



Leadership Styles in Strengthening Lecturers Motivation for Academic Rank Advancement at Private Universities in Gorontalo Province

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Abstract. Academic rank advancement known in Indonesia as *jabatan fungsional* serves as one of the clearest markers of a lecturer's professional growth, yet a substantial proportion of lecturers at private universities in Gorontalo Province have yet to pursue it. This study examined how different leadership styles relate to lecturer motivation in pursuing academic rank, and what factors stand in the way. Using a qualitative case-study approach, data were gathered through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document review at STIKES Bakti Nusantara Gorontalo and Universitas Gorontalo. Findings reveal that authoritarian leadership, when applied without adequate support structures, tends to generate compliance rather than genuine motivation. Charismatic and transformational styles, by contrast, foster a sense of belonging and professional pride that encourages lecturers to take career development seriously. Transactional approach esppecially when reward systems are clear and fairly applied also show positive results, though their effect is contingent on institutional consistency. Four key inhibiting factors were identified: limited leadership attention toward individual lecturers, inadequate welfare and remuneration, poor understanding of the academic rank process, and an underdeveloped reward system. The study concludes that sustainable motivation for academic rank advancement requires a combination of inspirational leadership, fair compensation, and institution-wide literacy about career pathways.

Keywords: Leadership Style; Lecturer Motivation; Functional Position

1. Introduction

Higher education in Indonesia has undergone remarkable growth over the past two decades, both in the sheer number of institutions and in the expectations placed upon them. The National Education System Law (No. 20/2003) established that universities state and private alike are held to the same accreditation standards, which encompass service quality, academic output, and the professional credentials of their teaching staff. Private universities, in particular, operate in a highly competitive environment where public trust is earned, not given, and losing it can threaten institutional survival (Rumijati, 2020).

Within this landscape, lecturers occupy a position that is simultaneously central and precarious. They are the primary actors through whom an institution's academic mission is fulfilled teaching, conducting research, and engaging with the community through the Tri Dharma framework. Their professional standing is formally reflected in the academic rank system (*jabatan fungsional*), a structured career ladder moving from Teaching Staff (*Tenaga Pengajar*) through Assistant Lecturer (*Asisten Ahli*), Lecturer (*Lektor*), Senior Lecturer (*Lektor Kepala*), and finally Professor (*Guru Besar*). Advancing through this ladder requires the

accumulation of credit points tied to each pillar of Tri Dharma, as regulated by Permenpan-RB No. 17/2013.

Data from LLDIKTI Region XVI (Gosulutteng, 2023) reveal that the rate of academic rank attainment varies considerably across private universities in Gorontalo Province. At some institutions, more than 70% of lecturers already hold an official rank; at others, the majority still function without one. STIKES Bakti Nusantara Gorontalo stands out in this regard: with only 13 permanent lecturers, 54% remain classified as teaching staff without any formal academic rank. This figure is not merely an administrative gap it signals a deeper problem rooted in motivation, institutional support, and leadership quality.

Table 1. Academic Rank Status of Lecturers at Private Universities in Gorontalo Province (2023)

Institution	No Rank (n)	No Rank (%)	Has Rank (n)	Has Rank (%)	Total
Universitas Bina Taruna Gorontalo	56	77	17	23	73
Universitas Bina Mandiri Gorontalo	63	64	35	36	98
Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama	46	62	28	38	74
STIKES Bakti Nusantara Gorontalo	7	54	6	46	13
Universitas Pohuwato	28	40	42	60	70
Politeknik Gorontalo	10	40	15	60	25
Universitas Ichsan Gorontalo Utara	12	16	21	84	33
Universitas Gorontalo	33	28	84	72	117
Universitas Muhammadiyah Gorontalo	45	27	121	73	166
Universitas Ichsan Gorontalo	45	24	140	76	185

Source: LLDIKTI Region XVI – Lembaga Layanan Pendidikan Tinggi Wilayah XVI, covering Gorontalo, North Sulawesi, and Central Sulawesi Provinces (Gosulutteng), 2023.

Table 2. Academic Rank Distribution of Lecturers at STIKES Bakti Nusantara Gorontalo

No.	Academic Rank	Total
1	Teaching Staff	7
2	Assistant Lecturer (Asisten Ahli)	5
3	Lecturer (Lektor)	1
4	Senior Lecturer (Lektor Kepala)	–
5	Professor (Guru Besar)	–

Source: STIKES Bakti Nusantara Gorontalo, internal data

The table above makes the situation plain: out of thirteen lecturers, seven carry no academic rank at all, and only one has reached the Lektor level. No one has progressed beyond that. The disparity between what the regulations envision and what is happening on the ground is striking, and it prompted the core question driving this research: what role does leadership style play in shaping or stunting lecturers' motivation to pursue academic rank advancement?

