



## IMPLICATIONS OF DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL BACKGROUNDS ON REGIONAL HEAD LEADERSHIP MODELS

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### Abstract

The success of local development depends on a leadership that is able to transform and collaborate with society in order to optimize its potential. In practice, success programs often do not continue due to regional heads change. Differences in vision or political backgrounds could disrupt the leadership transfer process and policy sustainability. Banjarbaru city can be an example of how leadership transitions from regional head with a bureaucrat background to regional head with a politician background. This research aims to understand the implications of differences in political background on the leadership models used by regional heads. Qualitative methods are used in this research, with regional heads as the research object. The results of the study found that differences in political backgrounds do not necessarily mean that the leadership models used are completely different. The model is more influenced by situational conditions in the region. Thus, it can be concluded that political background becomes social capital that can support the achievement of political interests and provide color to the leadership model they choose.

**Keywords:** *Politics; Leadership; Local Government, Regional Head*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The direct election of regional heads by the people as an effort to bring policy closer to the people is a hope for the future of democracy in Indonesia, so that leaders are born who are closer to the people and able to provide better benefits in solving public problems (Said, 2008); (Andriansyah, 2015). The leader's adjacency to the voters is a necessity as well as legitimacy in this kind of electoral system, where the background of the regional head candidate must be known by the public, as well as an introduction to the programs that will be implemented. On the other hand, this adjacency is expected to indicate the candidate's understanding of the existing development problems, therefore problems solving can be better. In the Indonesian political system, a citizen has right to be elected as regional head through political party and individual ways. The individual way can be understood as a constitutional right and also a way out for citizens to participate in regional heads election, but have difficulty using the way provided by political parties. Those difficulties can be related to the pattern of party cadre or the idealism of candidates who are reluctant to deal with transactional politics (Sulaiman, 2013).

Studies also show that individual mechanism in regional elections is an antithesis in order to suppress the dominance of money politics (Misra, et al., 2021). It is generally known that every candidate promoted by a political party requires large amounts of funding for the winning team (Mietzner, 2015), campaign (Fahmi, Amsari, Azheri, & Kabullah, 2020) (Kabullah, Amsari, Arifin, & Misra, 2020), even surveys (Ufen & Mietzner, 2015). However, individual candidates are not free from shortcomings. Candidates with bureaucratic backgrounds, for example, have concerns about inherent bureaucratic pathology, "business as usual" mindset, or laissez faire leadership model that allows their subordinates to do work without supervision. Despite the irony, leadership is still needed to solve public problems for instance poverty (Bass & Riggio, 2006); (Hicks, 2004). For this reason, creative and innovative efforts are needed, especially when some issues, such limited resources, whether human and natural resources, are accompanied. The emergence of innovation itself is still dependent on the figure of the leader. Besides that, innovation does not occur without creativity, thus leaders must be the first to promote it (Kremer, Villamor, & Aguinis, 2018).

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Regional leaders have an important role in making these breakthroughs. Foremost, in the era of autonomy, regions are expected to develop independently. Ironically, based on National Development Planning Agency records, regional leadership is actually one of several things that hinder regional innovation, apart from regulatory and planning issues (Supriyanto, et al., 2017). Observation results also show that rent seeking behavior among decision makers still dominates compared to reform behavior (Sumarto, 2004). Besides, leaders perceptions and preferences influence the problem solving action. The “business as usual” behavior also occurs among public servants. Raising awareness about the concept of innovation and its implications for the public sector is not an easy task (Bason, 2010). Another obstacle to the innovation comes from inconsistency of large range of levels in the bureaucracy with the vision of the leader (Nugroho, 2018). Considering those challenges, there is a need for a regional head who capable to formulate a vision of what innovation is and how it can help. On the other hand, the regional heads often influenced by political mainstream in policy making, thus development planning less sustainable. In many times, changes of regional heads are accompanied by changes of policy. As a result, the regional development often does not solve public problems comprehensively.

In the context of regional head leadership in Indonesia, several regional heads have succeeded in showing good performance, for example, Tri Rismaharini in Surabaya. Her achievements while leading Surabaya were supported by a bureaucratic entrepreneur leadership style that was democratic and had empathy (Tuti & Adawiyah, 2020). In contrast to that, the focus in other studies shows the relationship and positive influence between the regional head's leadership style and the performance of the apparatus. For instance in Pontianak (Wardi, 2019), Tidore Islands (Kadir, 2016), Makassar (Putra, Hamzah, & Sumardi, 2018) and Solo (Dewardari, 2015). These studies found that the regional heads use certain styles such as charismatic, transformational, democratic or participative. There were a few researches on leadership transitions topics for regional heads, especially those that focus on differences in political backgrounds that influence their leadership models. In general, research on regional heads is only limited to one term. No research has been found that specifically discusses the influence of political background on the leadership model used. In fact, this is important to do in order to obtain a more comprehensive data to see the sustainability of a program during different periods. A regional head's program is an instrument to gain public trust. Legitimacy itself is one of the supporting resources for regional head election, beside the candidate's quality and personality (Andriansyah, 2015). Thus, a study of the implications of differences in political background on regional heads' leadership models is important to highlight in this article.

