

THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EI) IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION LEADERSHIP: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

KAMU YÖNETİMİ LİDERLİĞİNDE DUYGUSAL ZEKÂNIN (EI) ROLÜ: KAVRAMSAL BİR ANALİZ

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ABSTRACT

Leadership in public administration has traditionally been examined through the lenses of rational decision-making, bureaucratic efficiency, and managerial competence. However, contemporary governance challenges—ranging from crises and rapid digital transformation to citizen engagement and accountability—require leaders to demonstrate skills that extend beyond technical expertise. Emotional Intelligence (EI), defined as the capacity to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions in oneself and others, has emerged as a critical yet underexplored dimension of effective leadership. This article provides a conceptual analysis of the role of emotional intelligence in public administration leadership. Drawing on established EI models, particularly those of Goleman and Mayer & Salovey, the paper proposes a framework linking core EI competencies—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—to key leadership functions in public administration such as ethical decision-making, crisis management, collaborative governance, and citizen-centered service delivery. The analysis suggests that emotional intelligence not only enhances organizational performance but also strengthens trust, transparency, and legitimacy in public institutions. By integrating EI into the theoretical discourse on public administration leadership, this article highlights its potential as a vital competency for addressing the complex, dynamic, and relational demands of modern governance. Future research directions and practical implications for leadership development are discussed.

Keywords: Ethical Decision-Making, Leadership, Governance, Crisis Management, Emotional Intelligence

ÖZET

Kamu yönetiminde liderlik, geleneksel olarak rasyonel karar verme, bürokratik verimlilik ve yönetsel yeterlilik bakış açılarıyla incelenmiştir. Ancak, krizler, hızlı dijital dönüşüm, vatandaş katılımı ve hesap verebilirlik gibi çağdaş yönetim zorlukları, liderlerin teknik uzmanlığın ötesine geçen beceriler sergilemesini gerektirmektedir. Duygusal Zekâ (DZ), kişinin kendi duygularını ve başkalarının duygularını algılama, anlama ve düzenleme kapasitesi olarak tanımlanır ve etkili liderliğin kritik fakat yeterince incelenmemiş bir boyutu olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Bu makale, kamu yönetiminde liderlikte duygusal zekânın rolüne ilişkin kavramsal bir analiz sunmaktadır. Goleman ile Mayer & Salovey'in geliştirdiği yerleşik DZ modellerinden yola çıkarak, makale temel DZ yeterliliklerini—öz farkındalık, öz denetim, motivasyon, empati ve sosyal beceriler—etik karar alma, kriz yönetimi, iş birliğine dayalı yönetim ve vatandaş odaklı hizmet sunumu gibi temel kamu yönetimi liderlik işlevleriyle ilişkilendiren bir çerçeve önermektedir. Analiz, duygusal zekânın yalnızca kurumsal performansı artırmakla kalmayıp aynı zamanda kamu kurumlarında güveni, şeffaflığı ve meşruiyeti güçlendirdiğini göstermektedir. Duygusal zekâyı kamu yönetimi liderliği üzerine kuramsal söyleme entegre ederek, bu makale onun modern yönetişimin karmaşık, dinamik ve ilişkisel gerekliliklerini karşılamada hayati bir yetkinlik olma potansiyeline dikkat çekmektedir. Makalede ayrıca gelecekteki araştırma yönelimleri ve liderlik geliştirmeye ilişkin pratik sonuçlar tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etik Karar Verme, Liderlik, Yönetişim, Kriz Yönetimi, Duygusal Zekâ

1. Introduction

The concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) first emerged in the work of Salovey and Mayer (1990: 189- 190), who defined it as the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and use emotions in reasoning and behavior. Their ability-based model positioned EI as a complement to cognitive intelligence, highlighting its role in effective social functioning. Later, Goleman (1995: 195- 197) popularized the idea in organizational studies, proposing a mixed model that emphasized five dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Bar-On (1997) extended this understanding further with a framework that incorporated broader emotional and social competencies, linking EI to interpersonal effectiveness and psychological well-being. While there has been debate about whether EI represents a distinct intelligence or a collection of personality traits and skills, scholars broadly agree that it plays a vital role in leadership effectiveness. Recent studies have reinforced this view, demonstrating that EI enhances conflict resolution, teamwork, and organizational performance across different sectors (Boyatzis, 2018; Supramaniam & Singaravelloo, 2021). Additionally, the evolving conceptualizations of EI underscore its dynamic and context-dependent nature, suggesting that emotional competencies can be developed and refined through targeted training and reflective practice. As such, contemporary research increasingly views EI not merely as an innate capacity but as a critical component of professional development and adaptive leadership in complex organizational environments.

