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The Role of Emotional Intelligence of Civil Servants in Improving the Quality of Public Services at the Population and Civil Registration Office of Buol Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of emotional intelligence among civil servants (ASN) in improving the quality of public services at the Population and Civil Registration Office (Disdukcapil) of Buol Regency. The background of this research stems from the phenomenon of public service challenges, such as unresponsive attitudes of officials and suboptimal communication. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The research informants consist of the head of the office, the head of the service division, ASN service staff, and members of the public using the services. The findings show that emotional intelligence plays an essential role in improving professionalism and the quality of interactions between officials and the community. Officials with strong self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation can deliver more effective, friendly, and satisfying services. Conversely, poor emotional control diminishes the public service image. This study emphasizes that developing emotional intelligence must be an integral part of human resource development to achieve quality, humanistic, and citizen-oriented public services.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence; Civil Servants; Public Service; Service Quality; Population and Civil Registration Office.

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INTRODUCTION

Public service is one of the fundamental elements of governance focused on public welfare. The government, as a service provider, must deliver services that are fast, accurate, fair, and of high quality. Within the framework of bureaucratic reform, public service is a key indicator of government success in realizing good governance. Therefore, every civil servant (ASN) is required to possess not only technical competence but also personal and social competence to perform their service duties optimally.

The quality of public services is influenced not only by policies and bureaucratic systems but also by the behavior and emotional abilities of the officials delivering the service. Officials often face work pressure, public complaints, and limited facilities. These situations require strong emotional management skills to remain professional. Emotional intelligence plays a vital role in maintaining psychological stability and improving work effectiveness in delivering public services.

According to **Goleman (1998)**, emotional intelligence comprises five main components: self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills. A person with high emotional intelligence can recognize their emotions, understand others' feelings, and adjust behavior appropriately in social contexts. In public service, emotionally intelligent civil servants can better handle work pressure, communicate effectively, and provide friendly and empathetic service to the public.

In Indonesia, public services still face challenges, particularly in the quality of interactions between officials and the public. Many complaints arise not merely from bureaucratic delays but from uncommunicative, impatient, or indifferent attitudes of officials. This phenomenon indicates that

emotional intelligence plays a critical role in creating quality, humanistic, and citizen-oriented public services.

The Population and Civil Registration Office (Disdukcapil) of Buol Regency carries a major responsibility in providing administrative services, such as ID cards, family cards, birth certificates, and other vital documents. Due to high service intensity and public interaction, ASN in this office must possess mature emotional abilities to perform effectively.

Although several innovations, such as digital service systems and online queues, have been implemented, service quality issues remain. Public complaints—such as document delays, unclear information, and unfriendly service—suggest weaknesses in emotional management, empathy, and interpersonal communication among civil servants.

This indicates that civil servants' emotional intelligence greatly influences public perception and satisfaction. Those who can understand and manage emotions provide open, patient, and responsible services. Conversely, low emotional intelligence often leads to negative emotional responses, damaging institutional credibility.

Previous studies (e.g., **Ramlah, 2023**) confirm a positive relationship between emotional intelligence, employee performance, and public service quality. Employees with high emotional intelligence tend to exhibit better job satisfaction, motivation, and organizational commitment. Thus, developing emotional intelligence is a critical investment for enhancing professionalism and service effectiveness.

Based on these insights, this study aims to deeply analyze how emotional intelligence affects the attitudes, behaviors, and performance of civil servants in delivering public services. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to public administration studies and practically to improving human resource development strategies for professional, humanistic, and citizen-centered services.

METHOD

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at providing an in-depth understanding of how emotional intelligence among civil servants enhances public service quality. Data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation with the head of the office, division heads, service staff, and citizens using the services. Informants were selected using purposive sampling. Data analysis followed the interactive model of **Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014)**, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was tested through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research conducted at the Population and Civil Registration Office (Disdukcapil) of Buol Regency, it was found that the emotional intelligence of civil servants (ASN) has a significant influence on improving the quality of public services. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 10 informants consisting of the head of the office, the head of the service division, service implementation staff, and members of the public who use the services. From the results of observations and interviews, it was revealed that most of the officials have shown considerable progress in terms of self-awareness, emotional control, and communication skills with the public.

