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Developing a Value-Oriented Transformational Organization Model Based on the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model in Applied Science Centers

ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to develop a model of a value-oriented transformational organization based on the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model in Applied Science Centers This study was conducted using a qualitative approach based on grounded theory. The statistical population consisted of experts, managers, faculty members, and specialists familiar with organizational transformation and applied science higher education. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, and data collection continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. A total of 15 individuals participated in semi-structured interviews. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using the Strauss and Corbin grounded theory method. Data analysis involved open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, leading to the extraction of key concepts, categories, and relationships among categories. The trustworthiness of the findings was ensured through member checking, peer review, and continuous comparison of data. The analysis revealed that the core phenomenon of the model was the development of a value-oriented transformational organization based on the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model in Applied Science Centers. Causal conditions included the necessity of transformation in the applied science education system, the influence of upstream policy documents and the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model, the need to improve organizational quality and effectiveness, environmental changes and external pressures, the role of transformational leadership and management, and the requirements of human capital development. Contextual conditions comprised cultural and social characteristics of educational centers, organizational structures and management systems, educational and technological infrastructures, human resource characteristics, and regional conditions. Intervening conditions included financial limitations, resistance to organizational change, policy and administrative challenges, weak managerial support, human resource-related challenges, and environmental pressures. The identified strategies consisted of developing transformational leadership based on Iranian-Islamic values, empowering human capital, redesigning organizational structures and processes, fostering a transformational culture, improving educational quality and curricula, utilizing modern educational technologies, and strengthening relationships with industry and society. The implementation of these strategies was expected to result in improved educational quality and effectiveness, development of committed and capable human capital, enhanced organizational performance and productivity, institutionalization of a transformational culture, stronger interaction with industry and society, and realization of the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model in education. The findings indicate that the development of transformational organizations in Applied Science Centers requires an integrated framework that combines value-based leadership, organizational culture, human capital development, technological advancement, and stakeholder engagement.

Keywords: Transformational Organization, Transformational Leadership, Iranian-Islamic Progress Model, Applied Science Centers, Grounded Theory, Organizational Transformation, Human Capital Development, Organizational Culture.

Introduction

In today's highly dynamic and knowledge-driven environment, organizations face increasing pressure to adapt to technological advancements, social transformations, economic uncertainty, and evolving stakeholder expectations. Educational institutions, particularly higher education and applied science centers, are not exempt from these challenges. The accelerating pace of digital transformation, the emergence of new forms of knowledge production, and the growing demand for innovation have created a need for organizations that are agile, resilient, and capable of continuous renewal. Within this context, transformational leadership has emerged as one of the most influential approaches for guiding organizational change, fostering innovation, and improving organizational effectiveness. Recent studies have emphasized that transformational leadership plays a crucial role in helping organizations navigate complexity while simultaneously enhancing employee motivation, creativity, and commitment [1, 2].

Transformational leadership is generally characterized by the ability of leaders to inspire followers through a compelling vision, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence. Unlike traditional leadership approaches that focus primarily on supervision and control, transformational leadership seeks to create meaningful change by aligning organizational goals with the values and aspirations of employees. This leadership style encourages individuals to transcend personal interests and contribute to collective organizational success. Evidence from various organizational settings indicates that transformational leadership significantly improves employee performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and overall organizational effectiveness [3, 4]. As organizations increasingly rely on knowledge workers and innovation-oriented processes, transformational leadership has become a critical factor in sustaining organizational competitiveness and growth.

The significance of transformational leadership is particularly evident in educational institutions, where leaders are expected not only to manage administrative processes but also to create environments conducive to learning, innovation, and human development. Educational organizations operate in complex systems that require adaptation to changing educational policies, technological developments, labor market demands, and societal expectations. Research has shown that transformational leadership can significantly enhance organizational innovation capability within educational institutions by promoting creativity, supporting collaboration, and facilitating knowledge sharing among employees and stakeholders [5, 6]. Educational leaders who adopt transformational approaches are more likely to foster a culture of continuous learning and organizational improvement, thereby increasing institutional effectiveness and responsiveness.

A growing body of literature highlights the relationship between transformational leadership and innovation. Innovation has become an essential requirement for organizational survival and sustainable development. Transformational leaders create supportive environments in which employees feel empowered to generate new ideas, experiment with novel approaches, and engage in creative problem-solving. Studies have demonstrated that transformational leadership positively influences innovative work behavior through the development of innovation-friendly organizational climates, employee empowerment, and enhanced self-efficacy [7, 8]. Furthermore, transformational leaders encourage risk-taking, experimentation, and intellectual curiosity, all of which are essential for fostering organizational innovation and adaptability.

The relationship between transformational leadership and organizational climate has received considerable scholarly attention. Organizational climate reflects employees' perceptions of policies, practices, and procedures within the workplace. A positive organizational climate facilitates collaboration, trust, and engagement, thereby supporting innovation and

organizational performance. Research suggests that transformational leadership contributes significantly to the development of supportive organizational climates that encourage innovative work behavior and organizational citizenship behavior [9, 10]. Through effective communication, vision sharing, and employee involvement, transformational leaders create organizational environments that promote both individual and collective achievement.

Another important mechanism through which transformational leadership influences organizational outcomes is organizational culture. Organizational culture encompasses shared values, beliefs, norms, and assumptions that guide behavior within organizations. Transformational leaders play a critical role in shaping organizational culture by articulating shared visions, modeling desired behaviors, and reinforcing organizational values. Empirical studies have shown that transformational leadership contributes to the development of learning-oriented, innovative, and adaptive organizational cultures that enhance organizational performance and sustainability [11, 12]. In educational institutions, culture serves as a foundation for organizational identity, collaboration, and commitment to continuous improvement.

