



Good Governance in Policy Communication Governance for the Improvement of Digital Public Services

Yasef Firmansyah^{1*}, Rahmat Salam², Taufiqurokhman³

Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta

Corresponding Author: Yasef Firmansyah

yasef.firmansyah@student.umj.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze culture-based leadership in public service in West Java by placing Dedi Mulyadi's leadership model as a conceptual case study. The main focus of this study is how local cultural values, cultural symbols, direct communication, mutual cooperation, and the closeness of leaders to the community can contribute to strengthening public services and local governance. This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach with a case study method based on literature review and document analysis. The analytical framework is built from the theories of cultural leadership, symbolic leadership, public service, quality of public services, social capital, and sound governance. The results of the study show that culture-based leadership can play a role as a socio-administrative instrument that connects local values with the needs of modern public services. In the context of West Java, the cultural leadership model is seen through three main dimensions, namely the symbolic dimension, the value dimension, and the social dimension. These three dimensions have the potential to strengthen public trust, expand citizens' access to communication, increase community participation, and encourage bureaucracy to be more responsive to public needs. This study concludes that culture-based leadership can be the foundation for sound governance if cultural values do not stop as symbols, but are translated into a fast, accountable, inclusive, transparent, and equitable service system.

INTRODUCTION

Public services are one of the main indicators of the success of local governance. The government is not only required to be present as an administrative organizer, but also as an institution that is able to meet the basic needs of the community quickly, fairly, openly, and responsively. In the Indonesian context, public services have a clear legal basis through Law Number 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services. However, in practice, the quality of public services is still often faced with slow bureaucratic problems, layered procedures, limited public access, low public trust, and lack of sensitivity of the apparatus to the social conditions of the community.

Public service problems are not solely technical-administrative, but also related to leadership issues. Regional leaders have a strategic role in determining the direction, work culture, bureaucratic responsiveness, and pattern of relationships between the government and the community. Leadership that emphasizes only formal procedures is often not enough to address the complexity of citizens' needs, especially in societies with strong socio-cultural roots. Therefore, a leadership model is needed that is able to combine modern administrative capacity with socio-cultural legitimacy.

In the context of West Java, Sundanese culture can be seen as a source of relevant value in building a more humane public service. Values such as mutual honing, mutual love, mutual care, mutual cooperation, social closeness, politeness, and collective concern can be the basis for public leadership ethics. If these values are internalized into the behavior of leaders and apparatus, then public service is not only understood as a bureaucratic obligation, but also as a moral action to serve, protect, and empower the community.

Dedi Mulyadi's leadership model is interesting to study because it is often associated with cultural-contextual leadership styles. The pattern of direct communication with residents, the use of Sundanese cultural symbols, the emphasis on mutual cooperation, and attention to the community's social problems can be read as culture-based leadership practices. In the framework of public services, these styles can be analyzed from their contribution to increasing bureaucratic responsiveness, service accessibility, citizen participation, and strengthening public trust.

This study is also relevant to the concept of sound governance developed by Farazmand. Different from good governance which is often understood normatively-administratively, sound governance emphasizes governance that is more adaptive, contextual, ethical, innovative, and responsive to the socio-cultural ecology of the community (Farazmand, 2004). Thus, culture-based leadership can be positioned as a bridge between the need for public service reform and the need for cultural legitimacy in local government.

Based on this background, this article aims to analyze the relationship between culture-based leadership and public service transformation in West Java. In particular, this article discusses the characteristics of culture-based leadership, its relevance to public services, its contribution to sound governance, and its implications for strengthening local governance. This article is prepared as a case-based conceptual study by combining public administration literature,

leadership, organizational culture, service quality, and conceptual documents regarding Dedi Mulyadi's leadership model.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture-Based Leadership

Culture-based leadership is an approach to leadership that places values, symbols, traditions, social norms, and collective identities as an important part of the process of influencing society and organizations. In the perspective of organizational culture, leaders not only direct the behavior of subordinates, but also shape the meanings, values, and work patterns that are shared by the organization's members (Schein, 2010). Therefore, culture-based leadership cannot be separated from the leader's ability to read social contexts, produce symbols, and build legitimacy through values that live in society.

