

The Role of Ambidextrous Leadership in Strengthening Bureaucratic Reform: A PRISMA Systematic Review

Author:

Raden Muhamad Iqbal¹, Ajeng Kusuma Andaning², Sammy Julian Tampubolon³,
Ismail Nurdin⁴

Affiliation:

Fakultas Manajemen Pemerintahan, Institut Pemerintahan Dalam Negeri, Kabupaten
Sumedang, Jawa barat 45363, Indonesia^{1,2,3,4}

e-Mail:

radeniqbal71@gmail.com¹, akandaning@gmail.com², sammyjulio88@gmail.com³,
ismailnurdin@ipdn.ac.id⁴

*Corresponding author

Ismail Nurdin
Institut Pemerintahan Dalam Negeri
Email: ismail.nurdin@ipdn.ac.id
Phone:

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Abstract

Bureaucratic reform is an effort to develop a better bureaucratic system, create a dynamic government that has a real impact on society, and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of government administration. Therefore, bureaucratic reform requires bureaucrats (civil servants) to be able to implement changes within the bureaucracy itself. The suboptimal performance of the bureaucracy is due to the inability of ASN to generate ideas for change and implement them in a structured manner, thus necessitating structured changes in the implementation of bureaucratic reform. In this context, the author will discuss the concept of ambidextrous leadership, which combines the ability to explore new ideas and ensure structured and controlled implementation. This study uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach with PRISMA guidelines. With a search base of 3,001 articles identified, 399 articles were eliminated, and 32 articles were selected after screening and assessment using Scopus. The results of the synthesis show that ambidextrous leadership has a positive correlation with innovation culture, service quality, organizational effectiveness, and other performance outcomes, especially when supported by clear objectives, organizational climate, mental intelligence, and organizational governance. The conclusion of this study confirms that ambidextrous leadership plays a significant role in the transformation of bureaucratic reform in Indonesia, particularly in strengthening innovation and improving organizational performance.

Keywords: Ambidextrous leadership; Bureaucratic reform; ; Systematic Literature Review; PRISMA

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Abstrak

Reformasi Birokrasi merupakan upaya dalam pembangunan sistem birokrasi yang lebih baik, mewujudkan pemerintahan yang dinamis dan memberikan dampak nyata kepada masyarakat, serta meningkatkan efektif dan efisien dalam penyelenggaraan pemerintahan. Oleh karena itu Reformasi Birokrasi menuntut para birokrat (ASN) agar mampu melakukan tindakan perubahan di tubuh birokrasi itu sendiri. Belum optimalnya birokrasi disebabkan ketidakmampuan ASN dalam menciptakan ide perubahan dan menerapkan secara tertstruktur sehingga perlu adanya perubahan secara terstruktur dalam penerapan reformasi birokrasi. Dalam konteks tersebut penulis akan membahas mengenai konsep Ambidextrous leadership, dimana mengkombinasikan kemampuan untuk eksplorasi ide baru dan memastikan implementasi yang terstruktur dan terkontrol. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan Systematic literature review (SLR) dengan pedoman PRISMA. Dengan pencarian sebagai base data sebanyak 3.001 artikel teridentifikasi, 399 artikel setelah melakukan eliminasi dan 32 artikel setelah proses penyaringan dan penilaian yang memenuhi kriteria menggunakan Scopus. Hasil sistensis ambidextrous leadership berkorelasi positif terhadap budaya inovasi, kualitas layanan, efektivitas organisasi dan hasil kinerja lain, terutama jika di support dengan kejelasan tujuan, iklim pada organisasi, kecerdasan mental dan tata kelola organisasi. Kesimpulan penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa Ambidextrous leadership memiliki peran yang signifikan terhadap transformasi reformasi birokrasi yang ada di Indonesia. Khusus dalam memperkuat inovasi dan meningkatkan kinerja pada organisasi.