Leadership in public administration, however, has traditionally been understood in terms of rationality, hierarchy, and bureaucratic authority, rooted in Weber's (1947) theory of bureaucracy. With the rise of New Public Management (NPM), the focus shifted toward managerial efficiency, accountability, and performance measurement (Hood, 1991, pp. 3–19). More recently, New Public Governance (NPG) has emphasized collaboration, citizen engagement, and network-based leadership (Osborne, 2006, pp. 377–387). These paradigmatic shifts suggest that public administration leadership cannot be fully explained by technical and procedural competence alone. Instead, leaders are increasingly required to demonstrate adaptability, communication skills, and relational capacities to respond to the complexity of governance in contemporary societies (Van Wart, 2013, pp. 553–565). In this context, emotional intelligence emerges as a critical, yet often overlooked, dimension of effective leadership.

Although EI has been extensively examined in private-sector leadership and organizational behavior, its relevance to public administration has only recently begun to attract scholarly attention. Empirical studies across different contexts confirm that EI positively influences leadership performance and organizational effectiveness in the public sector. For example, research in Malaysia shows that EI enhances both job satisfaction and overall institutional performance among public administrators (Supramaniam & Singaravelloo, 2021). Similarly, Appiah-Kubi, Koranteng, and Opata (2025) demonstrate that EI strengthens leadership effectiveness in Ghana's public service, highlighting its significance in contexts of limited resources. Haricharan (2022) finds a positive relationship between EI and leadership performance among public service executives in South Africa, further supporting the global relevance of EI in governance. Additionally, studies suggest that EI moderates the negative effects of transformational leadership on leaders' emotional exhaustion, underscoring its importance for leader resilience and sustainability (Ejaz et al., 2025). At the micro level, EI competencies such as empathy and

social skills contribute to citizen-centered governance by promoting inclusivity, transparency, and legitimacy in policy implementation (Christensen & Lægreid, 2011; Trisa, 2024). Despite these contributions, the integration of EI into theories of administrative leadership remains limited, with few conceptual frameworks directly addressing the intersection of emotional intelligence and governance. This gap underlines the importance of developing a theoretical model that situates EI within public administration leadership, bridging insights from psychology and organizational behavior with the unique demands of the public sector.

2. Conceptual Framework

Based on the thematic analysis of the selected literature, this study develops a conceptual framework that interrogates and repositions emotional intelligence (EI) within the discourse on leadership effectiveness in public administration. While dominant leadership theories in the public sector have often privileged rational-technical expertise and bureaucratic neutrality, the growing emphasis on EI represents both a theoretical opportunity and a conceptual tension. The proposed framework identifies five interrelated EI competencies—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 1995, pp. 32–36; Salovey & Mayer, 1990, pp. 185–211)—yet it critically examines how these competencies interact with, and at times challenge, the structural and institutional logics of public administration. Importantly, the framework situates EI not as a replacement for traditional bureaucratic competencies but as a complementary lens that can enhance ethical judgment, adaptive leadership, and stakeholder engagement in complex governance contexts. By explicitly addressing the interplay between emotional competencies and institutional constraints, the model offers a nuanced perspective for both scholars and practitioners seeking to cultivate more responsive and resilient public sector leadership.



Self-awareness, although celebrated as the foundation of emotionally intelligent leadership, raises questions about the extent to which introspection can be authentically practiced within hierarchical bureaucratic structures. While it allows leaders to reflect on their emotional triggers and ethical judgments (Bar-On, 1997, pp. 18–25; George, 2000), its practical manifestation may be constrained by institutional cultures that reward conformity and procedural compliance over reflexivity (Appiah-Kubi, Koranteng, & Opata, 2025). Therefore, the cultivation of self-awareness in public leadership is not merely an individual cognitive act but a political one—shaped by the organizational environment’s tolerance for dissent and ethical deliberation. Additionally, fostering self-awareness in such contexts requires deliberate strategies, including mentorship, reflective practices, and feedback mechanisms that encourage critical self-examination without fear of reprisal. Consequently, the effectiveness of emotionally intelligent leadership hinges not only on personal competencies but also on the structural and cultural conditions that enable leaders to translate introspection into ethical and adaptive decision-making.

