

Leadership Ideas of Ridwan Kamil: A Conceptual Analysis

Muhtar Haboddin

Ilmu Pemerintahan, FISIP Universitas Brawijaya , Jln. Veteran, Jawa Timur
Corresponding Author: Muhtar_haboddin@ub.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explain Ridwan Kamil's ideas on leadership. The choice of leadership ideas is based on the consideration that there has not been any writing specifically discussing this theme. This gap becomes an entry point for understanding Ridwan Kamil's ideas on leadership. Why leadership? Because leadership is one of the core aspects in the study of governance. In revealing Ridwan Kamil's leadership ideas, two data collection methods are used in parallel, namely interviews and literature studies. The results found that Ridwan Kamil's leadership ideas are very concise when defining the meaning of leadership. For example, leadership is about taking risks or solving problems. Furthermore, Ridwan Kamil also classifies the levels of leadership from oneself, family, and society. In line with that, a leader must also be a solution for their people. This paper concludes with a critical assessment of Ridwan Kamil's ideas.

Keywords: *Ridwan Kamil, leadership ideas, regional leader*

ABSTRAK

Makalah ini bertujuan menjelaskan gagasan Ridwan Kamil tentang kepemimpinan. Pilihan gagasan kepemimpinan didasari pada pertimbangan bahwa belum ada tulisan yang secara khusus membahas tema ini. Kekosongan tema ini menjadi pintu masuk dalam memahami gagasan Ridwan Kamil tentang kepemimpinan secara mendasar. Mengapa kepemimpinan? Karena kepemimpinan merupakan salah satu inti dalam kajian pemerintahan. Dalam mengungkap gagasan kepemimpinan Ridwan Kamil ada dua metode pengumpulan data yang digunakan secara paralel, yakni wawancara dan kajian pustaka. Hasilnya ditemukan gagasan kepemimpinan Ridwan Kamil sangat menarik, ketika mendefinisikan arti kepemimpinan. Misalnya, kepemimpinan itu mengambil resiko menyelesaikan masalah atau memberikan Solusi nyata bagi masyarakat. Selanjutnya, Ridwan Kamil juga mengklasifikasi tiga jenjang kepemimpinan mulai dari diri sendiri, rumah tangga, dan masyarakat. Sejalan dengan itu, pemimpin juga harus menggerakkan rakyatnya. Selanjutnya, tulisan ini diakhiri dengan melakukan penilaian secara kritis atas gagasan kepemimpinan Ridwan Kamil.

Kata Kunci: *Ridwan Kamil, gagasan kepemimpinan, pemimpi daerah*

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INTRODUCTION

The two quotes above are deliberately presented as the opening of this article. The goal is so that we can understand what Ridwan Kamil (RK) thinks about leadership. Studying RK's idea of leadership is interesting because of three main considerations. *First*, RK is a leader who is able to combine academics-social activists with government

practitioners. His political career as mayor of Bandung (2013-2018) and governor of West Java (2018-2023) is a form of achievement—which surpasses his parents' career as a genuine academic. With this achievement, RK automatically raised the dignity and dignity of his family as a political person. Political people are required to have the art of managing a good, democratic, and responsible government (Lele, 2025).

Second, the results of a search of 14 works on the figure of RK, both books and scientific journals, did not find an analysis that focused on RK's idea of leadership. This void provides an alternative space in studying the idea of RK. The choice of leadership ideas is motivated by the thought that no one has ever written. Even though we all know that RK is a political leader who has played an important role in managing the government of the City of Bandung and West Java Province. Regardless of the pros and cons or failures of managing local governments, RK is a political leader who has its own attraction because of its ability to create history. In Sulistyono (1991) terms, RK succeeded in becoming a political figure at the local and national levels in his era. This shows that humans are indeed free to make their history, but few leaders are actually capable of doing so (Poloma, 1984) and RK is one of them.