Kata kunci: *Ambidextrous leadership; Reformasi birokrasi; ; Systematic Literature Review; PRISMA*

INTRODUCTION

Bureaucratic reform has been initiated since 2004 through the principles of Clean Government and Good Governance, with the expectation of fostering an efficient, accountable, transparent, and service-oriented bureaucracy. The primary focus of this reform lies in civil service human resource restructuring—such as the merit system, open selection for officials, and apparatus performance evaluation systems—mandated by the Civil Servant (ASN) Law. This policy dictates that civil service human resources must be managed based on professionalism, proportionality, accountability, and effectiveness to enhance bureaucratic performance. Consequently, this civil service reform aims to produce high-quality, politically neutral, and competitive public servants (Taufik, 2020). However,

reports from the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucracy Reform (Kemenpan RB) reveal that leadership across various institutions is still weak in building and driving an innovation culture in public services, which in turn slows down the progress of bureaucratic reform.

In executing bureaucratic reform, the government is continuously compelled to navigate various forms of change, both forced and organic. Global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic several years ago, demonstrated that conventional bureaucracies struggle to respond rapidly, highlighting the necessity for adaptive and transformational leadership. During the pandemic, the government needed to respond quickly and adaptively, making bureaucratic transformation essential for institutional survival. This shift in public

services allows government delivery to become more effective and efficient, as public institutions actively adjust to new challenges by offering quick, solution-oriented answers (Hawari & Kartini, 2023). Furthermore, the digital revolution and public service transformation—which heavily adopt E-Government paradigms today—demand that civil servants and bureaucratic structures become more responsive, creative, and agile. In this climate, addressing barriers such as digital incompetence and cultural resistance becomes imperative (Prasodjo, 2025). A bureaucracy functions optimally when its core drivers possess high capability; hence, leadership serves as a critical factor in steering bureaucratic reform toward a positive trajectory. Within this framework, leaders must possess the capacity for both innovation and exploration.

Ambidextrous leadership represents a concept where leaders can unlock innovation opportunities for the organization while simultaneously instituting control mechanisms to reduce counterproductive variances and maintain a structured strategic path. In practice, ambidextrous leaders encourage employees to engage in exploration while setting clear boundaries for idea implementation to optimize performance (Xi et al., 2025). The author argues that this leadership paradigm is highly appropriate for contemporary conditions where bureaucratic reform is heavily reinforced and leaders must swiftly adapt. Barriers within a bureaucracy are frequently rooted not in policy, but in leadership style; research indicates that bureaucratic leaders often become entangled in rigid administrative routines, making it difficult to

generate and execute innovations (Hal G. Rainey, 2021).

This concept has been widely implemented; for instance, research demonstrates that leaders who employ ambidextrous leadership achieve higher levels of innovation, as they can effectively modulate when civil servants are given the autonomy to innovate and when they must strictly adhere to regulations and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) (Tom J. M. Mom, 2009). Although studies on ambidextrous leadership are steadily increasing, research applying this framework to the public sector and bureaucratic reform in Indonesia remains limited. This scarcity persists because most existing literature on ambidextrous leadership focuses predominantly on the private sector, technology industries, healthcare, and education. The novelty of this study lies in its effort to bridge these theoretical and practical gaps by presenting a systematic synthesis of ambidextrous leadership in strengthening bureaucratic reform through enhanced civil servant innovation, an adaptive work culture, and improved public service delivery.

The author argues that research on ambidextrous leadership within the context of bureaucratic reform is still limited. Therefore, this article adds to the literature on bureaucratic reform and public leadership management by examining how ambidextrous leadership helps strengthen reform efforts at both central and local government levels.

METHODS

This study utilizes a systematic literature review methodology framed by the

Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. Adopting this protocol guarantees that the core phases—encompassing bibliographic retrieval, screening, study selection, and qualitative synthesis—are handled with utmost transparency and strict reproducibility. PRISMA comprises an evidence-based framework that assists authors in delivering systematic reviews and meta-analyses that accurately assess utility. The PRISMA process focuses heavily on providing a structured framework for authors to ensure transparent and comprehensive reporting of the research. Ultimately, PRISMA serves as an internationally standardized guideline that helps elevate the reporting quality of Systematic Literature Reviews (Simamora & Gaffar, 2024).

The rationale for utilizing the PRISMA method is that it offers the most comprehensive, transparent, and systematic international standard for conducting structured literature reviews. PRISMA also enables researchers to execute a step-by-step article review process through a flow diagram that illustrates the number of articles screened at each stage, thereby enhancing the credibility of the research outcomes (Page et al., 2021).

