

Exploring Emotional Intelligence and Leadership In Government: A Literature Review and Conceptual Analysis

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Emotional intelligence Leadership Government Integrity, Organizational effectiveness.	Leadership in government requires skills not only in technical and rational aspects, but also in managing complex emotional and social dynamics. Emotional intelligence is one of the key factors determining leadership effectiveness, because it plays a role in building communication, managing conflict, and strengthening employee trust and motivation. This study aims to conceptually analyze the role of emotional intelligence in shaping leadership effectiveness in government environments, by reviewing relevant empirical research. The results of the review indicate that emotional intelligence has a significant influence on employee performance, affective commitment, moral behavior, and innovation. The discussion highlights the five main dimensions of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-control, empathy, motivation, and social skills that contribute to ethical decision-making and the creation of a harmonious work climate. Furthermore, the integration of emotional intelligence in leadership has been shown to strengthen integrity and minimize the potential for bureaucratic conflict. In conclusion, emotional intelligence is not only a personal ability, but also a strategic competency necessary to realize government leadership that is adaptive, has integrity, and is oriented towards humanistic public service.

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership in government is a key element determining the success of state governance. Government leaders are required not only to possess intellectual and administrative skills, but also to possess a strong emotional capacity to understand and manage complex socio-political dynamics.(Purwanda, 2024)In the context of modern bureaucracy, a leader's success is no longer solely measured by technocratic abilities, but also by interpersonal skills in building trust and maintaining emotional stability.(Wahab, 2020). Therefore, emotional intelligence is a fundamental aspect that differentiates effective leaders from leaders who only carry out structural functions.(Faridh et al., 2024).

The shifting paradigm of government, increasingly oriented toward public service, demands that leaders possess a high level of empathy and social sensitivity. Emotional intelligence helps leaders understand community needs and develop appropriate responses to multidimensional public issues.(Ningtias et al., 2024)In the digital era and openness of

information, government leaders are required to be able to balance policy rationality and emotional maturity.(Alla et al., 2025)Leaders with high emotional intelligence can manage conflict and build effective communication amidst political and bureaucratic pressure.(Fitri, 2020).

In addition, political and bureaucratic dynamics often create high psychological pressure which demands that leaders are able to control themselves in making important decisions.(Anshari, 2021). In conditions like this, emotional intelligence functions as a mechanism to maintain objectivity and composure in the face of public criticism.(Yanto & Yanti, 2023)Leaders with high levels of emotional intelligence are able to maintain focus under pressure, ensuring that decisions remain oriented toward the public interest (Zikri, 2022).

In the Indonesian government bureaucracy, the issue of leadership quality often becomes a major focus due to the weak integration between technical and emotional abilities.(Darlita, 2019)The phenomenon of low discipline and weak coordination between agencies shows that the role of emotional aspects in bureaucratic leadership is not yet optimal.(Alfianda & Wahyulina, 2023)This condition has an impact on reducing the effectiveness of organizational communication and the work motivation of civil servants.(Mukarrama, 2022).

Emotional intelligence not only influences leadership style but also determines a leader's ability to create a harmonious and productive work culture (Parigi et al., 2022). Leaders with high empathy tend to be better able to strengthen collaboration and increase employee commitment to the organization's vision (Fitriadi & Nugraha, 2022). In a government context, this means strengthening public trust and creating a bureaucracy that is humanistic and responsive to public needs (Garnita, 2021).

On the other hand, classical leadership theories emphasizing rationality are considered inadequate to explain the effectiveness of leaders in the modern era of governance (Parawitha & Gorda, 2017). New approaches emphasizing emotional and social aspects are crucial for developing adaptive and transformational leadership (Pasek & Pasek, 2023). The concept of transformational leadership places emotional intelligence at the heart of a leader's ability to inspire and drive bureaucratic change (Husnan, 2019).

Furthermore, emotional intelligence is the foundation for building integrity and ethics in public leadership (Taufik et al., 2021). Leaders with high self-control and empathy tend to more consistently apply moral values and avoid corrupt behavior (Mulya, 2025). In the context of bureaucratic reform in Indonesia, high emotional intelligence supports the creation of a culture of integrity, accountability, and public service oriented towards public welfare (Solehah et al., 2023). Thus, discussions on emotional intelligence are not only psychologically important but also have practical implications for improving the quality of leadership and overall governance.

