



Exploring Leadership Roles and Performance Dynamics in Regional Public Financial Institutions

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Received: 19/01/2026, Revised: 08/02/2026, Approved: 09/02/2026

Abstract

This study explores how organizational leadership contributes to improving employee performance in a local government financial management institution in Indonesia. The research specifically investigates the influence of the agency head's leadership on the performance of civil servants at the Regional Financial and Revenue Management Agency (BPKPD) of Wajo Regency. In public sector organizations, employee performance is a key factor affecting service quality, organizational effectiveness, and public accountability. Nevertheless, performance improvement in local government institutions is often constrained by leadership limitations, low employee motivation, and structural challenges. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of leadership practices and their implications for employee performance. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and document reviews involving the agency head, structural officials, staff members, and community representatives. The analysis examines leadership roles encompassing directive, participative, and delegative functions, alongside performance indicators such as work quality, work quantity, timeliness, efficiency, and teamwork. The findings indicate that the agency head plays an important role in enhancing employee performance through clear guidance, effective communication, inclusive decision-making, and role-model leadership. Performance is further supported by employee development initiatives, recognition, and open communication, while inconsistent discipline, limited trust, and insufficient empathy emerge as key constraints. Overall, the study demonstrates that effective leadership is essential for strengthening employee performance and organizational effectiveness in local public financial management institutions.

Keywords: Leadership Role, Employee Performance, Public Sector Management, Local Government, Financial Management Agency.

INTRODUCTION

Public sector organizations play a pivotal role in delivering public services, managing public resources, and ensuring accountability to citizens. The effectiveness of these organizations is largely determined by the performance of their employees, particularly in institutions responsible for public financial management. Unlike private organizations, public sector institutions operate within rigid bureaucratic structures, formal regulations, and political oversight, which often constrain managerial

flexibility and performance improvement initiatives (Rainey, 2021; Van Wart & Dicke, 2021). In this context, leadership emerges as a critical factor influencing employee behavior, motivation, and performance outcomes.

Recent public administration literature increasingly recognizes leadership as a strategic mechanism for enhancing public sector performance. Effective leadership is expected to provide direction, motivate employees, foster collaboration, and align individual performance with organizational goals (Vogel & Masal, 2021; Kim & Park, 2022). Contemporary leadership theories emphasize that public leaders must go beyond administrative control and adopt participatory, delegative, and developmental roles to address complex organizational challenges (Orazi et al., 2022). However, despite these theoretical advancements, many public sector organizations continue to experience performance gaps, particularly at the local government level.

Public sector reform initiatives across countries have placed strong emphasis on performance management, accountability, and transparency. These reforms often assume that leadership capacity at the organizational level will translate into improved employee performance and service quality (Kroll & Vogel, 2023). Nevertheless, empirical evidence suggests that leadership practices in public organizations frequently remain hierarchical and compliance-oriented, limiting their ability to stimulate motivation, innovation, and high performance among employees (Belle & Cantarelli, 2021; Moynihan et al., 2021). As a result, ideal leadership expectations are not always realized in daily organizational practices.

In the context of local government, leadership challenges are even more pronounced. Local public organizations often operate with limited resources, high administrative workloads, and increasing demands for accountability from both higher levels of government and the public. Agencies responsible for financial and revenue management face particular pressure due to their central role in managing public funds, ensuring fiscal discipline, and supporting development programs (Prabowo et al., 2020). Employee performance in these institutions directly affects financial accuracy, service timeliness, and public trust. Despite this importance, leadership dynamics within local public financial institutions remain underexplored in empirical research.

Existing studies on leadership and employee performance in the public sector have predominantly adopted quantitative approaches, focusing on statistical relationships between leadership styles and performance indicators (Kim & Park, 2022; Wright et al., 2012). While these studies provide valuable generalizable findings, they often overlook the contextual and process-oriented aspects of leadership as it is enacted in everyday organizational life. Scholars have therefore called for more qualitative and context-sensitive research that captures how leadership roles are performed in practice and how they influence employee performance within specific institutional settings (Crosby & Bryson, 2020; Van Loon et al., 2018).

