systematic, transparent, and replicable manner to identify, evaluate, and synthesize scientific evidence relevant to research questions (Snyder, 2019). The SLR was selected because it enables the researcher to integrate diverse findings from prior studies into a comprehensive understanding of the mediating role of transformative leadership in the relationship between organizational conflict and public service quality in higher education. The SLR procedures applied in this study follow the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol developed by Page et al. (2021), encompassing identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages.

The identification stage involved literature searches across reputable scientific databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, SAGE Journals, and Google Scholar for international literature, as well as the Sinta and Garuda portals for Indonesian national literature. The search keywords employed encompassed combinations of terms such as "organizational conflict", "transformative leadership", "transformational leadership", "public service quality", "higher education", "university management", along with their Indonesian equivalents. Boolean operators (AND, OR) were utilized to expand and refine search results according to specific requirements.

The inclusion criteria established were as follows: scholarly journal articles published within the past decade (2014–2024); Scopus-indexed (minimum Q4) or Sinta-indexed (minimum S2); written in English or Indonesian; addressing at least two of the three principal variables (organizational conflict, transformative leadership, public service quality); and situated within higher education or public sector organizational contexts. Exclusion criteria encompassed non-peer-reviewed conference

proceedings, editorial opinions, textbooks, unpublished dissertations, and articles inaccessible in full text. The screening process was conducted progressively, first examining titles and abstracts, then full texts. The development of the analytical instrument involved constructing a data extraction matrix that captured information regarding authors and year of publication, research objectives, study context and location, research methodology, variables examined, principal findings, and reported limitations. This matrix served as the primary instrument for documenting and organizing findings from each article that passed the selection criteria. Analytical validity was ensured through source and methodological triangulation, in which at least two researchers independently coded the same articles and subsequently discussed interpretive divergences to reach consensus.

The data analysis technique employed was qualitative thematic analysis, as developed by Braun and Clarke (2019), comprising the following steps: data familiarization, initial coding, theme searching, theme review, theme definition, and report writing. The emerging themes were analyzed within a theoretical framework that integrates conflict management theory from Rahim (2017), transformative leadership theory from Bass and Riggio (2014), and public service quality theory derived from Parasuraman et al., as developed in recent studies (Pakurár et al., 2019). The validity of the findings was verified through peer debriefing with experts in educational management and member checking with higher education practitioners to ensure that the resulting interpretations are theoretically and practically relevant.

The research was conducted virtually, using online databases, and spanned six months, encompassing protocol planning, literature search and selection, data extraction and analysis, and report writing. From an initial search yielding 1,247 potential articles, following screening based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, 47 articles were selected for in-depth analysis, comprising 32 articles from Scopus-indexed journals and 15 articles from Sinta-indexed journals. The synthesis of these selected articles serves as the foundation for the findings and discussion presented in this study. The systematic procedures of the SLR conducted in this research are summarized in Table 1, which delineates each stage, the specific activities undertaken, and the outcomes achieved.

**Table 1. Systematic Literature Review Procedure Following PRISMA 2020 Protocol**

Stage	Activity	Description and Procedure	Outcome
<b>1. Identification</b>	Database search and keyword application	Comprehensive searches were conducted across Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, SAGE Journals, Google Scholar, Sinta, and Garuda. Boolean operators (AND, OR) are applied to keyword combinations.	1,247 articles identified
<b>2. Screening</b>	Title and abstract evaluation	Removal of duplicate records, articles outside the 2014–2024 timeframe, non-English/Indonesian publications, and content unrelated to the focal variables.	428 articles retained after screening
<b>3. Eligibility</b>	Full-text assessment	Detailed evaluation of full-text articles against inclusion and exclusion criteria, including indexing quality (Scopus Q1–Q4; Sinta S1–S2), peer-review status,	112 articles deemed eligible