Research conducted by(Triyono & Tjahjono, 2023)showed that emotional intelligence significantly influenced the affective commitment of employees within the Directorate General of Customs and Excise. This finding confirms that a leader's ability to recognize and manage emotions not only influences interpersonal relationships but also increases

employee loyalty and engagement with the organization. Meanwhile, (Widodo and Suhana (2024) found that emotional intelligence and transformational leadership simultaneously increased innovative work behavior among civil servants, particularly when mediated by psychological empowerment. Both studies demonstrate that emotional intelligence is a crucial element in creating a positive work climate in the government sector.

Next, research Rasnawati et al. (2024) demonstrated that emotional intelligence and transformational leadership have a direct impact on employee motivation and performance at the South Konawe Regional Revenue Agency. These findings suggest that leaders with high emotional intelligence are able to boost subordinates' work enthusiasm through effective emotional management. On the other hand, (Hasibuan et al., 2022) found that emotional intelligence, organizational climate, and moral behavior jointly improved the performance of civil servants at the North Sumatra Forestry Service. These results underscore the importance of synergy between emotional and moral factors in creating public leadership with integrity and productivity.

Although various previous studies have demonstrated the positive influence of emotional intelligence on the performance and work behavior of government officials, most studies still focus on quantitatively examining the relationships between variables without delving deeply into the conceptual meaning of emotional intelligence in bureaucratic leadership practices. This research gap indicates the need for a more comprehensive literature review to understand how emotional intelligence plays a role as an ethical and social foundation in government leadership. Therefore, this study aims to conceptually analyze the role and implications of emotional intelligence in shaping effective, humanistic, and integrity-based government leadership. The benefits of this study are expected to provide a theoretical foundation for the development of emotional intelligence-based leadership competencies and serve as a reference for further empirical research in the context of bureaucratic reform in Indonesia. (2018)

METHODS

This Research Methods section is designed for the study "Exploring Emotional Intelligence and Leadership in Government: A Literature Review and Conceptual Analysis". Research Design

This research applies a qualitative-descriptive approach with a systematic literature study design and conceptual analysis. The main objective of this method is to identify, collect, and analyze various empirical findings and theories related to emotional intelligence and leadership practices in government environments through a review of primary and secondary scientific sources. Research Procedures and Stages Literature Study Stage: The researcher conducted a search and review of literature from scientific journals, books, dissertations, and relevant research documents (indexed by Scopus, SINTA, or other international databases) for the period 2015–2025 that discuss emotional intelligence, bureaucratic leadership, and their relationship in the government sector. Selection and Synthesis: The selected literature was screened based on inclusion criteria such as topic relevance, source validity, and contribution to theory development. Synthesis was conducted using thematic coding techniques

in accordance with the development of emotional intelligence models and public leadership theories. Conceptual Analysis: The analysis was conducted by mapping key concepts, comparing different approaches in previous research, and identifying research gaps and the potential for integrating emotional intelligence into government leadership practices. Evaluation and Validation Instruments

The instruments used included a literature analysis checklist, a concept mapping matrix, and a conceptual framework systematically compiled based on secondary data. Validation was conducted through source triangulation and peer review of the synthesis results to ensure the validity of the arguments and the relevance of the study findings. Data Analysis Techniques

The data was analyzed qualitatively using content analysis, thematic analysis, and meta-synthesis techniques, ensuring that the conclusions drawn from the literature review accurately reflect the current understanding of emotional intelligence and government leadership. The analysis results are presented in the form of a narrative synthesis, a visual conceptual framework, and recommendations for further research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of a review of ten empirical studies relevant to the topic of emotional intelligence and leadership in the government context. These ten studies were selected based on their relevance to the themes of public leadership, civil service performance, and the relationship between emotional aspects and the effectiveness of public sector organizations. All studies reviewed ranged from 2016 to 2025 and used both quantitative and mixed-method approaches, providing a comprehensive overview of how emotional intelligence plays a role in shaping the behavior, motivation, and performance of leaders and employees in government bureaucracies.