Another limitation in the existing literature lies in the conceptualization of leadership. Many studies emphasize leadership styles or personal traits, whereas leadership in public organizations is closely linked to formal roles, authority structures, and institutional responsibilities. Agency heads are expected to perform multiple leadership roles, including providing direction, delegating authority, encouraging participation, and ensuring accountability (Jacobsen & Andersen, 2017; Orazi et al., 2022). Understanding how these leadership roles are enacted and how they shape employee performance indicators—such as work quality, quantity, timeliness, efficiency, and teamwork—remains insufficiently addressed, particularly in local government contexts.

Moreover, employee performance in public organizations is influenced not only by leadership practices but also by supporting and inhibiting organizational factors. Supportive factors such as employee development, recognition, trust, and effective communication have been shown to enhance motivation and performance (Perry et al., 2022; Fernández & Moldogaziev, 2020). Conversely, inhibiting factors including inconsistent discipline, limited empathy, and weak trust relationships can undermine performance sustainability and organizational commitment (Salas-Vallina et al., 2021). Examining these factors alongside leadership roles is essential for developing a more comprehensive understanding of performance dynamics in the public sector.

Against this backdrop, this study addresses a significant gap between normative leadership expectations and actual leadership practices within a local government financial management institution



in Indonesia. Indonesia's decentralized governance system grants substantial authority to local governments, increasing the responsibility of regional agencies in managing public finances and delivering accountable services (Prabowo et al., 2020). However, variations in leadership capacity at the local level create uneven performance outcomes across regions. By focusing on a Regional Financial and Revenue Management Agency at the regency level, this study provides empirical insights from a context that remains underrepresented in international public administration literature.

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to explore how leadership roles performed by the agency head influence employee performance. Through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis, the research captures leadership practices as they occur in daily organizational activities. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of leadership-performance dynamics that cannot be fully explained through quantitative indicators alone (Creswell & Poth, 2021; Tracy, 2020).

The contribution of this study is threefold. First, it enriches public administration theory by advancing a role-based perspective of leadership that emphasizes how formal leadership roles are enacted in practice within local government institutions. Second, it provides empirical evidence on the relationship between leadership roles and employee performance in a public financial management context. Third, it offers practical insights for public sector leaders and policymakers seeking to improve employee performance through adaptive, participatory, and empathetic leadership practices.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore how leadership roles influence employee performance within a local government financial management institution. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of leadership practices, organizational dynamics, and employee perceptions within their real-life context. Qualitative descriptive research is particularly appropriate for public administration studies that aim to capture managerial processes and institutional realities rather than to test causal relationships statistically (Creswell & Poth, 2021; Tracy, 2020). This design enabled the researcher to examine leadership roles as they are enacted in everyday organizational activities.

Research Site and Context

The research was conducted at a Regional Financial and Revenue Management Agency at the regency level in Indonesia. This institution was selected purposively due to its strategic role in managing public finances, ensuring fiscal accountability, and delivering financial services to the public. Agencies responsible for financial and revenue management face high performance demands because errors or delays directly affect public trust and governance outcomes (Prabowo et al., 2020). The selected agency represents a typical local government organization operating within a decentralized governance system, making it a relevant case for examining leadership and employee performance in the public sector.

Participants and Sampling Technique

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that informants possessed relevant knowledge and experience related to leadership practices and employee performance within the organization. The informants included the head of the agency, structural officials, division heads, administrative staff, and representatives of the community who had interacted directly with the agency's services. Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research to obtain rich, information-dense data from individuals who are directly involved in the phenomenon under study (Palinkas et al., 2020). Data collection continued until information saturation was achieved, indicated by the repetition of themes and the absence of new insights.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected over a three-month period using three complementary techniques: in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. This triangulation of data sources was applied to enhance the credibility and robustness of the findings (Nowell et al., 2021).