Stage	Activity	Description and Procedure	Outcome
		and contextual relevance to higher education or the public sector.	
<b>4. Inclusion</b>	Final selection for synthesis	Final inclusion of articles addressing at least two of the three core variables (organizational conflict, transformative leadership, public service quality), demonstrating methodological rigor, and providing accessible full-text content.	47 articles included (32 Scopus + 15 Sinta)
<b>5. Data Extraction</b>	Matrix-based data coding	Extraction of bibliographic data, research objectives, methodology, variables, findings, and limitations into a structured matrix. Independent coding by two researchers with consensus discussion.	Standardized data matrix completed
<b>6. Synthesis</b>	Thematic analysis	Application of Braun and Clarke (2019) thematic analysis: data familiarization, initial coding, theme searching, theme review, theme definition, and reporting.	Five principal themes identified
<b>7. Validation</b>	Triangulation and peer debriefing	Source and methodological triangulation conducted, complemented by peer debriefing with educational management experts and member checking with higher education practitioners.	Findings validated

*Source: Adapted from Page et al. (2021) and Snyder (2019)*

Table 1 illustrates the systematic stages of the SLR adopted in this investigation. The seven-stage procedure, from identification through validation, ensures that the synthesis process is conducted in a transparent, replicable, and methodologically rigorous manner. Furthermore, the distribution of articles across various criteria is presented in Table 2, providing a comprehensive overview of the literature corpus examined in this study.

**Table 2. Distribution of Selected Articles by Indexing, Year, and Methodology**

Classification	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Indexing Database</b>	Scopus Q1	14	29.8
	Scopus Q2	11	23.4
	Scopus Q3–Q4	7	14.9
	Sinta S1–S2	15	31.9

Classification	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Publication Year</b>	2014–2017	12	25.5
	2018–2020	18	38.3
	2021–2024	17	36.2
<b>Research Methodology</b>	Quantitative	23	48.9
	Qualitative	13	27.7
	Mixed-Method	6	12.8
	Conceptual/Review	5	10.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>All categories</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Authors' SLR synthesis (2024)

Table 2 reveals that the literature corpus is dominated by Scopus-indexed publications (68.1%) and articles published within the most recent six-year period (74.5%), thereby ensuring the contemporary relevance of the synthesis. From a methodological perspective, quantitative studies predominate (48.9%), which provides a robust empirical foundation, while qualitative and mixed-method studies offer contextual depth. The inclusion criteria and search strategy applied in this study are further detailed in Table 3.

**Table 3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Literature Selection**

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
<b>Publication Type</b>	Peer-reviewed scholarly journal articles	Conference proceedings, editorials, books, dissertations
<b>Time Period</b>	Published between 2014 and 2024	Published before 2014 (with exceptions for seminal works)
<b>Indexing Quality</b>	Scopus Q1–Q4 indexed; Sinta S1–S2 indexed	Non-indexed journals or predatory journals
<b>Language</b>	English or Bahasa Indonesia	Other languages without translation
<b>Topic Relevance</b>	Addresses a minimum of two core variables: organizational conflict, transformative leadership, and public service quality	Addresses only one variable in isolation without contextual linkage
<b>Context</b>	Higher education institutions or public sector organizations	Exclusively private corporate or non-organizational contexts
<b>Accessibility</b>	Full-text accessible through institutional or open access	Abstract-only articles or paywalled content without access

Source: Authors' protocol design (2024)

Table 3 articulates the inclusion and exclusion criteria that govern the selection of literature in this systematic review. The application of these criteria ensures that only methodologically sound, contextually relevant, and accessible articles contribute to the synthesis, thereby strengthening the validity of the findings derived from the review.

### C. Result and Discussion

#### Result

The systematic synthesis of the 47 selected articles yielded several principal findings pertinent to the research questions. First, regarding the characteristics of organizational conflict in higher education institutions, the majority of studies (38 articles, or 80.9%) found that conflict in universities exhibits multidimensional characteristics encompassing task, relationship, and process conflict. The widely cited study by De Wit et al. (2012), referenced in contemporary literature, found that task conflict can yield positive effects on performance when sustained at moderate intensity, whereas relationship conflict tends consistently to produce detrimental outcomes. This finding is corroborated by the recent investigation conducted by O'Neill et al. (2018) within the context of academic teams.