The increasing importance of digital transformation has further elevated the relevance of transformational leadership. Digital transformation involves the integration of digital technologies into organizational processes, structures, and strategies to improve effectiveness and create value. Successful digital transformation requires leaders who can manage uncertainty, inspire innovation, and guide organizational adaptation. Research indicates that transformational leadership significantly contributes to organizational agility and digital transformation outcomes by fostering flexibility, innovation, and resilience [13, 14]. As educational institutions increasingly adopt digital technologies for teaching, learning, and administration, transformational leadership becomes essential for ensuring successful technological integration and organizational transformation.

Organizational resilience represents another critical outcome associated with transformational leadership. Resilience refers to an organization's capacity to anticipate, withstand, adapt to, and recover from challenges and disruptions. In educational systems, resilience is particularly important due to frequent policy changes, economic pressures, technological disruptions, and societal challenges. Studies have demonstrated that transformational leadership enhances organizational resilience by promoting adaptability, collective efficacy, and innovation-oriented behaviors among employees [15, 16]. Leaders who inspire trust and foster collaboration help organizations respond effectively to uncertainty while maintaining performance and organizational stability.

Transformational leadership also influences employee-related outcomes that are fundamental to organizational success. Employees who perceive their leaders as transformational tend to report higher levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, motivation, and engagement. These positive attitudes contribute to improved performance, reduced turnover intentions, and stronger organizational citizenship behaviors. Evidence suggests that transformational leadership enhances employee performance both directly and indirectly through increased empowerment, self-leadership, and organizational commitment [3, 17]. Moreover, transformational leaders create opportunities for professional growth and personal development, which further strengthen employee engagement and organizational effectiveness.

The role of transformational leadership in promoting organizational entrepreneurship and creativity has also been widely recognized. Organizations seeking sustainable competitive advantages increasingly rely on innovation, entrepreneurial behavior, and continuous learning. Transformational leaders encourage employees to challenge conventional assumptions, pursue creative solutions, and contribute actively to organizational innovation processes. Research findings indicate that

transformational leadership positively influences organizational entrepreneurship, innovative performance, and creativity across diverse organizational settings [18, 19]. Such findings highlight the importance of leadership approaches that support organizational learning and innovation.

In addition to fostering innovation and creativity, transformational leadership contributes to sustainable organizational development through its influence on learning cultures and knowledge-sharing practices. Knowledge sharing is particularly important in educational organizations because it facilitates the dissemination of expertise, promotes collaborative learning, and enhances organizational capabilities. Transformational leaders encourage open communication, trust, and collaborative relationships that facilitate knowledge exchange among organizational members [6]. Learning-oriented cultures, supported by transformational leadership, enable organizations to adapt more effectively to environmental changes and maintain long-term competitiveness [11].

Recent scholarship has also emphasized the interaction between transformational leadership and organizational change processes. Organizational change initiatives frequently encounter resistance due to uncertainty, fear, and entrenched routines. Transformational leaders help overcome resistance by communicating compelling visions, involving employees in decision-making processes, and creating supportive environments for change implementation. Studies indicate that transformational leadership significantly enhances organizational change capabilities and strengthens organizations' ability to achieve innovative performance during periods of transformation [1, 19]. Such capabilities are particularly relevant in educational institutions facing increasing demands for reform and modernization.

Another emerging area of research concerns the relationship between transformational leadership and sustainability-oriented organizational practices. Scholars have demonstrated that transformational leadership contributes to the development of environmentally responsible behaviors, green creativity, and sustainable organizational cultures. Through value-based leadership and strategic vision, transformational leaders encourage employees to embrace sustainability goals and participate in environmentally conscious innovation initiatives [20]. These findings suggest that transformational leadership extends beyond operational effectiveness to encompass broader social and environmental objectives.

Despite extensive international research on transformational leadership, there remains a need to examine how transformational organizational models can be developed within specific cultural, educational, and societal contexts. Educational systems operate within unique cultural frameworks that shape organizational values, leadership expectations, and institutional priorities. In countries emphasizing indigenous development models and culturally grounded approaches to education, organizational transformation requires alignment with national values, social aspirations, and strategic development frameworks. Consequently, understanding how transformational organizations can be developed in accordance with the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model represents an important area of inquiry. Such an approach emphasizes the integration of educational quality, organizational effectiveness, human capital development, cultural values, and societal needs within a coherent framework for organizational transformation.

Applied Science Centers occupy a particularly important position in this context because they serve as bridges between education, industry, and community development. These institutions are expected to produce skilled human resources, support regional economic development, and respond effectively to labor market demands. However, achieving these objectives requires organizational structures and leadership approaches capable of fostering innovation, adaptability, and continuous improvement. The principles of transformational leadership provide a valuable foundation for developing

organizational models that support these goals while remaining aligned with national development priorities and cultural values.

Therefore, the present study aimed to develop a model of a value-oriented transformational organization based on the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model in Applied Science Centers.