This article present leadership model of two mayors in Banjarbaru, South Kalimantan, as one of regional head leadership transition case in Indonesia. The Mayors serve in 2016-2021 and 2021-2026 periods. In the first period, the Mayor with a background as a bureaucrat, entered the Regional Head Election through individual way. As for the next period (2021-2026), the current Mayor has a strong political background as a member of the People's Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia for the 2009-2014 and 2014-2019 periods. These differences need to be investigated further in relation to their potential influence on leadership and followership styles within Banjarbaru local government, which of course is closely related to the successful development programs. Therefore, this research was conducted to find out the leadership model used by regional heads, especially in relation to the implications and motivations of the regional heads' political background. Banjarbaru city in South Kalimantan, as the research location, is a developing city that has a number of strategic potentials to become a developed city. Banjarbaru acts as a National Activity Center and National Strategic Area. Banjarbaru also functions as the center of provincial government, industry, regional and national trade, national air transportation services, and higher education in South Kalimantan. With its current status as the capital of South Kalimantan, Banjarbaru is also directed as a supporter of new state capital in the in East Kalimantan. With limited natural resources in the city, the main revenue for Banjarbaru comes from taxes. This of course requires regional heads to be creative in improving community welfare. This creative mindset is needed to encourage innovation at the grassroots. It is hoped that through innovation at the grassroots level will be a catalyst for the small businesses that can improve



community welfare. This dynamics of development conditions is one of the considerations for this research locations, besides the leadership transition conditions as mentioned previously. As an academic contribution, the study in this article fills the gap in the literature on regional autonomy studies regarding the transition of leadership styles used by regional heads, especially with different political backgrounds. Before analyzing the issue in detail, we present a theoretical framework regarding the political background and leadership of regional heads.

## THEORETICAL REVIEW

Government is an illustration of how power and politics intersect. Government is a form of exercising state power, while political leadership is an important key to the development process that produces good governance (Möller & Schierenbeck, 2015). In the local context, the government has governance that aims to provide public services and community welfare (Istianto, 2011); (Stewart & Clarke, 1988). Political leadership is one of the most recorded and reported and least understood phenomena in modern politics but is necessary globally to promote peace, democracy and human development within and between countries (Burns, 1977) (Bass & Bass, 2008). The main concepts in leader behavior that determine leadership in political settings include personality traits, leadership style, motivation and pressure tolerance (Ofosu-Anim, 2022). Leadership is an expression of who a person is, so it must develop from the inside out through conscious and subconscious beliefs (Bass & Bass, 2008). As a trait, leadership is defined as certain innate qualities that influence the way a person leads in order for his leadership to be effective (Northouse, 2009); (Northouse, 2021); (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). On the other hand, personality also influences voter legitimacy (Bass & Bass, 2008), due to shared political beliefs, emotional adjacency, religious fanaticism, or extraordinary individual charisma (Yukl, 2013). As for other theories, it is stated that certain traits are not related to the success of leaders or managers (Thoha, 2008); (Samad, 2012), but rather situational dynamics that give an important impression (House & Shamir, 1993).

However, this trait approach provides valuable information regarding the qualities that are good for a leader to have (Northouse, 2021). Thus, leadership is a series of skills and attitudes that are needed and can be learned by leaders. This series of things can come from education, family and environment. This background influences the character in leading. As for regional heads, the influence of the political environment before and while in office certainly influences the leadership model they use. This is what is meant by the political background of a regional head, namely a background condition that shapes the character of the leader, whether in the form of closeness to political parties or other fields. In management literature, leadership and leader behavior has become one of the most researched topics, and many studies examine the certain characteristics and behaviors or leadership styles that lead to successful leadership and positive followership which are an integral part of leadership (Khan, Nawaz, & Khan, 2016) (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009), such as transformational leadership (Jati, 2020). As a comprehensive model, the Full Range Leadership Model (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003) (Bass, 1997) which has had an influence in leadership theory and practice, has become one of the most widely accepted models that can optimize organizational performance (Smith, Matkin, & Fritz, 2004). In this model there are nine factors consisting of five transformational leadership factors, three transactional leadership factors, and one non-transactional laissez-faire leadership as follows: idealized influence (attributes), idealized influence (behaviors), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, contingent reward, management by exception (active), management by exception (passive), laissez-faire. The focus is not only on social and economic exchanges, but on the activities that leaders demonstrate to create follower commitment and expected effectiveness (Antonakis & House, 2014). Thus, this model shows a clear linear correlation between the leader's level of activity and the level of effectiveness achieved by his behavior. In other words, the more active the leader, the more effective his leadership style (Bass, 1997). In addition to these models which describe leadership factors separately, there is an opinion that there is no leadership style that is best for all situations, and environmental variables can determine the most appropriate leadership style (Fiedler, 1964).