Relevant literature was retrieved from prominent databases within the fields of social sciences and public administration, specifically Scopus and Google Scholar. Of the total articles collected, Scopus accounted for 85% of the data source composition, while the remaining 15% was derived from Google Scholar. The search strategy employed a combination of keywords: Ambidextrous Leadership, Exploration leadership, Public sector innovation, bureaucratic reform,

adaptive governance, and innovation in public administration, focusing on publications released within the 2015–2025 timeframe.

The literature search and selection process comprised four distinct stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Article selection was guided by a predetermined set of inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria encompassed peer-reviewed articles, including case studies, empirical research, and comparative analyses published in academic journals between 2015 and 2025. Selected articles were required to maintain a clear focus on public sector policy evaluation or program evaluation studies.

Conversely, the exclusion criteria applied to document types such as opinions, editorials, brief commentaries, book reviews, conference proceedings, and non-peer-reviewed publications. Articles irrelevant to the theme of public policy evaluation, those solely oriented toward the private sector, or those unavailable in full-text format were also excluded from the review process. This rigorous approach ensures that the study remains focused exclusively on the most relevant, high-quality scholarly literature capable of reflecting contemporary research developments (Page et al., 2021).

The quality assesment of the selected literature relied on three primary criterias: journal metrics, methodological and analytical transparency, and conceptual significance. Journal prominence was operationalized via Scopus quartile rankings, identifying Q1 publications as the pinnacle tier. Methodological validity was determined by the transparency with which authors detailed their empirical gathering and

analytical protocols. Concurrently, scholarly significance was gauged by the conceptual novelty of the work and its direct relevance to the overarching theories or frameworks of public policy evaluation. This careful selection ensured that the final synthesis only incorporated robust studies with meaningful contributions.

Following the PRISMA guidelines, the initial identification phase yielded 3,001 articles from the databases. Excluding duplicate records left 399 unique articles for screening. This screening was carried out in two stages: first assessing titles and abstracts, and then conducting full-text reviews, narrowing the selection to 74 papers. Any ambiguities during the selection process were resolved by reaching a consensus among the research team. Based on this full-text evaluation, 32 articles that met all inclusion criteria were incorporated into the qualitative synthesis (Page et al., 2021).

Bibliometric analysis was further utilized to identify publication trends, dominant keywords, co-authorship networks, and the intellectual structure of the research field through co-authorship, co-occurrence, and citation network analyses. This bibliometric mapping was executed using VOSviewer software, which enables the visualization of keyword networks and inter-topical relationships to determine scholarly trajectories and primary research clusters. The mapping results were used to strengthen the identification of research gaps and delineate the specific analytical focus for thematic synthesis within the SLR. Consequently, the integration of PRISMA and bibliometric analysis provides a more comprehensive and objective methodological foundation for

understanding the research landscape surrounding ambidextrous leadership in the public sector.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Bibliographic Analysis

To provide a comprehensive overview of the current research landscape, a network visualization was generated using VOSviewer software. This visualization, presented in Image 1, was derived from the 32 articles that fulfilled all inclusion criteria for the qualitative synthesis, thereby highlighting the core focus within this body of research.

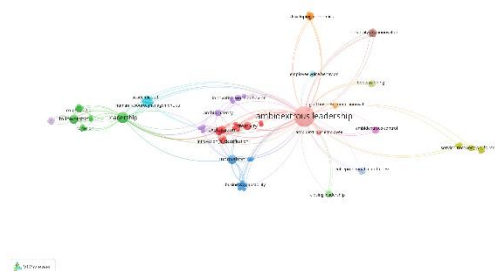


Image 1

As illustrated in the network visualization in Image 1, four primary clusters can be identified based on color-coded keywords. The yellow cluster represents ambidextrous leadership and innovation, serving as the central theme and primary subject of study; it is positioned as a driver of innovation and the cornerstone for achieving an ambidextrous organization—one that maintains a structural balance between exploration and exploitation. The blue cluster focuses on the impact and context of leadership. Within this cluster, research extends beyond leadership paradigms to encompass intended business outcomes, which are further linked to dynamic capabilities and technology. This

configuration suggests that ambidextrous leadership is frequently investigated within highly adaptive and flexible industrial environments. Meanwhile, the green cluster centers on employee behavior, specifically highlighting how leaders influence employee conduct. This cluster exhibits a strong correlation with transformational leadership, demonstrating that the integration of ambidextrous and transformational leadership styles directly affects creativity and innovation. Finally, the red cluster concentrates on strategic management, indicating that ambidextrous leadership can also be structurally examined through a strategic management perspective.