1. In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to capture participants' perceptions and experiences regarding leadership roles and employee performance. An interview guide was developed to explore leadership practices such as direction-setting, delegation, participation, communication, and supervision, as well as performance dimensions including work quality, work quantity, timeliness, efficiency, and teamwork. The semi-structured format allowed flexibility to probe emerging issues while maintaining consistency across interviews (Tracy, 2020). All interviews were conducted with informed consent, audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim.

2. Direct Observation

Direct observation was used to examine leadership practices and employee interactions in their natural organizational setting. Observations focused on daily work routines, coordination among units, communication patterns, and the enactment of leadership roles during meetings and service delivery activities. Observational data are valuable in qualitative public administration research because they provide insights into behaviors and organizational culture that may not be fully articulated in interviews (Guest et al., 2023).

3. Document Analysis

Document analysis was conducted to complement interview and observation data. Relevant documents included organizational structures, performance reports, internal regulations, job descriptions, and official policy documents. Document analysis helped clarify formal leadership responsibilities, performance expectations, and institutional frameworks that shape leadership practices (Bowen, 2021).

Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis followed an iterative and inductive thematic analysis process. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were read repeatedly to achieve data familiarization. Initial codes were then generated to identify meaningful units related to leadership roles, employee performance indicators, and supporting and inhibiting factors. These codes were subsequently organized into broader themes through constant comparison across data sources. Thematic analysis was selected because it allows systematic identification and interpretation of patterns while remaining sensitive to contextual nuances (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Throughout the analysis, leadership roles were examined from a role-based perspective, focusing on how directive, participative, and delegative roles were enacted in practice. Employee performance was analyzed using indicators commonly applied in public sector performance studies, including work quality, quantity, timeliness, efficiency, and teamwork (Kim & Park, 2022). The analysis process was iterative, with themes continuously refined to ensure analytical coherence and rigor.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed. Credibility was strengthened through data triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents. Prolonged engagement in the research setting allowed the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the organizational context. Dependability and confirmability were addressed by maintaining detailed research notes and an audit trail documenting research procedures and analytical decisions. Transferability was supported by providing rich descriptions of the research context and participants, enabling readers to assess the applicability of the findings to similar public sector settings (Nowell et al., 2021).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by removing identifying information from interview transcripts and research reports. Ethical research practices are essential in public sector studies to protect participants and to maintain the integrity of the research process (Tracy, 2020).



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the empirical findings of the study regarding the role of leadership in influencing employee performance within a Regional Financial and Revenue Management Agency. The results are derived from in-depth interviews, direct observations, and document analysis. To ensure clarity and coherence, the findings are organized into three main subsections: leadership roles performed by the agency head, employee performance outcomes, and supporting and inhibiting factors affecting performance.

Leadership Roles Performed by the Agency Head

The findings indicate that the agency head performs multiple leadership roles that significantly shape employee performance. These roles are reflected in directive, participative, and delegative leadership functions commonly identified in public sector leadership studies (Orazi et al., 2022; Vogel & Masal, 2021). Leadership is exercised not only through formal authority but also through daily interactions, supervision, and communication with employees.

1. Directive Leadership

Directive leadership was evident in the provision of clear instructions, performance monitoring, and regular supervision. The agency head consistently communicated work targets, deadlines, and procedural standards to employees. Observational data confirmed that the leader frequently visited work units to monitor task progress and address operational issues. Such practices ensured clarity of expectations and reduced task ambiguity, particularly in units responsible for financial reporting and revenue administration.

2. Participative Leadership

Participative leadership emerged through employee involvement in discussions and decision-making processes. Informants reported that employees were invited to provide input during coordination meetings, especially when tasks required cross-unit collaboration. This participatory approach contributed to a sense of responsibility and collective ownership of organizational outcomes, which is a common feature of effective public sector leadership practices (Jacobsen & Salomonsen, 2020).

3. Delegative Leadership

Delegation was implemented by assigning tasks based on employees' competencies and functional expertise. Division heads and staff members reported receiving autonomy to complete tasks within defined responsibilities. Document analysis of job descriptions and work plans confirmed that delegation was formally structured, enabling efficient task distribution and workload management. Delegative leadership facilitated faster task completion and supported operational efficiency in routine financial management activities.