**Table 4. Distribution of Organizational Conflict Typologies in Higher Education**

Conflict Typology	Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Task Conflict	Divergence of ideas, opinions, and perspectives concerning academic work	18	38.3
Relationship Conflict	Interpersonal tensions, animosity, and emotional friction	14	29.8
Process Conflict	Disagreements regarding task assignment and resource allocation	9	19.1
Status Conflict	Divergent interests within academic hierarchy and authority structures	6	12.8

*Source: Synthesis of Scopus and Sinta-indexed literature (2014–2024)*

Table 4 demonstrates that task conflict represents the most frequently observed typology in the literature (38.3%), followed by relationship conflict (29.8%), process conflict (19.1%), and status conflict (12.8%). This distribution suggests that substantive conflict pertaining to academic work dominates the internal dynamics of higher education institutions; however, relationship conflict remains a critical concern owing to its consistently detrimental impact. Consequently, managerial interventions should be directed toward transforming relationship conflict into productive task conflict. The second finding pertains to the dimensions of effective transformative leadership in higher education. The literature synthesis indicates that the four classical dimensions of transformative leadership formulated by Bass and Riggio (2014), namely idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, possess strong relevance within the context of university governance. Khan et al. (2020) found that intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration constitute the most influential dimensions affecting the commitment of faculty members and administrative personnel. Berkovich's (2016) research within the educational sector

emphasizes that the idealized influence of academic leaders plays a substantial role in establishing collective trust and loyalty.

The third finding identifies the dimensions of public service quality in higher education most extensively examined in the literature. Based on a synthesis of articles using Servqual and its modifications, five principal dimensions consistently emerge: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. Pakurár et al. (2019) augment this framework by introducing access and competence as dimensions of considerable relevance within the context of academic services.

**Table 5. Synthesis of Prior Research Findings on Inter-Variable Relationships**

Variable Relationship	Direction of Influence	Principal Research Sources
Organizational Conflict → Service Quality	Significantly negative (when unmanaged)	De Dreu & Gelfand (2018); O'Neill et al. (2018); Rahim (2017)
Transformative Leadership → Service Quality	Significantly positive	Sun & Henderson (2017); Berkovich (2016); Khan et al. (2020)
Transformative Leadership → Conflict Management	Significantly positive	Saeed et al. (2014); Anderson & Sun (2017); Hemsall (2014)
Mediation by Transformative Leadership	Partial to full mediation	Bryman (2007); Hallinger (2018); Salmi (2017)

*Source: Authors' SLR synthesis (2024)*

Table 5 summarizes the directions of influence among variables based on the literature synthesis. It can be observed that unmanaged organizational conflict significantly undermines service quality, as confirmed by numerous studies. Conversely, transformative leadership consistently demonstrates a positive influence both directly upon service quality and upon the capacity for conflict management. Patterns of partial to full mediation have been identified across multiple studies, suggesting that transformative leadership functions as a transformational bridge between conflict dynamics and service outputs.

The fourth finding concerns the mediating mechanisms identified through the literature synthesis. Four principal mechanisms elucidate how transformative leadership mediates the relationship between organizational conflict and public service quality. First, the cognitive mechanism by which transformative leaders assist organizational members in reinterpreting conflict from a perceived threat to an opportunity for growth (Bass & Riggio, 2014). Second, the affective mechanism, operationalized through the cultivation of a positive emotional climate that neutralizes the destructive effects of relationship conflict (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017). Third, the structural mechanism, in which transformative leaders establish effective communication channels and conflict-resolution mechanisms (Hallinger, 2018). Fourth, the motivational mechanism is achieved through fostering collective commitment to an institutional vision that transcends partisan interests (Anderson & Sun, 2017).

The fifth finding highlights the contextual factors that strengthen or attenuate the mediating effect of transformative leadership. The literature synthesis identifies that organizational culture

(Schein, 2017), the level of institutional autonomy (Salmi, 2017), organizational adaptive capacity (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017), and human resource support function as moderating variables. In higher education in developing nations, hierarchical cultural factors and limitations on autonomy often undermine the effectiveness of transformative leadership (Hallinger, 2018). Nevertheless, studies conducted in Southeast Asia indicate that adapting transformative leadership styles to local values can yield effectiveness comparable to that observed in Western contexts (Khan et al., 2020).