Leadership in higher education is not merely a managerial function. The rector or institutional head serves simultaneously as a formal authority figure, an academic mentor, a motivator, and a cultural architect. How that person leads whether through inspiration, directive control, incentive systems, or emotional connection shapes the working atmosphere in ways that directly affect faculty behavior (Pudjiarti, 2023). This study draws on Siagian's (2016) typology of leadership styles, authoritarian, charismatic, transactional, and transformational as an analytical lens for understanding differences across two institutions: STIKES Bakti Nusantara Gorontalo and Universitas Gorontalo.

Beyond leadership, the study also examines four inhibiting factors that frequently surface in conversations about why lecturers delay or abandon the pursuit of academic rank: (1) insufficient attention from institutional leadership, (2) inadequate welfare and financial support, (3) limited understanding of the rank acquisition process, and (4) the absence of meaningful reward systems. Understanding these factors is essential for any institution serious about closing the gap between its accreditation aspirations and the professional realities of its teaching staff.

While previous studies have examined leadership styles in higher education or lecturer motivation as separate lines of inquiry (e.g., Pudjiarti, 2023; Sari, 2021), this study is novel in its comparative case-study design across two private universities in Gorontalo Province an under-researched region and its integration of both leadership-style analysis and structural inhibiting factors within a single analytical frame. This dual focus generates actionable insights for institutional leaders seeking to strengthen lecturers' academic rank advancement in similarly resourced private higher education settings.

This study also speaks to global development priorities, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), Target 4.3 on ensuring equal access to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Target 8.5 on achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all, including opportunities for professional growth. By examining how leadership practices support or hinder lecturers' career advancement, this research contributes empirical insight into how higher education institutions can align their internal governance with these global commitments to equitable, high-quality education and decent working conditions for academic staff.

2. Methods

This study adopts a qualitative case-study design, chosen because the phenomenon under investigation how leadership style shapes motivation in specific institutional contexts is deeply embedded in social relationships, organizational culture, and individual experience. A quantitative survey would struggle to capture why certain leadership approaches resonate with lecturers while others leave them cold; case study methodology, by contrast, allows the researcher to follow the texture of those experiences closely (Creswell, 2014).

The research was conducted at two private universities in Gorontalo Province: STIKES Bakti Nusantara Gorontalo and Universitas Gorontalo. These two sites were selected

purposely because they represent contrasting profiles in terms of academic rank attainment rates, institutional size, and observable leadership characteristics, making comparison analytically productive.

Primary data were generated through in-depth interviews with key informants including institutional leaders, academic coordinators, and lecturers at various career stages. Interview questions focused on how respondents experienced and perceived leadership practices, what motivated or discouraged them from pursuing academic rank, and how institutional policies shaped their decisions. Observations were also conducted to capture the ambient working environment and the dynamics of day-to-day interaction between leaders and their staff. Secondary data including internal documents, policy records, and performance reports served to contextualize and triangulate interview findings.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) three-stage model: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the reduction stage, transcripts and field notes were reviewed repeatedly, with relevant passages coded and irrelevant material set aside. Reduced data were then organized into thematic displays narrative summaries and comparative matrices that made patterns across the two sites visible. Conclusions were drawn tentatively at first, then verified through continued engagement with the data and through member checking, in which key findings were shared with selected participants to confirm their accuracy and fairness.

Trustworthiness was strengthened through source triangulation comparing what different informants said about the same phenomena and through method triangulation, cross-referencing interview data with observations and documents. The researcher also maintained a reflective journal throughout the fieldwork period to monitor potential biases and assumptions. Ethical clearance was obtained from Bina Taruna University's postgraduate research committee, and all participants provided informed consent before taking part.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Leadership Styles and Lecturer Motivation for Academic Rank Advancement

Across both research sites, it became clear that leadership style is not a background variable; it operates at the center of how lecturers understand their own career possibilities. The sections below trace how each of the four styles identified in Siagian's (2016) typology manifested in the two institutions, and what those manifestations meant for lecturer motivation.

3.1.1. Authoritarian Leadership Style

At first glance, authoritarian leadership might seem like an unlikely candidate for promoting lecturer motivation. The model's emphasis on directives, compliance, and centralized control runs against the grain of academic culture, where autonomy and independent judgment are deeply valued. Goleman (1998) documented that authoritarian environments frequently generate tension, reduce innovative thinking, and leave employees feeling constrained rather than inspired. For lecturers whose work demands creativity and sustained intellectual effort, these side effects are particularly costly.

