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The Effect of Bureaucratic Simplification on Civil Servants' Performance: The Mediating Roles of Motivation and Job Satisfaction

Happy Wulandari¹, Agus Joko Purwanto², Rina Herlina Haryanti³

¹ Master of Public Administration, Faculty of Law, Social Sciences, and Political Sciences, Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia. Email: happy.wulandari579@gmail.com¹, ajoko@ecampus.ut.ac.id¹, rinaherlinaharyanti@staff.uns.ac.id³

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effect of bureaucratic simplification on the performance of civil servants in the Salatiga City Government, with work motivation and job satisfaction as mediating variables. The study employs a quantitative explanatory approach with a cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected from 148 civil servants selected through proportional random sampling from a population of 2,883 employees, supported by interviews with five public service users. The variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.1. The results show that bureaucratic simplification has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, work motivation, and job satisfaction. Job satisfaction also has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, whereas work motivation has a positive but insignificant effect on performance. In the indirect model, job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between bureaucratic simplification and employee performance, while work motivation does not. The findings indicate that bureaucratic simplification improves employee performance not only through direct structural efficiency but also through the enhancement of employees' job satisfaction. This suggests that the effectiveness of bureaucratic reform depends not only on streamlining procedures and structures but also on the extent to which the reform creates a more satisfying work environment for civil servants.

Keywords: Bureaucratic Simplification, Civil Servant Performance, Work Motivation, Job Satisfaction, Public Sector Reform.

I. Introduction

Bureaucratic simplification has become a central strategy in public-sector reform to build a government apparatus that is more agile, efficient, and responsive. In Indonesia, this agenda was formalized through the Regulation of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform of the Republic of Indonesia Number 25 of 2021 concerning the Simplification of Government Institution Organizational Structures for Bureaucratic Simplification, which aims to accelerate decision-making, reduce overlapping functions, and strengthen accountability and transparency. The policy is inseparable from the broader trajectory of bureaucratic reform outlined in Presidential Regulation Number 81 of 2010 on the Grand Design of Bureaucratic Reform 2010–2025, which emphasizes process simplification, service transformation, and



innovation in governance. In conceptual terms, this reform reflects the continuing relevance of bureaucracy theory. Weber (1947) viewed bureaucracy as the most rational and efficient organizational form for large-scale administration, characterized by a clear division of labor, hierarchical authority, rules and procedures, impersonality, competence-based recruitment, and professionalism. However, contemporary public administration no longer views bureaucracy merely as a rigid administrative structure. Dunn (2003) argues that bureaucracy must also function as a decision-making system capable of responding effectively to policy problems through adaptive, data-based, and strategic management. From this perspective, bureaucratic simplification is not only a matter of structural reduction, but also of organizational capacity to sustain performance under new and more collaborative working arrangements.

This policy shift is particularly relevant in local government, where the scale of personnel, diversity of functions, and uneven institutional capacities make implementation more complex. In Salatiga City Government, the policy was followed by the issuance of 28 mayoral regulations on December 28, 2021, concerning organizational structures and work procedures across local agencies, and by the inauguration of 190 functional officials on December 31, 2021, through a job equalization mechanism. The transition continued with the Regulation of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform Number 7 of 2022 on Work Systems in Government Institutions for Bureaucratic Simplification, which transformed a hierarchical and silo-based model into a collaborative and dynamic one. At the local level, this was reinforced by Salatiga Mayor Regulation Number 30 of 2024 concerning Work Systems for Bureaucratic Simplification, which institutionalized a non-structural, team-based, flexible, and adaptive work model. In practice, tasks are now performed through cross-unit work teams composed of functional officials and implementing staff, often across organizational boundaries, under coordinators appointed based on competence and organizational needs. Although normatively promising, this transformation creates serious adaptation demands. News reports in *Kumparan* indicate that job equalization in local governments has generated challenges related not only to service effectiveness but also to individual-level issues, including demotivation, inadequate understanding of the essence of functional positions, and the persistence of old structural work patterns. Based on BKN's 2024 ASN Statistics, local governments also face greater challenges because of their larger number of civil servants and more complex work environments. These difficulties are further exacerbated by educational backgrounds that do not always align with the competency requirements of functional positions (Fitrianingrum, 2021). The National Institute of Public Administration, as cited in Sartika et al. (2022), notes that unequal local government capacities and limited transition time made the equalization process appear rushed and suboptimal, contributing to the declining motivation of functional officials resulting from equalization (Sartika et al., 2022).

