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Bureaucratic Streamlining and Structural Simplification: A Study of the Impact on Civil Servant Performance and Morale

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ABSTRACT

The bureaucratic streamlining policy through echelon simplification is a strategic step taken by the Indonesian government to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public services by reducing administrative layers that often slow down processes. This study aims to explore the impact of the structural transition from echelon positions to functional positions on the individual performance and work morale of State Civil Apparatus (ASN). The results reveal that although this policy is aimed at accelerating decision-making, its implementation faces significant challenges such as unclear career paths, unequal workload distribution, and the emergence of resistance to structural change. Empirical findings indicate that approximately 60% of ASN experience a decline in performance after the restructuring, while 70% of employees feel uncertain about their new roles and responsibilities, ultimately leading to stress and job dissatisfaction. Determining factors for the success of this transition include strong management support, transparent policy communication, and the provision of intensive training programs to help employees adapt to the new work evaluation system. This article concludes that successful bureaucratic reform requires a holistic and participatory approach and serious attention to the organizational climate to minimize negative impacts on employee psychological well-being.

KEYWORDS: Bureaucratic Streamlining, Echelon Simplification, Asn Performance, Employee Morale, Bureaucratic Reform.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Streamlining the bureaucracy through equalizing echelon positions is one of the national bureaucratic reform agendas, as mandated by the President of the Republic of Indonesia since 2019 and regulated in Regulation of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform No. 28 of 2019 and Circular Letter of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform No. 384 of 2019. Simplifying the bureaucratic structure, particularly through reducing echelons, has become one of the main focuses of bureaucratic reform in Indonesia. This policy aims to create a bureaucracy that is more efficient and responsive to public needs. According to the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (PANRB), the main objective of this simplification is to accelerate decision-making and reduce layers of bureaucracy that often slow down the administrative process (Ministry of PANRB, 2020). In this context, the government is striving to build a leaner system, where decision-making can be carried out more quickly and effectively.

However, despite these positive objectives, the implementation of structural simplification policies often faces various challenges. One of the most significant challenges is the lack of clarity in civil servant (PNS) career paths. With the reduction in echelons, many employees feel lost in their careers, which can lead to confusion and dissatisfaction. This also impacts performance and career development. Civil servants affected by job equalization experience performance and career development that does not align with expectations for functional position holders (Indra Wahyudi et al., 2024). Unequal workload distribution is also a problem, with remaining employees often having to handle more tasks without adequate additional resources. This can lead to stress and decreased morale among employees.

Resistance to structural change is also an issue that cannot be ignored. Many employees feel threatened by these changes, which can lead to resistance to new policies and lower morale (Yulianto, 2019). In this context, it is important to understand the concrete impact of organizational structure downsizing on individual performance and civil servant morale. This study aims to explore the following key questions:

1. What structural changes occurred as a result of the echelon simplification policy?
2. How does this policy affect employee performance and motivation?
3. What are the long-term consequences for public sector human resource (HRM) management?

In answering these questions, this paper will use the latest data and statistics, as well as relevant case examples, to provide a deeper understanding of the impact of bureaucratic streamlining on civil servant performance and morale. Through this analysis, it is hoped that solutions can be identified that can help improve policy effectiveness and civil servant welfare in the future.

In understanding organizational structure, contingency theory is an important approach. This theory argues that there is no single best way to organize an organization; instead, organizational structure must be adapted to the situation and environment faced (Donaldson, 2001). For example, in the context of public bureaucracy, organizations operating in dynamic and complex environments may be more effective if they adopt organic structures, which are more flexible and responsive to change. Conversely, organizations operating in stable environments tend to be more efficient with more formalized and hierarchical mechanistic structures (Burns & Stalker, 1961).