Methodology

This study was conducted using a qualitative research design based on the grounded theory approach. The purpose of this qualitative phase was to identify the causal and contextual conditions, intervening factors, strategies, and consequences associated with the formation of a transformational organization with emphasis on the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model in Applied Science Centers of Mazandaran Province. Since the phenomenon under investigation was complex, context-dependent, and rooted in the experiences, interpretations, and professional insights of experts and managers, a qualitative approach was considered appropriate for discovering the underlying dimensions and constructing a conceptual model grounded in empirical data. The statistical population of the study consisted of management experts, university faculty members, directors, and deputies of Applied Science Centers in Mazandaran Province. These participants were selected because of their theoretical knowledge, practical experience, and familiarity with organizational transformation, indigenous management models, Islamic values in higher education, and the operational structure of Applied Science Centers. Their professional background enabled them to provide rich, meaningful, and analytically relevant information concerning the factors that shape transformational organizations within the framework of the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their experience, knowledge, and direct or indirect involvement in issues related to transformational management, the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model, and the organizational performance of Applied Science Centers. In qualitative studies, particularly those based on grounded theory, sample size is not determined in advance by statistical formulas; rather, it is guided by theoretical saturation. Accordingly, sampling continued until the interviews no longer produced substantially new concepts, categories, or analytical insights. In the present study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 participants, including management experts, faculty members, directors, and deputies of Applied Science Centers in Mazandaran Province. Although informational saturation was reached after approximately 12 interviews, data collection continued up to the fifteenth participant to ensure greater depth, adequacy, and confirmation of the extracted categories. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, the confidentiality of their information, and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without restriction. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before conducting the interviews.

The main data collection tool in this study was the semi-structured interview. This method was selected because it allowed the researcher to guide the interview process according to the objectives of the study while also providing sufficient flexibility for participants to express their views, experiences, and interpretations in depth. The initial interview questions were designed based on the research objectives and the key concepts related to transformational organizations and the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model in Applied Science Centers. During the interviews, additional probing questions were asked according to the participants' responses in order to clarify meanings, explore implicit concepts, and obtain more detailed explanations. This approach enabled the researcher to move beyond predefined questions and extract deeper insights regarding causal

conditions, contextual conditions, intervening factors, transformational strategies, and expected consequences related to the development of a transformational organization model.

Before conducting the individual interviews, the general research plan, the background of the study, and the research objectives were explained to the participants. In some cases, this information was sent to participants by email, while in other cases it was presented in person before the interview session. At the beginning of each interview, a brief explanation was also provided about the purpose and scope of the study so that participants could become familiar with the general framework of the research. The interviews were conducted in a calm and appropriate setting and lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, depending on the participants' availability, willingness, and level of engagement with the topic. With the participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate documentation of the data. In addition to audio recording, key points and important observations were noted during the interview process. After each interview, the recorded files were transcribed verbatim, and the resulting texts were read several times by the researcher to become fully familiar with the content and to prepare the data for coding and analysis.

The interview guide included questions about the conditions that encourage Applied Science Centers to move toward becoming transformational organizations, the internal and external conditions that facilitate or hinder organizational transformation, the internal and external factors that accelerate or slow down the process of transformation, the strategies and practical actions required to guide Applied Science Centers toward a transformational model, the positive and negative consequences of implementing such a model based on the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model, and the most important factors influencing the success of organizational transformation. At the end of the interviews, participants were also asked whether they wished to add any further points or suggestions that had not been addressed but could contribute to a better understanding of the research topic. The credibility and trustworthiness of the qualitative data were strengthened through participant review, expert review, careful documentation of the research process, and continuous comparison of the extracted concepts with the original interview texts. The interview transcripts and extracted subcategories were provided to selected participants to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations. In addition, experienced qualitative research experts and academic supervisors reviewed the coding process, extracted categories, and analytical decisions to enhance the dependability and confirmability of the findings.

The qualitative data were analyzed using the grounded theory method based on the systematic coding procedure. The analysis began immediately after the transcription of the interviews and continued simultaneously with data collection. This simultaneous process allowed the researcher to compare emerging concepts across interviews, refine subsequent questions, and pursue theoretically relevant issues in later interviews. The first stage of analysis involved open coding, during which the interview transcripts were read line by line and meaningful statements, concepts, and expressions related to transformational organizations and the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model were identified and labeled. In this stage, the researcher attempted to remain close to the participants' meanings and to extract initial codes directly from the data. Similar codes were then compared, merged, or differentiated according to their conceptual similarities and differences.

In the next stage, axial coding was conducted to organize the initial codes into broader and more systematic categories. During this process, the relationships among concepts were examined, and the extracted categories were classified according to their relevance to the main components of the grounded theory paradigm, including causal conditions, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, strategies, and consequences. This stage enabled the researcher to move from

fragmented initial codes toward a coherent analytical structure that explained how the transformational organization model could be formed in Applied Science Centers based on the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model. Finally, selective coding was used to identify the core category and integrate the major categories around a central phenomenon. Through this stage, the overall structure of the studied phenomenon was developed, and the final conceptual model of a transformational organization was formulated.

Throughout the analysis, the researcher repeatedly returned to the interview transcripts to ensure that the extracted concepts, categories, and relationships were grounded in the original data. Constant comparison was used to compare codes with codes, codes with categories, and categories with emerging theoretical relationships. MAXQDA software was used to manage the qualitative data and facilitate the processes of coding, classification, retrieval, comparison, and organization of concepts. The use of this software helped the researcher systematically record analytical decisions, organize large volumes of textual data, and identify relationships among categories more accurately. To ensure the rigor of the analysis, the principles of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability were considered. Credibility was enhanced through participant validation of interview texts and extracted concepts. Dependability was supported by careful documentation of all stages of data collection and analysis. Confirmability was strengthened through the review of codes and categories by qualitative research experts who were not directly involved in the study. Transferability was addressed by selecting participants with diverse experiences, professional backgrounds, and areas of expertise in management, higher education, and organizational transformation, thereby increasing the applicability of the findings to similar Applied Science Centers and related educational organizations.

