

## Ethical Governance in the Next Decade: Key Attributes for Effective Political Leadership

Waiphot Kulachai<sup>1</sup> & Duangruedee Eaosinsup<sup>1</sup>

Corresponding author: waiphot.ku@ssru.ac.th

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### บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิชาการนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์หลักเพื่อค้นหาคุณลักษณะของภาวะผู้นำของนักการเมืองที่ประชาชนปรารถนา โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่ง คุณลักษณะของภาวะผู้นำที่ได้รับความนิยมมาอย่างยาวนานในบริบททางวัฒนธรรม สังคม และการเมืองที่แตกต่างกัน เช่น ความซื่อสัตย์ ความโปร่งใส ประสิทธิภาพ วิสัยทัศน์ ทักษะการสื่อสาร ความเห็นอกเห็นใจ และการประพฤติตนอย่างมีคุณธรรม จริยธรรม โดยบทความนี้เป็นการสังเคราะห์ผลการวิจัยจากบริบทที่หลากหลาย ผลการศึกษา ค้นพบว่า คุณลักษณะที่สำคัญของภาวะผู้นำของนักการเมืองที่ประชาชนต้องการประกอบด้วย ความซื่อสัตย์สุจริต ความโปร่งใส ความรับผิดชอบ ประสิทธิภาพความรู้ วิสัยทัศน์ กลยุทธ์ ความเห็นอกเห็นใจ ความเมตตา และการประพฤติตนอย่างมีจริยธรรม ผลการศึกษาในครั้งนี้จึงมีบทบาทสำคัญอย่างยิ่งในการนำไปเป็นแนวทางในการประยุกต์ใช้เพื่อในกระบวนการ

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<sup>1</sup> Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

ฝึกอบรมภาวะผู้นำทางการเมือง กระบวนการคัดเลือกผู้สมัครของพรรคการเมือง มาตรการด้านการสร้างความรับผิดชอบ และการตัดสินใจทางการเมือง ซึ่งในที่สุดแล้วจะส่งผลให้การปกครองมีธรรมาภิบาลและโปร่งใส นอกจากนี้ ผลการวิเคราะห์ยังมีส่วนช่วยในการนำเสนอกรอบการทำงานแบบบูรณาการและสร้างแรงจูงใจในการทำวิจัยเพิ่มเติมเพื่อสนับสนุนความเข้าใจผลกระทบของภาวะผู้นำของนักการเมือง การรับรู้ของสาธารณะ และประสิทธิภาพโดยรวมของผู้นำ แม้ว่าคุณสมบัติที่กล่าวมาข้างต้นจะได้รับการยอมรับว่าเป็นที่ต้องการจากประชาชน แต่การวิจัยเชิงประจักษ์เพิ่มเติมก็มีความสำคัญต่อการประเมินวิธีการปลูกฝังคุณสมบัติเหล่านี้ในแต่ละบริบทของสังคมและวัฒนธรรม

**คำสำคัญ:** ความซื่อสัตย์; ภาวะผู้นำทางการเมือง; ความปรารถนาของประชาชน; ความโปร่งใส; วิสัยทัศน์

### **Abstract**

This academic article primarily aims to identify the characteristics of political leadership that the public desires, particularly those long-valued leadership qualities in various cultural, social, and political contexts, such as honesty, transparency, experience, vision, communication skills, empathy, and ethical behavior. This article synthesizes research findings from diverse contexts and discovers that the essential characteristics of political leaders desired by the public include honesty, transparency, accountability, experience, knowledge, vision, strategy, empathy, compassion, and ethical conduct. Therefore, this study plays a significant

role in providing guidelines for application in political leadership training processes, political party candidate selection, accountability measures, and political decision-making, which ultimately leads to governance that is ethical and transparent. Additionally, the analysis contributes to presenting an integrated framework and motivates further research to support the understanding of the impacts of political leadership, public perception, and overall leadership effectiveness. Although the aforementioned qualities are acknowledged as desirable by the public, additional empirical research is crucial for assessing ways to instill these qualities in each social and cultural context.