Table 1. List of Previous Research

No	Title	Author and Year	Research result
1	<i>The Effect of Emotional Intelligence on Public Sector Employee's Affective Commitment</i>	(Triyono & Tjahjono, 2023)	EI has a positive effect on the affective commitment of employees at the Directorate General of Customs and Excise; PSM mediates the effect of EI → affective commitment. (UMY Journal)
2	<i>The Role of Transformational Leadership and Emotional Intelligence to Increase Innovative Work Behavior with Psychological Empowerment as Mediating Variable</i>	(Ari Widodo, nd2024)	Among Pekalongan Regency Government civil servants, EI and transformational leadership increase innovative work behavior, partly mediated by psychological empowerment. (YRPI Journal)
3	<i>Involving employee performance in the influence of emotional intelligence and transformational leadership on employee motivation at</i>	(Rasnawati et al., 2024),	At the South Konawe Regional Revenue Agency (Bapenda), EI and transformational leadership improved per-

	<i>the South Konawe Revenue Agency</i>		formance; EI also improved motivation; and performance mediated the effect on motivation. (Riset Press)
4	<i>The Impact of Emotional Intelligence, Organizational Climate, and Moral Behavior on the Performance of State Civil Services at the Forestry Service of North Sumatra, Medan City</i>	(Hasibuan et al., 2022)	At the North Sumatra Forestry Service (ASN), EI, organizational climate, and moral behavior have a significant positive effect on performance; combined $R^2 \approx 0.743$.
5	<i>The influence of emotional intelligence on employee's performance: A case from Romania's public sector</i>	(Sabie, Pîrvu, Burcea, Brişcariu, & Apostol (Voicu)2025),	In Romanian public sector organizations, EI was significantly related to employee performance (Pearson's $r \approx 0.321$). (ramp.ase.ro)
6	<i>Emotional Intelligence and Service Quality of Facilitators' Indonesia Human Resources Development Agency (HRDA)</i>	(Pintor & Budiyantri, 2021)	At the Central Sulawesi Government Training Institute, the EI dimension (especially social awareness) of facilitators increases the perception of the quality of training services.
7	<i>Workload, Emotional Intelligence, and Leadership Style: Their Contribution to Performance (DLHK Kupang City)</i>	(Kore, Bunga, & Lani, 2025)	At the Kupang City Environmental Agency (DLHK), workload, EI, and leadership style simultaneously explained $\approx 70\%$ of the variation in performance; EI contributed positively. (journal.pdmbengkulu.org)
8	<i>Leadership Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal Communication on Job Satisfaction (Dept. of Education & Culture, West Kalimantan Province)</i>	(Oktafiani & Chiar, 2019)	Leadership EI and interpersonal communication have a positive influence on job satisfaction among provincial education office employees. (Journal of STKIP Singkawang)
9	<i>Law Enforcement Officers' Ability to Recognize Emotions: The Role of Personality Traits and Basic Needs' Satisfaction</i>	Dirzyte, Antanaitis, & Patapas, 2022	In 154 law enforcement officers, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and relatedness needs predicted better emotion recognition. (MDPI)
10	<i>Emotional Intelligence and Toxic Leadership in Police Departments</i>	(Sorensen, 2023)	Empirical studies show a correlation between leaders' EI and subordinates' perceived toxic leadership behaviors in police departments. (scholarworks.waldenu.edu)

Based on the review of these ten studies, it appears that emotional intelligence plays a consistent role in improving the quality of leadership and the performance of government officials. The majority of studies indicate that leaders with high emotional intelligence are able to create a more harmonious work environment, increase motivation, and strengthen employee commitment and innovation. Furthermore, empirical findings also indicate that

emotional intelligence is closely related to a leader's ability to maintain integrity, build trust, and manage conflict in public organizations. Thus, emotional intelligence can be understood as a strategic factor supporting the realization of effective, ethical, and service-oriented government leadership.

