

Visionary-Oriented Leadership as a Foundation for Building Innovation: A Case Study of the Semarang City Health Office

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ABSTRAK

Kepemimpinan inovatif merupakan strategi krusial dalam membentuk budaya kerja yang inovatif, namun sering kali pemimpin menghadapi tantangan dalam menetapkan gaya kepemimpinan inovatif yang berkesinambungan. Penelitian ini bertujuan menelaah peran aspek visioner dalam membangun gaya kepemimpinan inovatif di organisasi sektor publik, dengan fokus pada Dinas Kesehatan Kota Semarang yang berhasil menciptakan budaya kerja inovatif sekaligus meningkatkan indeks kualitas inovasi secara konsisten. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif untuk menggali praktik-praktik terbaik dalam proses kepemimpinan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan inovatif visioner di Dinas Kesehatan Kota Semarang memiliki karakter visioner yang terlihat dari kejelasan arah dan penerapan strategi yang matang penyampaian visi, antusiasme pemimpin dalam mewujudkan visi, penetapan tujuan yang mengutamakan kolaborasi lintas bidang, serta penjabaran misi sebagai wujud konkret dari visi yang telah ditetapkan. Kesimpulan penelitian menegaskan bahwa aspek visioner perlu ditempatkan sebagai tahap awal dalam membangun gaya kepemimpinan inovatif di sektor publik, dengan menitikberatkan pada kolaborasi lintas bidang dan konkretisasi visi sebagai landasan penguatan budaya kerja inovatif.

ABSTRACT

Innovative leadership serves as a crucial strategy in advancing an innovative work culture; thus, leaders frequently deal with obstacles in establishing a sustainable innovative leadership model. This study aims to examine the role of visionary elements in shaping innovative leadership within public sector organizations, with a focus on the Semarang (city) Health Office, which has successfully developed an innovative work culture while consistently enhancing its innovation quality index. A descriptive qualitative approach was applied to identify best practices in leadership processes. The findings indicated that innovative creative leadership at the Semarang City Health Office is characterized by visionary traits, including clarity and strategic delivery of vision, leader enthusiasm in realizing the vision, goal setting that emphasizes cross-sector collaboration, and the articulation of mission as a concrete manifestation of the established vision. The study concluded that visionary aspects should be prioritized as the initial phase in developing innovative leadership in the public sector, emphasizing cross-sector collaboration and vision concretization as the foundation for strengthening an innovative work culture.

INTRODUCTION

The public sector in Indonesia faces persistent challenges in achieving welfare goals and delivering quality services, exacerbated by Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (VUCA) conditions that demand institutional agility (Mutavski et al., 2024). Within this context, public organizations are urged to adopt flexible, innovative, and learning-oriented approaches to reform bureaucratic structures and processes. Scholarly discourse in public administration has

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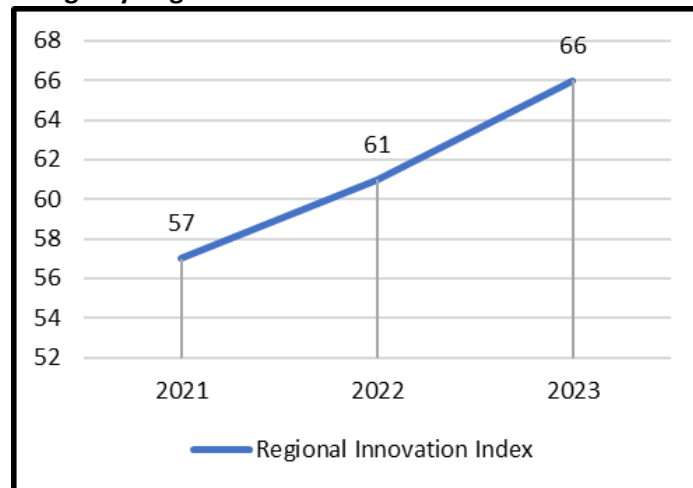
KEYWORDS

Innovative Leadership; Public Service Innovation; Public Sector Innovation Strategic; Public Sector Leadership; Agile Governance

been shaped by two dominant paradigms: New Public Management (NPM), which prioritizes efficiency, performance metrics, and market-oriented service delivery, and New Public Service (NPS), which emphasizes democratic values, collaboration, and citizen engagement (Masinambow & Polii, 2023). An integrated application of both frameworks offers a balanced pathway toward public value creation, merging operational effectiveness with participatory governance.