In the context of local government, culture-based leadership has relevance because local communities not only interact with the state through formal procedures, but also through cultural perceptions of authority, caring, closeness, and justice. Leaders who are able to articulate local values can gain stronger social legitimacy than leaders who rely solely on administrative authority. This legitimacy is important because public compliance with public policy often depends not only on formal rules, but also on public perceptions of the justice, trust, and moral closeness of leaders (Tyler, 2006).

Symbolic and Transformational Leadership

Culture-based leadership has a closeness to symbolic leadership. Symbolic leadership emphasizes the leader's ability to create meaning through symbols, language, public actions, rituals, and representations of collective identity. In government, symbols are not only aesthetic, but can be used to build social closeness, strengthen regional identity, and affirm policy orientation. When leaders use local cultural symbols, the message sent to the community is that the government understands the identity and values that live in the community.

In addition, culture-based leadership also has a relationship with transformational leadership. Bass and Riggio (2006) explain that transformational leadership works through ideal influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual attention. In the context of public service, transformational leaders not only manage bureaucracy, but also drive changes in the behavior of the apparatus to be more responsive to society. When transformational leadership is combined with local cultural values, then bureaucratic change can gain a stronger moral and social impetus.

However, symbolic and transformational leadership needs to be criticized so that it does not stop at the leader's personal image. Cultural symbols must be translated into a clear, measurable, and accountable system of service. Therefore, culture-based leadership must be judged not only by the symbols used, but also by its impact on the quality of public services, complaint management, public access, and increased public trust.

Public Service and Service Quality

Public services are activities to meet the needs of the community for goods, services, and administrative services provided by public service providers. From the perspective of public administration, public services are not only oriented towards bureaucratic efficiency, but also on the values of justice, accountability, openness, and community satisfaction. Denhardt and Denhardt (2015) through the concept of New Public Service emphasize that the government should serve citizens, not just control or treat the public as service consumers.

The quality of public services can be analyzed through several indicators, including reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and physical evidence as developed in the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman et al., 1988). In public service, the dimensions of responsiveness and empathy are very important because society needs certainty, speed, and humane treatment. Good public service is not only completed administratively, but also provides a sense of appreciation, security, and trust to the community.

Public Trust, Participation, and Social Capital

Public trust is the main capital in the administration of government. A trusted government will find it easier to obtain public support in the implementation of policies. On the contrary, low public trust can cause resistance, non-compliance, and social distancing between the government and citizens. Putnam (1993) explained that social capital, including trust and participation networks, can strengthen the effectiveness of public institutions.

In the context of public services, public trust can be built through consistency of actions, information disclosure, speed of response, and closeness of the government to citizens. When people feel that their complaints are heard and acted upon, the relationship between the government and the community becomes more participatory. This participation is important because public services cannot only be done top-down. The government needs information from the public so that policies and services are in accordance with the real needs of citizens.

Sound Governance

Sound governance is a governance paradigm that emphasizes healthy, robust, adaptive, innovative, ethical, and contextual governance. Farazmand (2004) explains that sound governance goes beyond the good governance approach because it not only emphasizes efficiency, transparency, and accountability, but also pays attention to global, local, institutional, values, structure, processes, and adaptive capacity of governance. In this framework, governance is not only measured by administrative compliance, but also by the government's ability to adjust to the social needs of the community.

In the context of local government, sound governance is relevant because local governments deal directly with social, cultural, economic, and geographical diversity. Local governments need to have the capacity to combine positive law, administrative innovation, and local wisdom. This is in line with the idea that effective public services must pay attention to the context of society, not simply copy a uniform administrative model.

METHODOLOGY

This article uses a qualitative-descriptive approach with a conceptual case study method. The case study was chosen because this article focuses on Dedi Mulyadi's leadership model in the context of public service and governance in West Java Province. A qualitative approach is used to understand the meaning, values, symbols, interaction patterns, and implications of culture-based leadership on public services.

Data collection techniques are carried out through document studies and literature studies. Document studies are used to identify the main concepts, problem formulations, indicators, and conceptual models contained in the study materials. Literature studies are used to strengthen theoretical arguments and compare the findings of the document with relevant public administration theories.

The data analysis technique uses thematic content analysis. The analysis step is carried out through three stages. First, data reduction is carried out by selecting information that is relevant to the theme of culture-based leadership and public service. Second, the data is categorized into main themes, namely the symbolic dimension, the value dimension, the social dimension, public trust, community participation, sound governance, and excellent service. Third, conceptual interpretation is carried out by linking the results of document review with academic literature.