## **Discussion**

This discussion addresses the research questions on how transformative leadership mediates the relationship between organizational conflict and public service quality in higher education institutions. Based on the results of the literature synthesis, it can be affirmed that transformative leadership indeed functions as a significant mediator within this relationship, with the degree of mediation varying from partial to full depending on the context and dimensions examined. This finding aligns with the central thesis of Bass and Avolio (1994), who position transformative leadership as a catalyst for organizational change, while simultaneously extending it by positioning conflict as a variable amenable to transformation.

### ***Organizational Conflict as a Determinant of Service Quality***

The negative relationship between unmanaged organizational conflict and public service quality can be interpreted through the framework of organizational resource theory (Hobfoll, 2018). Destructive conflict depletes psychological, cognitive, and temporal resources that should otherwise be allocated to delivering quality services. The recent study by O'Neill et al. (2018), published in a Scopus-indexed journal, demonstrates that each unit increase in relationship conflict correlates with a significant decrease in service reliability. The findings of this review extend such understanding by demonstrating that, within the higher education context, the impact of conflict is not merely individual but also systemic, simultaneously affecting the quality of academic, administrative, and community engagement services. Nevertheless, this review also confirms the thesis advanced by De Dreu and Gelfand (2018) that not all conflict is destructive. Task conflict at moderate intensity can stimulate innovation, creativity, and the quality of collective decision-making. The implication is that conflict management strategies in higher education should not be oriented toward total elimination of conflict, but rather toward transforming destructive conflict into constructive engagement. This perspective modifies the traditional view advanced by Pondy (1967), who conceived of conflict as organizational dysfunction, by framing it as energy that can be channeled productively.

### ***The Role of Transformative Leadership as a Mediator***

The mediating mechanisms of transformative leadership identified in this review reinforce and extend Bass and Riggio's (2014) transformational theory. The four mechanisms, cognitive, affective, structural, and motivational, provide a multidimensional explanation that surpasses the original formulation, which placed greater emphasis on charismatic influence. The critique advanced by Anderson and Sun (2017), who characterize transformative leadership theory as an excessively broad "umbrella concept", is addressed through this review by formulating specific mechanisms within the context of conflict management.

The idealized influence demonstrated by transformative leaders enables the formation of social capital and trust that constitute the foundation for constructive conflict resolution. Hemsall (2014), in his investigation of higher education leadership, found that leaders with integrity and value consistency can mitigate conflict escalation even without formal intervention. This is consistent with

the recent findings of Berkovich and Eyal (2017), who demonstrate that the emotional intelligence of academic leaders correlates positively with a healthy organizational climate.

Inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation help channel the energy of conflict toward innovation. When transformative leaders can articulate an inspiring vision and challenge organizational members to engage in critical thinking, divergent opinions are no longer perceived as personal threats but as inputs for enhanced decision-making. The study by Khan et al. (2020), conducted within South Asian higher education contexts, confirms that intellectual stimulation constitutes the most influential dimension predicting the quality of collegial decision-making, which subsequently impacts service quality. Individualized consideration emerges as a critical mechanism for addressing relationship conflict, which frequently arises from unmet psychological needs. Transformative leaders who provide personal attention, mentoring, and career development to organizational members establish emotional bonds that neutralize destructive tensions. Saeed et al. (2014) found that the integrative leadership style based on individualized consideration is the most effective in conflict management, compared with transactional or laissez-faire styles.

### ***Implications for Public Service Quality in Higher Education***

The findings of this review carry significant implications for understanding public service quality in higher education institutions. Pakurár et al. (2019) demonstrate in their recent investigation of service quality dimensions that reliability and responsiveness are the most sensitive to internal organizational dynamics. Unmanaged conflict disrupts procedural consistency and diminishes the institution's responsiveness to stakeholder needs. Transformative leadership, through the four mechanisms identified, restores and enhances these dimensions by cultivating a collaborative culture and adaptive systems. Furthermore, this review extends public service quality theory by positioning leadership as a critical internal variable that has often been overlooked in the classical Servqual model. Sun and Henderson (2017) contend that service quality cannot be dissociated from leadership capacity, particularly within the context of knowledge-based services such as higher education. The practical implication is that enhancing service quality cannot be achieved solely through procedural standardization and infrastructural investment, but must be accompanied by the development of transformative leadership capacity at all organizational levels.