Findings and Results

The demographic findings showed that the study participants consisted of 15 interviewees. In terms of gender, 11 participants were male, representing 73.3% of the sample, and 4 participants were female, representing 26.7%. Regarding age, the highest frequency belonged to the 46–50 age group, with 8 participants accounting for 53.3% of the sample. This was followed by the 40–45 age group, with 4 participants accounting for 26.7%, and the 51–55 age group, with 3 participants accounting for 20%. In terms of marital status, 13 participants were married, representing 86.7%, while 2 participants were single, representing 13.3%. These demographic characteristics indicate that the interviewees were mainly middle-aged, married, and male experts, managers, and academic actors with relevant experience in the field of applied science education and organizational transformation.

Table 1

Integrated qualitative results of the dimensions of the transformational organization model based on the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model in Applied Science Centers

Paradigm component	Axial codes	Open codes
Causal conditions	Necessity of transformation in the applied science education system	Inefficiency of traditional educational methods; gap between education and the labor market; lack of responsiveness to the skill needs of society; weakness in skill-oriented education; lack of alignment between curricula and contemporary developments; low educational productivity; student dissatisfaction with the quality of education; weakness in training specialized workforce.
Causal conditions	Influence of upstream documents and the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model	Emphasis on Islamic values in education; necessity of realizing educational justice; attention to educating committed and specialized human beings; role of the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model document; emphasis on localization of management models; attention to national-religious identity in organizations; obligation of policymakers to educational transformation; macro-level orientation of the system toward transformation.
Causal conditions	Need to improve organizational quality and effectiveness	Decline in the quality of educational outputs; weakness in the organizational performance of centers; non-realization of educational objectives; need to increase human resource productivity; low competitiveness of centers;

		necessity of improving managers' performance; need for continuous quality evaluation; gap between the current and desired status.
Causal conditions	Environmental changes and external pressures	Rapid technological developments; changing needs of the labor market; competition among educational centers; globalization of education; increasing social expectations from universities; economic pressures on the educational system; cultural and social changes; need for innovation in education.
Causal conditions	Role of leadership and transformational management	Weakness of traditional management styles; need for transformational managers; importance of value-based leadership; role of managers in creating change; necessity of innovative decision-making; weakness in employee motivation; need for participatory management; importance of organizational vision-building.
Causal conditions	Requirements for human capital development	Need to empower faculty members; weakness in staff professional skills; shortage of in-service training; need to enhance individual competencies; lack of human resource motivation; employee job burnout; necessity of organizational learning; importance of developing soft skills; need for a culture of continuous learning.
Contextual conditions	Cultural and social characteristics governing educational centers	Dominance of indigenous cultural values in centers; influence of religious beliefs on organizational behavior; degree of staff adherence to Islamic values; level of social responsibility in the organization; existence of teamwork culture; level of organizational trust among employees; positive or negative attitudes toward change; influence of social norms on organizational performance.
Contextual conditions	Structure and management system of Applied Science Centers	Degree of centralization or decentralization in decision-making; existence of administrative bureaucracy; flexibility of the organizational structure; distribution of managerial authority; level of employee participation in decision-making; transparency in managerial processes; dominant management style in centers; level of managerial accountability.
Contextual conditions	Educational and technological infrastructures and facilities	Access to appropriate educational equipment; level of use of modern technologies; quality of physical educational spaces; existence of e-learning systems; access to up-to-date scientific resources; quality of IT infrastructures; workshop and practical facilities; level of technical support in centers.
Contextual conditions	Human resource characteristics, including faculty members and staff	Level of faculty expertise and knowledge; professional experience of faculty members; staff work motivation; organizational commitment of staff; spirit of innovation among faculty members; educational and teaching skills; interaction between faculty members and students; readiness to accept change; level of staff job satisfaction.
Contextual conditions	Environmental and regional conditions of Mazandaran Province	Economic status of the region; needs of the local labor market; relationship between centers and regional industries; level of provincial development; demographic characteristics of students; support of local institutions for education; employment opportunities in the region; interaction between the university and local community; influence of geographical conditions on educational access.
Intervening conditions	Financial resource barriers and limitations	Shortage of educational budget; financial dependence on governmental resources; delayed allocation of credits; limitations in educational investment; weakness in securing sustainable financial resources; high cost of transformation programs; low priority of education in budget allocation; problems in providing educational equipment.
Intervening conditions	Resistance to organizational change	Negative staff attitudes toward change; fear of losing occupational position; habituation to traditional methods; lack of trust in transformation programs; weakness of innovation culture; lack of motivation for change; resistance of middle managers; rejection of new ideas.
Intervening conditions	Policy and administrative limitations and challenges	Restrictive administrative regulations; complex organizational bureaucracy; instability in educational policies; frequent managerial changes; weakness in macro-level policymaking; lack of coordination among related institutions; centralization in decision-making; limitation of managers' authority.
Intervening conditions	Weakness in managerial support and backing	Lack of senior managers' support for transformation; absence of a clear managerial vision; weakness in guiding organizational changes; insufficient allocation of resources by managers; absence of incentive and reward systems; weakness in supervision and evaluation; disregard for staff opinions; failure to follow up on program implementation.
Intervening conditions	Human resource-related challenges	Shortage of specialized human resources; weakness in staff professional skills; low work motivation; employee job burnout; absence of up-to-date training; weakness in teamwork; insufficient organizational commitment; migration or displacement of capable human resources; generational gap among employees.
Intervening conditions	External environmental pressures and factors	National economic fluctuations; rapid technological changes; competition with other educational centers; changing labor market needs; social pressures on the educational system; cultural transformations in society; reduced demand for some fields of study; lack of effective relationship with industry; effect of sanctions on educational resources.
Strategies	Development of transformational leadership based on Iranian-Islamic values	Promotion of a leadership style based on Islamic values; strengthening professional ethics among managers; creating a transformational vision in the organization; training managers in leadership skills; behavioral role-modeling by managers; strengthening the spirit of managerial responsibility; developing participatory decision-making; institutionalizing organizational justice; improving managerial transparency.
Strategies	Empowerment and development of human capital	Holding specialized training courses for staff; improving the professional skills of faculty members; establishing an in-service training system; strengthening staff job motivation; developing soft skills, including communication and teamwork skills; creating opportunities for growth and promotion; establishing a meritocracy system; supporting staff creativity and innovation; reducing job burnout.
Strategies	Redesigning organizational structure and processes	Reducing administrative bureaucracy; increasing flexibility in the organizational structure; delegating authority to lower levels; improving decision-making processes; simplifying administrative procedures; creating team-oriented structures; establishing process-oriented management; increasing the speed of organizational responsiveness.
Strategies	Development of a transformational organizational culture	Promoting a culture of innovation in the organization; strengthening the spirit of teamwork; institutionalizing religious and ethical values; increasing organizational trust; encouraging acceptance of change; creating a climate of continuous learning; strengthening organizational identity; enhancing staff organizational commitment; supporting new ideas.
Strategies	Improving the quality of education and curricula	Revising course content; aligning educational programs with labor market needs; developing skill-oriented education; using modern teaching methods; updating educational syllabi; strengthening the relationship between education and practice; continuous evaluation of educational quality; improving the level of student learning.
Strategies	Use of modern educational technologies	Developing e-learning; using virtual learning systems; equipping classrooms with modern technologies; using digital tools in teaching; improving faculty digital literacy; developing information technology infrastructures; using artificial intelligence in education; facilitating access to online scientific resources.
Strategies	Strengthening the relationship with industry and society	Developing cooperation with local industries; creating internship opportunities for students; attracting private sector participation; implementing joint applied projects; conducting educational needs assessment based on the