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There are three components that tend to influence leadership, namely the leader's personal relationship with its members, the power and authority they are given, and the level of structure that the group has been assigned to carry out. Thus, a person becomes a leader not because of his personality, but because of various situations and leader interactions. Furthermore, the concept of leadership transfer is also important to discuss, considering that it is rare to find a successor who will perform as extraordinary as the charisma of the previous leader, due to the potential for failure in identifying a strong successor, differences in markets, products, traditions and technology (Yukl, 2013). Apart from that, new situations also need to be responded to in new ways, rather than being trapped in old ways (Bass & Bass, 2008). And the choice of strategy is also influenced by the ideology of the leaders and by the nature of the party and regime organization (Mas'ood, 2015).

**2. IMPLEMENTATION METHOD**

The research was conducted in Banjarbaru City, South Kalimantan Province. The selection of research locations in this city was based on considerations of differences in background and conditions between the previous mayor (2016-2021) and the current mayor (2021-2026). This difference in the Mayor's background can be an example of how leadership transitions from a bureaucrat to a politician. The research was conducted in 2022, with data collection through interview techniques. In that year, the government was still determining the status of the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Eventhough the interview is conducted face to face, health protocols are still noticed when conducting the interview. A total of 20 interviews were conducted with local government officials including the Mayor, Head of Service, District Head, Subdistrict Head, Administrator and Supervisory Officials, as well as aides. This selection was carried out with the consideration that the informants were deemed to have sufficient knowledge and experience working under the leadership of a regional head for two terms of office. This is also done in the context of data triangulation which is the main strength of qualitative data analysis, so that the data collected can meet the saturation point in the form of similar perceptions of informants regarding the issues raised. The questions centered on the leadership model of the Mayor of Banjarbaru for the 2016-2021 period and the 2021-2026 period, as well as the differences in the political backgrounds of both Mayors. In the interview stage, the attributes of transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership were also explored in the context of regional head leadership.

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION****Profile of Regional Head**

The research was conducted in Banjarbaru City, South Kalimantan Province, as one of the autonomous regions that is considered the most successful in Indonesia based on the Ministry of Home Affairs' assessment of the implementation of autonomous regional government as a result of the expansion in 1999-2009. Banjarbaru outperformed 34 autonomous regions in Indonesia in that period. As an autonomous region, leadership changes occur through direct regional head elections. Thus, this city can be an example of a regional head leadership transition in Indonesia. Before discussing the leadership model used by regional heads, firstly we will describe the Mayor profile in two different periods. Based on the investigation, it was found that the Mayor in the 2016-2021 period was a regional leader with a bureaucratic background who advanced to the regional head election through the individual route. His bureaucratic career began with positions as Head of Subdistrict. Then he continued with positions related to improving community welfare in 2002. Then he served as District Head from 2010 until 2015. A long journey spanning more than a quarter of a century as a bureaucrat provides various experiences at the subdistrict and district level, thus enabling him to gain support from the community to advance to the regional head election through the individual route. Before entering the world of bureaucracy, he graduated civil service education in 1991. Then he continued his education in social and political sciences. This also confirms his educational background which is closely related to the world of bureaucracy.





During his tenure, he was known by his subordinates as a visionary leader, who often motivated, especially to subdistrict heads, to develop ideas to encourage MSMEs development in the community. In the next period (2021-2026), for the first time Banjarbaru led by a non-bureaucrat regional head. Banjarbaru city, which from the start had experience as an administrative city, was practically managed by bureaucratic regional head. Since the expansion of Banjar Regency in 2000, Banjarbaru has always been led by a bureaucratic regional head for four terms. The Mayor of this period has a strong political background as a member of the People's Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia for the 2009-2014 and 2014-2019 periods. He is also the youngest member in the Council as a representative of the South Kalimantan in the 2009 Legislative Election. Apart from his educational background at the Law Faculty, he also has experience in various youth organizations, such as the South Kalimantan Nahdlatul Ulama Student Association (2006-2008), the South Kalimantan Indonesian Tourism Ambassador Association (2006-2011), the Indonesian Development Young Movement of South Kalimantan (2008-2013), and the Indonesian Young Entrepreneurs Association (HIPMI) South Kalimantan (2008-2013).