Third, RK is a leader who actively voices the importance of serving leaders. This idea is part of RK's criticism of the previous leader who was considered unwilling to serve the people. But on the contrary, they want to be served by the people. This type of leader may dominate local government in Indonesia. This kind of leader's behavior is born from a paternalistic perspective. A leader who feels powerful and has the right to subjugate his people. Leaders who think that they are superior to their people (Adams, 2004). This perspective is not only outdated, but needs to be shifted the paradigm. By examining RK's idea of leaders who serve is very relevant in the implementation of local government. According to RK (2017), the leader serves, is friendly, and becomes a solution for his people. This is what the residents hope for their leaders (Haboddin and Rozuli, 2024).

These three keywords are important ideas in dissecting leadership. Leaders who serve should be developed in local governance. The logic is because the people hold power. The people elect leaders through direct, free, and secret elections. Therefore, it is very natural for RK to serve its people in a friendly manner. One of the instruments in serving the people of Bandung through the use of technology and social media. As stated by RK (4/5/2021):

Now is the time for leaders to use technology or social media. Because, social media is useful for leaders in terms of. (i) to reach the community at large; (ii) a means to build political communication; (iii) Leaders must be patient and sincere when criticized by the community.

RK's opinion is interesting to examine, namely the use of technology and social media by leaders has a positive impact. This explanation is summarized in points 1 and 2. In fact, RK is a leader who actively greets his citizens through tweets on social media (*interview with Daus, 25/5/2025*). On the contrary, social media is also an instrument for the people to convey complaints, suggestions, and criticisms to leaders. In other words, the technology used by leaders plays a dual role. However, one thing is for sure, technology and social media have contributed to shaping RK's leadership figure. This article will begin with a story about RK, then continue with the concept of leadership. The next explanation reviews the leadership level, leaders as a solution, and a critical assessment of RK's leadership ideas. This paper closes with a conclusion that can later be used as material for reflection and discussion together.

RK AND LEADERSHIP CONCEPTS

RK is a multi-dimensional figure. RK is a lecturer, also an architect. These two professions have long been attached to his figure. RK is a social activist in the city of Bandung, of course there is a truth. RK is the leader of the region, it is clear. All of these activities play a role and shape RK's knowledge as a political leader. As a leader, of course RK has the idea of leadership. For RK (19/9/2020), a leader is a person who takes risks. This concept is very short, clear, and concise, but it has a depth of meaning. Leaders who take risks need moral courage to act. Courage in taking risks is what is needed for leaders. Because, few leaders dare to take risks when in power. Why? Because they don't want to have conflicts. Not willing to look for enemies. Not wanting to tell the truth by letting the mistake unfold in front of your eyes, without interruption.

The rest chose to remain silent and seek congratulations for the future of their political careers. One of the leaders who dared to take risks and was being talked about by the mass media was Purbaya Yudhi Sadewa. In cowboy style, many cases that have been hidden or talked about to the public are slowly being dismantled. For him, there are many leaders who are smart and know many things, but do not have the courage to take political decisions (Sobari, 2024) where those decisions affect public life as a whole.

In another part, RK (19/9/2020) defines a leader as someone who focuses on solving problems. This definition emphasizes the central role of the leader in solving problems. A leader is required to be able to solve problems faced by society. This understanding was born from RK's experience as a political leader in the city of Bandung and the Governor of West Java. As RK (4/5/2021) said that 90 percent of the role of leaders is only to solve problems and provide a solution through policies. This can be understood because political leaders are the dominant actors and have wide access to the policy-making process that affects public interests and life (Haryanto, 2017). That means, political leaders always work for the people through their authority and at the same time have the ability to mobilize existing resources for the needs of their citizens (Haboddin and Rozuli, 2024). This is where the authority and power of the leader becomes important (Adams, 2004).

