

Reinventing Public Leadership to Enhance Public Trust in Local Government Administration: A Case Study of the Rejang Lebong Regency Government for the 2025–2030 Period

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the reinvention of public leadership in enhancing public trust toward local government administration in Rejang Lebong Regency during the 2025–2030 leadership period. Public trust is an essential element in local governance because it influences policy legitimacy, citizen participation, and the effectiveness of public service delivery. In the context of regional government, public trust is closely related to the ability of leaders to promote transparency, accountability, responsiveness, innovation, and effective public communication. This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to analyze how public leadership renewal is practiced and how it contributes to strengthening community trust. Data are collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and literature study. The findings indicate that reinventing public leadership is not only related to changes in leadership style, but also to broader improvements in governance practices. Leadership innovation, transparent information, responsive public services, meaningful citizen participation, accountable decision-making, and clear public communication are important factors in building public confidence. The study concludes that leadership renewal in Rejang Lebong Regency can become a strategic foundation for creating a more adaptive, participatory, service-oriented, and trusted local government administration. This research is expected to contribute to the development of public administration studies and provide practical recommendations for improving local governance quality.

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Introduction

Public administration in the contemporary era is increasingly required to respond to complex public demands, institutional change, and the growing expectation for transparent and accountable governance. Local governments are no longer understood merely as administrative bodies that perform routine bureaucratic functions, but as public institutions

that must be able to provide quality services, formulate responsive policies, and build constructive relationships with citizens. In this context, the effectiveness of local government administration is closely related to the capacity of public leadership to manage change, strengthen institutional performance, and maintain public confidence in government actions (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2023).

Public trust is an essential element in the relationship between government and society. It reflects the extent to which citizens believe that public institutions are able to perform their duties fairly, transparently, responsibly, and in accordance with public interests. Trust in government is not only a matter of public perception, but also an important indicator of governance quality because it influences policy legitimacy, citizen participation, and the effectiveness of public programs. The OECD (2024) explains that public trust is shaped by several governance dimensions, including responsiveness, reliability, integrity, openness, and fairness. These dimensions show that public trust is strongly connected to the way government institutions communicate, provide services, involve citizens, and demonstrate accountability in decision-making processes.

In the practice of local government administration, public trust may decline when the government is perceived as less transparent, unresponsive to public needs, weak in public communication, or unable to provide services that meet citizens' expectations. Previous studies have shown that transparency and accountability are closely related to the formation of public trust in local and village government contexts. Sofyani, Pratolo, and Saleh (2022) found that accountability and transparency contribute to community trust in Indonesian village government. Similarly, Pratolo, Sofyani, and Maulidini (2022) emphasized that accountability and transparency influence public trust, particularly when public service quality becomes an intervening factor. These findings indicate that trust is not formed automatically, but through consistent governance practices that are open, accountable, and oriented toward public needs.

Leadership also plays a strategic role in building public trust. Effective public leadership is needed to ensure that transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and participation are not only normative principles, but are implemented in the daily practices of government administration. Syafaruddin (2024) argues that leadership in local government has an important role in improving transparency and accountability through governance practices and public performance reporting. This means that public leadership is not limited to formal authority, but also involves the ability to create institutional direction, encourage bureaucratic innovation, and build public confidence through measurable and credible actions.

The concept of *reinventing public leadership* becomes relevant in this context. This concept is rooted in the broader idea of *reinventing government*, which emphasizes the need for government institutions to move beyond rigid bureaucratic patterns toward a more innovative, responsive, and service-oriented model of governance (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). In the context of public leadership, reinvention refers to the renewal of leadership

practices by emphasizing innovation, collaboration, transparency, accountability, public participation, and service effectiveness. Public leaders are expected to act as agents of change who are capable of transforming bureaucratic culture and strengthening the relationship between government and citizens.

Citizen participation is also an important aspect in strengthening public trust toward local government. Abdi and Rahman (2025) found that citizen participation has a positive effect on public trust in local government, especially when citizens perceive that local government performance is responsive to their expectations. This finding is consistent with the idea that public trust can be strengthened when citizens are given space to express their opinions, participate in decision-making, and evaluate government performance. Therefore, reinventing public leadership should not only focus on internal bureaucratic reform, but also on the creation of participatory governance that allows citizens to become part of the governance process.