Similarly, self-regulation, often portrayed as a universal virtue, demands a more nuanced interpretation in public sector contexts. Although it enhances composure and adaptability during crises (Van Wart, 2013, pp. 553–565; Ejaz et al., 2025), excessive emotional restraint may inadvertently reinforce bureaucratic detachment or suppress moral outrage in the face of injustice. The assumption that emotionally regulated leaders are inherently more effective neglects the possibility that affective expression—such as

indignation toward inequality or compassion in policymaking—can be integral to democratic responsiveness. The tension between emotional discipline and emotional authenticity thus reveals a paradox at the heart of EI discourse in public governance. This paradox suggests that effective public leadership requires a calibrated approach, where self-regulation is exercised strategically rather than absolutistically, balancing composure with principled emotional engagement. It also underscores the importance of contextual sensitivity, as the appropriateness and impact of emotional expression vary across organizational cultures, political environments, and stakeholder expectations. Ultimately, advancing EI in public administration demands frameworks that reconcile the benefits of emotional control with the ethical and relational imperatives of responsive governance.

Motivation, particularly intrinsic motivation tied to public service values, is also not immune to critical scrutiny. While EI literature often treats motivation as a stable internal trait (Goleman, 1995, pp. 32–36; Supramaniam & Singaravelloo, 2021), empirical studies suggest that motivation in public institutions is profoundly influenced by external factors such as political interference, bureaucratic inertia, and resource constraints. The valorization of individual motivation risks depoliticizing structural challenges, thereby placing undue responsibility on leaders' emotional fortitude rather than addressing systemic dysfunctions in governance. Therefore, a nuanced understanding of motivation in public leadership must integrate both personal commitment and the organizational and political contexts that enable or constrain action. Recognizing these systemic influences shifts the discourse from idealized notions of heroic leadership toward a more realistic appraisal of what emotionally intelligent leaders can achieve within institutional boundaries. In addition, this perspective invites the design of interventions and policies that bolster intrinsic motivation while simultaneously reforming structural impediments, creating conditions where EI-driven leadership can genuinely thrive.

Empathy, though widely endorsed as a democratic virtue, requires critical contextualization. Its operationalization in public administration assumes that leaders can meaningfully internalize diverse citizen perspectives (Christensen & Lægheid, 2011; Trisa, 2024). Yet empathy, when unexamined, may reproduce paternalistic tendencies, where leaders presume understanding rather than co-create it through genuine dialogue. Additionally, the emotional labor associated with empathetic governance may disproportionately burden women and minority leaders, revealing a gendered and intersectional dimension often omitted from mainstream EI frameworks. In addition, cultivating empathy in public leadership demands deliberate mechanisms for inclusive engagement, participatory decision-making, and reflexive accountability, rather than relying solely on individual emotional sensitivity. It also necessitates recognition of the structural and cultural factors that shape whose voices are heard and how they are interpreted within bureaucratic processes. By embedding empathy within institutional practices rather than treating it as a purely personal attribute, leaders can navigate the delicate balance between responsiveness and responsibility, minimizing the risks of tokenism or emotional overextension.

Social skills, similarly, while essential for communication and collaboration (Boyatzis, 2018; Haricharan, 2022), can become instruments of performative management rather than authentic engagement. The managerialization of emotions—encouraging leaders to deploy “soft skills” strategically—risks commodifying empathy and reducing relational capacities to tools of control and persuasion. In this sense, the integration of EI into administrative

behavior may not necessarily democratize leadership but rather reinforce subtle forms of managerial power. In addition to that a critical approach to social skills in public administration must differentiate between performative interaction and genuinely participatory leadership that fosters trust and co-creation. It also calls for examining how organizational incentives, hierarchical norms, and accountability mechanisms shape the ways leaders exercise relational competencies. Ultimately, embedding social skills within ethical and inclusive governance practices requires vigilance to ensure that emotional intelligence enhances collective outcomes rather than merely serving individual or institutional agendas.

Synthesizing these critiques, the proposed framework does not romanticize EI as a panacea for the shortcomings of bureaucratic leadership. Instead, it situates EI as a contested and contingent competency—one that interacts with institutional norms, power asymmetries, and socio-political contexts. By bridging the rational-bureaucratic tradition of Weber (1947) and the managerial ethos of New Public Management (Hood, 1991, pp. 3–19), this model contributes to an emergent paradigm of “emotional governance.” Yet, it also cautions against the instrumentalization of emotions as a depoliticizing tool that substitutes individual affective labor for structural reform. In doing so, the framework emphasizes the dual responsibility of leaders: to cultivate their emotional competencies while simultaneously advocating for organizational and systemic conditions that enable ethical and responsive governance. It highlights the importance of reflexivity, where leaders continuously interrogate how their emotions, decisions, and actions influence both stakeholders and institutional dynamics. Ultimately, this approach positions EI not as an isolated skill set but as a relational and context-sensitive practice that can enhance leadership effectiveness without obscuring the structural and political realities of public administration.