**Keywords:** honesty; political leadership; public desire; transparency; vision

## Introduction

In the evolving landscape of global politics and economics, the imperative for leadership vision and the adept handling of international crises have never been more pronounced. As the world embarks on the threshold of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, characterized by an unprecedented fusion of digital, biological, and physical worlds, the demand for leaders who can navigate through these transformations becomes critical. This new era, propelled by advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and other digital technologies, presents both immense opportunities

and significant challenges, necessitating a leadership approach that is both visionary and pragmatic (Schwab, 2017). The intertwining of AI and geopolitics introduces complex dynamics that are reshaping global power structures, demanding a reevaluation of traditional approaches to international relations and governance. Leaders today must possess not only a deep understanding of these technological advancements but also the foresight to anticipate their impacts on global security and economic stability (Kissinger, Schmidt, & Huttenlocher, 2021). The skills required extend beyond traditional geopolitical acumen, embracing a comprehensive grasp of digital literacy, ethical considerations in technology deployment, and the ability to foster international collaboration in the face of emerging global challenges (Schwab, 2017; Nye, 2021). Addressing international political crises in this context requires a nuanced approach, where strategic foresight and diplomacy are coupled with an agile understanding of the rapidly changing technological landscape. Leaders must navigate through complexities with a keen eye on both immediate threats and the long-term implications of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, ensuring that technological advancements contribute to global peace and prosperity rather than exacerbate existing tensions (Nye, 2021). As the world transitions more deeply into the era of AI and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the call for leadership that is both visionary and adept at managing international crises within the intricate tapestry of global geopolitics has never been more

urgent. The future hinges on leaders who can not only comprehend the vast potential and challenges of these technological shifts but also harness them to foster a more stable, secure, and equitable world (Schwab, 2017; Kissinger et al., 2021).

The notion of political leadership is a multifaceted concept that continues to evolve in response to societal transformations and shifts in public expectations (Jackson & Parry, 2019). As societies become more diverse and complex, the attributes of effective political leadership are continually being reevaluated and redefined (Hickman, 2014). An understanding of the qualities most desired by the public in their political leaders is crucial for both improving democratic representation and fostering leadership development. This literature review synthesizes research from the past decade (2014-2023) on the most desirable leadership qualities in politicians, exploring personal traits, professional competencies, and ethical attributes. Political leaders are expected to demonstrate honesty and integrity, both in their personal conduct and professional roles (Cialdini, 2016). A lack of perceived honesty can result in a breakdown of trust, which can lead to increased skepticism and cynicism among the public (Patterson, 2014). Integrity, on the other hand, is associated with a leader's adherence to ethical standards, even in the face of adversity or temptation (Moore, 2020). In the age of information, transparency has become a fundamental

expectation for political leaders (Stoker & Rawlings, 2021). Leaders who demonstrate transparency in their decision-making processes can cultivate higher levels of public trust (Bovens, 2017). Accountability, a closely related concept, implies that leaders should be answerable for their actions and decisions. Research indicates that politicians who willingly embrace accountability are often viewed more favorably by their constituents (Schillemans, 2018). Experience and knowledge in the realm of politics and public policies are considered vital qualities for effective leadership (Malone & Ntziadima, 2022). A wealth of experience can provide a leader with the necessary insights and skills to navigate complex political landscapes (Hudson, 2017). Moreover, knowledge about social issues, economic dynamics, and international relations is invaluable in formulating sound policies and making informed decisions (Bennister & 't Hart, 2015b). Visionary leadership, wherein leaders articulate a clear and inspiring future for their constituents, is a recurring theme in the literature on political leadership (Cross & Peake, 2022). Such leaders not only envision a desirable future but also devise strategies to achieve this vision (Evans, 2016). They demonstrate the capacity to align their strategies with the aspirations of their constituents, thereby galvanizing public support (Mintrom, 2020). Empathy and compassion are increasingly recognized as essential traits in political leadership, particularly in contexts of crisis or hardship (Rhode, 2021). Politicians who display empathy can build deeper

connections with their constituents and are better positioned to respond effectively to their needs (Marcus, 2019). Lastly, ethical conduct in politics is a predominant theme in literature. Ethical leaders avoid conflicts of interest, act in the best interest of their constituents, and maintain high moral standards in all aspects of their professional conduct (Lawton et al., 2023). Research shows that the perceived ethicality of leaders significantly impacts public trust and the perceived legitimacy of political institutions (Besley, 2019).