The Salatiga case illustrates this tension between policy design and implementation outcomes. Government performance data show that before simplification, in 2021, 68.2% of Key Performance Indicators (IKU) were categorized as "Very Good," with no indicators in the "Fair" or "Poor" categories. During the initial transition in 2022, however, the share of "Very Good" indicators dropped to 59.1%, while "Fair" and "Poor" categories appeared at 9.1% and 4.5%, respectively. Performance improved in 2023, when 89.7% of IKU fell into the "Very Good" category, but declined again in 2024 after the full implementation of the new work system and the abolition of sub-coordinators, with "Very Good" indicators decreasing to 69.0% and "Fair" indicators reappearing. These fluctuations suggest that organizational adaptation to simplified bureaucracy is neither linear nor automatically performance-enhancing. This pattern is also visible at the individual level. E-Kinerja data for January–October 2024 indicate that functional officials produced through equalization reached 100% performance targets in only two months, whereas non-equalized functional officials performed better in the same period. This empirical pattern implies that equalized functional officials tend to exhibit lower performance than their non-equalized counterparts. Moreover, dissatisfaction is not limited to officials directly affected by equalization. A staff memorandum dated October 7, 2024 (No. 01/FJF/10/2024) reported that the development of equalized functional officials had not been conducted optimally, that rights mandated by regulation had not been fully granted, and that job class determination had not yet followed Circular Letter of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform Number B/22/M.SM.02.00/2024. At

the same time, interviews also revealed discontent among non-equalized functional officials, who perceived unequal organizational attention, more limited career opportunities, and increasing workload due to ambiguity in roles and responsibilities under the new structure.

These empirical conditions are theoretically relevant because motivation and job satisfaction are widely recognized as key determinants of employee performance. Chatab, as cited in Silaen et al. (2021), identifies ability, motivation, and organizational support as the three main factors shaping individual performance, placing motivation at the center of performance optimization. Yusuf (2014) similarly found that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation significantly improve individual performance, as higher motivation strengthens employees' willingness to contribute to organizational goals. In the context of bureaucratic simplification, however, structural change may erode rather than enhance motivation when it creates uncertainty over status, authority, career prospects, and work expectations. Interview evidence in Salatiga points to resistance and anxiety among officials affected by equalization, especially due to the perceived loss of authority and the difficulty of adapting to new technological and collaborative demands. Job satisfaction is equally crucial. Robbins and Judge (2017) define job satisfaction as a positive feeling about one's job resulting from an evaluation of its characteristics, including social interaction, supervision, organizational policy, working conditions, and adaptation to technological and organizational change. Empirical studies reinforce this relationship. Mulyati and Setyawati (2024) found that bureaucratic simplification and career development positively and significantly affected job satisfaction, which in turn improved employee performance. Likewise, Taufik and Supriadi (2022) showed that bureaucratic simplification, work motivation, and job satisfaction simultaneously influenced the performance of educational personnel, with job satisfaction serving as a mediating variable. Robbins and Judge (2017) also emphasize the strong positive correlation between job satisfaction and performance, suggesting that satisfied employees are more productive, loyal, and engaged.

Despite the growing literature, an important research gap remains. Existing studies have generally confirmed the positive role of bureaucratic simplification, motivation, and job satisfaction in shaping performance, but they provide limited insight into how these relationships operate in local-government settings undergoing structural equalization and full work-system transformation. More specifically, prior findings do not sufficiently explain why a policy normatively designed to improve agility and efficiency may coincide with transitional performance decline, uneven adaptation, role ambiguity, and dissatisfaction among both equalized and non-equalized officials. In Salatiga, this gap is particularly visible in the discrepancy between *das sollen* and *das sein*: normatively, bureaucratic simplification should improve ASN performance through leaner structures, faster processes, and competence-based functional positions; empirically, however, the transition has been marked by fluctuating IKU achievement, lower performance among equalized functional officials, resistance to new work arrangements, and dissatisfaction related to career development, role clarity, and organizational support. The fact that functional officials represent 1,806 of 2,883 civil servants in Salatiga, or 62.64% of the total workforce, further underscores the strategic importance of understanding how this reform affects the motivation, satisfaction, and performance of a large proportion of the bureaucracy. The urgency of this study therefore lies in its potential to explain the behavioral and organizational mechanisms through which bureaucratic simplification influences public-sector performance in a real local-government context.