		labor market; increasing interaction with the local community; holding joint skill-based courses with industry; commercializing knowledge and skills; creating communication networks with employers.
Consequences	Improving educational quality and effectiveness	Increasing the teaching quality of faculty members; improving the level of student learning; enhancing students' practical skills; aligning education with the real needs of society; increasing the efficiency of curricula; improving the educational evaluation process; reducing student academic dropout; increasing satisfaction with the quality of education; improving educational outputs.
Consequences	Development of committed and capable human capital	Training specialized human resources; increasing staff professional commitment; improving individual and organizational skills; growth of creativity and innovation among staff; increasing job motivation; strengthening social responsibility; enhancing professional competencies; reducing job burnout; improving staff performance.
Consequences	Improving organizational performance and productivity	Increasing human resource productivity; improving managerial performance; reducing resource waste; increasing the speed of task completion; improving the quality of educational services; enhancing organizational effectiveness; increasing process efficiency; achieving organizational objectives; improving performance indicators.
Consequences	Institutionalization of a transformational organizational culture	Strengthening the culture of innovation in the organization; increasing the spirit of teamwork; enhancing organizational trust; accepting change as an organizational value; strengthening Islamic values in the organization; increasing organizational commitment; improving relationships among employees; forming a strong organizational identity; expanding organizational learning.
Consequences	Enhancing interaction with society and industry	Increasing relationships with local industries; improving graduate employability; implementing applied projects; increasing private sector participation; better responsiveness to labor market needs; developing entrepreneurship among students; strengthening university-community relationships; increasing internship opportunities; commercializing knowledge and skills.
Consequences	Realization of the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model in education	Promoting religious values in education; strengthening students' national-Islamic identity; realizing educational justice; localizing educational models; integrating science and values in education; enhancing spirituality in the organizational environment; educating committed and specialized human beings; aligning with the country's upstream documents; developing an indigenous view of progress.

The qualitative analysis of the interviews led to the extraction of a comprehensive paradigm model for a transformational organization based on the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model in Applied Science Centers. The results indicated that the formation of such an organization is not limited to managerial change or structural reform, but emerges from the interaction of educational, cultural, organizational, technological, economic, and value-based factors. The extracted categories were organized into five main paradigm components: causal conditions, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, strategies, and consequences. Together, these components show that organizational transformation in Applied Science Centers requires simultaneous attention to the inefficiencies of the current educational system, the normative orientation of upstream national documents, the internal capacities of educational centers, and the external pressures imposed by technological, economic, and labor-market changes.

The causal conditions showed that the need for transformation originates from several fundamental deficiencies and pressures within the applied science education system. Participants emphasized that traditional educational methods, weak skill orientation, insufficient alignment between curricula and labor-market needs, and dissatisfaction with educational quality have created a serious necessity for transformation. At the same time, the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model and other upstream documents were identified as important drivers because they emphasize educational justice, the integration of Islamic values into education, localization of management models, and the training of committed and specialized human beings. Therefore, the causal conditions demonstrate that the movement toward a transformational organization is both a practical response to educational inefficiencies and a value-oriented response to national and cultural policy expectations.

The contextual conditions reflected the internal and regional environment in which the transformational organization must be developed. The findings showed that cultural and social characteristics, such as indigenous values, religious beliefs, social responsibility, teamwork culture, organizational trust, and attitudes toward change, create the background for accepting or resisting transformation. In addition, the structure and management system of Applied Science Centers, including the degree of centralization, bureaucracy, transparency, participation, and managerial accountability, influence the feasibility of change. Educational and technological infrastructures, human resource characteristics, and the regional conditions of Mazandaran Province also emerged as decisive contextual factors. These results indicate that transformation

must be designed according to the cultural, managerial, infrastructural, and local conditions of the centers rather than being implemented as a generic and uniform organizational program.