This academic paper aims to explore and analyze the evolving concept of political leadership in the context of current global and societal changes, particularly in relation to the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the digital era's complexities. It seeks to identify the most critical leadership qualities that are valued in politicians by the public, drawing on recent research spanning from 2014 to 2023. By examining personal traits, professional competencies, and ethical attributes, the paper endeavors to understand how these qualities contribute to effective governance and democratic representation. Furthermore, it aims to investigate how leaders can navigate the challenges presented by international crises, technological advancements, and changing political landscapes. Through this analysis, the paper intends to contribute to the discourse on leadership development, offering insights that could inform the cultivation of future political leaders

capable of fostering stability, security, and equity in an increasingly interconnected and technologically driven world.

### **Importance of Leadership in Politics**

The significance of leadership in politics is undeniable and deeply rooted in various aspects of the democratic process and societal well-being. Here are more detailed explanations of why leadership is crucial in politics:

1. Policy Making: Political leaders are central to policy-making, employing their knowledge, expertise, and experience to deal with complex issues (Kingdon, 2014). Their strategic vision can direct the course of policy, promoting social justice, economic development, and environmental sustainability (Fischer et al., 2015).

2. Representation: Political leaders serve as the voice of their constituents, ensuring a broad array of perspectives and needs are considered in the decision-making process, promoting inclusivity and social equity (Mansbridge, 2018).

3. Public Trust: Demonstrations of honesty, transparency, and accountability by political leaders are instrumental in fostering public trust (Grimmelikhuisen et al., 2022). Leaders who embody these traits can enhance the credibility of political institutions and promote civic engagement (Rudolph & Evans, 2017).



4. Conflict Resolution: Leaders often mediate conflicts, negotiating compromises among diverse stakeholders. Their leadership contributes to peaceful conflict resolution and consensus-building (Druckman, 2013).

5. Crisis Management: Political leaders are pivotal in times of crisis. They are expected to make swift, informed decisions, communicate effectively with their constituents, and exhibit resilience and empathy (Boin et al., 2017). Their leadership plays a crucial role in managing crises and guiding their communities through challenging times (Moynihan, 2019).

6. Role Modeling: Political leaders serve as societal role models. By demonstrating ethical behavior, they promote civic virtues and inspire future generations of leaders (Bandura, 2016).

7. Social Change: Political leaders can drive social change. By raising awareness of societal issues, challenging the status quo, and mobilizing support for social reforms, they have the potential to transform societies (McAdam, 2019).

In conclusion, the role of leadership in politics is fundamentally important. Effective political leaders have a profound influence not only on the political landscape but also on the social, cultural, and moral fabric of their communities (Burns, 2018). However, from the authors' viewpoint, political leadership is crucial for shaping effective policies, ensuring representation, and building public trust, which together underpin democratic processes and societal well-being. Leaders play key roles in

conflict resolution, crisis management, and acting as role models, thereby influencing the social, cultural, and moral fabric of communities. Their capacity to drive social change highlights the indispensable role of political leadership in advancing social justice, economic development, and environmental sustainability, ultimately reflecting on the profound impact leaders have on governance and the broader societal landscape.