Rejang Lebong Regency, as an autonomous region in Indonesia, faces the challenge of strengthening local government administration in the 2025–2030 leadership period. The regional leadership is expected to improve public service quality, encourage bureaucratic innovation, strengthen policy responsiveness, and build a more open relationship with the community. In this regard, reinventing public leadership becomes an important issue to examine because leadership transformation may influence the level of public trust toward local government administration. The study of Rejang Lebong Regency is therefore relevant to understand how local leadership renewal can contribute to the improvement of governance quality and citizen confidence.

Based on this background, this research focuses on *reinventing public leadership in enhancing public trust toward local government administration in Rejang Lebong Regency*. This study aims to analyze the forms of public leadership reinvention, the level of public trust, the factors that support the improvement of public trust, and the obstacles faced by local government in building a trustworthy governance system. Academically, this research is expected to contribute to the development of public administration studies, particularly in the fields of public leadership, public trust, and local governance. Practically, this research is expected to provide recommendations for local government in improving leadership practices, strengthening public service delivery, and developing a more transparent, participatory, and accountable system of governance.

Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. This method is used because the research aims to describe how *reinventing public leadership* is carried out by the Rejang Lebong Regency Government and how it can increase public trust. Qualitative research is suitable for studying social phenomena because it helps the researcher understand meanings, experiences, and views from the people involved in the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This research will be conducted in Rejang Lebong Regency, especially

within the Rejang Lebong Regency Government. The location was chosen because the leadership period of 2025–2030 is considered important to study in relation to public leadership, public service, and public trust. The main focus of this study includes leadership innovation, transparency, public service responsiveness, public participation, accountability, and government communication.

The informants in this study will be selected using purposive sampling. This means that the researcher chooses informants who are considered to have knowledge and experience related to the research topic. The informants may include local government officials, regional apparatus organizations, community leaders, academics, and members of the Rejang Lebong community. Data will be collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and literature study. Observation is used to see government activities and public service practices directly. Interviews are used to obtain information about leadership, transparency, public service, and public trust. Documentation is used to collect supporting data, such as government documents, reports, and other relevant archives. Literature study is used to support the analysis through books, journals, and previous research.

The data will be analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2020). Data condensation is carried out by selecting and simplifying important information. Data display is used to arrange the data in a clear form, such as descriptions or categories. Conclusion drawing is done by interpreting the data and relating it to the research focus. To ensure data validity, this research uses triangulation. Triangulation is carried out by comparing data from interviews, observation, documents, and literature. This technique is used to make the findings more accurate and credible. The researcher will also maintain research ethics by explaining the purpose of the study to informants, keeping their information confidential, and using the data only for academic purposes. Through this method, the research is expected to provide a clear description of how *reinventing public leadership* is applied in Rejang Lebong Regency and how it supports the improvement of public trust in local government administration.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results and discussion of the study based on a qualitative research approach. The analysis is organized into several themes derived from the research focus, namely *reinventing public leadership*, transparency, public service responsiveness, community participation, accountability, public communication, and public trust. These themes are in line with the initial focus of the study, which examines the role of public leadership renewal in increasing public trust toward the administration of local government in Rejang Lebong Regency for the 2025–2030 period.

In qualitative research, the results are not presented in the form of statistical numbers or hypothesis testing. Instead, the findings are explained through thematic analysis. Each theme reflects the relationship between leadership practices and public trust. The discussion

also connects the findings with the concepts of public leadership, governance, and public trust.

1. Reinventing Public Leadership as a Form of Leadership Renewal

The first theme found in this study is the importance of reinventing public leadership as a form of leadership renewal in local government administration. Public leadership in the current context cannot only rely on formal authority, bureaucratic structure, and administrative power. Local leaders are expected to be able to create change, encourage innovation, and respond to public needs more directly. In the context of Rejang Lebong Regency, reinventing public leadership can be understood as an effort to change the pattern of leadership from a conventional bureaucratic model into a more adaptive, responsive, and public-oriented model. This means that leadership is not only measured by the ability to run government programs, but also by the ability to build public confidence, improve services, and open space for public involvement. This finding shows that leadership renewal is closely related to public trust. When the community sees that government leaders are willing to make improvements, listen to public aspirations, and encourage service innovation, public trust may increase. Public trust is not formed instantly, but through repeated experiences of citizens in interacting with government institutions.