Employee Performance Outcomes

Employee performance was assessed using five key indicators: work quality, work quantity, timeliness, efficiency, and teamwork. These indicators are widely applied in public sector performance assessment frameworks (Kim & Park, 2022). The findings indicate that employee performance was generally positive, with variations across performance dimensions.

1. Work Quality

The results show that employees demonstrated high work quality. Tasks related to budgeting, financial reporting, and revenue administration were completed accurately and in accordance with established procedures. Performance reports and internal evaluation documents indicated minimal errors and high compliance with technical standards. Interviews with supervisors confirmed that performance quality was regularly monitored through periodic evaluations.

2. Work Quantity

In terms of work quantity, employees were able to meet expected output targets. Informants reported that assigned tasks were generally completed within designated workloads. Observations indicated that task allocation was evenly distributed across units, preventing



excessive workload concentration. This finding reflects effective task delegation and coordination within the organization.

3. Timeliness

Timeliness emerged as a relative weakness compared to other performance indicators. While most tasks were completed within required deadlines, inconsistencies were observed in employee punctuality, particularly regarding arrival times and attendance discipline. Observational data revealed variations in time discipline across units, although these inconsistencies did not significantly disrupt overall task completion.

4. Efficiency

Employee efficiency was found to be relatively high. Employees utilized available resources, including time and administrative support, effectively to complete assigned tasks. Coordination among units minimized duplication of work, and clear division of responsibilities supported efficient workflow. These findings were supported by internal documents indicating stable output levels despite limited organizational resources.

5. Teamwork

Teamwork was identified as one of the strongest performance dimensions. Employees across different units demonstrated strong cooperation, particularly in completing complex or time-sensitive tasks. Interviews revealed that inter-unit coordination and mutual assistance were common practices, contributing to smooth task execution and service delivery.

Table 1 summarizes the observed employee performance outcomes.

Table 1. Employee Performance Outcomes

Performance Indicator	Empirical Findings	Overall Assessment
Work quality	Tasks completed accurately and according to standards	High
Work quantity	Most assignments completed within required targets	High
Timeliness	Inconsistent punctuality and time discipline	Moderate
Efficiency	Resources and time generally used effectively	High
Teamwork	Strong coordination and collaboration among units	High

Source: Research Results, 2025.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors Affecting Employee Performance

The findings also identified several factors that supported or hindered employee performance. These factors influenced how leadership roles translated into actual performance outcomes.

1. Supporting Factors

Supporting factors included employee development opportunities, recognition, and effective communication. Informants reported that training activities and informal mentoring enhanced employee competence. Recognition, both formal and informal, reinforced positive performance behaviors and encouraged task completion. Clear communication from leadership facilitated coordination and reduced misunderstandings, particularly in financial reporting processes.

2. Inhibiting Factors

Inhibiting factors included inconsistent enforcement of time discipline, limited trust in certain work situations, and insufficient empathy during periods of high workload. Some employees perceived that personal constraints were not always adequately considered, which occasionally affected motivation. These inhibiting factors did not negate overall performance achievements but indicated areas requiring leadership attention to ensure performance sustainability.



Overall, the results demonstrate that leadership roles performed by the agency head significantly influence employee performance outcomes. While most performance dimensions showed positive results, persistent issues related to timeliness and relational factors highlight areas for further improvement within the organization.

Discussion

This study examined how leadership roles performed by the agency head influence employee performance within a local government financial management institution. The findings confirm that leadership plays a central role in shaping employee behavior, work outcomes, and organizational climate. This discussion interprets the empirical results by linking them to existing public sector leadership and performance literature, while highlighting the gap between ideal leadership expectations and actual practices at the local government level.

Leadership Roles and Their Influence on Employee Performance

The findings indicate that the agency head performs directive, participative, and delegative leadership roles in an adaptive manner. This supports the growing consensus in public administration literature that effective public leadership is not defined by a single leadership style but by the ability to perform multiple roles in response to organizational needs and contextual constraints (Vogel & Masal, 2021; Orazi et al., 2022). Directive leadership, manifested through clear instructions and regular supervision, contributed significantly to maintaining work quality and performance consistency.