### **Honesty and Integrity**

Honesty and integrity have long been considered foundational elements of political leadership. The act of conveying truthfulness, demonstrating sincerity in words and actions, and being forthright about one's decisions and actions encapsulates the attribute of honesty (Simons, 2014). Cialdini (2016) suggests that a political leader's honesty is closely linked with their public image and their ability to cultivate trust amongst their constituents. Moreover, a leader's honesty can significantly impact the level of public trust, the legitimacy of political processes, and overall governance effectiveness (Stoker & Rawlings, 2021). Integrity, on the other hand, extends beyond just being honest. It is about aligning one's actions with a set of moral or ethical principles, and consistently demonstrating these principles regardless of the situation or audience (Moore, 2020). It involves staying true to one's commitments, standing firm on moral and ethical grounds, and refusing to partake in activities that conflict with these values,

even when it might be politically expedient to do so. As put forward by Lawton et al. (2023), political leaders who demonstrate integrity command respect from their constituents, inspire confidence in their leadership, and instill a sense of trust in the political system as a whole. The emphasis on honesty and integrity in political leadership is not surprising, considering the high stakes involved in political decision-making and the extensive impact of these decisions on the public. While the nature of political work may sometimes pose challenges to maintaining honesty and integrity, it is these very qualities that often distinguish successful leaders from others and play a crucial role in fostering a healthy, functioning democracy (Patterson, 2014).

From the authors' perspective, honesty and integrity are cornerstones of effective political leadership, crucial for cultivating public trust and ensuring governance legitimacy. Honesty, characterized by truthfulness and transparency in decision-making, directly influences a leader's public image and the trust they inspire among constituents. Integrity, seen as the alignment of actions with ethical principles, goes beyond honesty, demanding consistency in moral conduct regardless of circumstances. Political leaders who embody these virtues not only earn respect and confidence from the public but also strengthen the foundations of democracy. Despite the inherent challenges in the political arena,

maintaining these values is essential for leadership success and the health of democratic systems, underscoring the significant impact of honesty and integrity on political processes and outcomes.

### **Transparency and Accountability**

Transparency and accountability are essential traits for effective political leadership. Transparency, as described by Bovens (2017), involves political leaders openly sharing information about their actions, decisions, and the decision-making process. It includes maintaining an open-door policy and being approachable to inquiries and critique. In the digital age, transparency also involves effectively leveraging technology to provide access to accurate and timely information, fostering an informed and engaged electorate (Stoker & Rawlings, 2021). Accountability, closely related to transparency, is the responsibility of leaders to explain and justify their decisions and actions to their constituents (Schillemans, 2018). It involves a readiness to be scrutinized and to face consequences for one's actions. Accountability is a fundamental mechanism in a democratic system, as it allows for checks and balances, thus reducing the risk of abuse of power.

Leaders who demonstrate high levels of transparency and accountability promote public trust and engagement, leading to more robust

democratic processes (Bennister & t Hart, 2015a). These traits ensure that leaders are answerable to those they represent, fostering a culture of trust and inclusivity. Conversely, lack of transparency and accountability can erode public trust, lead to disillusionment, and undermine the very fabric of democratic governance (Lawton et al., 2023). While these traits are desired in political leaders, they also present challenges. Exercising transparency and accountability often means navigating complex ethical considerations, managing varying interests, and sometimes facing intense public scrutiny. However, as leaders grapple with these challenges, their commitment to transparency and accountability underscores their ethical standing and further consolidates their credibility in the eyes of the public.

From the authors' viewpoint, transparency and accountability are fundamental traits that underpin effective political leadership, crucial for nurturing public trust and ensuring the integrity of democratic processes. Transparency, as the open sharing of information and decisions, coupled with the embrace of technology, enhances public engagement by keeping the electorate informed and involved. Accountability entails leaders being answerable for their actions, and supporting a system of checks and balances that curbs power misuse. These traits not only bolster democratic governance by making leaders more responsive and responsible but also help in building a culture of trust and participatory politics. Challenges

associated with maintaining transparency and accountability, such as ethical dilemmas and the balancing of diverse interests, are acknowledged. Yet, navigating these complexities is essential for reinforcing leaders' ethical stature and credibility, thereby strengthening the democratic fabric and promoting a more inclusive and trustworthy political landscape.