Innovation has consequently emerged as a critical performance indicator, enabling governments to address complex societal issues that exceed the capacity of conventional bureaucratic mechanisms. Empirical studies affirm that rising public expectations and multifaceted policy problems compel state agencies to innovate in policy design and service delivery (Waruwu, 2024). Within this process, leadership is a decisive factor. Leaders’ vision, behavior, and managerial approach directly shape organizational creativity and motivation. Effective public leadership today requires a synthesis of NPM-driven managerial competence and NPS-oriented collaborative ethos to inspire and institutionalize innovation. In Indonesia, the Ministry of Home Affairs has formalized innovation incentives through the Innovative Government Award (IGA), a national program designed to spur innovative capacity among local governments. The Semarang City Government has been consistently recognized in this scheme, being named one of Indonesia’s most innovative cities for three consecutive years (2021–2023). This distinction is quantitatively reflected in its Regional Innovation Index scores, which have shown a sustained upward trajectory, rising from 45.21 (2021) to 47.38 (2022) and reaching 49.75 (2023) (see Figure 1). This consistent performance indicates a deeply embedded culture of innovation within Semarang’s local bureaucracy.

Figure 1.
Semarang City Regional Innovation Index in the Last 3-Year Period



Source: Author Processed

This study focuses on the Semarang City Health Office, which has been identified as one of the most innovation-productive agencies within the city’s administration. Under the leadership of Dr. Mochamad Abdul Hakam, Sp.PD, the office has implemented several service innovations such as [contoh konkret: “SI SEHAT” mobile health service, digital patient monitoring system, etc.] that have demonstrably improved service access and health outcomes. These outputs provide empirical evidence of successful innovation implementation, moving beyond conceptual claims.

The theoretical lens adopted is the innovative leadership framework by Friandi (2022) which identifies four dimensions: encouraging participatory innovation, setting clear goals, developing creative solutions, and rewarding innovative culture. Dr. Hakam's leadership serves as a representative case of how this framework operates in Indonesia's regional bureaucracy. However, the novelty of this study lies not merely in applying this framework, but in examining how NPM and NPS principles are concurrently enacted through leadership practices to foster innovation a theoretical intersection still underexplored in the context of Indonesian local government. Methodologically this study employs a qualitative case study approach, using in-depth interviews, document analysis, and observation. To ensure analytical consistency and strengthen scientific rigor, the data coding process followed structured thematic analysis techniques, aligning code categories explicitly with the four dimensions of the Marfianti (2021) framework. This alignment ensures that findings are directly traceable to the research constructs and mitigate prior inconsistencies between data and method.

Accordingly this research aims to analyze how visionary-oriented leadership initiates and institutionalizes an innovation culture within the Semarang City Health Office. The findings are expected to contribute both to theoretical discussions on hybrid public governance and to practical guidance for public leaders seeking to enhance their organization's innovative capacity in a VUCA era.