The two definitions of leadership from RK are very different from leadership textbooks. RK's ideas about leadership are very easy to understand, clear, and concise, but not easy for political leaders to practice. Political leaders must dare to take risks and be able to solve problems simultaneously. These two points of idea are indispensable in governance. In order to strengthen this idea, political leaders need to be supported by four characters borrowing RK's thoughts. For more details, you can see the table.1.

Table 1. Leader Character

Visions	that is, having a far-ahead thinking
Innovative	that is, always making changes
Down the field	namely leaders who go directly to the field and meet with their citizens
Teladan	that is, it can be a good example for the community

Sources: Youtube, RK, 17/6/2021

First, leaders must be visionary. The idea of a forward-oriented leader is needed, but it must be based on the needs and interests of the community he leads. This means that the vision and mission of political leaders really answer the interests of the community and not their personal interests. As said by Lele (2025), the vision and mission of leaders are oriented towards the common good. Shared virtue departs from the realization that the leader's vision is on the side of the community, defending the community, and representing the community (Haboddin and Rozuli, 2024). In the RK language, seriously use power for the benefit of the community (Radarjogja.24/9/2020). Meanwhile, Adams (2004) calls it a leader who is able to fight for the will of his people. This is what is called the visionary

idea, namely grounding, taking sides, and bringing fundamental changes (RK, 2019), both in society and governance.

Second, leaders must be innovative. Innovative leaders are needed in managing the government, considering that the city of Bandung at that time was experiencing a critical trust crisis. The crisis of public trust arises due to poor public services, long-winded bureaucracy, and corruption cases involving the mayor of Bandung (*interview* Wulan 18/1/2023). This crisis is slowly but surely fixed by RK as a new leader with a breakthrough in governance. For more details, see one of RK's writings (13/12/2022) below:

*Mark changes;
From slow to fast.
In the past, sluggishness became fast movement.
In the past, corruption became integrity.
It used to be extraordinary.
It used to be dark to light
It used to be conventional to digital*

The quote above informs the steps of change that RK is taking in leading the Land of Pasundan. The content of the tweet above wants to emphasize the innovative idea of RK in managing the government. This idea is certainly different from the previous leader, namely Dada Rosada. RK wants to show a breakthrough and a big change in managing the government. This explanation is strengthened by Abeng (2012) that the leader's task must be to make major changes. He must be able to think quickly, work smarter, and the results will be enjoyed by the people of Bandung.

Third, leaders must go to the field. Good leaders are required to review the field directly, interact with residents, see the condition of the community directly, so as not to be lied to by their subordinates. Leaders who like to go to the field do not easily receive reports from their subordinates. According to RK, if the leader just goes to the field, then all regional apparatus under him must do the same. If the governor intervenes, then *the regents, mayors, sub-district heads, village heads, and villages are also blusukan*. Being a regional leader must go directly into the field to see the problems that are going on and happening. In RK's (2015) note, it is stated:

I want to know the daily faces of the people of the city of Bandung. Because so far there has been a lot of hiding. For example, poverty hides behind factory outlets, hotels, and apartments that continue to be built. During my time as a leader, I often

blusukan to remote areas of the city of Bandung, entering narrow alleys as wide as my stomach.

This attitude has been taught by Ki Hajar Dewantara, namely *in madya mangun karsa* – a leader who is in the middle so that he can pull those behind and remind those in front to walk slowly (Wicaksana, 2018). That means, leaders must be in the midst of society. His presence is felt. His policies are right on target because they are in accordance with the needs of the community he leads. This is what is called a responsible leader (Adams, 2004).

Finally, leaders who are role models for their citizens. Being an exemplary leader is a chosen people. Exemplary leaders are seen from their words and actions. If you promise to keep it and always uphold the principles in any situation in carrying out leadership. One word with deeds is a symbol of a leader's determination. Therefore, exemplary leaders are always an example for the people because of the qualities they have (Abeng, 2012) in accommodating and fighting for the aspirations of the people, but also developing their responsibilities as people's educators (Latief, 2024). In short, quoting RK, exemplary leaders are the best leaders. Your behavior is your indictment. Your example is your leadership (Wicaksana, 2018).

RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this study is a case study. There are three considerations underlying the use of the case study method used in understanding RK's idea of leadership. *First*, the question asked about how RK's idea is? *Second*, the idea of RK leadership is very specific, special and local. *Third*, this study is a single case (Salim; 2006) that places RK as a central figure as a political leader. Because what is concerned is the basic idea or idea of RK's thinking (Thompson, 1986) about leadership, this paper is automatically not included in the study of biography that is praising or criticizing (Hill, 2011).

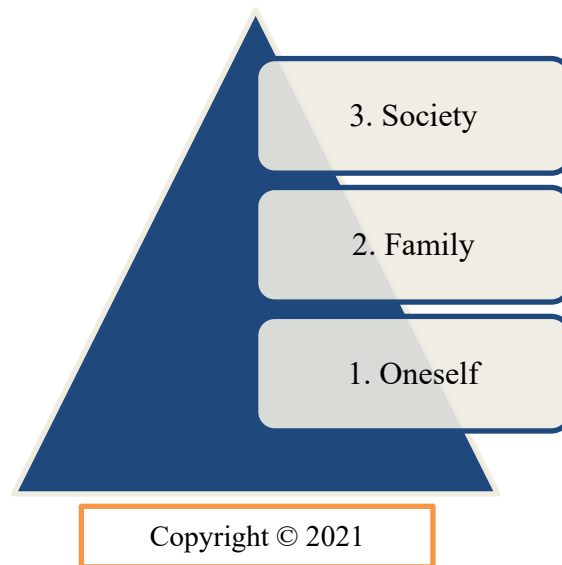
Writing leadership ideas or ideas is a tradition in the study of political philosophy which in development is not in much demand for government science scholars. Therefore, by raising the idea of RK leadership, it is hoped that there will be new nuances in understanding and discussing the conception of leadership. Tradition of thought is an important choice in placing figures or individuals who have succeeded in producing ideas and their influence (Thompson, 1986) in society at that time. Therefore, the idea of

leadership is worth studying carefully (Thompson, 1986) and interpreting it contextually. This is because the idea of RK is very specific and may have limitations (Salim; 2006).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Three Levels of Leadership

Above has been explained about RK's idea of the meaning of leaders and their characteristics. The next explanation will be elaborated on the level or stratification of leadership according to RK's thinking. According to RK, there are three leadership stratification as summarized in chart 1.



First, the leadership level starts from oneself. Before becoming a greater leader, then be a leader for yourself. The success and failure of a leader starts from himself. In other words, leading oneself is a natural learning process. The process of learning to educate yourself before others is important. This explanation is parallel to Latief's (2024) analysis which says that whoever appoints himself as a leader, he should start teaching himself before teaching others.

Second, the next level of leadership is the family. In terms of the scope of leadership, it becomes large. Family is an important part of training leadership. A leader, said RK (2015), must direct all his life energy to build the best for his family. A leader should be a bridge and encouragement to rise up with his family members. A portrait of success in leading a household can be a provision to become a broader leader.

Third, the level of leadership in society. The third level of leadership is a form of self-actualization and proof in a broader scope. Success in being a leader oneself and leading a family is not necessarily successful in leading the community. Why? Because in

addition to the wider scope, the demands, needs, and interests of the community are also diverse. Diversity of demands requires skills and abilities to lead while helping to solve societal problems. The ability to solve problems is the task of leaders. The more problems of society are solved, the more the leader is useful to the people. In RK (2015) terms, the best person is the person who is most beneficial to others. Meanwhile, Sobari (2024) calls him a leader who has a wide impact on his policies.