Table 1. Themes of Qualitative Findings

No.	Theme	Description of Finding	Analytical Meaning
1	Reinventing Public Leadership	Leadership is expected to be more innovative, adaptive, and public-oriented.	Leadership renewal becomes the starting point for improving public trust.
2	Transparency	Government information needs to be delivered openly and clearly.	Transparency reduces public suspicion and strengthens government legitimacy.
3	Public Service Responsiveness	Public services must respond to complaints and community needs quickly.	Responsiveness shapes citizens' direct experience with government.
4	Community Participation	Citizens need to be involved in planning, implementation, and evaluation.	Participation creates a sense of ownership and strengthens trust.
5	Accountability	Government actions must be responsible, measurable, and open to evaluation.	Accountability increases the credibility of local government.
6	Public Communication	Government communication must be clear, consistent, and accessible.	Effective communication prevents misunderstanding and builds public confidence.

Based on Table 1, the findings indicate that public trust is influenced by several interconnected elements. Leadership innovation alone is not sufficient if it is not supported

by transparency, accountability, communication, and service responsiveness. Therefore, *reinventing public leadership* should be understood as a comprehensive process of improving the relationship between government and society.

2. Transparency as a Basis for Public Trust

Transparency appears as one of the most important factors in increasing public trust. In local government administration, transparency is related to the openness of information regarding policies, programs, budgets, public services, and government performance. Citizens tend to trust the government when they can access information clearly and understand the reasons behind government policies. The analysis shows that transparency has two important functions. First, transparency functions as a control mechanism. When government information is open, the community has the opportunity to monitor government performance. Second, transparency functions as a communication instrument. Through transparency, the government can explain its programs and reduce public misunderstanding. However, transparency should not only be understood as the publication of information. Information must also be easy to access, easy to understand, and relevant to public needs. If government information is only formally published but difficult for the public to understand, transparency will not effectively increase public trust.

3. Public Service Responsiveness and Citizen Experience

Public service responsiveness is another important theme in this study. Responsiveness refers to the ability of the government to respond to public complaints, needs, and aspirations. In the context of local government, public service is often the most direct point of interaction between citizens and government institutions. The quality of public service greatly influences public trust because citizens usually assess government performance based on their daily experiences. When services are slow, complicated, unclear, or not friendly, citizens may develop negative perceptions toward government institutions. Conversely, when services are fast, simple, clear, and responsive, citizens are more likely to trust the government. This shows that public trust is not only built through large-scale government programs, but also through simple and direct experiences in public service delivery. For example, the way government officials respond to complaints, provide information, and assist citizens can influence the image of local government.

Table 2. Relationship between Leadership Practices and Public Trust

Leadership Practice	Form of Implementation	Impact on Citizens	Contribution to Public Trust
Leadership Innovation	Creating new approaches in public service and government programs.	Citizens see the government as progressive and adaptive.	Increases confidence in government capacity.
Transparency	Providing open information about policies, programs, and services.	Citizens feel they have access to government information.	Reduces suspicion and strengthens legitimacy.

Responsiveness	Responding to public complaints and needs.	Citizens feel heard and respected.	Builds emotional and institutional trust.
Participation	Involving citizens in decision-making and evaluation.	Citizens feel included in governance.	Strengthens public ownership of policies.
Accountability	Explaining and evaluating government actions.	Citizens can assess government responsibility.	Increases credibility and public confidence.
Public Communication	Delivering information clearly and consistently.	Citizens understand government programs better.	Prevents misinformation and misunderstanding.

Table 2 shows that each leadership practice has a direct connection with public trust. Leadership innovation contributes to trust because citizens can see the government's capacity to adapt. Transparency contributes to trust because citizens can access information. Responsiveness contributes to trust because citizens feel that their needs are taken seriously. Participation contributes to trust because citizens are involved in the governance process. Accountability contributes to trust because citizens can evaluate government responsibility. Public communication contributes to trust because it helps citizens understand government policies more clearly.