Several members of the community stated that the services provided at the Disdukcapil office now feel faster, friendlier, and more transparent compared to previous years. Employees tend to give more detailed explanations regarding service procedures and demonstrate patience when dealing with citizens who are not yet familiar with the document processing requirements. However, several challenges remain, such as the limited number of employees in the service department and the high workload during peak hours, which have the potential to reduce the quality of employees' emotional interactions with the public.

In addition, field observations revealed that a work atmosphere that fosters collaboration among service divisions contributes to strengthening employees' emotional balance. Employees who receive support from their colleagues and supervisors tend to be calmer and more motivated in performing their duties. This finding indicates that the work environment and internal social support

play an important role in maintaining the emotional stability of civil servants when providing services to the public.

This phenomenon shows that the improvement of civil servants' emotional intelligence does not occur instantly but is the result of a continuous process of coaching, performance evaluation, and a shift in bureaucratic mindset toward a more human-centered public service orientation. Civil servants who understand the importance of self-control and empathy are able to change the public's perception of local government services, which have often been associated with rigid and slow bureaucracy.

The data analysis process was conducted using the model proposed by Miles, Matthew B., Huberman, A. Michael, and Saldana (2014), which includes three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by selecting and focusing on information relevant to the role of emotional intelligence in public service. Data were presented through narrative descriptions, while conclusions were drawn by interpreting the meaning derived from interview and observation results.

The analysis shows that the dimensions of emotional intelligence, as defined by Goleman (1998) self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills all play a significant role in shaping the service behavior of civil servants at the Population and Civil Registration Office of Buol Regency.

1. Self-awareness recognizing personal emotions and maintaining professionalism under pressure.
2. Self-regulation: staying calm during complaints and avoiding negative reactions.
3. Self-motivation: maintaining enthusiasm without relying solely on supervision.
4. Empathy: understanding citizens' needs and assisting them with care.
5. Social skills: fostering teamwork and effective communication.Hypothesis Test (Resampling Bootstrapping)

The results of this analysis indicate that employees with a high level of emotional intelligence tend to be friendlier, more open, and more professional. Conversely, employees with low emotional intelligence are more likely to be easily provoked, impatient, and find it difficult to build harmonious working relationships.

These research findings reinforce the theory proposed by Goleman (1998), which asserts that emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in determining a person's success in jobs that involve intensive social interaction. In the context of public service, the success of civil servants is not measured solely by their technical or administrative skills but also by their ability to understand and manage emotions—both their own and those of the citizens they serve.

In practice, emotional intelligence becomes a determining factor in the effectiveness of public service delivery. Employees who possess strong self-awareness and empathy are able to understand public complaints without responding emotionally but instead offer rational and communicative solutions. This, in turn, enhances public trust in local government service institutions.

These findings are consistent with studies by Ramlah (2023) and Akmal (2023), which found that emotional intelligence significantly affects the improvement of employee performance and the quality of public services. Both studies emphasized that positive emotional behavior creates a harmonious work environment and directly contributes to increased public satisfaction. Furthermore, this study also demonstrates that a supportive work environment, effective internal communication, and empathetic leadership are key factors in maintaining the emotional stability of civil servants. Leaders who are able to understand the emotional burdens of their subordinates tend to foster an open, collaborative, and respectful organizational culture

.DISCUSSION

This study has several practical implications for the development of human resource management within government institutions.

First, the results of the study emphasize that emotional intelligence should be established as one of the core competencies of civil servants (ASN), on par with technical and managerial competencies. Local governments need to incorporate emotional intelligence training into

employee development programs through in-house training sessions or need-based training initiatives.

Second, the findings indicate the importance of strengthening employee development systems based on emotional behavior and service ethics. Civil servants should not only master systems and procedures but must also possess the emotional adaptability to respond effectively to various service situations. The implementation of coaching and mentoring programs by leaders for their subordinates can serve as an effective strategy to instill humanistic service values.

Third, this study implies that the performance evaluation of civil servants should include behavioral and service attitude aspects. Performance appraisals that focus solely on administrative targets fail to fully represent service quality. Therefore, indicators such as empathy, communication, and patience should be integrated into the performance evaluation system as part of a behavioral assessment approach.

