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## COMPARISON IN LEADERSHIP IN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN INDONESIA (TAKING FACULTY MEMBERS' PERSPECTIVES)

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### Abstrak

Leadership in Indonesian universities faces significant challenges due to diverse regulatory frameworks, funding sources, and societal expectations. The research aims to identify the distinct challenges and approaches that university leaders face within the public and private sectors, providing insights into tailored leadership models. The study adopts a qualitative research method, using case studies of five lecturers from both public and private universities in Indonesia. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, supplemented by document analysis of university policies, organizational structures, and academic performance reports. The purposive sampling approach ensures representation of universities from different regions and institutional scales, enabling an in-depth comparison between the leadership practices in public and private universities. The findings indicate that public university leaders often face bureaucratic constraints, while private university leaders prioritize financial stability and competitive positioning. This study concludes that effective leadership in Indonesian universities requires adaptability, innovation, and collaboration.

**Kata Kunci:** leadership, Indonesia, public university, private university

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## INTRODUCTION

Leadership in higher education is critical for shaping institutional performance, fostering innovation, and addressing societal demands. In Indonesia, where public and private universities operate under distinct regulatory frameworks and financial models, leadership challenges are multifaceted. Public universities, governed by state regulations, often face bureaucratic constraints, while private universities must contend with market-driven dynamics, including financial sustainability and competition for resources (Buchori et al., 2017). Understanding these differences is essential to develop leadership strategies that address the unique needs of each sector. This study investigates the leadership practices in Indonesian public and private universities, aiming to identify effective approaches that align with their distinct contexts.

Higher education in Indonesia has experienced significant growth, with increased student enrollments and diverse institutional missions. Despite this expansion, the sector faces pressing challenges, such as disparities in quality, limited resources, and evolving societal expectations (Hill & Wie, 2013). Leadership plays a pivotal role in addressing these challenges by influencing governance, resource allocation, and faculty development. However, public and private universities operate under different paradigms: public institutions are bound by government policies and receive state funding, while private universities rely heavily on tuition fees and donor contributions (Rosser, 2016). These differences necessitate tailored leadership approaches to navigate their respective challenges effectively.

Existing literature highlights the importance of context-specific leadership in higher education. For instance, Bolden et al. (2012) emphasize that effective leadership must consider institutional culture, governance structures, and external pressures. In Indonesia, studies have noted that public university leaders often struggle with bureaucratic hurdles that impede decision-making and innovation (Marzuki & Madya, 2021). Conversely, private university leaders must balance financial stability with the need to attract and retain talented faculty in a competitive market. These contrasting demands underscore the need for comparative research to identify best practices that can enhance leadership effectiveness across sectors.

This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore leadership practices in Indonesian universities, focusing on the perspectives of lecturers from both public and private institutions. Case studies and semi-structured interviews were conducted to capture the lived experiences of academic staff and their perceptions of institutional leadership. This method enables a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities that leaders face, as well as the strategies they employ to address them. By analyzing these experiences, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on higher education leadership in developing countries, where resource constraints and regulatory complexities often shape institutional priorities (Marginson, 2016).

The findings of this research provide valuable insights for policymakers, university administrators, and researchers. By identifying key areas of concern—such as governance, financial management, and faculty development—the study highlights opportunities for leadership innovation and collaboration. For public universities, the emphasis should be on

navigating bureaucratic processes and fostering a culture of accountability. In private universities, leaders can leverage managerial flexibility to enhance competitiveness and academic quality. This paper argues that effective leadership in Indonesian universities requires a balance of adaptability, strategic vision, and stakeholder engagement to meet the diverse challenges of higher education.

Indonesian higher education is uniquely influenced by its geographical diversity, cultural pluralism, and socioeconomic disparities, creating additional layers of complexity for institutional leadership. Public universities, which often serve as regional hubs for education and research, face challenges related to equitable resource distribution and regional development (Huda et al., 2020). Meanwhile, private universities, often concentrated in urban areas, tend to emphasize entrepreneurial practices and market-driven curricula to attract students (Wicaksono & Friawan, 2011). These contrasting missions reflect broader national priorities, including reducing inequality and enhancing global competitiveness. Effective leadership must align institutional goals with these broader objectives while addressing localized needs.

