

## KEPEMIMPINAN DIGITAL SEBAGAI KUNCI TRANSFORMASI LAYANAN DI ORGANISASI SEKTOR PUBLIK

### *DIGITAL LEADERSHIP AS THE KEY TO SERVICE TRANSFORMATION IN PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS*

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#### ABSTRACT

*The rapid development of digital technology requires public sector organizations to transform their services to become more efficient, transparent, and citizen-oriented. This study aims to analyze the role of digital leadership in driving service transformation within public sector organizations in Indonesia. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving selected informants using purposive sampling. The findings reveal that digital leadership significantly influences service transformation through the development of a clear digital vision, the strengthening of organizational culture and human resource capabilities, and the promotion of innovation in service delivery, leading to improved efficiency, accessibility, and transparency of public services. However, this study is limited by its qualitative design with a relatively small number of informants, its focus on leadership perspectives, and the lack of in-depth analysis of regional disparities in infrastructure. Future research is recommended to use quantitative or mixed methods, incorporate citizen perspectives, and explore the role of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data in enhancing digital leadership and public service innovation.*

**Keywords:** digital leadership, service transformation, public sector, e-government, organizational innovation

#### ABSTRAK

Perkembangan pesat teknologi digital menuntut organisasi sektor publik untuk mentransformasi layanan agar lebih efisien, transparan, dan berorientasi pada masyarakat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran kepemimpinan digital dalam mendorong transformasi layanan pada organisasi sektor publik di Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan analisis dokumen terhadap informan yang dipilih secara purposive. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan digital berperan signifikan dalam transformasi layanan melalui pengembangan visi digital yang jelas, penguatan budaya organisasi dan kapasitas sumber daya manusia, serta inovasi dalam penyelenggaraan layanan, yang berdampak pada peningkatan efisiensi, aksesibilitas, dan transparansi layanan publik. Namun, penelitian ini memiliki keterbatasan pada jumlah informan yang terbatas, fokus pada perspektif kepemimpinan, serta belum mendalamnya analisis terkait disparitas infrastruktur antar wilayah. Penelitian selanjutnya disarankan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif atau metode campuran, mengintegrasikan perspektif masyarakat sebagai pengguna layanan, serta mengeksplorasi peran teknologi baru seperti kecerdasan buatan dan big data dalam memperkuat kepemimpinan digital dan inovasi layanan publik.

**Kata Kunci:** kepemimpinan digital, transformasi layanan, sektor publik, e-government, inovasi organisasi

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has significantly transformed how organizations operate, particularly within the public sector. Governments worldwide are increasingly adopting digital innovations to improve service delivery, enhance transparency, and increase citizen satisfaction (Al Sayegh et al., 2023; Pollifroni et al., 2025; Risal & Sulaiman, 2023). In this context, digital leadership plays a critical role in guiding organizations through digital transformation processes by fostering innovation, strategic alignment, and adaptive organizational culture (Fasnacht, 2024; Laukka et al., 2022; Papademetriou et al., 2026). Digital leadership is not only about adopting new technologies but also about reshaping governance, decision-making, and service models to meet the evolving needs of society.

In Indonesia, the push toward digital transformation in the public sector has been reinforced through initiatives such as the implementation of e-government and the *Sistem Pemerintahan Berbasis Elektronik* (SPBE). Despite these efforts, many public institutions still face significant challenges, including limited digital competencies among leaders, resistance to organizational change, inadequate infrastructure, and fragmented digital systems (de Araujo et al., 2021; Ruel et al., 2020; Wuersch et al., 2024) and how digital capability development and training are embedded. We use a conceptual approach to integrate literature from the fields of digital transformation, digital internal communication, and digital human resource capability development. The findings reveal that an organisational system's technical (channels and platforms, and policy. These issues often result in suboptimal public services, characterized by inefficiency, lack of integration, and low responsiveness to citizen needs. Consequently, the role of