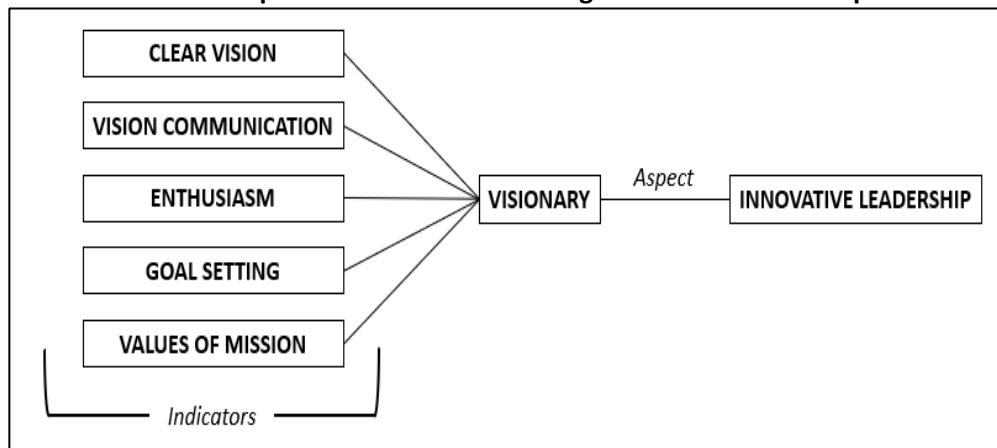
Literature Review

Visionary Leadership and Innovation in Public Sector Governance

Innovation in the public sector has become a critical response to complex societal demands, requiring leadership that transcends traditional bureaucratic management. While the role of leadership in fostering innovation is widely acknowledged (Despriyantje et al., 2024), the specific process of building an innovative leadership model particularly the 'how', 'when', and 'where' remains underexplored in a cohesive theoretical framework.

Existing literature offers valuable but fragmented perspectives. Studies emphasize the importance of ethical and trust-based leadership as a catalyst for innovation (Putri et al., 2024) and highlight how visionary leadership enhances team integration for collaborative outcomes (Karindradevi et al., 2025). Furthermore, research underscores the leader's role as a bridge between bureaucracy and transformation, aligning strategy with future-oriented goals (Zhou et al., 2024). A significant contribution comes from Somsueb et al. (2019), who proposed a structural model identifying key dimensions for innovative leadership, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2.
Vision Aspect Framework in Building Innovative Leadership



Source: (Katsaros, 2025)

The existing literature on innovative leadership reveals two critical theoretical shortcomings. First, a persistent prescriptive-descriptive divide is evident. While influential frameworks, such as that of (Despriyantie et al., 2024), successfully describe the core components (vision, risk management) and outcomes of innovative leadership, they offer limited actionable guidance. They fall short in detailing how to cultivate these dimensions within the specific, constraint-heavy context of public bureaucracies, when specific leadership behaviors are most pivotal during innovation cycles, or where in organizational structures interventions should be targeted. Second, there is a lack of integrative process models. Alternative approaches, like transformational leadership, emphasize inspiration but gloss over the systematic building process, while collaborative governance frameworks focus on external engagement without explaining the internal leadership mechanics needed to initiate it. Thus, the crucial process of how a concretely articulated and operationalized vision serves as a foundational catalyst to build and sustain innovative leadership remains underexplored as a replicable model.

This study directly addresses these gaps by empirically investigating the Semarang City Health Office. Its novelty lies not in reaffirming the importance of visionary leadership, but in elucidating the concrete, processual model of how it is built and institutionalized. The research shifts the inquiry from what defines an innovative leader to how such leadership is developed through actionable stages vision articulation, contextual adaptation, employee enrollment, and structural reinforcement. By detailing this process observed in a "best practice" setting, the study aims to produce a contextually enriched, replicable blueprint. This contribution seeks to bridge the theoretical gap between descriptive leadership theory and prescriptive, actionable model-building for innovation in public administration.

RESEARCH METHODS

Through a qualitative approach, the study investigates and interprets social phenomena to reveal the meanings underlying activities, contexts, events, and artifacts, thereby fostering a more profound understanding (Hardani et al., 2020). The research was conducted at the Semarang City Health Office, which has a good track record of public service innovation. The research focus determined by the researcher aims to limit the scope of inquiry and ensure depth in the analysis. This study is situated within the discipline of public administration, focusing on the dimensions of public management under the framework of the New Public Service paradigm. Both primary and secondary data were utilized in the research process. Data

collection was conducted through multiple techniques, including (1) observation, (2) in-depth interviews, (3) document analysis, and (4) the use of visual materials. The analytical and interpretive process followed several stages: (1) data preparation and organization, (2) initial familiarization with the data, (3) coding, (4) categorization and theme development, and (5) interpretation (Sulistiyawati, 2023).