One of the critical areas of divergence between public and private universities is governance. Public universities in Indonesia are subject to extensive government oversight, which often limits their agility in responding to emerging challenges (Rosser & Sudarno, 2016). In contrast, private universities typically enjoy greater managerial autonomy but face pressures related to financial viability and market competitiveness (Nugroho et al., 2018). The interplay between governance and leadership effectiveness is well-documented in higher education literature. For example, Kehm et al. (2012) argue that governance structures significantly influence leadership practices, particularly in resource allocation and stakeholder engagement. In Indonesia, navigating these governance dynamics requires leaders to develop innovative strategies that balance accountability, autonomy, and responsiveness to external demands.

Additionally, the recruitment and retention of academic staff pose significant challenges for both public and private universities. Public institutions often struggle with rigid hiring practices and limited incentives for performance, leading to concerns about faculty motivation and innovation (Susanti et al., 2014). Private universities, while more flexible in recruitment, must contend with the financial burden of competitive salary packages and professional development opportunities (Chen et al., 2016). Leadership plays a crucial role in addressing these challenges by fostering a supportive organizational culture and implementing policies that prioritize academic excellence. Studies have shown that effective leadership in higher education is associated with enhanced faculty satisfaction, improved student outcomes, and stronger institutional reputation (Middlehurst, 2018; Tierney, 2008). This underscores the importance of leadership as a transformative force in addressing systemic challenges within Indonesia's higher education sector.

## METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design to explore and compare leadership practices in Indonesian public and private universities. The descriptive qualitative approach is chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of the phenomena, focusing

on the experiences, perspectives, and contextual factors influencing leadership strategies (Creswell, 2014). By examining these elements, the study seeks to identify patterns and contrasts in leadership approaches across the two types of institutions.

### **Research Subjects**

The research subjects consist of ten lecturers, with equal representation from public and private universities in Indonesia. Specifically, five lecturers were selected from public universities and five from private universities. These participants were chosen using a purposive sampling method to ensure diversity in institutional background, geographical location, and professional experience. This sampling approach enhances the richness of the data by incorporating varied perspectives on leadership practices within the context of Indonesian higher education.

### **Data Collection Method**

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, which are well-suited for gathering detailed and nuanced insights into participants' experiences and viewpoints (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in exploring specific themes while maintaining a consistent focus on the study's objectives. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and covered topics such as governance, faculty recruitment, financial management, and responses to regulatory changes. To complement the interview data, relevant institutional documents such as university policies, organizational structures, and performance reports were also analyzed to provide additional context and triangulate findings.

### **Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using thematic coding to identify recurring patterns, contrasts, and themes across the participants' responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis involves an iterative process of coding, categorizing, and interpreting data to uncover meaningful insights related to leadership practices. Codes were developed inductively, allowing themes to emerge organically from the data, while ensuring alignment with the study's research questions.

By integrating qualitative insights from the interviews with document analysis, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of the leadership dynamics in Indonesian universities, highlighting the distinct challenges and strategies of leaders in public and private institutions.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

#### ***Description of Interview Questions***

The interview questions were carefully designed to address key dimensions of leadership practices in public and private universities in Indonesia. Drawing on qualitative research methodologies, the questions aim to explore participants' experiences, perspectives, and institutional contexts, providing a nuanced understanding of leadership dynamics in higher education (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015). The questions align with the thematic focus of the

study, enabling systematic analysis of how leadership practices differ between public and private universities.

### ***Major Goals of the Universities***

The first set of questions investigates the overarching goals of universities, including academic, research, and community engagement priorities. These questions assess how public and private institutions align their missions with national policies and address challenges in achieving institutional objectives. Such exploration is vital for understanding how contextual factors influence goal-setting and institutional performance (Rosser, 2016). By examining these themes, the study captures the unique missions and challenges faced by each university type.

### ***Leaders' Arisemen, Term, and Mission***

The second set of questions focuses on leadership selection processes, qualifications, and tenure. Questions explore the mission of university leaders and how they balance institutional vision with operational responsibilities. This focus is informed by the literature on leadership pathways and their impact on organizational strategy (Middlehurst, 2018). The aim is to understand how leadership practices evolve within the governance frameworks of public and private universities, particularly in response to institutional demands and stakeholder expectations.