The Weberian principle of rationalization also provides an important perspective in understanding bureaucracy. Max Weber emphasized the importance of hierarchical structures and a clear division of labor in creating efficiency and accountability in public organizations (Weber, 1947). However, in practice, many public organizations experience problems such as slow decision-making and a lack of innovation due to overly rigid structures. Therefore, many researchers and practitioners argue that these Weberian principles need to be adapted to improve organizational performance in the modern era (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002).

The shift toward a post-bureaucracy emphasizes decentralization and employee empowerment, aimed at increasing innovation and responsiveness (Heckscher & Adler, 2006). In this context, simplifying organizational structures can be seen as a strategic move to reduce unnecessary hierarchical layers, thereby facilitating better communication and faster decision-making. For example, a study by Rainey (2014) showed that organizations that successfully streamline bureaucracy tend to have higher levels of employee satisfaction and better performance.

In the Indonesian context, research by Sugiarto (2020) shows that bureaucratic streamlining carried out by local governments in several provinces has had a positive impact on the efficiency of public services. However, challenges remain in terms of employee morale, which must be addressed to prevent a decline in work enthusiasm due to structural changes. Therefore, it is important to consider aspects of motivation and organizational climate in any streamlining effort . Consider the aspect of employee motivation: many government agencies have undertaken bureaucratic reforms limited to changing the name of the organizational structure, for example, from section head or administrator to field coordinator, or subsection head or supervisor to subcoordinator. This can be interpreted as organizational accommodation to anticipate demotivation of employee work enthusiasm.

Overall, organizational structure theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the dynamics of bureaucratic downsizing. In its implementation, it is important to integrate contingency theory, Weberian principles, and post-bureaucracy approaches to create structures that are more efficient and responsive to societal needs (Mintzberg, 1980).

Bureaucratic reform is one of the efforts undertaken to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public services. The principles of New Public Management (NPM) serve as an important foundation for this reform, emphasizing the application of private sector managerial practices in the public sector (Hood, 1991). In this context, simplifying organizational structures is considered a strategic step to reduce excessive bureaucracy and increase accountability (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992).

One concrete example of the application of NPM is the e-government program launched by many countries, including Indonesia. This program aims to increase transparency and efficiency in public services by utilizing information technology (Heeks, 2006). However, e-government implementation is often hampered by rigid and bureaucratic organizational structures. Therefore, streamlining the structure is crucial to support the success of these programs.

In the context of structural simplification, it is important to consider the impact on civil servants. Research by Parnell and Hsieh (2019) shows that bureaucratic reforms that do not involve employee participation can lead to resistance and decreased morale. Therefore, involving employees in the change process and providing adequate training are key to ensuring the success of bureaucratic reform .

A case study in Australia shows that structural simplification by involving employees in decision-making resulted in improved performance and employee satisfaction (Peters, 2017). This demonstrates that a participatory approach to bureaucratic reform can yield better results than the often-used top-down approach.

Overall, bureaucratic reform and structural simplification are important steps in creating more efficient and responsive public organizations. However, the success of these reforms depends heavily on employee engagement and the application of sound management principles (Heinrich, 2016).

Organizational climate and employee motivation are two interrelated factors that have a significant impact on civil servant performance. Work motivation theories, such as those proposed by Herzberg and McClelland, provide important insights into what motivates employees in the context of public organizations (Herzberg, 1966; McClelland, 1961). Herzberg distinguished between

motivating factors that enhance job satisfaction and hygiene factors that , if absent, can lead to dissatisfaction. In the context of bureaucratic downsizing, it is crucial to ensure that employees not only feel secure in their jobs but are also motivated to contribute to their full potential.

One relevant study is Kahn's (1990) research, which showed that employees who feel engaged and have a positive organizational climate tend to perform better. In the context of bureaucratic downsizing, structural changes that are not accompanied by attention to organizational climate can lead to a decline in employee morale. For example, research by Kim (2018) showed that employees who feel threatened by structural changes tend to experience decreased motivation and performance.