During the coding process, all textual data from interviews, field notes, and documents were broken down into meaningful units representing specific actions, ideas, or experiences. These codes were then grouped into broader categories that reflected patterns or relationships among the data. From these categories, the researcher developed themes inductively, allowing patterns to emerge naturally from the data rather than being imposed a priori. Each theme represented a higher-order concept that captured the essence of participants' experiences and organizational practices, particularly in relation to leadership, innovation processes, and organizational culture within the Semarang City Health Office. The themes were continuously refined through iterative comparison between data and emerging conceptual insights until theoretical saturation was achieved. To ensure validity and reliability, this study applied source triangulation, which involves cross-checking and confirming findings by comparing data derived from multiple sources, including interviews, observations, and documents (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This process strengthened the credibility of the developed themes and ensured that the interpretations accurately represented the empirical reality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Vision Alignment and Leadership Commitment in Strengthening Public Health Innovation

The harmonization of the Semarang City Government's broader vision with the operational vision of the Semarang City Health Office illustrates the strategic clarity embedded within the institution. The leaders here have formulated a clear and focused vision, directing organizational priorities toward tackling health-related problems and advancing the quality of healthcare services in Semarang.

"The vision of the Semarang City Health Office currently reads: Realizing an Increasingly Great Semarang City based on Pancasila and the Framework of the Republic of Indonesia with Bhineka Tunggal Ika. We follow this vision from the Semarang City Government. However, our focus is on developing the health sector/affairs."

This finding is also supported by the argument of Semarang City Health Service employees, who stated that vision is fundamental to the preparation of programs that are realized through public service innovation to accelerate the achievement of goals and program achievements.

"In formulating a work program, refer to the leadership's vision. The vision is the basis for achieving the goals that have been designed. The vision of the Semarang City Health Office aligns with the vision of the Semarang City Government. Before a regulation regulated the clarity of the vision, the Health Office built and formulated its regional apparatus vision, in the sense of having its vision that was not the same as the City Government's vision in terms of sentence structure."

The vision of the Semarang City Health Office matches the vision of the Semarang City Government. This shows how the directive from the Minister of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Regulation Number 86 of 2017, is being followed. This regulation explains the process for planning, managing, and evaluating regional development. According to Article 269, paragraph 3, letter (b), the vision and mission of the regional Medium-Term Development Plan

(RPJMD) serve as the foundation for the vision and mission of the city or regency's regional agencies.

The alignment of the Semarang City Health Office's vision with that of the Semarang City Government demonstrates adherence to the Ministry of Home Affairs Regulation No. 86/2017, which regulates the stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation of regional development. As stated in Article 269 paragraph (3) letter (b), the formulation of vision and mission at the agency level, including city and district offices, must be derived from the regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD), thereby ensuring consistency in the direction of local governance (Damayanti et al., 2023).

2. Vision Communication

The head of the Semarang City Health Office conducts vision communication to convey a message to the Health Office's leaders and employees to jointly realize the implementation of the objectives of the vision that have been set together. The implementation of vision communication at the Semarang City Health Office was carried out with an innovation called *TEPA SELIRA*, which has the acronym *Tegur Sapa Senin Pagi Apel Bersama*. This routine activity, as shown in Figure 3, serves as a platform for leaders to deliver guidance, motivational messages, and program evaluations to align employees with the organizational vision.

Figure 3.
TEPA SLIRA (Monday Morning Greeting and Joint Roll Call) Agenda



Source: Semarang City Health Service (2023)

Effective communication between leaders and subordinates is vital to achieving organizational visions and goals. In public sector organizations, structured forums help spread the vision while fostering shared responsibility among employees. At the Semarang City Health Office, this is institutionalized through regular Monday morning activities where leaders directly interact with staff to ensure directions, objectives, and innovations are clearly understood and consistently implemented. *“The organization’s leaders communicate through routine activities such as TEPA SELIRA, where guidance is given to employees to align health programs with the shared vision. Communication also occurs during structural meetings at the Health Office with other division heads. This ensures messages from leaders are delivered clearly and well received by employees.”*

This statement is supported by the opinion of the Head of Public Health at the Semarang City Health Service, who stated that the communication pattern carried out by the Head of the Semarang City Health Service was directly carried out during the TEPA SELIRA activity. *“Leaders conduct communication with a direct communication pattern, usually during morning assembly.*

This activity in the Health Service is called TEPA SELIRA, which is carried out by delivering messages clearly and conducting weekly evaluations. Of course, the communication carried out by leaders is directed at achieving the vision set together. Leaders communicate about the program's progress, obstacles, and whether the goals have been achieved. From this, employees feel happy because the leaders care and give full attention to our program."