The data from STIKES Bakti Nusantara Gorontalo reflect this dynamic. Rather than imposing strict directives around academic rank, the institution's leadership chose a more permissive posture encouraging lecturers to pursue advancement but stopping short of making it a clear institutional expectation. While this approach avoids the stress associated

with authoritarian pressure, it also removes the sense of urgency that sometimes catalyzes action. Without clear signals from leadership that academic rank matters, many lecturers treated it as optional rather than essential.

Universitas Gorontalo offers an instructive contrast. There, leadership has taken a firmer stance, reminding lecturers each semester of their rank obligations through formal evaluations and, where necessary, written warnings. Some lecturers described this as pressure; others experienced it as clarity knowing exactly what was expected of them made planning easier. Bass and Avolio (1994) caution, however, that when firmness tips into coercion, productivity and creativity can suffer. The line between accountability and authoritarianism is thin, and Universitas Gorontalo appears to walk it carefully by combining firm expectations with genuine institutional support.

One finding deserves particular attention: the experience of lecturers who felt compelled to pursue rank primarily to avoid sanctions. Several respondents at Universitas Gorontalo acknowledged that their motivation was partly defensive they wanted to avoid demotion rather than genuinely build their careers. Deci and Ryan (2000) identify this as a failure of intrinsic motivation, where external controls displace the internal drive that produces sustained, high-quality performance. An institution that relies too heavily on punitive mechanisms may see lecturers filing paperwork without the deeper engagement that authentic professional growth requires.

3.1.2. Charismatic Leadership Style

Charismatic leadership, in Siagian's (2016) framing, hinges on the personal magnetism of the leader their ability to inspire loyalty, generate enthusiasm, and make followers feel that their work connects to something meaningful. Northouse (2018) adds that effective charismatic leaders do not simply radiate personal appeal; they actively invest in relationships, maintain consistent presence, and communicate in ways that make each follower feel seen and valued.

The contrast between the two institutions here was particularly sharp. At STIKES Bakti Nusantara, respondents described a leadership presence that was often physically and emotionally absent from daily campus life. The institution's head was rarely seen engaging informally with lecturers, and formal interactions tended to be brief and task-oriented. An internal survey conducted at the institution in 2022 found that 60% of lecturers felt they received little support from leadership in developing their careers. This statistic is consistent with recurring qualitative themes identified in the interviews: several lecturers explicitly described feeling that leadership rarely asked about the progress of their research, and that career development was treated as something they had to figure out largely on their own. Such accounts illustrate, in lecturers' own words, precisely the kind of unsupported experience the survey captured numerically, reinforcing through method triangulation that the absence of visible leadership engagement is a lived, day-to-day reality at the institution rather than a statistical artifact alone.

At Universitas Gorontalo, the rector's leadership style stood in clear contrast. Multiple respondents described a leader who regularly attended departmental events, engaged substantively with academic staff, and made a point of recognizing individual contributions. This kind of active, visible engagement created what Bass and Riggio (2006) call a 'motivational climate' an environment in which lecturers feel their work has meaning and their progress is noticed. An internal study from 2023 found that 75% of lecturers at the university

felt more motivated to pursue academic rank after participating in professional development programs supported by institutional leadership.

The implications are practical. Charismatic leadership is not simply a personality trait that leaders either have or lack it is, in large part, a set of behaviors that can be cultivated deliberately. Making time for lecturers, acknowledging their efforts publicly, and demonstrating genuine interest in their career trajectories are all within reach of institutional leaders who choose to prioritize them. The challenge at STIKES Bakti Nusantara is not that charismatic leadership is impossible, but that it has not been consistently practiced.

3.1.3. Transactional Leadership Style

Transactional leadership operates through exchange: leaders offer rewards, recognition, and tangible benefits in return for specific forms of performance. In a professional context, this approach has well-documented strengths it provides clarity, creates predictable incentives, and allows lecturers to make informed decisions about where to invest their energy (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Both institutions in this study applied transactional elements to some degree, and in both cases the effect on motivation for academic rank advancement was positive, though with important qualifications. At Universitas Gorontalo, academic allowances linked to rank level were communicated clearly, and lecturers who achieved advancement received formal recognition. The response, according to multiple respondents, was a noticeable increase in engagement with rank-related paperwork and a greater willingness to participate in research activities that generate the credit points required for advancement. This aligns with Judge and Piccolo's (2004) finding that transactional leadership can effectively increase job satisfaction and specific performance outcomes.