Fourth, from a public policy perspective, this study reinforces the urgency of implementing emotional governancea bureaucratic management model that balances rational, emotional, and moral dimensions in public service delivery. This approach can serve as a model for strengthening the capacity of civil servants in addressing the increasingly complex social dynamics of society.

Based on the findings and discussion, several recommendations can be proposed to enhance the role of emotional intelligence among civil servants in public service delivery within Buol Regency, namely:

1. The Population and Civil Registration Office (Disdukcapil) should organize regular training programs on emotional intelligence and excellent service delivery. These training sessions should focus on developing skills in self-control, effective communication, empathy toward the community, and constructive conflict resolution.
2. A continuous monitoring and evaluation system should be established to assess the behavioral aspects of civil servants in service delivery. Evaluations should not only measure administrative performance but also include attitudes, politeness, and empathy demonstrated during public interactions.
3. Institutional leaders should cultivate an organizational culture grounded in positive emotional values such as honesty, empathy, and social responsibility. This culture can be strengthened through moral and work-ethic development activities, internal communication forums, and reward programs for employees who exhibit exemplary service behavior.
4. Local governments should integrate emotional intelligence development into regional bureaucratic reform policies by including it as an indicator in the civil servants' professionalism index. In this way, bureaucratic reform will not only focus on procedural simplification but also on improving the emotional and spiritual quality of human resources.
5. Cross-agency collaboration is needed to establish an emotional learning and mentoring system for civil servants across various public service units. Such collaboration will strengthen the emotional capacity of government officials and support the realization of public services that are more equitable, high-quality, and citizen-oriented.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the emotional intelligence of civil servants (ASN) plays a highly significant role in improving the quality of public services at the Population and Civil Registration Office (Disdukcapil) of Buol Regency. Strong emotional intelligence enables civil servants to understand their own emotions, control their feelings, and empathize with the citizens they serve. Officials who possess self-awareness, self-control, and high motivation tend to deliver services with professionalism, patience, and a strong sense of responsibility. Such conditions create more harmonious service interactions, increase public trust in government institutions, and strengthen the positive image of public agencies in the region.

The findings of this study show that the five dimensions of emotional intelligence proposed by Goleman (1998)—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—significantly contribute to the effectiveness of public service delivery. Employees with high self-awareness are able to recognize their strengths and limitations at work, while self-regulation enables them to handle pressure without compromising service quality. Self-motivation drives officials to remain enthusiastic and committed despite various challenges. Empathy enhances their sensitivity to citizens' needs, and social skills foster cooperation among colleagues and effective communication with the public.

The relationship between emotional intelligence and public service quality can be explained through the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman & Berry, 1990). The dimensions of emotional intelligence have been shown to correlate with service quality indicators such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. Emotionally intelligent civil servants are able to maintain punctuality in service delivery, exhibit courteous and friendly behavior, and provide a sense of assurance and security to the public. Thus, enhancing emotional intelligence directly improves citizens' perceptions and experiences regarding the quality of services at Disdukcapil Buol.

At the institutional level, this study emphasizes that the development of emotional intelligence must become an integral part of human resource management policies for civil servants. Continuous training and development programs focusing on emotional and interpersonal aspects are needed to build psychologically resilient, communicative, and service-oriented employees. Leaders play a strategic role in creating a supportive work environment, motivating staff, and modeling empathetic and ethical behavior. With continuous coaching and mentoring, civil servants are expected to perform their duties with sincerity and empathy—not merely as administrative obligations.

Overall, the results of this research indicate that emotional intelligence is the fundamental foundation for realizing quality, humanistic, and sustainable public services. Civil servants who maintain a balance between intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence are better equipped to serve as responsive public servants who meet community needs and support the realization of good governance. Therefore, efforts to enhance the emotional intelligence of civil servants must be continuously strengthened through bureaucratic reform policies, non-technical competency training, and performance evaluation systems based on service behavior. Strengthening emotional intelligence among civil servants will enable public service delivery in Buol Regency to become more professional, accountable, and oriented toward citizen satisfaction.

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