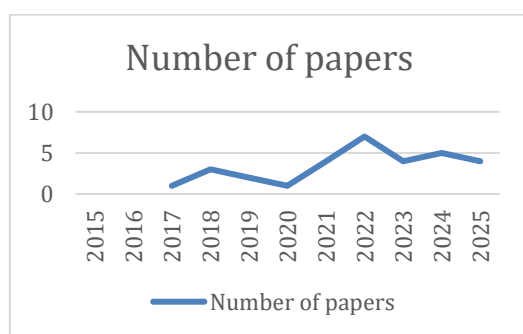


Image 2

Through a detailed analysis, the author closely evaluates publication trends, journal distributions, and main focus areas. Looking at the publication trends, there are noticeable shifts in the total volume of research outputs between 2015 and 2025. The highest research output occurred in 2022, peaking at seven publications, followed by a decline in 2023, a subsequent rebound in 2024, and another decrease in 2025. These fluctuations can be attributed to several factors, including shifting thematic demands among scholars, evolving research priorities,

the availability of funding opportunities, and varying levels of academic interest.

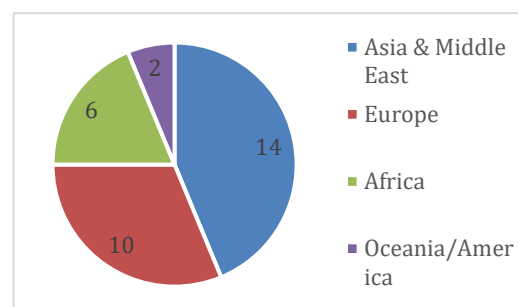


Image 3

The geographical distribution of the studies included in this systematic review is presented in Image 3. The majority of the research originates from Asia and the Middle East, accounting for 14 articles, which include contributions from Indonesia, China, South Korea, Thailand, and Malaysia. The second-largest share comes from Europe, with a total of 10 articles represented by countries such as Norway, France, the Netherlands, Germany, and Switzerland. Furthermore, Africa accounts for 6 articles spanning nations like Nigeria, South Africa, Ethiopia, and Egypt. Lastly, the smallest proportion of research is attributed to Oceania/Americas, with only 2 articles coming from the United States and Canada.

B. Content Analysis

Furthermore, Image 4 presents the categorization of the journals, which are divided into four thematic groups: Ambidextrous Leadership and Innovation, Ambidextrous Leadership and Performance/Outcomes, Followership and Leader-Follower Dynamics, and Other Leadership Styles.

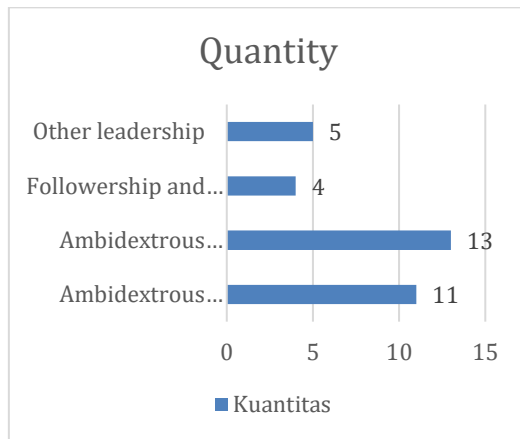


Image 4

Image 4 illustrates the research clusters derived from the collected journals. Additionally, a summary of the 32 chosen articles is shown in the following table format:

No	Category	Journal Title	Key Variables & Main Findings
1	A. Ambidextrous Leadership (AL) & Individual/Team Innovation	Ambidextrous leadership, ambidextrous employee, and employee innovative performance	AL predicts employee exploration/exploitation behaviors and relates significantly to employee innovative performance.
2		Ambidextrous Leadership and Innovative Work Behaviors : Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence	Emotional Intelligence mediates the positive relationship between AL and Innovative Work Behaviors (IWB).
3		Ambidextrous leadership: opening and closing leader behaviors to facilitate idea generation, idea promotion and idea realization	AL facilitates three stages of individual innovation: idea generation, promotion, and realization.
4		The Link between Ambidextrous Leadership and Innovative Work Behaviors in a Military Organization	An innovation climate moderates the positive relationship between AL and IWB within a military context.
5		Ambidextrous leadership to stimulate innovative work behaviors: the role of goal clarity and psychological empowerment	This study examines the relationship between ambidextrous leadership and innovative work behaviors using a parallel mediation model, with goal clarity and psychological empowerment as mediating variables. Data were collected from 198 online questionnaire respondents. The main finding indicates a significant mediating effect of psychological empowerment on the relationship between ambidextrous leadership and innovative work behaviors . Several significant direct relationships between leadership and innovation were also identified.
6		Ambidextrous leadership and innovation: a process perspective and an experimental approach	Employees two randomized controlled experiments (2x2-2021) to validate the causal effects of ambidextrous leadership on two distinct innovation processes: idea generation and idea implementation. This study addresses the limitations of previous research that treated innovation as a single construct. The findings broadly support the adaptive value of ambidextrous leadership in both idea generation and implementation. This indicates that opening (exploration) and closing (exploitation) behaviors may be required in both stages of innovation depending on situational demands.
7		Cognitive Uncertainty and Employee Daily Innovative Work Behaviors : The Moderating Role of Ambidextrous Leadership	Examines individual-level boundaries on innovation by focusing on daily cognitive uncertainty as a personal condition that can influence innovative work behaviors among professionals in a Dutch public organization. Utilizing a quantitative diary study (5485 respondents), the analysis identifies a positive relationship between daily cognitive uncertainty experiences and employees' innovative work behaviors . However, this positive relationship surfaces only when employees perceive substantial support from their team leaders (in the form of ambidextrous leadership).
8		Harmonizing ambidextrous leadership model for innovation and operational efficiency in technology industry	This article aims to leverage the ambidextrous leadership model to achieve innovation and operational efficiency, focusing specifically on the technology industry. (As a conceptual framework review, specific empirical results were not available in the excerpt, the focus remains on the implementation of the ambidextrous leadership model in the technology sector to drive innovation and operational efficiency).

No	Category	Journal Title	Key Variables & Main Findings
12	B. Ambidextrous Leadership (AL) & Other Performance/Organizational Outcomes	Ambidextrous Leadership and Sustainability-based Project Performance: The Role of Project Culture	Analyses the role of AL in building an ambidextrous culture for sustainability-based project performance.
13		Ambidextrous Leadership, Social Entrepreneurial Orientation, and Operational Performance	AL influences operational performance through a social entrepreneurial orientation.
14		Linking ambidextrous leadership and small and medium scale enterprises export performance	AL enhances export performance in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).
15		The Influence of Ambidextrous Leadership and Digital Business Model Innovation on the Performance of Organizational Agility and Digital Business Model Innovation on the Performance	Organizational agility and digital business model innovation mediate the relationship between AL and corporate performance in a telecommunications firm during COVID-19.
16		The Synergy of Ambidextrous Leadership, Agility, and Entrepreneurial Orientation in Achieving Sustainable AI Product Innovation	Illustrates the synergy of AL, organizational agility (OA), and entrepreneurial orientation (EO) in achieving sustainable AI product innovation.
17		A resilient Digital Leader's personal journey: The role of entrepreneurial mindfulness and ambidextrous leadership through scaling-up performance capacity	AL influences digital leaders' resilience and scaling-up performance capacity.
18		Ambidextrous Leadership and Employee Voice Behaviors : The Role of Work Motivation and Ambidextrous Culture	Work motivation mediates, and ambidextrous culture moderates, the relationship between AL and employee voice behaviors .
19		Ambidextrous Leadership: A Systematic Review of Leadership Dimensions for Innovation and Efficiency in Modern Organizations	A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) synthesizing academic findings from 24 articles (2013-2022) regarding the dimensions of ambidextrous leadership for innovation and efficiency. The results demonstrate that ambidextrous leadership offers substantial opportunities for organizational success due to balanced behaviors between exploration and exploitation activities in optimizing processes and resource efficiency.
20		Ambidextrous Leadership and Service Recovery Performance Under B2B Selling Context	AL opening behaviors are significantly and positively related to Service Recovery Performance (SRP) in a B2B context, whereas closing behaviors are not.
21		The role of ambidextrous leadership and employees' ambidexterity in enhancing service quality of care and creativity: ...	AL and employee ambidexterity improve care service quality and healthcare practitioner creativity.
22		Do Management Control Systems Promote Ambidextrous Innovation? The Moderating Role of Leadership Style	Leadership style moderates the relationship between Management Control Systems (MCS) (Interactive/Diagnostic) and ambidextrous innovation.
23		Principles between exploration and exploitation: Results of a relationship study on ambidexterity of school leaders	School principals are more heavily engaged in exploitation activities than exploration.
24		Understanding the Antecedents and Consequences of Service-Sales Ambidexterity	Uses the MOA (Motivation-Opportunity-Ability) framework to understand service-sales ambidexterity.