At STIKES Bakti Nusantara, the transactional framework was less clearly defined. While financial incentives for rank advancement existed in principle, their application was described by several respondents as inconsistent and not widely understood. Ginting and Siregar (2021) found that lecturers who received fair and timely recognition showed higher institutional commitment; conversely, when reward systems are opaque, lecturers may conclude that the effort required is not worth the uncertain return.

The lesson here is not that transactional leadership is inherently insufficient, but that its effectiveness depends heavily on execution. A reward system that exists on paper but is inconsistently applied, poorly communicated, or perceived as unfair can be worse than no system at all it generates frustration and erodes trust. For STIKES Bakti Nusantara, the priority should be designing a reward framework that lecturers can understand, trust, and rely upon.

3.1.4. Transformational Leadership Style

Of the four styles examined, transformational leadership generated the most consistently positive responses from lecturers particularly those at Universitas Gorontalo. Transformational leaders work by appealing to followers' higher aspirations, building strong emotional connections, and creating a shared vision of what the institution can become. In academic settings, where intrinsic motivation is especially important, this approach tends to resonate (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Research conducted by Rahmadani (2023) found that 85% of lecturers at Universitas Gorontalo felt their leadership provided meaningful support for professional development and academic rank advancement. Respondents in this study echoed that finding. They

described a rector who articulated a clear vision for the university's future, framed academic rank advancement as part of a collective project rather than a bureaucratic obligation, and made herself accessible to lecturers navigating the process. Feeling heard and included in the institution's direction not merely managed made a tangible difference to how invested lecturers felt in their own advancement.

The situation at STIKES Bakti Nusantara was noticeably different. Respondents there described a leadership environment in which decisions were made without much transparency, feedback from lecturers was rarely solicited, and the institution's strategic direction was not clearly communicated. Many reported a feeling of disconnection doing their work competently enough, but without any particular sense of where it was leading or whether anyone in leadership was paying attention. Herzberg's (1966) two-factor theory is relevant here: in the absence of motivators like recognition, achievement, and meaningful work, lecturers default to focusing on hygiene factors (salary, working conditions), and even those become sources of dissatisfaction when they feel undervalued.

Taken together, the findings across both sites suggest that transformational leadership creates the conditions most conducive to genuine motivation for academic rank advancement. This is not because it is the only effective style, but because it addresses the intrinsic dimension of motivation that purely transactional or directive approaches tend to neglect.

3.2. Inhibiting Factors in Leadership Effectiveness

3.2.1. Leadership Attention

One of the most consistently mentioned themes across interviews at STIKES Bakti Nusantara was the sense that leadership was simply not paying attention not to individual lecturers' struggles, not to the bottlenecks in the rank advancement process, and not to the broader question of what the institution needed to do to help its staff grow. Deci and Ryan (2000) argue that intrinsic motivation is closely tied to the experience of being valued and supported; when that experience is absent, motivation tends to withdraw.

This was not always a matter of deliberate neglect. Several respondents acknowledged that the institution's leadership carried heavy administrative burdens and that meaningful engagement with individual lecturers was genuinely difficult to sustain. But the effect on motivation was the same regardless of intent: when lecturers felt invisible to their institutional leaders, they became less inclined to take initiative. Sari (2021) found a similar pattern in her study of Indonesian higher education institutions, where perceived leadership inattention was among the strongest predictors of low career development activity.

The communication gap also had practical consequences. Several respondents described confusion about procedural requirements for academic rank advancement confusion that persisted, they said, because no one in leadership had taken the time to walk them through the process or to create accessible informational resources.

3.2.2. Lecturer Welfare

Questions of welfare salary, allowances, workload, and working conditions came up in virtually every interview. For many lecturers, the decision of whether to pursue academic rank is not purely a matter of motivation or knowledge; it is a practical calculation about time and return on investment. Pursuing rank requires writing research papers, completing community service reports, and assembling documentation activities that take considerable

time and energy. If the financial reward for doing so is modest or uncertain, and if day-to-day remuneration is already insufficient to meet basic needs, that investment can feel irrational.

Data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemdikbud, 2022) indicate that only 30% of Indonesian lecturers express satisfaction with their current allowances a figure that reflects systemic, not institution-specific, challenges. At STIKES Bakti Nusantara, with its small staff and limited financial resources, this national problem is felt particularly acutely. A survey by the Indonesian Lecturers Association (Asosiasi Dosen Indonesia, 2023) found that approximately 45% of lecturers reported insufficient time or energy for research due to high teaching loads and inadequate compensation, undermining the very activities needed for advancement.