leadership becomes crucial in ensuring that digital transformation efforts are effectively implemented and sustained.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of leadership in digital transformation; however, much of the existing literature focuses on the private sector or developed countries. Research specifically examining digital leadership within the Indonesian public sector remains limited, particularly in relation to its direct impact on service transformation and public value creation (Kampilong et al., 2025) and its sustainability challenge is especially acute in emerging regions where digital connectivity and supply chains remain fragmented. To uncover actionable levers for change, this study surveyed 60 medium-sized contractors in Eastern Indonesia and complemented the survey with follow-up interviews. To explore how leadership practices, organizational culture, and technology use are related through the application of partial least squares structural equation modeling. Findings highlight Sustainable Leadership Innovation Capability (SLIC. This gap indicates the need for a more context-specific understanding of how digital leadership can address structural and cultural challenges in Indonesia's public organizations.

This study emphasizes the integration of digital leadership and public service transformation within the Indonesian context, highlighting how leadership capabilities influence the effectiveness of digital initiatives in improving service delivery. By linking leadership perspectives with digital governance practices, this research aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of transformation in developing countries.

The urgency of this research is driven by the increasing demand for fast, transparent, and citizen-centric public services in the digital era. Without strong digital leadership, investments in technology may fail to deliver

meaningful outcomes. Therefore, identifying the role and impact of digital leadership is essential for accelerating public sector reform and ensuring sustainable digital transformation in Indonesia.

Based on the above discussion, the objective of this study is to analyze the role of digital leadership in driving service transformation within public sector organizations in Indonesia.

## METHOD

### Research Design and Approach

This study employs a **qualitative research design** with a **descriptive approach** to explore the role of digital leadership in supporting service transformation within public sector organizations in Indonesia. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate as it allows for an in-depth understanding of complex social phenomena, particularly leadership practices and organizational transformation processes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This study focuses on capturing perspectives, experiences, and strategies of leaders in implementing digital transformation in public services.

### Research Procedure

The research procedure consists of several stages. First, a preliminary study was conducted through a literature review to identify key concepts related to digital leadership and public service transformation. Second, data were collected through **in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis** involving key informants such as public sector leaders, managers, and staff involved in digital initiatives. Informants were selected using **purposive sampling**, which enables the researcher to choose participants who have relevant knowledge and experience related to the research topic (Creswell, W. John & Creswell, 2018; Creswell, 2013).

Third, the data collection process was carried out systematically by preparing interview guidelines, conducting interviews, recording responses, and organizing relevant documents. Finally, data validation was ensured through **triangulation of sources and methods**, which helps enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings (Creswell, W. John & Creswell, 2018).

### Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study follows an **interactive model**, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). In the data reduction stage, raw data obtained from interviews and documents were selected, simplified, and categorized based on relevant themes such as leadership practices, digital strategies, and service outcomes.

Next, the data were presented in a structured form to facilitate interpretation and pattern identification. In the final stage, conclusions were drawn by linking empirical findings with existing theories of digital leadership and public sector transformation. The analysis process was conducted continuously and iteratively to ensure the accuracy and consistency of interpretations.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The findings of this study indicate that digital leadership plays a significant role in driving service transformation within public sector organizations in Indonesia. Based on the data collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis, three main themes emerged: digital vision and strategy, organizational culture and capability, and innovation in public service delivery.

First, digital leaders demonstrate the ability to formulate and communicate a clear digital vision aligned with organizational goals. Leaders who actively promote digital

transformation tend to encourage the adoption of technology-based systems such as e-government platforms and integrated service applications. This finding supports the view that leadership is a critical factor in shaping digital transformation strategies (Kane et al., 2019).

Second, the study reveals that organizational culture and human resource capability are key determinants of successful transformation. Public organizations led by digitally competent leaders tend to foster a culture of innovation, collaboration, and adaptability. However, several challenges remain, including limited digital skills among employees and resistance to change, which hinder the effectiveness of transformation efforts. This aligns with previous studies highlighting the importance of digital competence and change management in the public sector (Mergel et al., 2019).