No	Category	Journal Title	Key Variables & Main Findings
25		An archival review of preferred methods for theory building in follower research	Identifies trends over a 52-year period and recommends a focus on formulating new theories regarding followers.
26	C. Followership & Leader-Follower Dynamics	The influence of follower behaviors on follower behaviour in the leadership process	Followers' orientation influences follower behaviors within the leadership process.
27		Leaders need to be led: complementary followership in the context of community-driven development program	Highlights the role of complementary followership that supports leadership in community-based development programs.
28		Leadership and Followership Dynamics in Interprofessional Health Care Teams	Nurses experience shared leadership dynamics within interprofessional healthcare teams.
29		Impact of E-Leadership on Organizational Innovation Performance: Role of Employee Followership	Followership moderates the relationship between E-leadership and organizational innovation performance.
30	D. Special Contexts / Other Leadership Styles	Less Followership, Less Leadership? An Inquiry Into the Basic But Forgotten Downward of Leadership	A conceptual investigation into the fundamental downsides and negative aspects that are often overlooked in leadership and its relationship with followership. As a conceptual article, the "trident" comprises a framework for discussion and arguments that challenge dominant positive perspectives on leadership by highlighting how leaders cannot control costs and disambiguate.
31		The effect of leadership behaviors on followers' experiences and expectations in a safety-critical industrial context: Specific empirical results were not available in the excerpt, the analytical focus appears on how leadership behaviors influence Air Traffic and Navigation Services in South Africa.	This study investigates the influence of leadership behaviors on followers' experiences and expectations within a safety-critical industrial context. Specific empirical results were not available in the excerpt, the analytical focus appears on how leadership behaviors influence Air Traffic and Navigation Services in South Africa.
32		The role of leadership in academic creativity and innovation: Examining academic research in enhancing development environments	Analyses the role of leadership in fostering creative creativity and innovation within academic R&D environments.

Table 1

Ambidextrous Leadership and Performance/Outcomes

The primary focus of this research demonstrates that ambidextrous leadership contributes significantly to organizational performance. As a prominent leadership style, it has been widely adopted across public, private, and non-profit sectors. In private firms, ambidextrous leadership strongly impacts the outcomes of

sustainability-oriented projects by building an ambidextrous culture (Zheng et al., 2017). Moreover, Ouyang et al. (2022) note that such an ambidextrous culture fosters workplace democracy, allowing employees to openly share their insights within the company. Beyond establishing an ambidextrous culture, contemporary organizational advancement involves integrating entrepreneurial principles with social objectives—such as sustainability and community impact—allowing firms to address pressing social challenges while simultaneously pursuing financial profitability. Consequently, ambidextrous leadership serves as a critical catalyst to establish systems grounded in social entrepreneurship, thereby enabling institutions to effectively attain their broader organizational targets (Martínez-Climent et al., 2019).