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Shaping Leadership Effectiveness in Government Environments

The effectiveness of leadership in government is determined not only by managerial skills and technical mastery, but also by the leader's capacity to understand and manage emotions, both their own and those of others. Emotional intelligence (EI) plays a crucial role in creating the balance between policy rationality and the social sensitivity required in the context of public bureaucracy. Leaders with high levels of emotional intelligence tend to be able to empathize with the situations of their subordinates, provide moral support, and maintain emotional stability in the face of political and administrative pressure. According to (Goleman (1995), Leadership effectiveness is inextricably linked to a leader's ability to recognize their own emotions and use them to positively guide their actions. In the context of government, this ability is particularly relevant because leaders often face complex situations that require quick decisions while remaining grounded in human judgment.

Study (Triyono & Tjahjono, 2023) strengthens this view by showing that emotional intelligence has a significant influence on employee affective commitment at the Directorate General of Customs and Excise. This finding illustrates that leaders with high emotional abilities can create a conducive work environment and foster organizational loyalty. Similar results were also found by (Hasibuan et al., 2022) which identified a positive relationship between emotional intelligence, organizational climate, and moral behavior on the performance of employees at the North Sumatra Forestry Service. These two studies confirm that leadership effectiveness is measured not only by administrative achievements but also by the leader's ability to build positive and ethical interpersonal relationships. Thus, emotional intelligence is a key foundation for government leaders to manage organizations effectively and orientate themselves toward human values.

Furthermore, the research results (Rasnawati et al., 2024) showed that emotional intelligence and transformational leadership significantly influenced employee motivation and performance at the South Konawe Regional Revenue Agency. Leaders who are able to understand the feelings and needs of their subordinates can foster stronger intrinsic motivation, thereby improving organizational performance. This aligns with the findings of the study (Widodo and Suhana (2024) which states that emotional intelligence is a driving factor in innovative work behavior for civil servants when combined with a transformational leadership style. Both studies demonstrate that leaders with high emotional intelligence not only act as policy makers but also as change agents capable of inspiring employees to develop and innovate. Thus, emotional intelligence serves as a catalyst in creating leadership that adapts to the challenges of modern bureaucracy.

In addition to impacting motivation and performance, emotional intelligence has also been shown to improve the quality of interpersonal relationships within public organizations.

Research by Patiro and (Budiyanti (2021) found that the social awareness dimension of emotional intelligence influenced the quality of training facilitators' services at the Government Human Resource Development Institute. This suggests that leaders who are sensitive to social dynamics are better able to create a harmonious work environment and improve the quality of public services. Similarly, (Sabie et al., 2020) In the context of the Romanian public sector, a positive correlation was found between emotional intelligence and employee performance, indicating that effective emotional management is a prerequisite for productive leadership. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of government leadership is determined not only by structural authority but also by the extent to which leaders can manage the emotional dimension in carrying out their social and moral functions as public servants.

Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence that Contribute to a Leader's Ability to Manage Public Organizations

Emotional intelligence essentially consists of several interrelated main dimensions that contribute to leadership effectiveness, especially in the context of complex governance and social dynamics. According to (Goleman (1998), Emotional intelligence encompasses five core components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. In public organizations, each of these dimensions plays a distinct yet complementary role in shaping the character of an effective leader. Leaders with high self-awareness are able to understand their own strengths and weaknesses, thus allowing them to be more objective in making decisions. Meanwhile, self-control helps leaders remain calm in the face of bureaucratic pressure, and empathy enables them to understand the needs of their subordinates and the communities they serve. Thus, mastering the dimensions of emotional intelligence is an important foundation for leaders in managing public organizations ethically and efficiently.

Study (Hasibuan et al., 2022) The results confirmed that the dimensions of self-control and empathy significantly influence the moral behavior of civil servants, which in turn positively impacts organizational performance. These results indicate that a leader's ability to control emotions and understand the feelings of others is crucial in building a healthy and integrated organizational culture. Similarly, research (Oktafiani (2019) Research at the West Kalimantan Provincial Education and Culture Office found that leaders' emotional intelligence, particularly in interpersonal communication, plays a significant role in increasing employee job satisfaction. Leaders with strong social skills can create open interactions, build mutual trust, and strengthen collaboration within an organization. Both studies confirm that successful public leadership depends not only on technical skills but also on the ability to manage the emotional dimensions that influence interpersonal relationships in the workplace.