The findings in other vision communication indicators are that the communication methods carried out by the Semarang City Health Service manifest in the form of providing direction and information, and carrying out a knowledge-sharing process in terms of developing public service innovations, current health phenomena, and the formation of a culture oriented towards the work culture of BERAKHLAK. *"The leaders gave directions on innovation, current health phenomena, and the work culture of "BERAKHLAK", modern health, traditional health, and others. Even in the activity, there was a quiz about innovation."*

The implementation of vision communication in the Semarang City Health Office, carried out by the Head of the Semarang City Health Office, was performed using the TEPA SELIRA method. This method was performed once a week to facilitate communication between leaders and employees. This qualitative evidence illustrates that communication functions not only as message delivery but also as an empowerment mechanism, shaping a shared sense of purpose and collective motivation. → Qualitative Indicator: Codes such as "direct communication," "routine interaction," and "message clarity" formed the category "vision dissemination," which led to the theme of vision communication. Indicators include (1) structured communication forums (TEPA SELIRA), (2) two-way communication between leaders and employees, and (3) motivation through recognition and feedback mechanisms.

The implementation of vision communication in the Semarang City Health Office, carried out by the Head of the Semarang City Health Office, was carried out using the TEPA SELIRA method. This method was performed once a week to facilitate communication between leaders and employees. This is a finding of the researcher that is not found in other organizations that are forming an innovative culture. Communication with employees is critical to alleviating discomfort, as future innovations are likely to face uncertainty (Sius et al., 2025). This behavior is a characteristic of inspirational motivation leadership, as stated (Zaini et al., 2022) which means that leaders act by motivating and inspiring subordinates by giving meaning and challenges to subordinate tasks. Subordinates are given the opportunity to participate optimally in terms of providing ideas and a vision of the future state of the organization that promises clear and transparent expectations.

3. Enthusiasm

The enthusiasm of the Head of the Semarang City Health Office in building and realizing public service innovation is demonstrated through a strong commitment and consistency in solving public health problems in Semarang City. An interesting finding is that the Head of the Health Office not only encourages but also actively participates in innovation activities, particularly those aimed at improving service quality and community health outcomes. This enthusiasm is evident in the creation of vaccine-related innovations such as Victory and Warak Ngendog. As illustrated in Figure 4, the Warak Ngendog innovation, which is recognized as one of the Top 45 KIPP 2022, reflects the leader's dedication to promoting innovative solutions for public health challenges. The leader's active involvement in these initiatives has become a valuable asset for the organization's growth and sustainability.

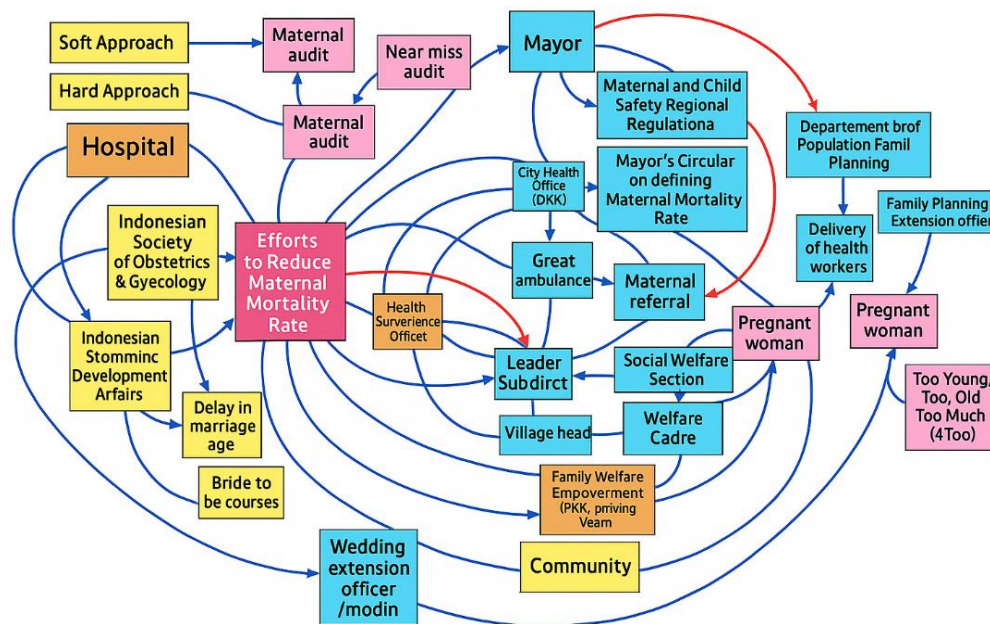
Figure 4
WARAK NGENDOG Innovation Top 45 KIPP 2022