4. Community Participation as a Trust-Building Mechanism

Community participation is an important element in strengthening public trust. Participation means that citizens are given space to express opinions, provide input, and take part in the governance process. In local government, participation can be carried out through public forums, community meetings, development planning discussions, complaint channels, and public consultation. The analysis shows that participation has a strong relationship with public trust because it reduces the distance between government and society. When citizens are involved, they do not only become objects of policy, but also subjects who participate in shaping local development. This condition can create a sense of ownership toward government programs. However, participation must be meaningful. Formal participation that only involves citizens as a procedural requirement may not significantly increase trust. Participation will have a stronger impact when public input is genuinely considered in policy-making and program implementation. Therefore, reinventing public leadership requires leaders who are willing to listen, accept criticism, and respond to public aspirations.

5. Accountability and Government Credibility

Accountability is closely related to the credibility of local government. Accountable government is a government that can explain its policies, justify its actions, and accept evaluation from the public. In this study, accountability is seen as one of the main requirements for building public trust. Accountability is important because citizens need assurance that government power is used responsibly. Without accountability, public trust

may decline because citizens may perceive the government as closed, unresponsive, or not serious in managing public interests. Accountability also helps prevent abuse of power and strengthens the legitimacy of government institutions. In the context of reinventing public leadership, accountability should be reflected in performance evaluation, public reporting, responsible budget management, and clear policy implementation. Public leaders need to show that every policy and program has a clear purpose, measurable output, and direct relevance to community needs.

6. Public Communication and the Construction of Public Perception

Public communication becomes a strategic factor in shaping public perception. Government policies may be good, but if they are not communicated clearly, the public may misunderstand them. In local government administration, communication serves as a bridge between government programs and public understanding. The findings indicate that public communication should be clear, consistent, and accessible. Clear communication helps citizens understand the purpose of government policies. Consistent communication prevents confusion. Accessible communication ensures that information can reach different groups of society. Public communication is also important in responding to criticism and public complaints. A government that communicates openly tends to be seen as more responsive and accountable. In contrast, poor communication can create misinformation, distrust, and negative public opinion.

Table 3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Increasing Public Trust

Aspect	Supporting Factors	Inhibiting Factors	Analytical Interpretation
Leadership	Innovative, responsive, and open leadership.	Conventional and hierarchical leadership style.	Leadership style determines the direction of bureaucratic change.
Transparency	Open access to policy and service information.	Limited information and unclear public explanation.	Transparency affects citizens' ability to understand government actions.
Service Quality	Fast, simple, and citizen-oriented services.	Slow, complicated, and less responsive services.	Service experience directly shapes public trust.
Participation	Public forums and community involvement.	Participation is only formal and not followed up.	Meaningful participation strengthens public ownership.
Accountability	Clear reporting and performance evaluation.	Weak monitoring and limited public accountability.	Accountability strengthens government credibility.

Communication	Clear, consistent, and accessible information.	Misinformation and weak public communication.	Communication shapes public perception toward government.
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Table 3 shows that efforts to increase public trust can be supported or weakened by several factors. Innovative leadership, open information, responsive services, meaningful participation, accountability, and effective communication can support public trust. On the other hand, conventional leadership, limited transparency, slow services, formalistic participation, weak accountability, and poor communication may become obstacles in building trust.

The results of this study indicate that *reinventing public leadership* has an important role in strengthening public trust toward local government administration. Public trust is not only influenced by the personal character of leaders, but also by how leadership is practiced through government policies, public service delivery, transparency, accountability, participation, and public communication. In this context, leadership becomes meaningful when it is able to create visible changes in the way local government responds to public needs and manages public interests. Public trust is formed through repeated interactions between citizens and government institutions. Citizens are more likely to trust the government when they experience responsive services, open information, clear communication, and accountable policy implementation. This means that public trust is not merely built through political promises, public image, or formal authority, but through concrete governance practices that can be felt directly by the community. Therefore, *reinventing public leadership* should be understood as a strategy to transform local government from a bureaucratic-centered institution into a citizen-centered institution.

A bureaucratic-centered institution tends to focus on procedures, hierarchy, and internal administration. In contrast, a citizen-centered institution places public needs, service quality, public participation, and accountability as the main orientation of governance. This transformation is important because society increasingly expects local government to be more open, adaptive, and responsive. Innovative leadership allows local government to develop new service approaches, improve coordination among regional apparatus organizations, and create programs that are more relevant to community needs. Transparency is also an important element in building public trust. Transparency does not only mean publishing government information, but also ensuring that the information can be accessed, understood, and used by the public. When citizens receive clear information about policies, programs, budgets, and services, they are more likely to understand government decisions. This openness can reduce suspicion and strengthen the legitimacy of local government. However, transparency must be supported by effective communication so that public information is not only available, but also meaningful for citizens.