Third, digital leadership contributes to the improvement of public service delivery through innovation. Respondents reported increased efficiency, faster service processes, and improved accessibility for citizens as a result of digital initiatives. For example, the implementation of online service systems reduces bureaucratic delays and enhances transparency. Nevertheless, issues such as system integration and infrastructure limitations continue to affect service quality in some regions.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of this study confirm that digital leadership is a crucial enabler of public service transformation in Indonesia. Leaders who possess digital awareness and strategic capability are better able to navigate organizational change and leverage technology to improve service outcomes. This finding is consistent with the concept of digital leadership as a driver of organizational agility

and innovation (Cortellazzo et al., 2019).

Furthermore, this study highlights that digital transformation in the public sector is not solely a technological issue but also a leadership and organizational challenge. The effectiveness of digital initiatives depends on how leaders manage human resources, organizational culture, and stakeholder engagement. This supports the argument that successful digital transformation requires a holistic approach that integrates technology, people, and processes (Vial, 2019).

In the Indonesian context, structural and cultural barriers remain significant. Bureaucratic rigidity, uneven digital infrastructure, and disparities in human resource capacity across regions present ongoing challenges. Therefore, digital leadership must also involve the ability to manage change, build capacity, and promote collaboration across organizational boundaries.

Additionally, the findings suggest that strengthening digital leadership competencies should become a strategic priority for public sector reform. Training programs, policy support, and institutional frameworks are needed to enhance leadership capacity in driving digital transformation. Without such efforts, the potential benefits of digitalization may not be fully realized.

Overall, this study demonstrates that digital leadership is a key factor in achieving effective, efficient, and citizen-centered public services in Indonesia. By addressing both technological and organizational dimensions, digital leadership can accelerate the transformation of public sector services in the digital era.

This study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the research adopts a qualitative approach with a limited number of informants, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to all public sector organizations in Indonesia. Second, the study focuses primarily on leadership perspectives, which may not fully capture the

experiences of all stakeholders, particularly citizens as service users. Third, variations in digital infrastructure and institutional capacity across regions were not examined in depth, which could influence the effectiveness of digital leadership and service transformation.

This study contributes to the development of knowledge in the field of public administration and digital governance by emphasizing the role of digital leadership as a key driver of service transformation in the public sector. It extends existing leadership and digital transformation theories by integrating them within the context of developing countries, particularly Indonesia. Furthermore, this study provides a contextual understanding of how leadership influences organizational culture, innovation, and service outcomes in the digital era, thereby enriching the discourse on public sector transformation.

From a practical perspective, this study offers insights for policymakers and public sector leaders in designing and implementing effective digital transformation strategies. The findings highlight the importance of strengthening digital leadership competencies, fostering an adaptive organizational culture, and improving human resource capabilities. In addition, this study suggests that government institutions should prioritize leadership development programs, enhance digital infrastructure, and promote inter-agency collaboration to ensure successful service transformation.

Future research is recommended to expand the scope of this study by employing quantitative or mixed-method approaches to examine the relationship between digital leadership and service performance more broadly. Further studies could also explore comparative analyses across regions or countries to identify best practices in digital leadership. In addition, incorporating citizen perspectives would provide a more comprehensive evaluation of public service

transformation outcomes. Finally, future research may investigate the role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and big data, in strengthening digital leadership and public sector innovation.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that digital leadership plays a pivotal role in driving service transformation within public sector organizations in Indonesia by shaping strategic direction, fostering an adaptive organizational culture, and promoting innovation in service delivery. Effective digital leaders are able to align technological initiatives with organizational goals, enhance human resource capabilities, and overcome structural and cultural barriers that often hinder transformation efforts. Despite existing challenges such as limited digital competencies, infrastructure disparities, and resistance to change, strong digital leadership can significantly improve the efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness of public services. Therefore, strengthening digital leadership capacity is essential for accelerating sustainable public sector reform and achieving citizen-centered service delivery in the digital era.

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