From a methodological perspective, this study acknowledges the limitations of existing EI research, much of which relies on self-report measures and Western-centric conceptualizations of emotion and leadership. Future inquiry should adopt interpretivist and critical approaches—such as discourse analysis or ethnographic observation—to unpack how EI is constructed, negotiated, and performed across diverse administrative cultures. Empirical research should also examine the potential tensions between emotional authenticity and institutional rationality, assessing how emotional competencies translate into concrete governance outcomes beyond managerial rhetoric. In simpler terms, this conceptual framework positions EI as a double-edged construct within public administration: simultaneously a catalyst for ethical and human-centered leadership, and a potential mechanism for the subtle reproduction of managerial control. A critical engagement with EI thus invites scholars and practitioners to move beyond its psychologized interpretations toward a more political, reflexive, and context-sensitive understanding of emotional capacities in governance.

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach to develop a conceptual framework linking emotional intelligence (EI) to leadership effectiveness in public administration. Given the theoretical nature of the study, the methodology relies on systematic literature review and thematic analysis of existing scholarly work across multiple disciplines, including public administration, organizational behavior, and psychology. A purposive

selection of literature was conducted, encompassing both foundational studies (e.g., Salovey & Mayer, 1990, pp. 185–211; Goleman, 1995, pp. 32–36; Weber, 1947, pp. 45–52) and recent empirical research (e.g., Supramaniam & Singaravelloo, 2021; Appiah-Kubi et al., 2025; Ejaz et al., 2025) to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Sources were drawn from peer-reviewed journals, books, and recognized academic databases, emphasizing studies that examined EI in leadership or public sector contexts. This methodological design enables the integration of diverse theoretical perspectives, allowing for a nuanced interpretation of how EI influences leadership behaviors within bureaucratic and service-oriented settings. In addition, by synthesizing insights across disciplines, the study aims to generate a robust conceptual model that advances both academic inquiry and practical applications in public sector leadership development.

The selected literature was analyzed thematically to identify core emotional intelligence competencies—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—and their relationships with leadership functions in public administration, such as decision-making, ethical governance, crisis management, stakeholder engagement, and citizen-centered service delivery. Through qualitative synthesis, patterns and linkages were extracted to construct a conceptual framework that integrates EI into public administration leadership theory. This methodology provides a structured yet flexible approach to generate theoretical insights, allowing for both conceptual clarity and practical relevance. The resulting framework offers a foundation for future empirical research, including surveys, interviews, or case studies, to validate the proposed relationships. In addition, the framework highlights potential pathways through which emotional intelligence can enhance leadership effectiveness, providing actionable guidance for training and professional development programs in the public sector. By bridging theoretical constructs with practical leadership functions, this study contributes to a more holistic understanding of how emotionally intelligent leadership can foster organizational resilience, ethical decision-making, and improved public service outcomes.

4. Implications for Theory and Practice

The theoretical implications of this framework extend beyond the normative assumption that emotional intelligence (EI) is an inherently positive or universal leadership competency. Instead, it foregrounds the contextual, political, and ethical contingencies through which EI is enacted in public administration. By problematizing the instrumentalist orientation of much EI literature, this study contributes to a more critical epistemology of emotional governance—one that interrogates whose emotions are legitimized, which emotional expressions are sanctioned, and how these dynamics reinforce or resist institutional power structures. Within the broader trajectory of administrative theory, this framework challenges the dichotomy between rationality and emotion that has long underpinned Weberian bureaucratic thought. The presumption that emotions undermine objectivity or administrative order has led to their marginalization within the public service ethos. However, the integration of EI into leadership theory exposes the insufficiency of this binary, demonstrating that emotion and reason coexist as mutually constitutive elements of decision-making. At the same time, it resists the managerial appropriation of emotion that characterizes New Public Management (NPM) reforms, where affective competencies are often repackaged as tools for productivity and compliance rather than as mechanisms for ethical deliberation or participatory governance.

From a feminist and intersectional perspective, this framework also draws attention to the uneven emotional economies operating within public institutions. The emotional labor expected of leaders particularly empathy, care, and relational sensitivity has historically been feminized and undervalued. By critically examining EI through this lens, the study underscores the need to reconceptualize emotional competencies not as naturalized personal traits but as socially and culturally constructed practices embedded in power hierarchies. Recognizing this dynamic invites a broader rethinking of leadership development programs, which should aim to redistribute emotional expectations equitably across organizational roles and genders, and to acknowledge emotion as a collective organizational resource rather than an individual managerial asset. In practical terms, integrating EI into public leadership training and performance evaluation requires a nuanced approach. Rather than imposing standardized emotional competencies, institutions should cultivate reflective emotional literacy—the capacity to understand and navigate the emotional undercurrents of policy, administration, and citizen engagement. This involves creating organizational spaces for reflexivity, dialogue, and critical feedback, where emotions are not disciplined but interpreted as sources of insight into institutional culture and public sentiment. Leadership programs, therefore, must transcend technical skill development to incorporate ethical reflection, social justice awareness, and cultural sensitivity as core components of emotionally intelligent governance.