Economic growth can also be significantly influenced by leadership capabilities. In Indonesia's people-centered economy (ekonomi kerakyatan), growth is primarily driven through small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). For instance, research conducted by Isichei demonstrates that ambidextrous leadership exerts a positive influence on the export performance of SMEs in Nigeria (Isichei et al., 2022). Similarly, within the technology sector, ambidextrous leadership positively impacts technological product innovation, a dynamic that materializes when ambidextrous leadership synergizes with organizational agility and an entrepreneurial orientation (Zhang & Suntrayuth, 2024). Furthermore, studies indicate that ambidextrous leadership is highly compatible with startup environments. It simultaneously reinforces a

leader's personal resilience under pressure and fosters organizational adaptation and growth (scale-up). Given that the startup ecosystem is characterized by pervasive uncertainty, an ambidextrous leadership paradigm is indispensable for balancing competing organizational demands (Indrianti et al., 2024). In terms of driving performance during crises, Bawono et al. (2022) observe that amidst the non-conducive conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, ambidextrous leadership successfully enhanced corporate performance. This was achieved indirectly by first developing two critical organizational capabilities: organizational agility and digital business model innovation. Concurrently, research by Chandra Nababan et al. (2025) explicates that ambidextrous leadership offers substantial opportunities for organizational success by cultivating balanced behaviors between exploration and exploitation activities. Ambidextrous leadership also yields a significant impact on service delivery. In a study by Ahmad et al. (2022), recovering failed services within B2B environments requires leaders to act as facilitators of exploration and creativity. Meanwhile, in public-facing sectors such as healthcare, the alignment of ambidextrous leadership and employee ambidexterity can enhance the quality of care services and stimulate healthcare practitioners' creativity (Slåtten et al., 2023). While applicable to both service delivery and sales functions, ambidexterity operates optimally only when employees are motivated to balance dual roles, which necessitates having both the opportunity and the capability to do so (Ahmad et al., 2021). Ultimately, ambidextrous leadership cannot operate in isolation; it must be reinforced by

complementary leadership styles and management systems to drive comprehensive organizational innovation. Consequently, a tailored execution is required for leaders to effectively institutionalize ambidextrous leadership across public, private, and social organizations (Berraies et al., 2021; Pietsch et al., 2022).

Ambidextrous Leadership and Innovation

Numerous studies indicate that exploratory behaviors exhibited by leaders stimulate idea generation and creativity. For example, a validation study on how ambidextrous leadership impacts the dual stages of innovation—specifically idea generation and implementation—shows that this leadership approach strengthens adaptive value during both phases (Xi et al., 2025). Similar to general performance outcomes, ambidextrous leadership requires specific foundational support, one of which is emotional intelligence. Research by Hafeez et al. suggests that emotional intelligence acts as a total mediator in the positive relationship connecting ambidextrous leadership with innovative habits in the workplace. This mechanism has been corroborated across various studies utilizing identical variables but situated in distinct loci, including the military, information technology, and education (Akinci et al., 2022; Dinesh Babu et al., 2024; Hafeez et al., 2019; Kebede et al., 2024). Fundamentally, ambidextrous leadership grants autonomy to subordinates and cultivates team creativity during both exploration and exploitation phases, thereby exerting a positive influence on innovative subordinate performance and overall organizational outcomes (Alghamdi,

2018; Huang et al., 2022). Additionally, ambidextrous leaders can guide employees through the entire innovation lifecycle by supporting three main phases: generating, promoting, and realizing ideas (Mascareño et al., 2021). Apart from driving organizational innovation, ambidextrous leadership can also enhance operational efficiency. A study by Nyamboga demonstrates that this leadership approach simultaneously improves both innovation and operational efficiency within the technology sector (Nyamboga, 2025). Similarly, a Dutch study involving 88 respondents examined the positive link between employees' daily experiences of cognitive uncertainty and their innovative behaviors at work. Interestingly, this positive relationship only appears when employees feel strong support from their team leaders through ambidextrous leadership. This flexible leadership style can be incorporated into leader-subordinate dynamics, where shared leadership practices help build a highly collaborative work environment (Barry et al., 2024; Bernards, 2024). In a different context, psychological empowerment was found to significantly mediate the connection between ambidextrous leadership and innovative performance behaviors. Furthermore, from a psychological standpoint, ambidextrous leadership practiced by nurse managers toward nursing staff has been shown to yield a positive impact on both the psychological safety and the workplace creativity of nurses (El-Gazar et al., 2024; Mika de Graaff, 2021).