The limitation of this article is that the results of the study are conceptual and based on secondary data. Therefore, this article has not quantitatively measured the impact of culture-based leadership on the community satisfaction index, the performance of regional apparatus organizations, or the achievement of public service indicators. Further research can strengthen this article through interviews, observations, community surveys, media analysis, and data on the performance of public services in West Java Province.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that culture-based leadership in West Java public services can be explained through three main dimensions, namely the symbolic dimension, the value dimension, and the social dimension. These three dimensions form a leadership pattern that relies not only on formal authority, but also on socio-cultural legitimacy. In the context of Dedi Mulyadi, the symbolic dimension is seen through the use of Sundanese cultural identity, local symbols, regional languages, and visual representations that affirm the closeness to the people of West Java.

The symbolic dimension serves as a means of political-administrative communication. Cultural symbols can shorten the psychological distance between leaders and society. When leaders display symbols that are close to citizens' identities, people can sense that the government does not stand far apart as a formal institution, but is present as part of a social community. In public service, this symbolic closeness is important because it can increase the initial trust of the public in the government.

The second dimension is the value dimension. The value of mutual honing, mutual love, and mutual nurture can be positioned as basic ethics in public service. Mutual training reflects the spirit of mutual education and capacity building; Mutual compassion reflects care and empathy; whereas mutual nurture reflects a responsibility to guide and protect. If this value is internalized into the bureaucracy, then the apparatus not only works based on procedures, but also based on a humane service orientation.

The third dimension is the social dimension. This dimension can be seen through the pattern of direct interaction with the community, field supervision, horizontal communication, and rapid resolution of residents' problems. In the study document, this pattern is referred to as a practical transformation of governance through horizontal communication channels, on-the-spot supervision, and rapid resolution of poverty and health problems (Firmansyah, 2026). This social dimension shows that public services are not enough to just wait for residents to come to the service office, but require an active presence of the government in the community.

Subsequent findings suggest that culture-based leadership has a close relationship with public trust. Public trust is formed when people see consistency between the symbols, values, and actions of leaders. If cultural symbols are only displayed ceremonially without the impact of service, then social legitimacy will be weakened. Conversely, if cultural symbols are followed by responsive policies, then public trust can increase.

The results of the study also show that public trust has the potential to encourage public participation. In the context of West Java, the value of mutual cooperation can be social capital in regional development and public services. The community is no longer only positioned as service recipients, but also as government partners in solving public problems. This is in line with the principle of sound governance that places citizens as collaborative actors in governance.

In terms of public services, culture-based leadership contributes to three main aspects, namely responsiveness, accessibility, and participation. Responsiveness can be seen from the encouragement to resolve residents' complaints more quickly. Accessibility can be seen from the opening of informal communication spaces between the community and leaders. Participation can be seen from the increasing involvement of residents in social activities and regional development. These three aspects are relevant to public service indicators that demand speed, convenience, openness, and accountability.

Based on these findings, this article formulates a conceptual model in which culture-based leadership operates through a sequential process involving local cultural values, cultural leadership, public trust, community participation, sound governance, and excellent public services. This model shows that quality public service is not only determined by regulations and procedures, but also by the strength of values, social legitimacy, and the ability of leaders to build direct relationships with society.

The results of the study show that culture-based leadership can be an important approach in regional public service reform. The findings regarding the symbolic dimension are in line with Schein's (2010) view that leaders have an

important role in shaping organizational culture through basic values, symbols, and assumptions that are internalized into organizational behavior. In the context of West Java, Sundanese cultural symbols can strengthen collective identity and build closeness between the government and society. However, the symbol must be translated into service practices so that it does not cease to be a visual representation.

The value dimension in the cultural leadership model also strengthens the concept of public service put forward by Denhardt and Denhardt (2015). Good public services must place citizens as the main subject, not just customers or policy objects. The value of mutual honing, mutual compassion, and mutual nurture can strengthen service orientation because it contains elements of learning, care, and protection. This value is relevant to the demands of humane public services, especially in the health, education, social, and basic administration sectors.