For future research directions, longitudinal and ethnographic studies could examine how EI is performed, negotiated, and resisted within different tiers of public administration. Such research would illuminate how emotional norms are institutionalized, how leaders internalize or subvert them, and how organizational context shapes the expression of emotional competencies. Second, comparative cross-cultural research could address the Western-centric bias prevalent in EI scholarship. The emotional expectations of leadership vary across cultural and political settings; thus, a global understanding of EI must account for local moral orders, administrative traditions, and collective emotional repertoires. For instance, while Western public management models valorize individual authenticity, collectivist contexts may prioritize emotional moderation or relational harmony as markers of effective leadership. Third, future inquiry should explore the political functions of emotional intelligence in governance. Emotions are not merely psychological phenomena but instruments of legitimacy, control, and resistance. Understanding how leaders deploy empathy or emotional narratives to mobilize support, justify policy, or manage dissent can reveal the affective dimensions of political power. This calls for a synthesis of EI theory with critical governance studies, discourse analysis, and political psychology to unpack how emotions operate as technologies of governance. Finally, there is a need for methodological innovation in studying EI. Conventional psychometric tools—designed to quantify and standardize emotional competencies—often obscure the fluidity and contextual variability of emotional experience. Integrating interpretive methodologies, such as narrative inquiry, affective ethnography, and critical hermeneutics, would allow scholars to capture the lived, relational, and embodied dimensions of emotional leadership.

As has been demonstrated, the theoretical and empirical agenda proposed here reorients the study of emotional intelligence in public administration from a managerial competency framework toward a critical, relational, and reflexive paradigm. It contends that emotionally intelligent leadership is not merely about managing feelings but about recognizing the political, ethical, and social implications of emotional life in governance.



By engaging with emotion as a site of both vulnerability and agency, this approach contributes to the ongoing transformation of public administration into a more humane, just, and self-reflective domain of practice. This reconceptualization invites scholars and practitioners to move beyond conventional metrics of performance and efficiency, considering instead how emotional awareness shapes trust, legitimacy, and democratic responsiveness. It also foregrounds the interplay between individual capacities and institutional structures, emphasizing that the cultivation of EI must be accompanied by reforms that support ethical decision-making and inclusive participation. Ultimately, by embedding emotional intelligence within a broader critical and relational lens, public administration can advance toward leadership that is both effective and morally attuned to the communities it serves.

5. Conclusion

This study provides a conceptual analysis of the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in enhancing leadership effectiveness within public administration. By synthesizing foundational and recent literature, the study highlights five core EI competencies—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—and demonstrates how each contributes to critical leadership functions, including ethical decision-making, crisis management, stakeholder engagement, and citizen-centered governance (Goleman, 1995, pp. 32–36; Salovey & Mayer, 1990, pp. 185–211; Appiah-Kubi, Koranteng, & Opata, 2025). The proposed conceptual framework positions EI as a complementary competency to traditional administrative skills, emphasizing the human-centered, relational, and adaptive dimensions of public leadership (Van Wart, 2013, pp. 553–565; Weber, 1947, pp. 45–52).

By situating EI within the tensions between bureaucratic rationality and human governance, this study underscores the importance of acknowledging emotion as both a site of power and a resource for democratic accountability. The proposed framework exposes the limitations of technocratic approaches that depersonalize governance and reduce leadership to procedural competence. In contrast, it advances a vision of public leadership that is emotionally reflexive—capable of recognizing the affective undercurrents of administrative action, the ethical weight of decision-making, and the emotional realities of citizens affected by policy. Such an understanding reframes EI as a normative and political construct, inseparable from questions of justice, inclusion, and care in public institutions. At the same time, this study calls for sustained critical engagement with the potential co-optation of EI by managerialist agendas. When emotional intelligence is instrumentalized as a mechanism for compliance, surveillance, or emotional control, it risks reproducing the very power asymmetries it purports to transcend. The challenge, therefore, lies in cultivating authentic emotional intelligence—one that resists commodification and embraces emotion as a force for empathy, ethical disruption, and transformative governance. This demands a shift from the managerial management of emotions toward their interpretive, deliberative, and emancipatory use in public service.