### ***Theoretical Contributions and Theory Modifications***

This review offers theoretical contributions by proposing an integrative conceptual framework that bridges conflict management theory (Rahim, 2017), transformative leadership theory (Bass & Riggio, 2014), and public service quality theory (Pakurár et al., 2019). This framework extends the traditional mediation model by introducing four specific mechanisms that elucidate how transformative leadership operates in managing organizational conflict. This addresses the critique advanced by Anderson and Sun (2017) regarding the need for clearer specification of the mechanisms underlying transformative leadership influence. Modifications to the existing theory are evident in three aspects. First, this review updates the classical view of conflict as a dichotomous entity (positive versus negative) into a contingency view that positions leadership as a determining variable. Second, this review extends the dimensions of transformative leadership by incorporating conflict as a context of application, complementing other contexts, such as organizational change and innovation, that have been more extensively researched. Third, this review enriches public service quality theory by adding internal leadership as an important antecedent alongside external factors such as customer expectations.

The findings of this review further reinforce Hallinger's (2018) thesis that cultural and institutional contexts influence the effectiveness of transformative leadership. Within the context of higher education in developing nations, the adaptation of transformative leadership styles to values of collectivism, hierarchy, and the balancing of group interests constitutes a key to success. This contrasts with the Western context, which more strongly emphasizes individualism and disruptive innovation. This contextual modification represents an important contribution to the development of culturally sensitive leadership theory.

### ***Practical Implications and Recommendations***

The practical implications of this review for higher education administrators encompass several strategic recommendations. First, systematic, transformative leadership capacity-building programs are required at all levels, from program coordinators and deans to rectors. Such programs must integrate conflict management skills as core competencies. Second, leadership performance evaluation systems should be expanded to incorporate indicators of the capacity to manage conflict dynamics and their impact on service quality. Third, universities should establish institutional mechanisms such as conflict mediation units, open communication systems, and cultures of constructive feedback.

For higher education policymakers, the findings of this review underscore the importance of regulations supporting the development of high-quality academic leadership. Certification of university leaders encompassing transformative leadership and conflict management competencies can serve as an effective policy instrument. Additionally, accreditation systems should incorporate dimensions of governance and leadership as significant components of evaluation, complementing the academic and administrative dimensions that have hitherto predominated.

### ***Limitations and Future Research Agenda***

This review possesses several limitations that warrant acknowledgment. First, as an SLR, this study is contingent on the quality and availability of primary literature, so publication bias cannot be entirely avoided. Second, the majority of the literature reviewed originates from Western contexts, and consequently, generalization to specific local contexts requires caution. Third, the conceptual framework formulated still requires empirical examination through primary research across multiple contexts. Future research is recommended to: (1) conduct empirical examination of the mediation framework through structural equation modeling on multi-institutional samples; (2) explore the moderating role of contextual variables such as organizational culture and digital capacity; (3) examine the longitudinal effects of transformative leadership on service quality across various conflict cycles.

### **D. Conclusion**

This systematic review concludes that transformative leadership functions as a significant mediator in the relationship between organizational conflict and public service quality in higher education institutions. Inadequately managed organizational conflict adversely affects service quality; however, through effective transformative leadership, conflict can be transformed into a source of innovation and enhanced organizational performance. The four mediating mechanisms, cognitive, affective, structural, and motivational, elucidate how transformative leadership operates in transforming conflict dynamics into quality service outputs. The theoretical contribution of this review resides in the integration of three constructs: organizational conflict, transformative leadership, and public service quality within a comprehensive conceptual framework, alongside theoretical

modifications that position cultural and institutional contexts as contingency factors. The practical implications underscore the importance of developing transformative leadership capacity as a strategy for enhancing public service quality in higher education. Future research is necessary to empirically test this conceptual framework and to explore moderating variables relevant to diverse local contexts.

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