### **Experience and Knowledge**

Experience and knowledge are critical components of political leadership. Experience, both professional and personal, is seen as a vital prerequisite that shapes leaders' understanding of their roles, informs their decision-making processes, and enhances their effectiveness (Malone & Ntziadima, 2022). In politics, experience often encompasses prior roles in public service, understanding of governance and policymaking, as well as the nuances of navigating the political landscape. Moreover, life experiences, such as overcoming adversity or engaging with diverse cultures and communities, can also contribute significantly to a leader's capacity to empathize, build relationships, and make informed decisions (Evans, 2016). Knowledge, on the other hand, refers to a leader's understanding of various subjects necessary to fulfil their roles effectively. This can range from knowledge of laws and regulations, economic and social issues, and international relations, to the understanding of the needs and aspirations of their constituents (Hudson, 2017). Deep and wide-

ranging knowledge enables leaders to comprehend complex issues, anticipate the consequences of actions, devise informed policies, and communicate effectively with diverse audiences (Marcus, 2019). Experience and knowledge are not static but evolve over time. Political leaders must demonstrate a commitment to continuous learning and adaptation to stay abreast of societal changes, advances in technology, emerging issues, and evolving public needs (Mintrom, 2020). The desire for knowledgeable and experienced leaders reflects public expectations for competent governance and effective policy-making, with leaders who can navigate the complexities of the political arena while making informed, judicious decisions.

From the authors' perspective, experience and knowledge stand as indispensable pillars of political leadership, each playing a crucial role in shaping a leader's effectiveness and decision-making capabilities. Experience, drawn from both professional engagements and personal life, enriches a leader's understanding of their role, enhancing their ability to navigate the complex political landscape, empathize with diverse groups, and forge meaningful connections. Knowledge, encompassing a broad understanding of legal, economic, social, and international domains, equips leaders to tackle multifaceted issues, formulate well-informed policies, and communicate effectively across various platforms. The dynamic nature of

these attributes highlights the necessity for leaders to engage in ongoing learning and adaptation to address the ever-changing global and local challenges. This commitment to growth reflects the electorate's demand for leaders who not only possess depth and breadth in their understanding and experience but are also capable of competent governance and insightful policy development in an increasingly complex world.

### **Vision and Strategy**

Vision and strategy are integral elements of effective political leadership. Vision involves articulating a clear and inspiring future goal or state for the community, country, or institution that the leader serves. It provides a sense of direction, purpose, and continuity, enabling constituents to align their efforts and aspirations towards a common goal (Cross & Peake, 2022). A leader's vision often reflects their values, aspirations, and understanding of their constituents' needs and potential. Visionary leaders can inspire constituents, stimulate innovation, and drive change (Jackson & Parry, 2019). Strategy, on the other hand, involves defining a clear pathway to realizing this vision. It includes setting priorities, making plans, mobilizing resources, and defining performance measures. In the realm of political leadership, strategy requires a deep understanding of political, social, economic, and technological factors, and the ability to navigate these complexities to achieve the desired outcome (Besley, 2019). Vision and



strategy are complementary and mutually reinforcing. A vision without a strategy can result in unrealized potential, while a strategy without a vision can lead to aimless action. Leaders who excel in both vision and strategy can drive significant change, foster development, and make lasting contributions to their constituencies and the broader society (Bennister & 't Hart, 2015a). The desire for visionary and strategic leaders reflects the public's demand for forward-thinking, ambitious, and effective governance. Such leaders can seize opportunities, address challenges, and navigate change in ways that benefit their constituents and secure a promising future for their community, state, or nation (Mintrom, 2020).

From the authors' perspective, vision and strategy are crucial components of effective political leadership, serving as the foundation for transformative governance. A well-articulated vision provides a clear and inspiring goal, instilling a sense of purpose and direction within the community, and reflecting the leader's values and aspirations. This vision not only motivates constituents but also fosters innovation and guides societal change. Strategy, as the roadmap for achieving this vision, involves meticulous planning, resource allocation, and the adept navigation of complex political and social landscapes. The interplay between vision and strategy is vital; one without the other diminishes the efficacy of leadership efforts. Leaders adept in both areas are positioned to enact significant

change, driving development and leaving a lasting impact on society. The public's desire for leaders who are both visionary and strategic, capable of anticipating future challenges and opportunities and steering their communities towards sustainable growth and prosperity. This dual competency in vision and strategy underscores the essence of dynamic and effective political leadership.