In addition, McClelland (1985) emphasized the importance of the needs for achievement, affiliation, and power in motivating employees. In the context of bureaucratic downsizing, understanding individual employee needs is crucial in designing effective motivational programs. For example, career development and training programs can help meet employees' needs for achievement and affiliation, which in turn can improve their morale and performance.

Local research in Indonesia found that civil servants involved in bureaucratic streamlining processes tended to have positive perceptions of the changes, which led to improved morale and motivation (Sari, 2021). This suggests that employee participation in the change process is crucial for creating a positive organizational climate.

Overall, attention to organizational climate and employee motivation is crucial in the context of bureaucratic downsizing. Efforts to improve employee performance depend not only on organizational structure but also on how valued and engaged employees feel in the change process.

Empirical studies on organizational downsizing have been conducted in various countries, including the UK and Australia, which can provide valuable insights for implementation in Indonesia. In the UK, research by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017) showed that while bureaucratic downsizing undertaken by local governments resulted in increased efficiency, it also posed challenges to employee morale. Many employees felt insecure in their jobs due to the rapid changes, which impacted their performance.

A study by McDonald and Dyer (2017) showed that bureaucratic streamlining implemented with a participatory approach can produce better results. Employees involved in the decision-making process feel more committed to the change and demonstrate improved performance. This approach demonstrates the importance of effective communication and employee engagement at every stage of reform. However, a study by Wynen, J. et al. (2019) suggests that repeated changes in organizational structure can impact managerial support for innovative work behavior in the public sector.

In the Indonesian context, research by Prabowo (2019) examined the implementation of echelon simplification within the government bureaucracy. The results showed that although the structural simplification was successful in increasing efficiency, there were concerns among employees regarding the reduction in the number of positions and its impact on their careers. This suggests the need for mitigation strategies to address the uncertainty felt by employees.

Another example of a local study is research by Hidayat and Sari (2020), which examined civil servants' perceptions of bureaucratic streamlining in several ministries. The results showed that despite increased efficiency, many employees felt underappreciated in the change process, negatively impacting their morale. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that employees feel involved and valued in any reform process.

Overall, empirical studies show that bureaucratic streamlining can have a positive impact on efficiency, but it can also pose challenges to employee morale. Therefore, it is important to adopt a holistic and participatory approach in any bureaucratic reform effort.

literature review shows that streamlining bureaucracy and simplifying structures are important steps in improving the performance of public organizations. However, the success of these reforms depends heavily on employee engagement and attention to organizational climate. Therefore, it is recommended that the government and other stakeholders adopt a more participatory approach in any change process. Furthermore, it is important to provide adequate training and support to employees to address the uncertainties that may arise from structural changes.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative research method with a library study approach. The library research method is a technique for collecting data and information by reviewing, analyzing, and synthesizing various literature relevant to the research topic, such as books, scientific journals, previous research reports, articles, and other written documents that are highly relevant to the topic discussed (Creswell, 2018). The sources used are from various books and scientific articles that are closely related to bureaucratic reform and public sector performance. Thus, the resulting analysis discusses bureaucratic streamlining and performance comprehensively.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Echelon Simplification Policy in Indonesia

Bureaucratic simplification in Indonesia is a strategic step taken by the government to improve efficiency and effectiveness in public services. This policy began with the issuance of the Regulation of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (PermenPANRB), which regulates the simplification of echelon positions in government agencies. In the initial stages of implementation, the government drafted regulations that included reducing the number of structural positions and transferring them to functional positions. Data from the Ministry of PANRB shows that from 2019 to 2022, there was a reduction of approximately 40% of echelon positions in ministries and agencies (Ministry of PANRB, 2022).

The agencies affected by this policy include technical ministries, regional governments, and non-ministerial institutions. For example, the Ministry of Education and Culture has implemented simplification by reducing the number of echelon II and III positions from 200 to 120 (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2021). This aims to create a leaner structure that is more responsive to public needs. However, the challenge is ensuring that this transition does not disrupt the performance of existing public services.