The study underscores that emotionally intelligent leaders are better equipped to navigate the complexities and uncertainties of modern governance, maintain organizational performance, and strengthen public trust (Supramaniam & Singaravelloo, 2021;

Haricharan, 2022). Although the framework is theoretical, it provides a foundation for future empirical research, including qualitative case studies and quantitative surveys, to validate the relationships between EI and leadership outcomes in diverse administrative contexts. Therefore, integrating emotional intelligence into public administration leadership theory not only enriches the understanding of effective governance but also offers practical guidance for leadership development programs, recruitment, and performance management in the public sector. By recognizing the critical role of EI, policymakers and scholars can foster leaders who are not only technically competent but also emotionally and socially adept in addressing the challenges of contemporary public administration.



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Genişletilmiş Özet

Kamu yönetiminde liderlik, uzun yıllar boyunca rasyonel karar alma, bürokratik verimlilik ve yönetsel yeterlilik perspektiflerinden incelenmiştir. Weber'in bürokrasi anlayışı, kamu yöneticilerini öncelikle düzen, kurallar ve prosedürler üzerinden tanımlamış; yönetsel başarı ise teknik bilgi ve prosedürlere uyum ile ölçülmüştür. Bu geleneksel bakış açısı, kamu kurumlarının istikrarını ve işleyişini sağlamada önemli bir rol oynamış olsa da, günümüz kamu yönetimi ortamı giderek daha karmaşık ve dinamik bir yapıya sahiptir. Özellikle dijital dönüşümün hız kazanması, bilgi ve iletişim teknolojilerinin kamu hizmetlerine entegrasyonu, toplumsal taleplerin çeşitlenmesi, hesap verebilirlik ve şeffaflık beklentilerinin artması, krizlerin sıklaşması ve toplumsal duyarlılıkların yükselmesi, liderlerin yalnızca teknik yetkinliklerle başarılı olamayacağını ortaya koymaktadır. Bu yeni koşullar, liderlerin duygusal ve sosyal yetkinliklerini geliştirmelerini zorunlu hâle getirmiştir. Bu bağlamda duygusal zekâ (Emotional Intelligence – EI), liderlik araştırmalarında giderek daha fazla önem kazanan bir kavram hâline gelmiştir. EI, bireyin kendi duygularını ve başkalarının duygularını fark etme, anlama ve yönetme yeteneği olarak tanımlanmakta olup, Mayer ve Salovey'in tanımıyla duyguların bilişsel süreçlerle uyum içinde kullanılmasını, Goleman'ın yaklaşımıyla ise liderlik performansını belirleyen kritik bir faktörü ifade etmektedir. Kamu yönetimi gibi insan odaklı ve hizmet temelli bir alanda, duygusal zekâ liderliğin tamamlayıcı değil, aynı zamanda stratejik bir bileşeni olarak değerlendirilmektedir.

Duygusal zekânın kamu yönetimi liderliğinde rolünü inceleyen çalışmalarda, temel EI bileşenleri olarak öz farkındalık, öz yönetim, motivasyon, empati ve sosyal beceriler öne çıkmaktadır. Öz farkındalık, liderin kendi duygularını ve davranışlarını anlamasını, güçlü ve zayıf yönlerini fark etmesini sağlar. Öz farkındalık sayesinde lider, karar alma süreçlerinde bilinçli davranabilir ve duygusal önyargılardan kaynaklanabilecek hataları minimize edebilir. Öz farkındalık, ayrıca liderin kendine dair eleştirel bakış açısı geliştirmesini ve çalışanlar ile paydaşlar üzerindeki etkilerini değerlendirmesini mümkün kılar. Öz yönetim ise liderin stresli ve belirsiz koşullarda duygularını kontrol etmesine, tepkilerini düzenlemesine ve dengeli kararlar almasına imkân tanır. Bu beceri, özellikle kriz dönemlerinde liderin panik yapmadan stratejik düşünmesini ve ekiplerini yönlendirmesini mümkün kılar. Motivasyon, liderin yüksek performans ve başarı odaklı davranmasını desteklerken, empati başkalarının duygularını anlamasına, onların ihtiyaçlarını doğru bir şekilde değerlendirmesine ve etkili iletişim kurmasına yardımcı olur. Sosyal beceriler ise liderin ekip yönetimi, iş birliği ve paydaş ilişkilerinde başarılı olmasını sağlar. Bu beceriler yalnızca kurum içi ilişkilerde değil, vatandaş ve toplum ile kurulan etkileşimlerde de kritik öneme sahiptir. Kamu liderlerinin vatandaşın ihtiyaçlarını doğru anlaması, hizmetlerin etkin bir şekilde sunulması ve kurumlara olan güvenin sürdürülmesi, bu becerilerin doğrudan sonucudur.