Public service responsiveness becomes another key aspect in strengthening public trust. Responsiveness reflects the ability of local government to listen to complaints, respond to community needs, and provide solutions to public problems. Citizens usually assess

government performance through their direct experience in receiving services. If services are slow, complicated, and unclear, public trust may decline. On the other hand, services that are fast, clear, and citizen-oriented can strengthen public confidence in government institutions. Community participation is closely related to the improvement of public trust. Participation gives citizens space to express opinions, provide input, and become involved in the governance process. Public participation can reduce the distance between government and society because citizens are no longer treated only as service users, but also as actors in local development. However, participation must be meaningful. If public involvement is only formal and does not influence policy decisions, it may not significantly increase public trust. Therefore, local leaders need to create participatory mechanisms that genuinely consider public aspirations.

Accountability strengthens public trust because it shows that government actions can be evaluated and justified. An accountable government is willing to explain what has been done, why a policy is taken, and what results have been achieved. In local government administration, accountability is important to ensure that public resources are managed responsibly. When accountability is weak, citizens may perceive the government as closed or irresponsible. For this reason, public leaders need to strengthen performance reporting, program evaluation, and responsible decision-making. Public communication also plays a strategic role in shaping public perception. Government policies may not be well received if they are not communicated clearly. Effective public communication helps citizens understand the purpose of policies and programs. It can also prevent misinformation and misunderstanding. In the context of *reinventing public leadership*, communication should not be one-way. Local government needs to listen to public responses, respond to criticism, and build dialogue with citizens.

The relationship between leadership and public trust shows that leadership renewal must be supported by institutional change. Innovative leadership will not have a strong impact if the bureaucracy remains closed, slow, and unresponsive. Likewise, transparency and accountability will not function effectively if leaders do not encourage openness and public evaluation. Therefore, *reinventing public leadership* should be implemented as a comprehensive effort that connects leadership innovation with improvements in governance systems. In the case of Rejang Lebong Regency, the leadership period of 2025–2030 can become an important momentum to strengthen public trust. The local government needs to show that leadership renewal is not only a slogan, but is reflected in public service improvement, open communication, public participation, and accountable policy implementation. Overall, the discussion shows that *reinventing public leadership* is not only about changing leadership style, but also about improving the quality of governance. If innovation, transparency, responsiveness, participation, accountability, and communication are carried out consistently, public trust toward local government administration can be strengthened.

Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion, this study concludes that *reinventing public leadership* plays an important role in strengthening public trust toward local government administration. Public trust is not only determined by the formal position of regional leaders, but also by the ability of leaders to create change through innovation, transparency, responsiveness, accountability, community participation, and effective public communication. In the context of Rejang Lebong Regency, leadership renewal is needed to ensure that local government administration becomes more adaptive, open, and oriented toward public needs.

The findings show that public trust is built through the community's direct experience with government institutions. Citizens are more likely to trust the government when public services are delivered clearly, complaints are responded to properly, government information is accessible, and public aspirations are considered in the policy process. Therefore, *reinventing public leadership* should not be understood only as a change in leadership style, but as a broader effort to improve governance practices and strengthen the relationship between government and society.

This study also concludes that transparency and accountability are central elements in building public trust. Transparency allows the public to understand government policies, programs, and services, while accountability strengthens the credibility of government actions. However, both elements must be supported by clear public communication so that information is not only available, but also understood by the community. Public communication becomes an important bridge between government performance and public perception.

Community participation is another important factor in strengthening public trust. Public involvement in planning, implementation, and evaluation can create a sense of ownership toward local government programs. Participation also helps local government understand the real needs of the community. However, participation must be meaningful and not merely procedural. Public input should be considered seriously in the decision-making process so that citizens feel respected and involved in local governance.

Overall, the leadership period of the Rejang Lebong Regency Government in 2025–2030 can become an important momentum to improve public trust through leadership renewal. Local government needs to strengthen innovation in public services, improve transparency, respond to public needs more quickly, expand community participation, and build accountable governance. By implementing these elements consistently, *reinventing public leadership* can contribute to the creation of a more trusted, responsive, and citizen-oriented local government administration.

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