Against this background, this study examines the effect of bureaucratic simplification on the performance of civil servants in Salatiga City Government by positioning work motivation and job satisfaction as mediating variables. Specifically, the study analyzes the direct effect of bureaucratic simplification on work motivation, job satisfaction, and employee performance; the direct effect of work motivation and job satisfaction on performance; and the indirect effect of bureaucratic simplification on performance through both mediators. By doing so, the study seeks to contribute not only to the literature on bureaucratic reform and public-sector performance, but also to the practical design of more adaptive and equitable transition strategies in local government organizations undergoing structural simplification.

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Employee Performance

Employee performance in public organizations is understood as work achievement that reflects individuals' effectiveness, efficiency, quality, and contribution to organizational goals within the scope of their assigned authority and responsibilities. This emphasis is consistently reflected in the literature, which views performance not merely as an end result but also as a construct closely tied to standards, ethics, and organizational accountability. Prawirosentono (as cited in Agustian et al., 2024) conceptualized performance as the achievement of individual or group work outcomes that must align with organizational objectives while remaining within legal and moral boundaries. Similarly, Mangkunegara and Hasibuan (as cited in Khaeruman et al., 2021) emphasized the dimensions of effectiveness, efficiency, quality, quantity, and the comparison between actual outcomes and established standards. Stolovitch and Keeps (as cited in Silaen et al., 2021), Hasibuan (as cited in Khaeruman et al., 2021), and Donnelly, Gibson, and Ivancevich (as cited in Silaen et al., 2021) further reinforced the view that performance should be interpreted as the successful execution of tasks in accordance with targets, timelines, and responsibilities. Accordingly, in the bureaucratic context, performance cannot be reduced to administrative outputs alone; rather, it must be understood as the result of interaction among employee capability, organizational demands, and working conditions that shape day-to-day work behavior.

Theoretically, the literature also indicates that performance is a variable strongly influenced by psychological and organizational factors. Astuti (2021) argued that in organizations, both leaders and employees play active roles in generating expected performance, with motivation and job satisfaction serving as important drivers of productivity. This argument is consistent with Stoner (as cited in Indrasari, 2017), who positioned performance as a function of motivation, ability, and role perception. A more operational framework was proposed by Chatab (as cited in Silaen et al., 2021), who identified ability, motivation, and organizational support as the three main determinants of individual performance. In the context of bureaucratic change, this relationship becomes even more relevant because adaptation to a new work system often generates emotional pressure. Robbins and Judge (2017) demonstrated that emotional dissonance and emotional burnout may reduce both performance and job satisfaction, particularly when employees are expected to remain professional amid frustration, anxiety, and pressure caused by change. This suggests that performance studies in post-reform bureaucracy should not rely solely on outcome indicators.

The implication is that performance measurement in bureaucratic research must capture this complexity. Mondy, Noe, and Premeaux (as cited in Muh. Kadarisman, 2021) proposed quantity of work, quality of work, independence, initiative, adaptability, and cooperation as the main dimensions for assessing performance. This framework is especially relevant to bureaucracy undergoing restructuring because work success is no longer determined only by the volume and quality of outputs, but also by employees' capacity to take initiative, adapt, and collaborate across roles. Robbins and Judge (2017) and Wahyuningsih et al. (2021) further highlighted the importance of indicators that capture behavioral dimensions of work in public organizations. However, a gap remains in understanding how these dimensions change when organizational structures are simplified and job roles shift from a structural orientation to a functional orientation. This gap makes the study of performance in the context of bureaucratic simplification particularly important, especially when psychological variables such as motivation and job satisfaction are treated not as peripheral factors but as key explanatory mechanisms.

2.2. Bureaucratic Simplification

Bureaucratic simplification is essentially an organizational redesign strategy intended to create governance that is flatter, more adaptive, more collaborative, and more results-oriented. The literature

suggests that this issue is not merely about structural downsizing but also about how such change is adopted, managed, and internalized by civil servants. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory (as cited in Purwanto & Elu, 2024) emphasizes that the success of change adoption depends on employees' perceptions of the benefits, ease, and compatibility of the change with their values and needs. In the context of bureaucratic simplification, these perceptions determine whether reform is viewed as an opportunity for professionalization or rather as a threat to status, career prospects, and workload. Lewin's three-stage model of change—unfreezing, changing, and refreezing—as cited in Purwanto & Elu, (2024) further clarifies that transition phases always involve uncertainty that may affect motivation and job satisfaction. Tushman and O'Reilly, as well as Senge (as cited in Purwanto & Elu, 2024), added that successful structural change requires a balance between major transformation and gradual adjustment, along with an organizational culture that supports learning and collaboration. Within this framework, transformational leadership, according to Burns (as cited in Purwanto & Elu, 2024), becomes crucial to ensure that reform does not stop at formal restructuring but is translated into productive new work practices.