### **Regional Head Leadership Model**

Based on the research results, it was found that the leadership model used by both Mayors tended to be situational or adaptive. Based on the interview with a subdistrict head, a supervisor official and an aide, for example, it was found that differences in political backgrounds influenced the way of communicating. It was revealed that there are differences in ways of communicating. The Mayor for the 2016-2021 period is said to have mastered the terrain so he is able to communicate and provide detailed directions to his subordinates. Meanwhile, the Mayor for the 2021-2026 period was able to provide a different perspective. Thus providing enrichment of the bureaucratic perspective so far. Information from several other informants also validates this statement. As informed by another subdistrict head, there are differences in character. The Mayor for the 2016-2021 period has experience as a bureaucrat, a career path initiated at the subdistrict and district levels, so that in terms of leadership he can provide examples and share experiences in the bureaucracy. Meanwhile, the Mayor for the 2021-2026 period in terms of communicating or being a role model is not like the previous Mayor. Based on the results of an interview with the Mayor for the 2021-2026 period, he stated that he always provides freedom of expression for Local Government officials, with limits as long as their main tasks are completed and performance targets are met. Informants emphasized that restrictions that are too tight will only curb employees' freedom of creativity and innovation. Regarding being a role model, he emphasized that it is more important to be in the middle between proving and imaging, especially with a limited working period. Imaging without proof will only reduce the level of public trust. Proof without imagery will reduce accountability to society. So these two things must run continuously.

However, if we look at the leadership model, the elements of transformational leadership in this case have similarities. These elements include the Idealized Influence Attribute element, namely that leaders are expected to be able to express their vision and make their subordinates feel calm in facing crisis situations. Then other elements such as Idealized Influence Behavior, which refers to the leader's actions which are centered on the values, beliefs and ideals instilled in his subordinates so that the subordinates understand and follow them. Other interviews with informants who have been or are currently aides and supervisor officials also provide confirmation that both leaders always communicate and provide motivation and inspiration to subordinates to be creative and enthusiastic about innovation. This shows that other elements in transformational leadership, namely Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration, can be seen in the daily lives of both of them. Furthermore, referring to the definition of transactional leadership which focuses on goals that must be achieved and provides rewards related to performance but does not intervene unless the goals are not met (Bertocci, 2009), this leadership model includes three elements, namely contingent reward, management by exception (active), and management by exception (passive). As for the element of contingent reward, it is almost certain that it exists in the leadership model used by both of regional heads.

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Contingent reward is an agreement between superiors and subordinates regarding what the subordinate must do or be responsible for and what will be the reward from the superior to the subordinate if the subordinate successfully fulfills his duties. In the civil service system, awards are given to officers who excel and punishments to officers who violate the provisions are regulated. Although in practice, especially in the reward system, a regional head can make adjustments in giving rewards outside of those regulated in the system. The Mayor for the 2021-2026 period, in this case expressed the issue of giving awards to excellent performance teachers and the complaint service application admins. However, it seems that this is still limited to some groups of officials (especially the front line of public services), while other groups have not been awarded. Meanwhile, referring to the definition of Contingent Reward, the agreement between superiors and subordinates regarding what will be done can be seen in the performance agreement document which has been agreed in stages down to the lowest level at the beginning of each fiscal year. For another element in transactional leadership, namely Management by Exception, regarding the Mayor's supervision method for the 2021-2026 period, an informant who holds position of head of service stated that, they must first carry out what they are told, if problems are encountered later, then report them. After that, they usually help to find a solution.

This is in line with the results of the interview with the mayor concerned, that the monitoring system is carried out in stages, because it is impossible or very difficult for regional heads to check in detail one by one the work in the field. This shows that the Management by Exception (passive) element is fulfilled, that is, a leader with this type will only reprimand if a subordinate has made a mistake (a mistake has occurred). In this type of leadership, the leader avoids corrective action or disputes with his subordinates as long as mutually agreed goals and objectives are achieved. Meanwhile, based on the results of interviews with a subdistrict head who discussed the Mayor's method for the 2016-2021 period in supervising subordinates, it was found that the elements of Management by Exception (Passive) were also fulfilled, considering that there are leadership eyes and ears in almost all lines of public service in local government. With experience in bureaucracy, when he directs or orders subordinates, in moving the government he understands the ins and outs based on his experience. However, based on the results of interviews with another subdistrict head and mass media searches, it was also found that the elements of Management by Exception (Active) were also fulfilled, considering that in several events such as flood disasters in several areas, both mayors also went to the field to monitor disaster mitigation closely. In this case, the leader participates in the field and carries out very strict supervision of the subordinate's work process and will reprimand directly if the subordinate does not carry out work according to the specified standards, thereby preventing errors from occurring.