Source: Semarang City Health Service (2023)

The enthusiasm of the Head of the Semarang City Health Office for realizing public service innovations accelerates the handling of national and regional health problems. One example is the initiative to create innovations aimed at reducing stunting rates in Semarang City through the *SANN-PISAN* program. As illustrated in Figure 5, the *SANN-PISAN* Innovation Chart demonstrates cross-sectoral collaboration between hospitals, midwives, health workers, local governments, and communities to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates. Each element from mayoral regulations, maternal mortality audits, maternal referrals, and antenatal services to the involvement of communities and religious leaders illustrates systematic coordination that strengthens the city’s health governance. This innovation emphasizes the importance of multi-stakeholder synergy in improving maternal and child health outcomes.

Figure 5.
SANN-PISAN Innovation Chart



Source: Semarang City Health Service (2023)

The SANN-PISAN Innovation Chart, developed by the Semarang City Health Office in 2023, illustrates the cross-sectoral linkages in efforts to reduce maternal mortality through collaboration among hospitals, midwives, health workers, local governments, and communities. Each component from mayoral regulations, maternal mortality audits, maternal referrals, and antenatal services to the involvement of community and religious leaders forms a systematic network that ensures effective coordination. This innovation underscores the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in preventing pregnancy and childbirth risks, thereby ensuring greater safety for mothers. Another manifestation of the Head of the Health Office's enthusiasm is his active participation in developing the RONALDO public service innovation, a robotic-based health service program designed to enhance service efficiency and integration. As shown in Figure 6, the Head of the Semarang City Health Office is directly involved in the monitoring and implementation of RONALDO in collaboration with the National Institute of Public Administration (LAN). This demonstrates the leader's proactive role in applying technology-driven solutions to improve public health governance.

Figure 6.
Head of Public Health Service Conducts Monitoring RONALDO with LAN



Source: Semarang City Health Service (2023)

The Head of the Semarang City Health Office plays a central role in developing robotic-based health service innovations, notably the RONALDO program, which improves service efficiency and integration. This breakthrough demonstrates the effective application of technology to enhance public health services. The leader's enthusiasm is evident through direct involvement, joint discussions, and collaborative innovation processes within the Health Office.

4. Goal Setting

Determining the common goals of the Semarang City Health Office is essential for effective organizational planning. This ensures that the institution has a clear direction and that the implementation of designed programs and activities can accelerate the achievement of targets in the health sector. "Goal setting becomes important during the organizational planning process. The organization sets goals based on real problems observed in the field, which are then translated into public service innovations. The UHC program gave rise to the PANDANARAN innovation, which is expected to be used by organizational leaders in handling health cases in Semarang. In essence, innovation is the key to accelerating program achievement." As illustrated in Figure 10, the PANDANARAN Innovation in Handling UHC serves as a strategic public service innovation that emerged from the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) program to address health

cases in Semarang. This innovation focuses on complaint services, case handling, and health insurance claims for residents with Semarang City ID cards, enabling the community to receive optimal and equitable healthcare services. The leadership approach reflected in this initiative emphasizes creativity and renewal as key factors in accelerating public health program achievements.

Figure 7.
PANDANARAN Innovation in Handling UHC



Source: Semarang City Health Service (2023)

The PANDANARAN Innovation is a form of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) compliant service innovation for people with Semarang City ID cards. This innovation was developed to achieve common goals set by the regional head, focusing on complaint services, case handling, and health insurance fund claims, ensuring that the people of Semarang City can experience optimal healthcare quality. Setting shared goals within the Semarang City Health Office is not carried out spontaneously but is designed based on problems observed in the field. For instance, the Head of the Semarang City Health Office has established goals to address issues related to stunting, maternal health, anemia, and the prevention of energy and nutritional deficiencies among pregnant women.