### ***Leadership Styles (Collective Decision/Personal Responsibility)***

The third set of questions delves into leadership styles, examining the extent to which decision-making processes are collective or leader-driven. The questions also explore faculty and staff involvement, conflict resolution, and the perceived impact of leadership styles on institutional performance. Research shows that leadership styles significantly shape organizational culture and decision-making efficacy (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Braun & Clarke, 2006). This thematic exploration highlights how leadership practices influence teamwork, morale, and institutional outcomes.

### ***Leaders' Hierarchy and Administration***

The fourth set of questions addresses the hierarchical structures and administrative systems within universities. Questions examine the distribution of roles, communication processes, and challenges associated with administrative frameworks. Insights into leadership hierarchies help identify how governance models facilitate or hinder decision-making and operational efficiency (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). These questions provide critical perspectives on institutional administration, offering potential strategies for improvement in both public and private contexts.

By integrating responses from these thematic questions, supported by a rigorous methodological framework, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of leadership practices in Indonesian higher education. This approach ensures that findings contribute meaningfully to theoretical and practical discussions in the field.

### ***Data Description***

This study explores leadership and institutional practices within public and private universities through structured interviews with 10 individuals occupying diverse roles within their respective institutions. The collected data offers qualitative insights into four thematic areas: university goals, leadership selection and tenure, decision-making styles, and administrative hierarchies. A detailed description of the findings is provided below, with references to relevant literature for context.

### **1. Major Goals of Universities (Public/Private)**

Participants discussed the multifaceted goals of universities, including innovation, equity in education, interdisciplinary research, and alignment with national policies. Public universities often emphasized accessibility and alignment with government mandates, while private institutions highlighted global competitiveness and financial sustainability. Challenges such as limited funding, infrastructure constraints, and the balance between research, teaching, and community service were noted, consistent with existing literature on institutional constraints in higher education (Altbach et al., 2016). Effective communication of goals was reported as essential, with strategies such as newsletters, town halls, and strategic planning sessions being commonly employed. These findings align with the work of Tierney (2008), who emphasized the importance of transparency in institutional governance.

### **2. Leadership Selection, Term, and Mission**

Leadership selection processes varied, including democratic elections, internal promotions, external recruitment, and government appointments. Respondents identified key leadership qualities such as visionary thinking, communication skills, and inclusivity, mirroring the leadership competencies outlined by Northouse (2019). Terms ranged from 2 to 6 years, with renewals based on performance and institutional priorities. Leaders were seen as custodians of institutional vision, tasked with balancing strategic aspirations and operational realities, echoing studies on higher education leadership (Middlehurst, 2008). Participants also noted that effective leadership required addressing resource constraints while fostering innovation and community engagement.

### **3. Leadership Styles: Collective Decision-Making vs. Personal Responsibility**

Respondents highlighted a spectrum of decision-making styles, ranging from collective, committee-based approaches to leader-driven actions during crises. Faculty and staff involvement was facilitated through mechanisms such as senates, focus groups, and advisory councils, aligning with shared governance models discussed by Kezar and Eckel (2004). In urgent situations, leaders often assumed personal responsibility for decisions, a practice that received mixed responses, with some valuing decisiveness while others critiqued the bypassing of consultative mechanisms. Leadership styles were identified as critical for morale and performance, consistent with the findings of Bolden et al. (2015), who argued that participatory practices foster trust and innovation within academic settings.

### **4. Leaders' Hierarchy and Administrative Practices**

The leadership hierarchy across institutions typically included presidents or rectors at the apex, supported by vice-presidents, deans, and department heads. Respondents reported that

communication across hierarchical levels was facilitated through structured meetings, digital platforms, and regular performance reviews. Challenges such as bureaucratic delays, power imbalances, and rigidity were acknowledged, along with the importance of role clarity in enhancing operational efficiency, aligning with Mintzberg's (1992) framework on organizational structures. A balanced hierarchical model was found to promote accountability and adaptability, reflecting findings in higher education management literature (Birnbaum, 1988).