Taking this into account, the elements of Management by Exception, both actively and passively, are still carried out by both leaders by paying attention to the level of urgency and priority scale of each activity. Meanwhile, the leadership elements in the Laissez Faire model are not fulfilled in the leadership model used by both mayors, based on data in the field. The character of a leader who allows his subordinates to do their work without any supervision from him as a superior also contradicts the characters that have been stated previously. If we examine the local leadership in Indonesia, regional heads use various models, such as the democratic leadership model used by regional heads for the 2016-2021 period in Solo (Dewandari, 2015), regional heads for the 2008-2018 period in Pontianak (Wardi, 2019), and regional heads in Surabaya (2010-2015 and 2015-2020 periods) (Tuti & Adawiyah, 2020).. Apart from that, there is also a transformational leadership model used by regional heads in Makassar (Putra, Hamzah, & Sumardi, 2018) dan Tidore Islands (Kadir, 2016). However, the leadership model used by the regional head is not limited to just one model. Several other models are also combined, such as participatory, situational and visionary models. This study provide an overview of various leadership models in regional autonomy literature studies, especially regarding the transition of regional heads' leadership styles.



## Political Background and Leadership of Regional Heads

If we look back in the context of regional head leadership in Indonesia, the majority of regional heads have a background as politicians or entrepreneurs. Regional heads with bureaucratic backgrounds are quite rarely heard of. The one most widely known to the public is probably Tri Rismaharini in Surabaya, who is also the first female leader in Indonesia who has been included in the list of the world's best leaders. This study conclude that political background become social capital that can support the achievement of political interests and then influence their leadership model. Based on the results of interviews with several informants regarding the background of the Mayor for the 2021-2026 period as a politician, it is clear that his experience has a positive impact. A good connections with the legislature at the central and regional levels will support the development in Banjarbaru, so that the process of fulfilling needs and services to the community can be more optimal. Meanwhile, the Mayor for the 2016-2021 period who has a bureaucratic background, his leadership style is considered more popular because he has experience at the subdistrict and district level, which then provides color in the policy of developing the people's economy from the lower level. However, the informants understood that although the approach was somewhat different, the goal was still the same, namely the progress of Banjarbaru.

Based on the interviews with a subdistrict head and an administrator official, it was found that differences in political backgrounds, whatever it is, are normal in the regional political constellation. What needs to be observed is that these methods are still carried out with the aim of regional progress. Thus the leadership concept can include several leadership styles, that is considered most appropriate to the particular situation faced. According to (Bass & Bass, 2008), social capital can have different definitions for some people. This may include reputation, entrepreneurship, networks, public-private connections, or may refer to the quality of the human resources it has. Uhl-Bien in (Bass & Bass, 2008) believes that relationship skills are the social capital that organizations need. Awareness of others' needs, mutual obligations, trust, and respect are present in high-quality relationships. Leadership development requires more attention in the future to relationship skills training. In other words, differences in political backgrounds, both as bureaucrats and as politicians, have an advantage to the mayor leadership model.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Sustained development in the region requires the commitment of leaders and is supported by a leadership model that is able to transform and collaborate with elements of society in order to optimize the region potential. The commitment and leadership model in question is influenced, among other things, by the political background of the regional head. The research results show that regional heads with different political backgrounds do not necessarily choose different leadership models. Political background is also useful social capital for the Mayor. Mayor with non-partisan backgrounds, in this case as former bureaucrats, have the advantage of having closer relationships with bureaucratic circles who then become partners and subordinates in running the government, so that the process of conveying direction and communication between lines can be well established. Meanwhile, mayor with partisan backgrounds have more freedom in terms of establishing relationships with external bureaucratic parties. In this case, good relations can be maintained with regional and central legislative parties, even with ministries. This good relationship becomes advantage in providing assistance and support from various parties for the implementation of regional development. As for the leadership model chosen by both regional heads, they tend to use a leadership model that is situational or adaptive to organizational needs, taking into account the achievement of regional goals of course. On the other hand, from this research it can be concluded that the relationship between leadership and political background cannot be separated, because the goal of good will from politics to achieve social welfare requires a leadership model that can adapt to the circumstances.

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