### **Empathy and Compassion**

Empathy and compassion are increasingly recognized as valuable qualities in political leadership. Empathy is the capacity to understand and share the feelings of others, while compassion involves a deeper level of engagement, leading to a desire to alleviate others' suffering (Marcus, 2019). Political leaders with empathy can understand the perspectives, needs, and concerns of their constituents, leading to more responsive and inclusive policy-making. Empathy can also help leaders build connections with their constituents, strengthening their ability to communicate effectively and genuinely (Patterson, 2014). Compassion in political leadership goes a step further, influencing not only understanding but also action. Compassionate leaders prioritize policies and initiatives that aim to alleviate suffering and improve well-being. They show concern for the marginalized and vulnerable, and are often committed to social justice (Rhode, 2021). Empathy and compassion can enhance a leader's legitimacy, foster trust,

and encourage societal cohesion. They can help leaders navigate contentious issues and conflicts in ways that promote understanding and unity. However, these traits should not overshadow the need for leaders to make difficult decisions that may not please everyone. The challenge for empathetic and compassionate leaders lies in balancing these traits with the need for effective governance and decision-making (Jackson & Parry, 2019). The desire for empathetic and compassionate leaders reflects a shift towards more human-centered leadership, which values not only intellectual capacity and strategic acumen but also emotional intelligence and the ability to connect with others on a human level (Moore, 2020).

In summary, empathy and compassion are essential for modern political leadership, reflecting a shift towards governance that values emotional intelligence alongside intellectual and strategic capabilities. Empathy enables leaders to understand and respond to the needs of their constituents, while compassion drives them to act on these insights, prioritizing the well-being of the marginalized and fostering social justice. These traits enhance trust, legitimacy, and societal unity, although they must be balanced with the practicalities of decision-making. The growing demand for empathetic and compassionate leaders highlights a broader expectation for leadership that genuinely connects with and addresses the human aspects of governance.

## Ethical Conduct

Ethical conduct is a cornerstone of effective political leadership. It involves adhering to a set of moral principles, standards, and practices that guide a leader's actions and decisions (Moore, 2020). Ethical conduct in political leadership typically encompasses honesty, integrity, fairness, respect, transparency, accountability, and commitment to public interest. Political leaders are expected to uphold high standards of ethical conduct in their interactions with constituents, colleagues, and other stakeholders. They are also expected to make decisions that are morally justifiable, fair, and that respect the rights and interests of all affected parties (Lawton et al., 2023). Ethical conduct further extends to a leader's personal life, as personal behavior can significantly impact a leader's credibility, trustworthiness, and effectiveness (Simons, 2014). Leaders who demonstrate ethical conduct foster public trust, promote a positive public image, and create an environment that encourages ethical conduct among others. Their actions can strengthen democratic processes, improve governance outcomes, and contribute to social cohesion (Stoker & Rawlings, 2021). On the other hand, unethical conduct can severely undermine a leader's credibility, erode public trust, and weaken the social fabric. However, ethical conduct in political leadership is not without its challenges. Leaders often face dilemmas that require them to balance competing interests, make difficult decisions, and navigate gray areas. As

such, ethical conduct requires not just adherence to principles, but also moral courage, discernment, and a commitment to continuous ethical learning and reflection (Besley, 2019). The public's desire for ethical conduct in political leadership reflects a demand for leaders who are not only effective and competent but also principled, trustworthy, and morally upright. Such leaders serve as positive role models, reinforcing societal values and contributing to a more just and equitable society.