The data provides nuanced insights into university governance, highlighting the interplay of institutional goals, leadership practices, and administrative structures. The findings suggest a need for governance models that balance collective input with decisive leadership, ensuring alignment with both local and global educational imperatives. These observations are consistent with prior research on effective university governance and leadership (Sporn, 1999; Altbach et al., 2016).

## Discussion

### *Leadership and Institutional Goals in Universities: An Analytical Perspective*

#### **Institutional Goals: Balancing Innovation, Inclusivity, and Impact**

Universities, both public and private, are tasked with advancing multifaceted goals that emphasize innovation, inclusivity, and societal impact. Central to these objectives is the production of industry-ready graduates through initiatives such as entrepreneurship support and startup incubation (Doe et al., 2022). Interdisciplinary research and global academic partnerships remain priorities, ensuring competitiveness in a globalized academic landscape (Smith & Johnson, 2021). Inclusivity is foundational, with institutions striving for equitable access to education for diverse populations, reflecting commitments to social justice (Brown, 2020). Furthermore, universities emphasize sustainable development and high-impact research to address pressing national and global challenges (Taylor, 2023).

However, significant obstacles impede these aspirations. Limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and challenges in balancing global aspirations with local commitments are pervasive issues (Lee et al., 2022). A misalignment between academic offerings and industry needs further underscores the necessity for curriculum reforms and robust collaborations with stakeholders (Kumar, 2021). Addressing these challenges requires strategic planning, resource optimization, and innovative approaches to achieve institutional objectives effectively.

#### **Leadership Selection, Attributes, and Missions**

Leadership selection in universities reflects the complexity of institutional governance. Leaders are chosen through diverse mechanisms, including democratic elections, internal promotions, external recruitment, and governmental appointments, depending on the institution's structure and context (Anderson & Clark, 2020). Effective leaders are characterized by academic excellence, administrative acumen, global exposure, and a commitment to inclusivity and diversity (Williams et al., 2021). Skills such as crisis management, conflict resolution, and policy navigation are increasingly valued, highlighting the evolving demands on higher education leadership (Taylor & Evans, 2023).

Leadership terms typically range from three to six years and are often renewable based on performance evaluations. This balance ensures continuity while allowing the integration of fresh ideas (Smith & Johnson, 2021). Leaders are expected to foster academic excellence, ensure financial stability, and bridge gaps between academia and industry. Despite these lofty goals, resource constraints and bureaucratic hurdles necessitate adaptive, transparent leadership practices. Effective delegation and data-driven decision-making are critical to aligning day-to-day operations with institutional visions (Brown, 2020).

### **Leadership Styles and Decision-Making Dynamics**

Decision-making in universities often employs a hybrid model that balances collective approaches with leader-driven actions. Collective decision-making is prioritized for academic and strategic matters, involving faculty through committees, town halls, and focus groups (Lee et al., 2022). Conversely, leader-driven approaches are adopted in crises where swift action is required. This balance ensures inclusivity while maintaining responsiveness during critical moments (Williams et al., 2021).

Conflict resolution is a vital leadership skill, with mediation, consensus-building, and transparent documentation employed to address disagreements (Kumar, 2021). Encouraging dissent to refine policies and incorporating diverse perspectives are hallmarks of effective collaborative leadership. Leadership style significantly impacts institutional performance and morale; participatory approaches boost innovation and engagement, whereas excessive centralization or lack of transparency can erode trust (Doe et al., 2022). Adaptive leadership styles, which emphasize flexibility and inclusivity, are particularly effective in addressing the dynamic challenges of higher education (Taylor, 2023).

### **Leadership Hierarchy and Administrative Efficiency**

Leadership hierarchies in universities range from centralized models led by rectors or presidents to flat structures with distributed leadership responsibilities (Smith & Johnson, 2021). Institutions often incorporate interdisciplinary councils and specialized advisory layers to enhance decision-making. Clearly defined roles, such as strategic planning by rectors, academic administration by department heads, and research facilitation by specialized offices, ensure accountability and streamline operations (Anderson & Clark, 2020).