Kamu yönetimi liderliğinde geleneksel yaklaşımlar, lideri daha çok karar verici ve kontrol sağlayıcı bir otorite olarak konumlandırmıştır. Ancak çağdaş yönetim anlayışları—yeni kamu işletmeciliği, yönetim, dijital hükümet ve hizmetkâr liderlik gibi yaklaşımlar—liderin katılımcı, iletişimci, vizyoner ve dönüşümcü olmasını gerektirmektedir. Bu yeni beklentiler, duygusal zekânın önemini artırmaktadır; çünkü lider artık yalnızca prosedürleri yönetmekle kalmayıp, insan ilişkilerini şekillendirmek, ekipleri



motive etmek, çatışmaları yönetmek ve güven inşa etmek durumundadır. Liderin yalnızca formal otoriteye dayalı hareket etmesi, karmaşık paydaş ilişkilerinde ve kriz durumlarında yetersiz kalabilir. Bu nedenle EI, liderin hem örgüt içi performansını hem de toplumla olan etkileşimini güçlendiren stratejik bir yetkinlik olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Duygusal zekâ, liderin empati kurma, farklı paydaşların ihtiyaçlarını anlama ve karar süreçlerinde adil davranma kapasitesini artırarak kamu hizmetlerinin niteliğini doğrudan etkiler. Örneğin, afet yönetimi sırasında bir belediye başkanının yalnızca lojistik çözümler üretmesi yeterli değildir; toplumsal kaygıları ve halkın duygusal tepkilerini de yönetebilmesi, kriz iletişiminin etkinliğini ve toplum güvenini artırır. Bu noktada EI, liderin toplumsal dayanıklılığı artırmak için kritik bir araç olarak işlev görür.

Duygusal zekâ, kamu yöneticilerinin etik liderlik performansı açısından da kritik bir role sahiptir. Kamu kurumlarında etik dışı davranışlar, toplumun kamu kurumlarına olan güvenini zedeler ve uzun vadede kurumsal meşruiyeti sarsabilir. Öz farkındalık, liderin kendi değerlerini ve davranışlarını gözden geçirmesine olanak tanırken, öz yönetim duyguların karar süreçlerini olumsuz etkilemesini engeller. Empati, politikaların toplumsal etkilerini doğru değerlendirmeye yardımcı olurken, sosyal beceriler etik kararların uygulanmasını kolaylaştırır. Bu bağlamda duygusal zekâ, yalnızca liderin bireysel performansını artırmakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda kurumun şeffaflık, hesap verebilirlik ve meşruiyet düzeyini de yükseltir. Kamu yönetiminde etik standartların korunması, vatandaş güveninin tesis edilmesi ve kurumsal kültürün güçlendirilmesi, EI'nin liderlik performansına sağladığı katkılar arasında yer alır. Ayrıca, liderlerin duygusal zekâ becerileri, çalışanların etik davranışlarını da olumlu etkileyebilir; örneğin bir yönetici çatışmaları şeffaf ve empatik biçimde yönettiğinde, ekip üyeleri de etik karar alma konusunda daha duyarlı hale gelir. Bu etki, özellikle yolsuzlukla mücadele ve kamu kaynaklarının etkin kullanımı gibi alanlarda belirgin bir rol oynar.

Kriz yönetimi, EI'nin kamu liderliğinde etkili bir şekilde kullanılabileceği önemli alanlardan biridir. Afetler, pandemiler, ekonomik dalgalanmalar ve sosyal çatışmalar gibi krizler, liderler üzerinde yüksek düzeyde baskı ve stres yaratır. Bu koşullarda duygusal zekâyı sahip liderler, sakin kalabilir, ekiplerin moralini yüksek tutabilir, paydaşlar arasında koordinasyonu sağlayabilir ve güven veren iletişim kurabilir. Özellikle belirsizlik ortamlarında öz farkındalık ve öz yönetim, liderin stratejik düşünmesini ve kriz anında etik davranış göstermesini mümkün kılar. Empati ve sosyal beceriler, paydaşların endişelerini anlamak ve etkili çözüm yolları geliştirmek için kritik öneme sahiptir. Bu beceriler, yalnızca operasyonel kriz yönetimini değil, aynı zamanda toplumsal psikolojiyi ve kurumun güven algısını da yönetmeyi sağlar. Örneğin, sel felaketinde bir belediye yöneticisinin yalnızca altyapıyı onarması yeterli değildir; aynı zamanda halkın korku ve kaygılarını anlaması, güven duygusunu yeniden tesis etmesi ve ekiplerini motive etmesi gerekir. EI, bu tür durumlarda liderin etkinliğini doğrudan artırır.