Furthermore, the dimensions of motivation and self-awareness also play a significant role in maintaining the consistency and direction of government leadership. (Rasnawati et al. (2024) shows that leaders with high levels of emotional motivation are able to transmit positive enthusiasm to their subordinates, thereby improving overall organizational performance.

In a different context, (Riwu Kore et al., 2025) identified that emotional intelligence significantly contributes to employee performance at the Kupang City Environmental and Sanitation Agency, along with workload and leadership style. These results demonstrate that the intrinsic motivation dimension of emotional intelligence drives leaders to work consistently and orientate themselves toward public service goals. Leaders with strong self-awareness are also more open to feedback and change, ultimately enhancing the organization's capacity to adapt to the demands of a constantly evolving bureaucratic environment.

In addition, the social skills dimension of emotional intelligence is key to building effective communication and collaborative relationships between employees. (Pintor & Budi-yanti, 2021) Research shows that social awareness and social skills influence the quality of facilitator services in government training institutions. Leaders with strong social skills can create a supportive and participatory work climate, where every member of the organization feels valued and involved. This is in line with research Widodo and Suhana (2024) which emphasizes that leaders with high emotional intelligence are able to motivate their subordinates through persuasive and inspiring communication. Thus, mastering the dimensions of emotional intelligence not only enhances a leader's ability to manage public organizations but also strengthens the collective trust and commitment that are the foundation of successful modern governance.

The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Integrity, and the Performance of Government Leaders

Emotional intelligence is closely linked to the integrity and performance of a government leader. Integrity reflects not only personal morality but also the ability to maintain consistency between values, words, and actions. Leaders with high emotional intelligence tend to be better able to understand the emotional impact of every decision they make, thus they are more cautious in their actions and avoid behavior that is detrimental to the public interest (Zulkarnain & Salito, 2025). Emotional intelligence helps leaders maintain stability when facing political and bureaucratic pressures, as well as public criticism. With self-awareness and good emotional control, leaders are able to maintain ethics, honesty, and responsibility as tangible manifestations of integrity. In the context of government, this means that emotional intelligence serves as the psychological foundation for sustainable leadership integrity.

Study (Hasibuan et al., 2022) shows that emotional intelligence has a significant influence on the moral behavior of civil servants, which directly impacts the performance of public organizations. This finding indicates that the ability to understand and manage emotions not only impacts social relationships but also ethical and responsible decision-making. Similarly, (Sabie et al., 2020) In the context of the Romanian public sector, emotional intelligence was found to be positively correlated with employee performance. This means that leaders with high emotional intelligence are better able to create an honest, open, and productive work environment. Both studies reinforce the view that the integrity and performance of government leaders are inseparable from emotional intelligence, an internal mechanism that guides professional and moral behavior.

In addition, research (Dirzyte et al., 2022) provides additional evidence that emotion recognition skills are closely related to the ethical behavior of law enforcement officers. Individuals with better emotion recognition skills demonstrate a higher tendency to act based on moral values and satisfy basic needs such as social connectedness. This is relevant to the context of government leadership, where leaders are often faced with ethical dilemmas in making public decisions. With a high level of emotional intelligence, a leader can weigh decisions not only from the perspective of policy rationality, but also from the perspective of humanity and morality. In the long term, this ability helps create an image of leadership with integrity, trustworthiness, and a focus on public service. Thus, emotional intelligence not only shapes social competence but also strengthens the ethical foundation of leadership behavior.

The correlation between emotional intelligence, integrity, and performance is also evident in research. (Rasnawati et al., 2024) And (Kore et al. (2025), who found that leaders with high emotional intelligence tend to have a more positive and productive leadership style. Such leaders are able to motivate their subordinates through a humane and empathetic approach, rather than simply through authority. This has an impact on improving organizational performance because subordinates feel valued and have a sense of responsibility for their work. Furthermore, emotional intelligence also plays a role in maintaining a leader's credibility in the public eye. Leaders who are able to control negative emotions such as anger, frustration, or personal ambition will more easily maintain integrity and public trust. Therefore, emotional intelligence can be seen as a bridge connecting moral aspects (integrity) with functional aspects (performance), making it a strategic factor in building effective and dignified government leadership.