The social dimension in the form of *blusukan*, horizontal communication, and quick settlement shows closeness to the principle of responsiveness in public services. Parasuraman et al. (1988) place responsiveness and empathy as important parts of service quality. In the context of government, responsiveness means the government's ability to hear complaints, provide certainty, and solve community problems quickly. Leadership that is directly present in the field can accelerate the identification of problems, although it must still be balanced with a strong bureaucratic system so that services do not depend on the leader figure alone.

Findings regarding public trust are also relevant to theories of legitimacy and voluntary compliance. Tyler (2006) explains that people are more likely to be obedient when they view authority as legitimate, fair, and trustworthy. In the context of West Java public services, cultural legitimacy can strengthen trust because the community feels that leaders understand local values and needs. However, this legitimacy must be maintained through accountability, transparency, and consistency of policies.

Community participation that arises from culture-based leadership can be explained through the concept of social capital. Putnam (1993) states that beliefs, norms, and social networks can increase the effectiveness of public institutions. *Gotong Royong* as a local value can be a social capital that strengthens public services, especially when local governments face limited resources. However, community participation should not replace state responsibility. *Gotong royong* should be a collaborative complement, not a reason for the government to reduce service obligations.

In the framework of sound governance, the culture-based leadership model has relevance because it is able to connect the capacity of modern administration with local values. Farazmand (2004) emphasizes that healthy governance must be adaptive to social, cultural, and institutional contexts. Thus, public services in West Java are not enough to adopt national procedural standards, but need to be adjusted to the character of society, geography, and local needs. This is where culture-based leadership can serve as an instrument of policy contextualization.

Nonetheless, there are some critical notes. First, culture-based leadership has the risk of personalizing services if it relies too much on the leader figure. Second, the use of cultural symbols can be counterproductive if it is not followed by systemic bureaucratic reform. Third, public services must still be subject to universal principles such as non-discrimination, equity of access, service standards, and accountability. Therefore, culture-based leadership must be institutionalized through SOPs, strengthening the capacity of apparatus, complaint systems, performance evaluations, and measurable service indicators.

Thus, the main contribution of this study is to place culture not as an administrative ornament, but as a strategic resource in public services. Local culture can strengthen empathy, trust, participation, and legitimacy, while sound governance provides a framework for these values to be translated into adaptive, accountable, and citizen-oriented governance. The integration of the two can produce a public service model that is not only fast and efficient, but also humanistic and rooted in the social identity of the community.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This article concludes that culture-based leadership has strong relevance in strengthening public services in West Java. Dedi Mulyadi's leadership model can be understood as cultural-contextual leadership that operates through symbolic, value-based, and social dimensions. These dimensions help build identity closeness, internalize local ethics into public service orientation, and encourage direct interaction, responsiveness, and faster resolution of public problems.

Culture-based leadership contributes to public service improvement by strengthening public trust, expanding communication access, increasing community participation, and building social legitimacy. From a sound governance perspective, this leadership model can serve as a bridge between local cultural values and modern governance principles. However, it must be institutionalized so that public service reform does not depend solely on personal leadership figures.

Therefore, local governments should integrate cultural values into public service systems through local-wisdom-based standard operating procedures, apparatus training, responsive complaint channels, measurable service performance indicators, and public evaluation mechanisms. In this way, culture-based leadership can become a foundation for public services that are fast, humane, accountable, inclusive, and equitable, while also serving as a pathway toward sound governance in West Java.

FURTHER STUDY

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, this research is limited to a conceptual and descriptive analysis of culture-based leadership in strengthening public services in West Java, so it has not yet empirically measured the direct impact of this leadership model on bureaucratic performance, citizen satisfaction, public trust, or the quality of public service delivery. Second, the study focuses on cultural leadership, local values, symbolic leadership, public trust, community participation, and sound governance, but it has not deeply examined sectoral public service performance such as health

services, education services, social assistance, infrastructure services, administrative services, or digital complaint-handling systems. Therefore, further research is recommended to use an empirical approach through interviews, surveys, field observations, public service performance data, and policy document analysis involving local government officials, public service providers, community members, civil society organizations, academics, and media actors. Future studies may also develop and test an integrated culture-based leadership model to evaluate its effectiveness in improving responsiveness, accountability, transparency, community participation, public trust, service accessibility, and the overall quality of public services in West Java.

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