In our viewpoint, ethical conduct is crucial in political leadership, embodying principles like honesty, integrity, and fairness. Leaders committed to ethical standards bolster their credibility and public trust, positively impacting governance and democratic integrity. Despite challenges, ethical leadership demands moral courage and reflection, balancing competing interests with a commitment to the public good. The societal demand for ethical leaders underscores the desire for not only effective but also morally upright individuals who reinforce societal values and contribute to a just and equitable community.

## **Discussion**

The literature provides a robust analysis of the qualities desired in political leadership. The synthesis of various studies reveals an array of traits including honesty, integrity, transparency, accountability, experience, knowledge, vision, strategy, empathy, compassion, and ethical conduct as

desirable in political leaders. These traits are crucial for effective political leadership as they shape how leaders make decisions, interact with constituents, and influence societal outcomes. The discussion on honesty and integrity underscores the importance of these traits in building trust, promoting effective governance, and establishing a leader's credibility (Simons, 2014; Lawton et al., 2023). Transparency and accountability, on the other hand, are fundamental to democratic processes as they enable checks and balances, fostering a culture of trust and inclusivity (Bovens, 2017; Schillemans, 2018). Experience and knowledge are emphasized as critical in shaping leaders' understanding of their roles, informing their decision-making processes, and enhancing their effectiveness (Evans, 2016; Hudson, 2017; Malone & Ntziadima, 2022). Vision and strategy are portrayed as vital elements that enable leaders to guide their communities towards a common goal and determine clear pathways for achieving this vision (Cross & Peake, 2022; Jackson & Parry, 2019). Empathy and compassion, though not traditionally highlighted as key leadership traits, are increasingly recognized as important for enabling leaders to understand and respond to the needs and concerns of their constituents (Patterson, 2014; Marcus, 2019). Finally, ethical conduct is underscored as a cornerstone of effective political leadership, with leaders expected to adhere to high moral standards in their actions and decisions (Moore, 2020; Stoker & Rawlings, 2021).

Each of these qualities brings unique value to political leadership, and their importance is context-dependent. However, these traits should not be viewed in isolation. Instead, they should be considered as part of a holistic set of qualities that interact and reinforce each other in contributing to effective political leadership. The discussion in the literature also highlights that while these traits are desirable, they can also pose challenges for leaders, requiring a balance of competing interests, the courage to make difficult decisions, and the ability to navigate complex political landscapes. This underscores the complex nature of political leadership and the demands placed on political leaders. Overall, the synthesis of the literature provides valuable insights into the qualities desired in political leadership, offering a comprehensive guide for both existing leaders and those aspiring to leadership roles. However, it also signals the need for continued research to further understand how these qualities interact and how they can be cultivated in diverse political contexts.

## **Implications**

1. Leadership development programs for politicians should emphasize and instill qualities like honesty, transparency, experience, vision, communication skills, empathy, and ethical conduct. Training

programs and curriculums need to be designed to build capacity in these areas.

2. Selection and recruitment processes for political candidates should be assessed for these qualities to ensure the right leaders are chosen for public office. Candidate screening tools and interviews may need to be adapted.

3. There needs to be greater accountability for politicians to demonstrate these leadership qualities while in office through transparency practices, ethical conduct policies, public communication plans, etc. Expectations and standards need to be made clear.

4. Further research can build on these consistent findings by studying how to best instill and assess these qualities, examining their relative importance, and testing their actual impact on governance outcomes. Additional empirical research in real-world contexts is warranted.

5. These universal leadership qualities may point to certain shared values and expectations of the public regarding political leadership across cultures. These values need to be considered and respected.

### **Future Research Directions**

This comprehensive review of the literature suggests several promising directions for future research on the traits desired in political leadership:



1. Intersectionality: More research is needed to explore how different demographic factors (such as gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status) intersect to influence public expectations and evaluations of political leaders.

2. Impact of Digital Media: With the increasing role of digital media in politics, further studies could examine how digital media platforms are shaping public expectations of political leadership and how leaders can effectively use these platforms to engage with constituents.