Furthermore, this simplification policy also has implications for changes in organizational culture. Employees previously accustomed to a hierarchical structure must now adapt to a more horizontal system. Research by Prasetyo (2020) shows that this change can impact teamwork dynamics and collaboration between employees. Therefore, it is important to periodically evaluate the implementation of this policy to identify emerging issues and find appropriate solutions.

In this context, leadership support is essential to encourage employees to adapt to the changes. A study by Wibowo (2021) emphasized the importance of clear and open communication between management and employees to reduce the uncertainty that may arise from structural changes. With strong management support, it is hoped that employees will adapt more easily and remain focused on organizational goals. Overall, Indonesia's echelon simplification policy is a positive step toward a more efficient bureaucracy. However, its implementation must be carried out carefully and involve all stakeholders to minimize negative impacts on employee performance and morale.

3.2. Structural and Managerial Implications

Changes in the number of structural positions resulting from bureaucratic simplification have a direct impact on the coordination and governance burden within government agencies. Reducing the number of structural positions is expected to accelerate and streamline decision-making. However, this can also create new challenges, such as the risk of fragmentation or new centralization of power. In many cases, reducing structural positions can actually lead to the accumulation of power in the hands of a few individuals filling functional positions, which can undermine the principles of good governance (Sari, 2021).

The transition from structural to functional positions also requires adjustments in the human resource management system. Functional positions held by employees do not always have the same power and authority as structural positions, which can impact coordination between work units. According to research by Hasan and Rahman (2020), employees in functional positions often feel they lack the authority to make decisions that impact organizational performance.

Another impact is changes in communication and collaboration patterns between employees. In a leaner structure, horizontal communication becomes more important, but not all employees are ready to adapt to this way of working. Research by Nugroho (2019) shows that employees accustomed to hierarchies tend to have difficulty communicating openly and collaboratively. This can hinder innovation and continuous improvement in public services.

Furthermore, structural simplification can impact the quality of decision-making. With fewer structural positions, decisions may not fully consider diverse perspectives. A study by Setiawan (2022) revealed that decision-making centralized in a few individuals can reduce the diversity of ideas and solutions generated, potentially lowering the quality of resulting policies.

In a managerial context, it is crucial to create mechanisms that support effective collaboration and communication between employees. Management needs to ensure that employees in functional positions are provided with adequate training and resources to carry out their duties. This way, the transition to a more efficient structure can be achieved without sacrificing the quality of public services.

3.3. Impact on Employee Performance

The impact of bureaucratic simplification on civil servants (ASN) performance is a crucial aspect that requires analysis. Research shows that ASN perceptions of their performance after restructuring vary widely. Some employees report increased productivity, while others perceive a decline in performance due to unclear roles and functions in their new functional positions. According to Surya and Putri (2021), approximately 60% of ASN surveyed felt their performance declined after the transition to functional positions.

Changes to the performance evaluation system are also a crucial factor in assessing the impact of restructuring. Previously, employee performance was often evaluated based on their structural position, whereas in the new system, evaluations focus more on individual work results. This can lead to confusion among employees unfamiliar with the new system. Research by Rahardjo (2022) shows that employees who don't understand the new evaluation criteria tend to feel demotivated, which in turn affects their performance.

Determining factors for a successful structural transition include management support, adequate training, and clear communication. A case study of the West Java Provincial Government found that regions that provided intensive training to post-restructuring employees performed better than those that did not (Budianto, 2021). This demonstrates the importance of investing in human resource development to support the success of simplification policies.

Furthermore, regular monitoring and evaluation of employee performance after restructuring is crucial. Constructive feedback allows management to promptly identify emerging issues and make necessary improvements. Research by Lestari and Suryani (2023) emphasizes the need for an effective feedback system to improve employee performance in the context of organizational change.