The idea of RK which categorizes three levels of leadership deserves an important note. This is because this idea is not widely practiced by our political leaders. There are many political leaders who do not grow from the bottom and do not have a long process. They become political leaders through a process from above, aka the leader of the carbiat. Understandably, this type of leader is the son of a political party chairman or a descendant of a big person, but his behavior is shameful (*Kompas*, 15/2/2015). These practices and actions are what RK wants to correct by offering the idea of the need to build a political career from the bottom. The goal is for recruitment and leadership regeneration to run normally. This idea actually opposes the habit of central leaders who are always decisive in political recruitment (Ikhwan, 2025) at the local level.

Leaders are Solutions

RK repeatedly said that the leader must work. The leader must make changes. Leaders are hard workers, and so on (Wicaksana, 2018). A leader must act in making changes in governance. Acting means doing something to the community. According to Leuchtenburg, (1994) the leader must act continuously. *First*, the leader drives change (*interview*, RK, 9/9/2021) in society and governance. Why? Because there are many leaders who are unable to make changes during their time in power. The cause is a variety of factors. For example, they are poor in knowledge, lack of courage, are not supported with skills, and have very weak capacity to govern. RK's record (17/6/2021) mentions that 80 percent of regional leaders have not made any changes. Even though they are in power. This is what is called a leader who fails to manage the government (Haboddin, 2025).

This type of leader is criticized by RK, thus proposing the idea of a leader who makes changes. Leaders who drive change try to be realized as long as RK leads. Here and there we see changes. Some are in physical form. It exists in the form of public services. Bureaucratic reform to the digitalization of the government has been completely fixed (*interview*, Daus 25/5/2025) because it is in direct contact with the needs of the community. All of these changes are largely determined by the RK. RK continues to make changes,

make breakthroughs, and be at the forefront of government innovation in its time. RK uses technology to reform public services. Because for me, technology makes it easier in many ways in governance (Wicaksana, 2018).

Second, its presence makes the community safe and comfortable (Source: Youtube, 17/6/2021). For RK, the measure of the success of political leaders is when the community feels safe and comfortable. That means, the leader is present as a guarantor and protector. Security and comfort of life are one of the functions of the government. In classical political science studies, it has long been mentioned that the government's capacity to provide a sense of security and comfort (Haboddin and Arjul, 2016) is an important part of managing the government. And it is the duty of the leader to create security, order, and law enforcement. All of this can only be done if the leader is able to use power effectively in managing the government (Leuchtenburg, 1994).

This type of leader can include strong leaders. A strong leader is defined as a leader who is able to carry out his functions. In carrying out these functions, leaders must have a strong influence in the bureaucracy, have a wide network, and be able to build coalitions to create common peace (Leuchtenburg, 1994). Peace is a common need. Therefore, a large coalition is needed to provide security, order, and peace together.

Third, the power is temporary, but has an impact (West Java Public Relations, 3/4/2022). It is true, because power is limited by space and time. Because the power is limited in duration, RK tries to make the power he has felt by the community. Power must be present in the form of service and felt by the community. For RK (2015),

That power must encourage existing resources to be useful. Human resources are encouraged to be creative. Direct resources and creativity to provide as many benefits as possible. Everything we give is a form of our usefulness as leaders.

RK interprets power as a form of influence. With great power in him, RK moves its citizens to be more creative in many ways. Creativity will be useful when it can solve problems, said RK (2015). So, fostering creativity among the community is necessary because it provides many benefits to others. That means, power can be temporary but has an impact on society. In Leuchtenburg's (1994) terms, power that helps society continuously.

Fourth, the policy must be on the side of the people. In the RK language, all decision-making is solely to benefit the people (Jabar.pro.go.id, 21/12/2022). Pro-people

policy decisions were deliberately taken to distinguish himself from previous leaders. Since RK became a leader, the community really hopes that they can work and be responsive to the needs of the community (*Interview, Karol, 26/5/2025*). This hope is the basis for RK to make pro-people policies. The pro-people policy and RK's responsiveness in solving problems made him very close to the citizens. As an illustration, RK's policy in building the City Park and the Al-Jabar Mosque made him remembered. However, there are also those who say that all policies are made solely for the sake of RK and the greatness of RK (*interview, Ainur, 27/3/2025*) as a leader.