Supriyadi (2021) makes the important point that welfare should be understood broadly it is not just about salary, but about whether lecturers feel that their institutional environment is set up to let them succeed. Access to research support, reasonable teaching loads, and professional development opportunities all constitute welfare in this expanded sense, and deficits in any of these areas constrain motivation even when pay is adequate.

3.2.3. Lecturers' Understanding of Academic Rank

A somewhat unexpected finding was how frequently lecturers attributed their inaction not to lack of motivation per se, but to uncertainty about what was actually required. The academic rank system in Indonesia is governed by detailed regulations that specify credit point requirements, documentation standards, and assessment procedures, but these regulations are not always translated into plain language at the institutional level.

At STIKES Bakti Nusantara, several lecturers described attending institutional briefings about academic rank but coming away without a clear picture of what concrete steps they needed to take. The gap between policy language and practical guidance left many feeling that the process was more complicated than it needed to be, which made postponement feel reasonable. Research by the Indonesian Institute of Education (*Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pengajaran*, 2022) found that lecturers with a solid understanding of the rank process were significantly more likely to have advanced within two years 70% of that group succeeded, compared to much lower rates among those with limited knowledge.

This points to a clear role for institutional leadership: not just encouraging lecturers to pursue rank, but actively building the informational infrastructure that makes pursuit feasible. Structured mentoring programs, accessible guides, and regular Q&A sessions with experienced colleagues who have navigated the process could substantially reduce the knowledge barrier.

3.2.4. Reward Systems

The absence of meaningful reward systems beyond the baseline financial benefits tied to rank achievement was identified as a significant demotivating factor, particularly at STIKES Bakti Nusantara. When asked what would most encourage them to pursue academic rank advancement, respondents frequently mentioned recognition: acknowledgment from leadership that the effort matters, public celebration of milestones, and informal expressions of appreciation that make the journey feel worthwhile before the destination is reached.

Yulianto (2021) found that approximately 65% of lecturers in similar institutional contexts reported low motivation for rank development specifically because of inadequate recognition systems. Research by the Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (2020) similarly

showed that reward structures had a direct and statistically significant relationship with lecturer motivation and performance quality. These findings reinforce the logic of Podsakoff et al. (2000), who argued that supportive leader behavior including genuine acknowledgment of effort is among the most powerful drivers of job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Reward systems do not need to be expensive to be effective. What lecturers seemed to be asking for, more than large financial bonuses, was the sense that their institution noticed and valued what they were doing. Creating visible pathways for recognition through departmental announcements, institutional newsletters, or simple acknowledgment at staff meetings can signal that leadership takes academic rank seriously as a shared institutional goal rather than a personal administrative obligation.

Conclusions

This study set out to understand how leadership styles shape and sometimes stifle lecturer motivation for academic rank advancement at private universities in Gorontalo Province. The comparison between STIKES Bakti Nusantara Gorontalo and Universitas Gorontalo yielded findings that are both site-specific and broadly instructive.

No single leadership style emerged as a universal answer. Authoritarian approaches that pair clear expectations with genuine institutional support can create productive accountability, but when they slide toward coercion, they risk producing compliance without commitment. Charismatic leadership, grounded in active presence and genuine relational investment, was consistently associated with higher motivation but it requires leaders to show up, not just hold office. Transactional frameworks are effective when their reward systems are transparent, fair, and reliably applied; opacity and inconsistency drain their motivational power. Transformational leadership, which connects individual professional growth to a shared institutional vision, produced the most sustained and intrinsically driven motivation though its effectiveness depends on a leader's genuine commitment to building inclusive working relationships.

Beyond leadership style, four inhibiting factors consistently undermined motivation at STIKES Bakti Nusantara: limited leadership attention, inadequate welfare, poor understanding of the rank process, and an underdeveloped reward system. Addressing these factors is not merely a leadership challenge; it requires institutional investment in information infrastructure, compensation review, and a cultural shift toward recognizing professional development as a shared responsibility rather than an individual burden.

For policymakers and institutional leaders, the practical takeaway is this: improving academic rank attainment rates in private universities requires attending to both the relational and structural conditions that make advancement possible. A rector who inspires without building systems, or a system that rewards without inspiring, will fall short. The institutions that succeed will be those that treat leadership and institutional architecture as mutually reinforcing rather than separate concerns.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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