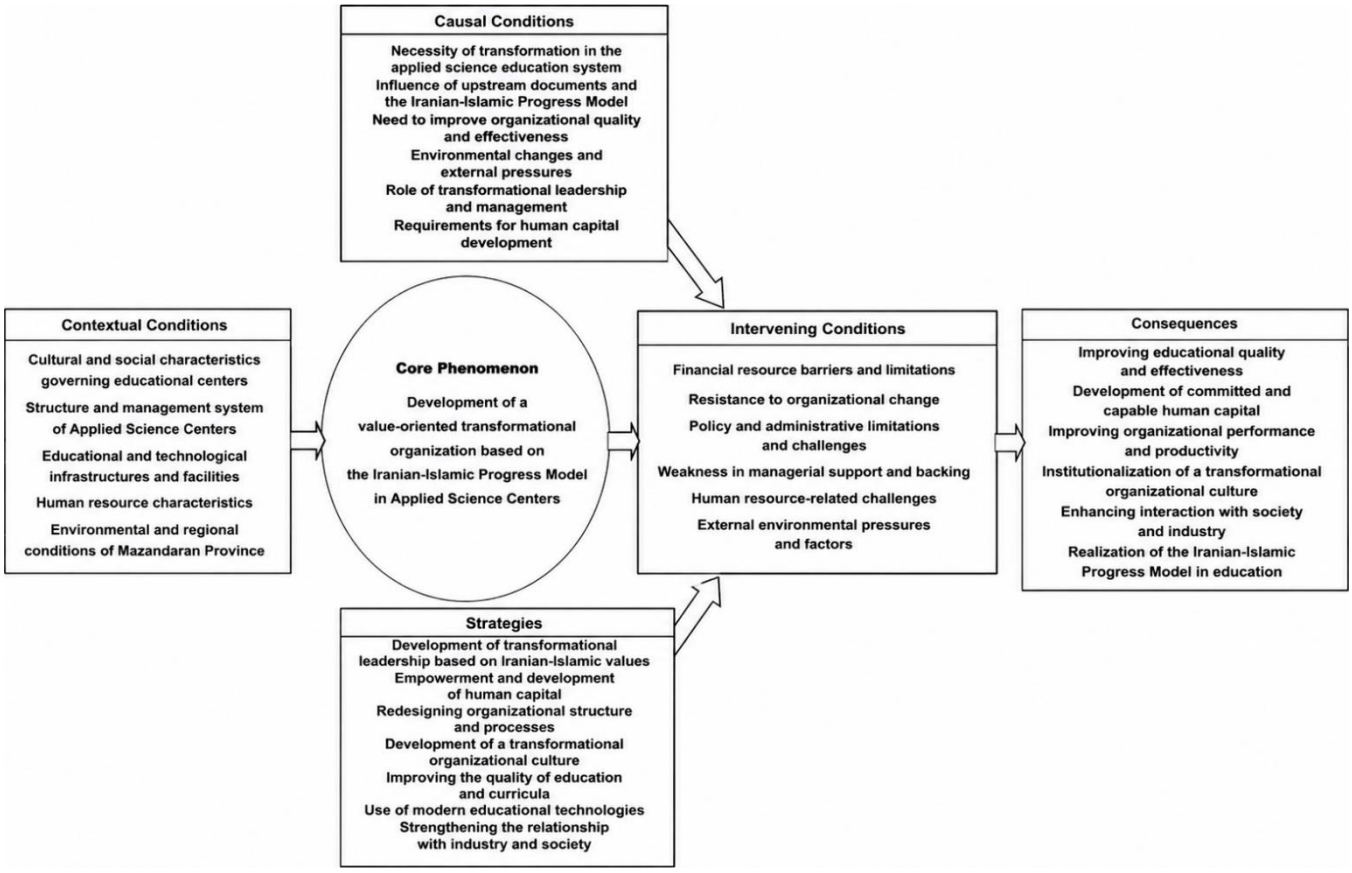
The intervening conditions revealed the major barriers that may weaken, delay, or redirect the process of organizational transformation. The most important barriers included financial limitations, dependence on governmental resources, delayed budget allocation, insufficient sustainable funding, and the high cost of transformation programs. Organizational resistance to change also emerged as a major obstacle, especially in the form of negative attitudes, fear of losing occupational status, attachment to traditional methods, lack of trust in transformation plans, and resistance by middle managers. Furthermore, restrictive administrative regulations, policy instability, frequent managerial changes, weak coordination among institutions, lack of senior managerial support, inadequate incentive systems, human resource challenges, national economic fluctuations, technological pressures, and weak industry relations were identified as intervening factors. These findings show that even when the need for transformation is recognized, its realization depends on the ability of the centers to manage institutional, financial, human, and environmental constraints.

The extracted strategies indicated that achieving a transformational organization requires a multidimensional and coordinated set of actions. The first strategic axis was the development of transformational leadership based on Iranian-Islamic values through ethical leadership, participatory decision-making, organizational justice, managerial transparency, and value-based role-modeling. The second axis was empowerment and human capital development through specialized training, improvement of faculty and staff competencies, meritocracy, job motivation, creativity, and reduction of burnout. Other strategies included redesigning organizational structures and processes, reducing bureaucracy, delegating authority, strengthening team-oriented structures, developing a transformational organizational culture, promoting innovation, increasing trust, institutionalizing ethical and religious values, and supporting continuous learning. The findings also emphasized improving educational quality and curricula, developing skill-oriented education, using modern educational technologies, expanding e-learning and digital tools, applying artificial intelligence in education, and strengthening relationships with industry, employers, and the local community.