“The determination of public service innovation objectives is carried out by analyzing problems in the field based on valid data so that innovation does not arise suddenly. In the health sector, this is realized through Roberto Carlos' innovation, namely promotional interventions for pregnant women and assistance to prevent anemia and chronic energy deficiency.” As shown in Figure 7, the ROBERTO CARLOS Innovation Network Map illustrates the structure and workflow of this health innovation, which integrates promotional activities, field assistance, and monitoring systems. This innovation serves as a preventive measure to improve maternal health and reduce the risk of anemia and chronic energy deficiency. The planned and data-driven nature of goal setting ensures that innovations like Roberto Carlos are aligned with the community's real health needs and contribute directly to achieving the Semarang City Health Office's strategic objectives.

The Semarang City Health Service has made adjustments to create a program based on public service innovation, making public service innovations on a technological basis so that mission values can be achieved well and efficiently.

“The Health Office supports the implementation of the values in the Health Office's mission; these missions align with the mission of the Semarang City Government. To realise this, efforts are made to provide health resources built through good health infrastructure based on technology and innovation. This is done so that the values of the mission can be achieved properly and efficiently. The organisation also provides facilities by building good technology and innovations, per the existing mission.”

The mission of the Semarang City Health Office aligns with that of the City Government as mandated by Permendagri No. 86 of 2017 and is carried out with commitment, synergy, and collaboration in health affairs. Research findings show that the Head of the Health Office demonstrates visionary leadership through clarity and communication of vision, strong enthusiasm, goal setting, and mission values, all of which have been effectively implemented.

Leadership is widely recognized as a determinant of organizational innovation. Leaders operating within supportive environments are more inclined to adopt creative practices, thereby motivating subordinates to think beyond conventional approaches (Jane & Pawitan, 2025). Transformational leaders inspire enthusiasm, reinforce organizational missions, and acknowledge individual capacities as strategic resources, fostering shared responsibility and organizational adaptability (Winoto & Handayani, 2022). This orientation is reflected in the leadership of the Semarang City Health Office, which demonstrates transformational attributes in mobilizing collective efforts to address health challenges. Visionary leadership, on the other hand, strengthens team cohesion and facilitates collaborative innovation through a clear articulation of institutional goals (Agatha & Pradana, 2025). The evidence substantiates the leadership pattern of the Semarang City Health Office, which demonstrates transformational features and enabling conditions. Taken together, transformational and visionary leadership operate synergistically: the former inspires commitment and creativity, while the latter ensures coherence and direction, thus embedding innovation as both a cultural norm and a strategic imperative in public sector governance (Saffa et al., 2025).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and discussion, this study concludes that the primary research objective—to analyze how visionary-oriented leadership initiates and institutionalizes an innovation culture within the Semarang City Health Office has been achieved. The analysis confirms that the leadership of Dr. Mochamad Abdul Hakam operationalizes the four dimensions of the Somsueb et al. (2019) framework through concrete, context-specific actions. Key scientific findings reveal that innovative leadership in this public sector setting is enacted through a dynamic process beginning with the leader's ability to articulate a clear, adaptive vision (“where”), which is then systematically embedded through participatory goal setting, cross departmental communication forums, and structured recognition programs (“how”). This process aligns leadership behaviors with critical innovation cycles, such during program design and stakeholder mobilization phases (“when”). The study's scholarly contribution is twofold. Theoretically, it addresses the identified prescriptive-descriptive divide by elaborating a processual model that specifies the mechanisms (routine rapat inovasi, innovation awards) through which a visionary foundation activates other innovative leadership dimensions. This provides a contextualized, actionable extension to existing frameworks. Practically, it offers a replicable blueprint for public

sector leaders, demonstrating how to transform visionary rhetoric into an embedded culture of innovation, as evidenced by the institutionalization of programs like RONALDO and SANN-PISAN.

This research has limitations. As a qualitative case study, its findings are context-bound to the Semarang City Health Office, which may limit generalizability. The reliance on perceptual data from interviews also presents potential subjectivity. Therefore, recommendations for future research include: 1) conducting comparative case studies across different public organizations or regions to test and refine the proposed processual model; 2) employing mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to quantitatively measure the correlation between specific leadership behaviors and innovation outputs over time; and 3) exploring the role of digital transformation as both an enabler and an outcome of visionary public sector leadership.

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