3. Longitudinal Studies: Longitudinal studies could offer insights into how desired leadership traits evolve over time and in response to changing political, social, and economic contexts.

4. International Comparisons: Comparative studies could explore variations in leadership expectations across different countries and cultures, contributing to a more globally inclusive understanding of political leadership.

5. Effectiveness of Leadership Development Programs: Further research could evaluate the effectiveness of leadership development programs in cultivating desired traits in political leaders and suggest ways to enhance these programs.

6. Ethical Challenges: Given the critical importance of ethical conduct in political leadership, more research could explore the ethical challenges that leaders face and how they navigate these challenges.

7. Role of Emotional Intelligence: Future studies could further explore the role of emotional intelligence in political leadership, including the ability to manage one's own emotions and to understand and respond to the emotions of others.

8. Crisis Leadership: In light of recent global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, research could explore what traits are most critical for effective crisis leadership.

In summary, there are ample opportunities for future research to deepen our understanding of the traits desired in political leadership and to contribute to more effective, inclusive, and responsive political leadership.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the literature reviewed and the findings discussed, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Leadership Training: Political parties and governments should invest in leadership training programs that emphasize the development of the identified desired traits. This includes creating opportunities for aspiring leaders to gain practical experience and knowledge, and fostering their ethical conduct, empathy, and strategic thinking skills.

2. Mentoring Programs: Establishing mentoring programs can allow novice political leaders to learn from experienced leaders, understand

the complexities of political leadership, and develop desirable leadership traits.

3. Public Engagement: Political leaders should proactively engage with their constituents to understand their needs, concerns, and expectations. This includes being transparent about their actions and decisions and demonstrating accountability.

4. Ethical Standards: Political parties and governments should establish and enforce high ethical standards for political conduct. This includes creating mechanisms for dealing with unethical conduct and promoting a culture of integrity within political institutions.

5. Media Literacy: Given the influence of media on public perceptions of political leadership, efforts should be made to enhance media literacy among the public. This includes helping constituents critically evaluate media portrayals of political leaders and understand the complexities of political leadership.

6. Gender Equality: Efforts should be made to promote gender equality in political leadership. This includes addressing gender biases in leadership expectations, creating opportunities for female leadership, and promoting diverse and inclusive leadership styles.

7. Cultural Sensitivity: Political leaders should be culturally sensitive in their leadership, acknowledging and respecting cultural variations in leadership expectations and styles.

8. Leadership Research: Scholars and researchers should continue to explore the complexities of political leadership, including the intersectionality of demographic factors, the influence of digital media, and the impact of changing sociopolitical contexts.

In conclusion, these recommendations provide a roadmap for cultivating effective, principled, and responsive political leaders who can meet public expectations, promote democratic processes, and contribute to societal well-being.

## **Conclusion**

This literature review has explored a range of traits desired in political leaders, including honesty, integrity, transparency, accountability, experience, knowledge, vision, strategy, empathy, compassion, and ethical conduct. It has underscored the importance of these traits in shaping leaders' actions and decisions, influencing public perceptions, and contributing to effective governance and societal outcomes. The review has also illuminated several complexities and challenges associated with political leadership, such as the need to balance competing interests, navigate ethical dilemmas, and respond to shifting public expectations and sociopolitical contexts. Moreover, it has highlighted the influence of factors such as gender, media, and culture on leadership expectations and evaluations. The findings carry several implications for theory and practice,

suggesting the need for more holistic, contextually sensitive, and gender-inclusive theories of political leadership and pointing to potential strategies for leadership development, public engagement, electoral processes, and policy-making. The review also suggests several promising directions for future research, including exploring intersectionality, digital media influences, longitudinal changes, international comparisons, leadership development program effectiveness, ethical challenges, emotional intelligence, and crisis leadership. In conclusion, this literature review contributes to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the traits desired in political leadership. It offers valuable insights for scholars, practitioners, and constituents, and underscores the critical importance of effective, principled, and responsive political leadership in promoting democratic processes, advancing social justice, and fostering societal well-being.

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