This finding aligns with Kroll and Vogel (2023), who argue that clarity of direction remains essential in bureaucratic environments characterized by procedural complexity. One informant explicitly emphasized the importance of clear leadership direction:

“As a leader, I always give clear instructions and regularly monitor each division so that employees understand what must be done and how to do it.” (Head of Agency)

Such statements demonstrate how directive leadership helps reduce ambiguity and ensures compliance with technical and administrative standards, which is particularly critical in public financial management institutions (Kim & Park, 2022; Rainey, 2021).

Participative leadership emerged as another key dimension influencing employee performance, particularly teamwork and coordination. Employees reported being involved in discussions and problem-solving processes, which enhanced their sense of responsibility and ownership. This finding supports previous studies suggesting that participatory leadership strengthens employee engagement and intrinsic motivation in public organizations (Jacobsen & Salomonsen, 2020; Perry et al., 2022). As one structural official stated:

“When important tasks arise, we are invited to discuss solutions together. This makes us feel trusted and responsible for the results.” (Structural Official)

Such participatory practices are consistent with integrative leadership perspectives, which emphasize collaboration and shared problem-solving as key mechanisms for improving public sector performance (Crosby & Bryson, 2020).

Delegative leadership was found to positively influence efficiency and work quantity. Tasks were assigned based on employee competence, allowing work to be completed more effectively. This finding supports earlier research indicating that delegation enhances employee capability and managerial efficiency when supported by adequate supervision (Vogel & Masal, 2021; Fernández & Moldogaziev, 2020). A division head explained:

“The leader delegates work according to our expertise, so tasks can be completed faster and with better quality.” (Head of Division)



This reinforces the argument that delegation in public organizations functions not only as a workload management tool but also as a capacity-building mechanism (Jacobsen & Andersen, 2017).

Employee Performance Dimensions: Strengths and Limitations

The results indicate that work quality, work quantity, efficiency, and teamwork were generally high, while timeliness remained a relative weakness. High work quality reflects the effectiveness of leadership supervision and performance monitoring mechanisms. This finding supports Kim and Park (2022), who highlight the importance of leadership feedback and performance clarity in sustaining high-quality public sector outputs.

Similarly, the achievement of work quantity targets suggests that task distribution and coordination were effectively managed. This aligns with Andrews et al. (2021), who argue that performance management systems are most effective when supported by leadership practices that balance control and support.

However, timeliness and punctuality emerged as persistent challenges. Despite overall task completion, inconsistencies in attendance discipline indicate a gap between formal performance standards and actual practices. This finding mirrors previous studies in Indonesian local governments, which identify weak enforcement of discipline as a common issue affecting public sector performance (Prabowo et al., 2020). One informant acknowledged this limitation:

“Some employees are disciplined, but others still arrive late. This is something that needs improvement.” (Human Resources Officer)

From a leadership perspective, this suggests that directive authority alone is insufficient to ensure time discipline. Leaders must also reinforce norms through consistent enforcement and role modeling, as emphasized by Van Wart and Dicke (2021).

Teamwork emerged as one of the strongest performance dimensions. Employees frequently assisted one another, particularly in handling complex or time-sensitive tasks. This finding supports research emphasizing that inclusive and communicative leadership fosters a collaborative organizational climate (Orazi et al., 2022; Belle & Cantarelli, 2021). As one informant noted:

“When one unit faces difficulties, other units help so that the work can still be completed.” (Administrative Staff)

Such collaborative behavior reflects the presence of a supportive organizational culture shaped by leadership practices.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Leadership–Performance Dynamics

Beyond leadership roles, the study identified several supporting and inhibiting factors influencing employee performance. Supporting factors included employee development, recognition, and effective communication. These findings are consistent with Perry et al. (2022), who emphasize that public employees respond positively to leadership practices that recognize their contributions and support professional growth.