Overall, the impact of bureaucratic simplification on employee performance is greatly influenced by how the transition is managed. With the right approach, it is hoped that employee performance will improve and public services will improve.

3.4. Impact on ASN Morale and Psychology

The impact of bureaucratic simplification is not only visible in terms of performance but also affects the morale and psychology of civil servants. One major issue is the loss of structural promotion pathways, which previously motivated many employees. With the reduction in echelon positions, many employees feel that opportunities for promotion are increasingly limited. This can reduce employee morale and motivation to contribute optimally (Yulianto, 2021).

Unclear roles and functions within functional positions also impact employee morale. Many civil servants feel confused about their responsibilities within the new structure, which can lead to stress and job dissatisfaction. According to research by Sari and Hidayati (2022), approximately 70% of employees surveyed felt uncertain about their roles after the restructuring, negatively impacting their job satisfaction.

The potential for horizontal conflict between employees has also increased, particularly between those previously in structural positions and those now in functional positions. In some cases, competition and dissatisfaction arise between these two groups, which can disrupt a harmonious work environment. Research by Prabowo (2023) shows that this conflict can reduce collaboration and innovation within organizations, ultimately impacting the quality of public services.

Therefore, it is crucial for management to address these moral and psychological issues effectively. One strategy that can be implemented is to provide psychological support to employees, through counseling or self-development programs. Research by Anggraini (2020) shows that psychological support programs can increase job satisfaction and reduce stress levels among employees.

Overall, the impact of bureaucratic simplification on civil servant morale and psychology should be a serious concern for management. With the right approach, it is hoped that it can create a more positive and productive work environment.

3.5. Adaptation Strategies and Policy Recommendations

In the face of changes resulting from bureaucratic downsizing, it is crucial to implement effective adaptation strategies. An organizational change management approach, such as that proposed by Kotter (1996), can be a guide in managing this transition. Kotter's eight-step model includes creating urgency, building coalitions, and communicating the vision for change, all of which are crucial to ensuring successful policy implementation. A study by Sarah J. et al. (1993) demonstrated that a structured approach is essential for understanding the process and outcomes of organizational downsizing.

The need for training, outreach, and institutional psychological support cannot be overlooked. Research by Yudhi and Lestari (2022) found that agencies that provided adequate training to post-restructuring employees demonstrated higher levels of job satisfaction. This training should include developing skills relevant to new functional positions, as well as understanding the new performance evaluation system.

Another recommendation is to reformulate career and compensation policies for functional positions. Many employees feel that the compensation they receive is not commensurate with the responsibilities they carry in their functional positions. Research by Rahman (2023) shows that clarity in compensation policies can improve employee motivation and performance. Therefore, it is important for management to evaluate these policies and make necessary adjustments.

Furthermore, it is crucial to create effective communication channels between management and employees. Open communication allows employees to express their aspirations and concerns, which can help management make better decisions. Research by Setiawan and Indah (2021) shows that effective communication can increase employee engagement in the change process.

By implementing appropriate adaptation strategies, it is hoped that bureaucratic simplification can be implemented smoothly and the negative impact on employee performance and morale can be minimized. This will contribute to the creation of a more efficient bureaucracy that is responsive to public needs

4. CONCLUSION

Bureaucratic streamlining is a strategic step taken by many governments worldwide, including Indonesia, with the goal of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public services. However, this process is not always smooth and often has a significant impact

on the performance and morale of civil servants (PNS). In this context, it is important to understand that while rationalization and efficiency are the primary goals of bureaucratic streamlining, its implementation can have unforeseen consequences for the employees involved. As a recommendation for further research, a longitudinal study on the impact of bureaucratic streamlining policies on the quality of public services and civil servant job satisfaction is urgently needed. This research can provide deeper insights into how structural changes affect long-term performance and how employees adapt to these changes. This is crucial to ensure that bureaucratic reform not only generates efficiency but also improves the quality of services provided to the public.

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