Challenges and Opportunities for Applying Emotional Intelligence in Bureaucratic Leadership Practices in Indonesia

The application of emotional intelligence in bureaucratic leadership in Indonesia faces quite complex structural and cultural challenges. The bureaucratic system, which remains hierarchical and rigid, often limits the emotional expression of leaders and their subordinates. A work culture that tends to be formalistic can hinder open communication, even though social skills and empathy are essential components of emotional intelligence. Public sector leaders are often trapped in a procedural and administrative orientation, resulting in a lack of attention to the emotional aspects of leadership. According to (Goleman (2001), Effective leadership is not only the result of intellectual intelligence, but also the ability to manage interpersonal relationships emotionally. In the context of Indonesian bureaucracy, the biggest challenge is how to balance compliance with regulations with the need for more humanistic, socially-oriented leadership.

Study (Widodo and Suhana (2024) Research shows that leaders with high emotional intelligence tend to develop a transformational leadership style that can inspire subordinates to innovate and adapt to change. However, in bureaucratic practice, innovation is often hampered by resistance to change and a reliance on traditional, power-oriented leadership patterns. Another challenge arises from the lack of training and soft skills development for civil servants, which leads to low awareness of the importance of emotional intelligence in the

workplace. Research (Rasnawati et al., 2024) also highlighted that although emotional intelligence has a positive effect on employee motivation and performance, its implementation is still limited due to less supportive work environments. In line with this, research by Zama et al. (2025) found that digital leadership does not have a direct effect on public sector employee performance, but has a significant indirect effect through organizational learning, dynamic capabilities, and digital capabilities. These findings indicate that leadership effectiveness in the digital government era is determined not only by technical capabilities, but also by the leader's emotional and social capacity to build a culture of learning and organizational adaptation.

In addition to structural and cultural challenges, individual factors also pose obstacles to the application of emotional intelligence in government. Many bureaucratic leaders lack the strong self-awareness to evaluate their own emotions and behavior. Research (Hasibuan et al., 2022) emphasizes that a leader's integrity and moral behavior are greatly influenced by emotional intelligence, but leaders who fail to control their emotions are prone to making reactive and non-objective decisions. On the other hand, (Dirzyte et al., 2022) Research shows that the ability to recognize emotions is positively correlated with social need satisfaction and ethical behavior. These findings suggest that emotional development training focused on self-awareness and empathy could be a long-term solution for improving the quality of public leadership. If applied consistently, emotional intelligence can be instrumental in building a more inclusive, collaborative, and service-oriented organizational culture.

Despite facing various obstacles, the application of emotional intelligence in bureaucracy also opens up significant opportunities for creating more effective and integrated government leadership. (Kore et al. (2025) And (Sorensen (2023) indicates that emotional intelligence significantly contributes to employee performance, especially when combined with a participatory leadership style. Leaders who are able to build healthy emotional relationships with their subordinates can create a work environment full of trust and motivation. A similar finding was also seen in research by Patiro and Budiyanti (2021) which found that social awareness and social skills can improve the quality of public services through empathetic interactions between facilitators and training participants. With increased awareness of the importance of emotional aspects in leadership, the Indonesian bureaucracy has the opportunity to transform into a public organization that is not only efficient but also oriented toward humanity and service. Therefore, the application of emotional intelligence should be viewed not as an add-on, but as the core of modern government leadership reform.

CONCLUSION

Emotional intelligence is a crucial foundation for developing effective, integrity-driven, and service-oriented government leadership. A review of various empirical studies has concluded that leaders with high levels of emotional intelligence are better able to understand themselves, manage their emotions, and build harmonious social relationships within the bureaucracy. Key dimensions such as self-awareness, self-control, empathy, motivation, and social skills play a significant role in enhancing employee motivation,

innovation, and performance. Emotional intelligence has also been shown to strengthen leadership integrity and reduce reactive behavior in the face of structural and political pressures. Although its application in the Indonesian bureaucracy still faces cultural and structural challenges, developing emotional intelligence offers significant opportunities for realizing humanistic, adaptive leadership that is capable of building public trust. Therefore, strengthening emotional intelligence is not merely a personal need for leaders, but a strategic strategy for strengthening competitive and ethical governance.

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