The consequences of implementing the transformational organization model were identified at educational, human, organizational, cultural, social, and value-based levels. At the educational level, the model is expected to improve teaching quality, student learning, practical skills, curriculum efficiency, educational evaluation, student satisfaction, and educational outputs. At the human resource level, it can contribute to the development of committed and capable human capital by improving professional competencies, job motivation, creativity, responsibility, and staff performance. At the organizational level, the model may increase productivity, managerial performance, process efficiency, service quality, and achievement of organizational goals. At the cultural level, it can institutionalize innovation, teamwork, organizational trust, acceptance of change, Islamic values, organizational commitment, and organizational learning. Finally, at the societal and value-based level, the model can strengthen university-industry relations, improve graduate employability, promote entrepreneurship, support commercialization of knowledge and skills, and contribute to the realization of the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model in education through educational justice, localization, integration of science and values, and the training of committed and specialized human beings.

Figure 1

Final Model of the Study



Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to develop a model of a value-oriented transformational organization based on the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model in Applied Science Centers. The findings revealed that the formation of such an organization is influenced by a set of causal conditions, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, strategic actions, and expected consequences. The central phenomenon identified through the grounded theory analysis was the development of a value-oriented transformational organization grounded in the principles of the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model. The results indicate that organizational transformation in Applied Science Centers requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that simultaneously addresses leadership, culture, organizational structures, human capital, technological advancement, and interactions with society and industry. These findings support the contemporary view that organizational transformation is a multidimensional process that depends on the alignment of organizational values, leadership practices, environmental conditions, and strategic capabilities.

One of the most important findings of the study was the identification of the necessity of transformation in the applied science education system as a key causal condition. Participants emphasized the inadequacy of traditional educational approaches, the mismatch between educational outputs and labor market requirements, and the need for educational systems to respond to rapidly changing societal demands. This finding is consistent with studies highlighting the growing need for organizational innovation and adaptability in educational institutions. Transformational leadership has been identified as

a critical mechanism for fostering organizational innovation capability and facilitating institutional adaptation to changing environmental demands [5]. Similarly, research has demonstrated that transformational leadership enables organizations to develop sustainable competitive advantages through learning-oriented cultures and adaptive organizational practices [11]. The findings suggest that Applied Science Centers can no longer rely on conventional administrative and educational models and must embrace transformational approaches to remain effective and relevant.

Another important causal factor identified was the influence of upstream national documents and the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model. Participants emphasized that organizational transformation should not merely replicate foreign models but should be grounded in indigenous values, national priorities, and cultural realities. This finding aligns with research emphasizing the importance of value-based transformational leadership and the role of organizational culture in shaping successful transformation processes [12, 20]. Transformational leadership is particularly effective when it integrates organizational goals with shared values and collective identities. The emphasis on the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model demonstrates the importance of cultural legitimacy and contextual appropriateness in organizational transformation initiatives.

The study also revealed that improving organizational quality and effectiveness, responding to environmental changes, strengthening transformational leadership, and developing human capital are essential drivers of transformation. Participants highlighted the importance of preparing organizations to respond to technological developments, globalization, labor market changes, and increasing societal expectations. These findings are consistent with studies demonstrating that transformational leadership enhances organizational agility, resilience, and adaptability in rapidly changing environments [1, 14]. Furthermore, organizational resilience has been shown to be strengthened through transformational leadership practices that encourage innovation, collaboration, and strategic flexibility [15, 16]. Therefore, transformational organizations are better positioned to respond to uncertainty while maintaining organizational effectiveness and competitiveness.

The contextual conditions identified in this study further demonstrate the complexity of organizational transformation. Participants emphasized the role of cultural and social characteristics, organizational structures, educational infrastructures, technological facilities, human resources, and regional conditions. These findings suggest that organizational transformation cannot occur in isolation from the broader organizational and environmental context. Previous studies have similarly highlighted the importance of organizational climate, organizational culture, and institutional support in determining the effectiveness of transformational leadership initiatives [7, 9]. Educational organizations with supportive cultures, effective management systems, and adequate technological infrastructures are more likely to achieve successful transformation outcomes. Moreover, knowledge-sharing cultures and perceived organizational support have been found to strengthen the positive effects of transformational leadership on organizational learning and innovation [6].

The findings concerning intervening conditions revealed several challenges that may hinder the development of transformational organizations. These challenges included financial constraints, resistance to change, policy and administrative barriers, insufficient managerial support, human resource limitations, and external environmental pressures. Such findings are consistent with organizational change literature, which emphasizes that transformation efforts often encounter resistance due to uncertainty, fear of change, resource scarcity, and bureaucratic obstacles [1, 19]. Resistance to change remains one of the most significant barriers to successful organizational transformation. Employees and managers may be reluctant to abandon established routines, particularly when change threatens existing power structures or creates

uncertainty regarding future roles. The findings indicate that overcoming such resistance requires strong leadership, effective communication, and active stakeholder participation.

Financial and human resource challenges emerged as particularly significant intervening conditions. Participants noted that limited funding, inadequate educational resources, and shortages of qualified personnel can undermine transformation initiatives. These findings support previous research demonstrating that organizational transformation requires substantial investments in human capital, professional development, and organizational learning systems [3, 17]. Transformational leadership contributes to organizational success partly through employee empowerment, self-leadership development, and increased organizational commitment. Consequently, organizations lacking sufficient resources may struggle to create the conditions necessary for sustainable transformation.