Followership and Leader-Follower Dynamics

Ultimately, ambidextrous leadership must be empirically operationalized within organizations to accurately evaluate its real-

world impact. This necessity arises because organizational conditions inherently vary, and individual followers exhibit distinct characteristics. Consequently, follower behaviors significantly shape and influence the broader leadership process (Inderjeet et al., 2022), rendering followers just as critical as leaders in establishing an ambidextrous culture. In organizational development, the role of followers is paramount to successfully attaining institutional objectives (Lee et al., 2024). In his study, Feldman posits the urgent need to formulate new theoretical frameworks that position followership as a primary, independent variable rather than a mere dependent variable. This paradigm shift is crucial since contemporary literature on followership remains heavily dominated by frameworks and methodologies that disproportionately focus on the leader's perspective (Feldman, 2018).

Other Leadership Contexts

Rather than remaining solely a managerial obligation, innovation relies on the active involvement of employees to generate and implement ideas that yield positive workplace outcomes (Zhong et al., 2023). Within high-stakes settings, leadership strongly shapes follower perceptions, where a leader's distinct behavior and professional experience exhibit a positive relationship with employee trust. However, it must be emphasized that although functional leadership promotes organizational success, toxic leadership configurations can conversely exert a negative impact on the enterprise (Alvesson & Blom, 2015; Joubert et al., 2017).

Theoretical Implications

The results of this synthesis support the argument that ambidextrous leadership should be actively applied within government organizations. Public sector institutions are often seen as rigid and bureaucratic; however, to achieve a meaningful positive impact, they need a shift in their leadership paradigm. In line with existing literature, the author argues that ambidextrous leadership cannot work effectively on its own. It must be supported by emotional intelligence, follower dynamics, and a supportive work environment. Subordinate or follower conditions are particularly critical, as followers serve as a vital moderating and facilitating force indispensable to fostering an adaptive bureaucracy.

Practical Implications

- A. Enhancing the institutional capacity of local governments to generate and execute innovations, thereby facilitating transparent and accountable public services and performance by leveraging the dual core dimensions of ambidextrous leadership: exploration and exploitation.
- B. Providing institutional leadership training programs tailored to cultivate ambidextrous leadership capabilities by balancing regulatory enforcement (exploitation) with subordinate autonomy (exploration).
- C. Strengthening governance and managerial systems to provide a secure and psychological space for innovation through institutionalizing sound mechanisms—such as innovation rewards, risk evaluation protocols, policy integration, and leadership

support—while simultaneously empowering proactive followership.

- D. Increasing strategic focus on followership by designing comprehensive employee empowerment initiatives to optimize the probability that ambidextrous leadership translates effectively into tangible innovation and performance outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The systematic review of 32 journal articles demonstrates that ambidextrous leadership significantly influences both organizational and employee innovation. This leadership framework synthesizes two distinct behavioral domains: exploration (openness) and exploitation (refinement), both of which are empirically proven to stimulate organizational idea generation and implementation. Furthermore, the reviewed literature indicates that ambidextrous leadership correlates positively with innovation culture, service quality, organizational effectiveness, and broader performance outcomes—particularly when supported by goal clarity, a conducive organizational climate, psychological capital, and robust institutional governance. This study underscores that ambidextrous leadership is a strategic and highly relevant paradigm to accelerate bureaucratic reform in Indonesia. The capacity to balance subordinate exploration and exploitation is pivotal to generating and executing innovations that enhance operational efficiency and elevate public service quality. The literature synthesis reveals that the successful institutionalization of ambidextrous leadership relies heavily on an

adaptive organizational culture, civil servant empowerment, and governance frameworks that tolerate experimental learning without compromising accountability. Consequently, this leadership model is essential to bridge the competing demands of innovation and bureaucratic stability, while addressing the challenges of value-based reform, digital governance, and complex policy environments.

Ultimately, ambidextrous leadership plays a transformative role in driving bureaucratic reform in Indonesia. Practical execution can be achieved by integrating ambidextrous leadership paradigms into civil servant education and training curricula, fostering an institutional culture of innovation, promoting collaborative leadership styles, enhancing employee empowerment, and accelerating digital competency development.

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