Conversely, inhibiting factors such as limited trust, insufficient empathy, and inconsistent discipline highlight relational weaknesses in leadership practices. These findings support Salas-Vallina et al. (2021), who argue that ethical and empathetic leadership is essential for sustaining employee commitment and well-being. One employee expressed this concern:

“Sometimes personal conditions are not fully understood, especially during high workloads.” (Staff Member)

This indicates that while leadership practices were generally effective, greater attention to emotional and relational aspects of leadership is needed to ensure long-term performance sustainability (Van Loon et al., 2018; Tracy, 2020).



Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings reinforce the relevance of a role-based leadership perspective in public administration research. Rather than focusing solely on leadership styles, this study demonstrates how leadership roles—directive, participative, and delegative—are enacted in practice and interact with organizational conditions (Orazi et al., 2022; Yukl, 2020). This supports recent calls for more context-sensitive and practice-oriented leadership studies (Riccucci, 2020).

Practically, the study suggests that leaders of local government financial institutions should strengthen participatory and developmental leadership practices while addressing weaknesses in discipline and trust-building. Leadership development programs should incorporate not only technical competencies but also emotional intelligence and ethical leadership skills (Salas-Vallina et al., 2021; Zahra & Wright, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This study examined the role of leadership in shaping employee performance within a local government financial management institution, focusing on how leadership roles are enacted in practice. The findings underscore that leadership in the public sector functions not merely as an administrative mechanism but as a strategic instrument that influences organizational direction, work culture, and performance sustainability. Leadership effectiveness in public financial institutions depends on the leader's capacity to balance formal authority with relational and developmental roles.

The study contributes to public administration literature by reinforcing a role-based perspective of leadership. Rather than emphasizing leadership styles or individual traits, this research highlights how leadership roles—embedded in formal positions and institutional responsibilities—shape employee performance dynamics. This perspective is particularly relevant for local government organizations operating within bureaucratic and resource-constrained environments, where leadership discretion is limited but leadership influence remains critical.

By focusing on a local government financial management agency in Indonesia, this study provides empirical insights from a context that is underrepresented in international public administration research. The findings demonstrate that leadership practices at the organizational level can mitigate structural constraints and support performance improvement, even within rigid administrative systems. This reinforces the importance of context-sensitive leadership approaches in decentralized governance settings.

Overall, the study confirms that effective leadership is central to enhancing public sector performance and strengthening institutional accountability. Leadership that integrates clarity of direction, employee involvement, and responsible delegation can support sustainable performance outcomes and improve organizational effectiveness. These conclusions highlight the need for continuous leadership development and institutional support to ensure that public organizations can respond effectively to increasing demands for transparency, efficiency, and quality public service delivery.

Recommendation

Based on the conclusions of this study, several recommendations are proposed to strengthen leadership effectiveness and employee performance in local government financial management institutions. First, public sector leaders should further institutionalize participatory leadership practices by systematically involving employees in decision-making processes related to planning, evaluation, and problem-solving. This approach can enhance employee ownership, commitment, and accountability within bureaucratic organizations.

Second, leadership development programs for public officials should place greater emphasis on relational and emotional competencies, including communication skills, trust-building, and empathy. While technical and administrative skills remain essential, leadership effectiveness in the public sector



increasingly depends on the ability to manage human dynamics and sustain employee motivation under high workload and regulatory pressures.

Third, local government institutions should strengthen internal performance governance by aligning leadership practices with clear performance expectations and consistent enforcement mechanisms. Establishing transparent standards for discipline and accountability can help reduce performance inconsistencies and reinforce professional norms within public organizations.

Fourth, policymakers at the regional and national levels should support leadership capacity-building initiatives through continuous training, mentoring, and performance-based leadership evaluation systems. Such institutional support can help ensure that leadership roles are performed effectively and consistently across local government agencies.

Fifth, future research is encouraged to expand this study by employing comparative or mixed-method approaches across multiple regions and organizational contexts. This would enhance the generalizability of findings and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of leadership-performance dynamics in public sector organizations, particularly in developing country settings.

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