The strategic component of the model highlighted several key pathways for achieving organizational transformation. Among these, the development of transformational leadership based on Iranian-Islamic values emerged as a central strategy. Participants emphasized the importance of value-based leadership, participatory decision-making, organizational justice, transparency, and ethical management practices. This finding aligns with extensive research demonstrating that transformational leadership enhances employee performance, organizational commitment, innovative behavior, and organizational effectiveness [3, 4]. Transformational leaders create a compelling vision, inspire followers, and encourage collective efforts toward organizational improvement. The incorporation of Iranian-Islamic values into transformational leadership practices may further strengthen organizational legitimacy and cultural alignment.

Another important strategic theme was the empowerment and development of human capital. Participants highlighted the need for continuous professional development, competency enhancement, innovation support, merit-based systems, and employee motivation programs. This finding is strongly supported by previous studies showing that transformational leadership positively influences self-efficacy, innovative behavior, empowerment, and employee engagement [8, 9]. Empowered employees are more likely to contribute creatively, participate in organizational improvement initiatives, and support organizational change efforts. The findings therefore suggest that human capital development should be considered a fundamental pillar of transformational organizational development.

The redesign of organizational structures and processes was also identified as a critical strategy. Participants emphasized reducing bureaucracy, increasing flexibility, improving decision-making processes, and establishing team-based structures. These findings correspond with research indicating that transformational leadership enhances organizational agility and change capability by promoting adaptive structures and innovative management practices [13, 19]. Flexible organizational structures facilitate faster responses to environmental changes and encourage greater employee participation in organizational decision-making.

Another notable finding was the emphasis on developing a transformational organizational culture. Participants described the importance of fostering innovation, teamwork, trust, continuous learning, organizational identity, and commitment to change. These findings are consistent with studies demonstrating that transformational leadership contributes significantly to the creation of innovative organizational climates and learning-oriented cultures [7, 21]. Organizational culture serves as a critical mechanism through which transformational leadership influences employee attitudes and behaviors. When organizations institutionalize innovation, collaboration, and learning as core values, they become better equipped to sustain transformation efforts over time.

The study further highlighted the importance of improving educational quality, modernizing curricula, and strengthening the integration of education with labor market needs. Participants stressed the necessity of revising educational content, promoting skill-based learning, implementing innovative teaching methods, and continuously evaluating educational quality. These findings support research emphasizing the role of transformational leadership in fostering organizational innovation and improving institutional performance within educational settings [2, 5]. Educational transformation requires not only administrative reform but also substantial improvements in teaching and learning processes.

The adoption of modern educational technologies emerged as another key strategy identified by participants. The findings suggest that digital learning systems, online educational platforms, information technology infrastructures, and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence can significantly contribute to organizational transformation. These results align with studies highlighting the role of transformational leadership in facilitating digital transformation and organizational agility [13, 14]. Digital transformation enables organizations to expand access to educational resources, improve efficiency, and respond more effectively to contemporary educational challenges.

The final component of the model concerned the anticipated consequences of implementing a value-oriented transformational organization. Participants expected improvements in educational quality, human capital development, organizational performance, organizational culture, industry relationships, and the realization of the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model. These findings are highly consistent with previous empirical evidence demonstrating that transformational leadership improves organizational performance, innovation outcomes, organizational resilience, employee effectiveness, and overall institutional success [10, 22]. Furthermore, transformational leadership has been associated with increased creativity, organizational citizenship behavior, and sustainable organizational development [2, 23]. Collectively, these findings suggest that transformational organizations can serve as effective mechanisms for enhancing the performance and societal contribution of Applied Science Centers.

Overall, the findings indicate that the development of a value-oriented transformational organization based on the Iranian-Islamic Progress Model requires a comprehensive framework integrating leadership, culture, organizational structures, human capital development, technology, and stakeholder engagement. The proposed model provides a contextually grounded pathway for achieving sustainable organizational transformation while maintaining alignment with national values and educational priorities.

The findings of this study should be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, the study relied on qualitative data collected from a relatively limited number of participants within Applied Science Centers, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. Second, the study focused on a specific cultural and regional setting, and therefore some identified dimensions may reflect local conditions and organizational experiences. Third, data collection was based on participants' perceptions and experiences, which may be influenced by subjective interpretations and personal biases. Finally, the proposed model was developed conceptually and was not quantitatively tested, limiting conclusions regarding causal relationships among its components.

Future studies should examine the proposed model using quantitative methodologies and structural equation modeling to validate the relationships among causal conditions, contextual factors, strategies, and outcomes. Comparative studies across different provinces and educational institutions could provide a broader understanding of transformational organizational development. Researchers may also investigate the role of specific dimensions such as digital transformation,

organizational resilience, knowledge management, and innovation climate within the proposed framework. Longitudinal studies are recommended to explore how transformational organizational practices evolve over time and influence institutional performance.

Educational policymakers and managers should prioritize the development of transformational leadership competencies among institutional leaders. Investment in professional development, organizational learning systems, and employee empowerment programs can facilitate organizational transformation. Applied Science Centers should redesign organizational structures to enhance flexibility, participation, and innovation. Strengthening relationships with industry and community stakeholders can improve the relevance of educational programs and increase graduate employability. Additionally, educational institutions should invest in digital infrastructures and modern teaching technologies while fostering organizational cultures that support continuous learning, innovation, and value-based development.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Written consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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