This opinion is not wrong. Because, leaders who work with all their achievements certainly provide double benefits. On the one hand, it helps the community as reflected in the duties and functions of a government leader. On the other hand, the government's work will have a good impact on the government itself. This is because good work will provide a strong basis of legitimacy for leaders. In other words, citing Leuchtenburg, (1994) the real work will survive in the community's memory of the figure and work of RK as a leader. This memory can be political capital in RK's next political career journey. That is, this success can be used as capital in increasing power. The reason is that every regional leader will try to increase his power through real work (*Interview, Move, 23/5/2025*).

Three Ratings

The presentation of RK's leadership ideas is interesting to examine. This is because RK's idea of leadership is not all original. *First*, RK's idea of leadership stratification is actually not new. Why? Because this idea was also conveyed by Hadidz (*interview, 23/5/2025*) even though it was in a different editorial. For example, leadership starts from oneself, in the household, and in community organizations. This way of thinking hints at the need for stages to become a political leader. This stage will form experience, strengthen capacity, and increase skills in managing government. Because, citing Leuchtenburg (1994), great leaders are usually born from the bottom and grow with the community. This is what is called a leader who unites the people. This unification is a symbol of the work of power in building the relationship between the leader and the led (Haboddin and Rozuli, 2004).

Second, leaders who move or leaders who act are not pure from RK's ideas. The history of this republic has proven the role of leaders who move society. There are many regional leaders who are able to mobilize the people around them in order to make changes and breakthroughs in government. The ability of leaders to communicate, motivate their

work teams, and explore creative talents (Abeng, 2012) in managing government collectively. For example, Anas in Bayuwangi, Risma in Surabaya, Kang Yoto in Bojonegoro, Nurdin Abdullah in Bantaeng are leaders who are able to move with breakthroughs based on evidence or results. They are leaders who work measurably—can be assessed and benefited by their society (Haboddin, 2025).

Third, RK always said that the best human being is the one who is useful to others. This idea can be traced in the Qur'an specifically Surah Almaidah: 2. Although this idea was not born by RK, we should respect RK's efforts in practicing Islamic values in leadership. With great power, RK is able to help or help the community through decided policies. This is the advantage of being a political leader. This is because the essence of leadership, according to RK, is to make changes, progress (Wicaksono, 2018) economic-development, and improve government performance (Haboddin and Arswendi, 2022).

These two words are greatly missed by the community. A leader who makes change as well as progress is a dream. The community has long longed for leaders who work by making changes and progress in the region. However, only a few can do it well (Abeng, 2012) through a big leap marked by the laying of *a legacy* for accountable local government (Santoso, 2017). And, the few leaders, including RK, are able to make changes and progress within certain boundaries of the city of Bandung and in West Java Province.

CONCLUSION

RK's idea of leadership is one of the important aspects that this article tries to discuss. The argument is that leadership is one of the cores in government studies (Haboddin and Arsemndi, 2022). Based on these considerations, studying RK's ideas about leadership contributes to the study of government science. Therefore, the study of ideas or thoughts should be a concern for government science scholars. Considering that studies like this are not in much demand. In fact, there are many government leaders – spread from all levels of government: from regional, national to global.

Exploring the idea of leadership by studying political figures is a new area that should be developed. Because in his ideas there is a uniqueness and even a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge about leadership. RK and a number of other regional leaders have done so with their capacity and authority. Now it is our turn to judge whether they are leaders with success stories or failures as leaders? It's all up to the dear readers. However, one important thing said Abeng (2012) is that the region will be as good as its leader and the leader will be as good as the people it leads and empowers. *Wallahu a'lam bishawab*.

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