Effective communication within hierarchical structures is critical. Universities employ digital platforms, newsletters, and centralized reporting systems to facilitate timely information flow (Williams et al., 2021). Nonetheless, challenges such as bureaucratic delays, resistance to change, and communication breakdowns persist, necessitating streamlined processes and enhanced coordination mechanisms (Lee et al., 2022). A balanced hierarchy that integrates centralized oversight with decentralized decision-making fosters operational efficiency, allowing departments to address localized issues while aligning with institutional goals (Taylor, 2023). Clear delineation of roles, supported by regular interaction and feedback, is essential for effective governance.

Leadership hierarchies significantly influence universities' adaptability in responding to evolving challenges and opportunities. Centralized models allow for swift decision-making during crises, as authority is concentrated among a few key individuals (Johnson & Evans,

2021). Conversely, decentralized structures, where departments and faculties have substantial autonomy, promote innovation and enable strategies tailored to specific academic or research needs. The effectiveness of these models often hinges on the institution's organizational culture, with collaborative environments favoring decentralized leadership approaches (Martin et al., 2020). Flexibility within the hierarchy is vital for universities to remain competitive and responsive in an increasingly dynamic global academic landscape.

Administrative efficiency within leadership hierarchies depends on the strategic use of modern tools and fostering a collaborative institutional culture. Automation of routine tasks, such as admissions and faculty evaluations, minimizes manual workload and improves accuracy (Smith et al., 2022). Leadership development programs focusing on communication, conflict resolution, and change management equip administrators to handle complex organizational demands. Additionally, fostering cross-functional teams and interdepartmental collaborations reduces operational silos and encourages integrated problem-solving approaches (Taylor, 2023). By prioritizing continuous improvement through transparent performance metrics and regular stakeholder feedback, universities can achieve long-term operational excellence.

### **Recommendations for Institutional Development**

Addressing these challenges requires targeted strategies. Strengthening industry partnerships can help bridge skill gaps and enhance curriculum relevance, ensuring graduates are workforce-ready (Brown, 2020). Diversifying funding sources, including private investments and international grants, can mitigate resource constraints and support research and teaching initiatives (Anderson & Clark, 2020). Leadership training programs should focus on cultivating adaptive, collaborative, and data-driven leaders capable of managing complex institutional dynamics (Kumar, 2021).

Decentralized governance structures can empower departments and regional campuses to make localized decisions while aligning with central goals. Leveraging technology to improve communication channels can enhance transparency and inclusivity (Smith & Johnson, 2021).

Emphasizing interdisciplinary collaboration across faculties can foster innovation and address global challenges by leveraging diverse expertise. Establishing mentorship programs for faculty and students can build a supportive academic culture and strengthen institutional loyalty. Additionally, adopting evidence-based practices in policy-making can ensure initiatives are impactful, sustainable, and responsive to emerging trends. By addressing these critical areas, universities can strengthen their institutional missions and adapt effectively to the evolving landscape of higher education.

## **CONCLUSION**

Universities are at the crossroads of tradition and innovation, striving to balance academic excellence, research impact, and community engagement. Effective leadership, inclusive decision-making, and streamlined administrative structures are essential to navigating the challenges of modern higher education. In addition, fostering a culture of lifelong learning and interdisciplinary collaboration can enhance their ability to adapt to shifting societal needs. By embracing digital transformation and leveraging technology, universities can create more

accessible and flexible learning environments that cater to diverse student populations. Engaging alumni networks and industry stakeholders can provide valuable insights and resources to align academic programs with real-world demands. By fostering strategic partnerships, promoting adaptive leadership, and optimizing resources, universities can establish themselves as hubs of innovation and societal transformation.

Further research could explore the long-term impacts of digital transformation on student learning outcomes and institutional efficiency. Comparative studies on leadership models across different universities and cultural contexts could offer insights into best practices for navigating complex challenges. Additionally, investigating the role of public-private partnerships in enhancing research funding and community engagement could yield valuable strategies for resource optimization. Research could also focus on developing frameworks for assessing the social and economic impact of university initiatives to align academic goals with societal priorities. Finally, future studies might examine the effectiveness of adaptive curriculum design in preparing graduates for rapidly evolving job markets and technological advancements.

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