Duygusal zekâ, vatandaş katılımı ve kamu hizmeti kalitesinin artırılmasında da etkili bir araçtır. Empati ve sosyal becerileri güçlü liderler, vatandaşların talep ve beklentilerini daha iyi analiz edebilir, hizmet sunumunda eşitlik ve adalet ilkelerini güçlendirebilir, katılım mekanizmalarını etkinleştirerek demokratik meşruiyeti artırabilir. Bu bağlamda EI, kamu kurumlarının toplumla olan etkileşimini güçlendirerek güven tesisini kolaylaştırır ve insan odaklı yönetim anlayışının hayata geçirilmesini destekler. Vatandaş odaklı yaklaşım,

yalnızca hizmet sunumunun etkinliğini artırmakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda toplumsal katılımı ve geri bildirim mekanizmalarını da geliştirir. Liderin empati ve sosyal becerilerini kullanması, politika yapım sürecine farklı seslerin dahil edilmesini kolaylaştırır ve yönetimde şeffaflığı artırır. Bu durum, özellikle sosyal hizmetler, sağlık hizmetleri ve eğitim politikalarında belirgin bir şekilde gözlemlenir. Vatandaşın güvenini ve memnuniyetini artıran liderlik davranışları, kamu hizmetlerinin sürdürülebilirliğini de garanti altına alır.

Çalışmanın yöntemi, kavramsal bir yaklaşım üzerine kurulmuştur ve sistematik literatür taraması ile tematik analiz yöntemlerini kullanmaktadır. Hem klasik kuramsal çalışmalar hem de güncel ampirik araştırmalar incelenerek çok disiplinli bir bakış açısı oluşturulmuş, duygusal zekânın kamu yönetimi liderliği üzerindeki etkilerini kavramsal düzeyde açıklayan bir çerçeve geliştirilmiştir. Bu çerçeve, EI'nin liderlik işlevlerine etkilerini daha sistematik bir şekilde ortaya koymakta ve gelecekte yapılacak ampirik çalışmalara temel oluşturmaktadır. Özellikle saha araştırmaları, örnek olay çalışmaları ve liderlik geliştirme programları ile bu kavramsal modelin doğrulanması mümkündür. Ayrıca kamu yönetimi eğitim programlarına EI temelli liderlik modüllerinin eklenmesi, yöneticilerin duygusal ve sosyal yetkinliklerini geliştirmelerine katkı sağlayacaktır. Bu yaklaşım, yalnızca akademik literatüre katkı sunmakla kalmayıp, kamu sektöründe liderlik eğitimlerinin uygulanabilirliğini de artırır.

Sonuç olarak, duygusal zekâ kamu yönetimi liderliğinde yalnızca tamamlayıcı bir beceri değil, modern yönetişimin gerektirdiği temel bir yetkinlik olarak öne çıkmaktadır. EI, liderlerin kriz yönetiminde etkinliğini artırmakta, etik karar alma süreçlerini desteklemekte, kurumsal güven ve meşruiyeti güçlendirmekte, çalışan bağlılığını ve vatandaş memnuniyetini yükseltmekte, aynı zamanda hizmet kalitesini iyileştirmektedir. Günümüz kamu yönetimi, teknik bilgi ve prosedür hâkimiyetinin ötesinde, insan ilişkilerini yönetebilme, empati kurabilme ve duygusal tepkileri etkin biçimde yönetebilme kapasitesini gerektirmektedir. Bu bağlamda, duygusal zekâ odaklı liderlik, kamu kurumlarının hem iç işleyişini hem de toplumsal etki kapasitesini güçlendiren stratejik bir araç olarak kabul edilmelidir. Gelecekte yapılacak araştırmalar, EI'nin liderlik performansına etkilerini nicel ve nitel yöntemlerle ölçmeli, farklı kültürel ve kurumsal bağlamlarda karşılaştırmalı analizler yapmalı ve liderlik geliştirme uygulamalarının etkinliğini değerlendirmelidir. Böylece duygusal zekâ, akademik literatürdeki yerini sağlamlaştıracak ve kamu yönetimi pratiklerine somut katkılar sağlayacaktır.



Ek Bilgiler

Çıkar çatışması bilgisi: Çalışmada çıkar çatışması yoktur.

Destek bilgisi: Çalışmada herhangi bir kuruluştan destek alınmamıştır.

Etik onay bilgisi: Çalışma için etik kurul onayına ihtiyaç yoktur.

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