From the perspective of organizational structure, bureaucratic simplification is a response to the weaknesses of overly hierarchical organizations. Hodge and Anthony (as cited in Purwanto, 2023) emphasized that an effective structure must maximize goal attainment while also encouraging flexibility, innovation, and adaptability. Robbins and Steers (as cited in Purwanto, 2023) even regarded structural design as a fundamental managerial responsibility because poor design can generate conflict, overlapping authority, and a mismatch between tasks and competencies. Therefore, bureaucratic simplification can be understood as a corrective measure against bureaucratic structures that are slow, rigid, and layered. This view is consistent with the definition of bureaucracy as the machinery of the state and public administration operating within a formal and institutional framework (Suwitri et al., 2019), even though, in practice, excessively layered structures often hinder rapid responses to public problems. Ripley and Franklin (as cited in Rusli et al., 2024) argued that when decision-making is concentrated at the top, frontline employees—who best understand realities on the ground—lose the space to act quickly. Thus, bureaucratic simplification is not merely an efficiency agenda but also an effort to redistribute decision-making capacity within public organizations.

Theoretical studies also show that bureaucratic simplification has a paradigmatic dimension. Weber (1947) described traditional bureaucracy as a rational system supported by hierarchy and rules, but in the context of modern governance this model must be transformed to avoid becoming structurally rigid. Antoni (2009) argued that the urgency of bureaucratic reform in developing countries lies not only in downsizing structures but also in reducing patronage, excessive formality, and inefficiency. Meanwhile, Dunn (2003) viewed bureaucracy as a problem-solving system that should be responsive to public needs and capable of making maximum use of information. This framework aligns with the orientation of New Public Management (NPM), which emphasizes decentralization, efficiency, results orientation, and the redesign of state–society relations (Suwitri et al., 2019). More recently, the good governance paradigm has expanded reform beyond the macro level of structural reorganization to the micro level of ethics, participation, service orientation, and behavioral change among public officials (Suwitri et al., 2019). Accordingly, bureaucratic simplification should be understood as a multidimensional reform—structural, cultural, and managerial at once.

However, empirical literature indicates that the implementation of this policy does not always produce linear outcomes. Aziza et al. (2022) found that bureaucratic simplification implemented within a relatively short period created challenges because functional officials resulting from position equalization had not fully understood their new roles. Tumanggor (2021) also noted that the policy generated mixed responses, ranging from support to resistance, particularly because approximately 420,000 employees lost their structural positions and were therefore vulnerable to demoralization. Robbins and Judge's (2017) Affective Events Theory explains that organizational restructuring may trigger emotional reactions that affect job satisfaction and performance. At the same time, national policy demands increasingly efficient public organizations through administrative reform, bureaucratic streamlining, decentralization, and digitalization. This is reflected in the Grand Design of Bureaucratic Reform 2010–2025 under Presidential Regulation No. 81 of 2010 and in the strengthening of digital bureaucracy through Presidential Regulation No. 95 of 2018 on

Electronic-Based Government Systems (SPBE), which emphasizes clean, effective, efficient, transparent, and accountable bureaucracy. The contradiction between the ideal design of the policy and the reality of employee adaptation reveals an empirical gap: many studies frame bureaucratic simplification as an institutional agenda, but they do not sufficiently explain how this reform operates at the level of employee experience and how its effects flow through motivation and job satisfaction toward performance.

Conceptually, evaluating bureaucratic simplification also requires sharper indicators than mere structural change. Siringoringo (as cited in Rizaldy et al., 2024) emphasized objective indicators, decision alternative indicators, and limiting resource indicators as measures of policy implementation effectiveness. Meanwhile, Regulation of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform No. 25 of 2020 and No. 7 of 2021 emphasizes organizational structure, business processes, regulation, public service, and accountability. These two approaches suggest that bureaucratic simplification cannot be assessed solely by the abolition of hierarchical levels, but rather by the extent to which reform creates more independent decision-making, stronger employee capacity, broader participation, and more responsive service performance. The problem is that much of the previous discussion remains normative and descriptive and has not sufficiently tested the direct and indirect relationships among bureaucratic simplification, motivation, job satisfaction, and employee performance. This is where the relevance of the present study lies: it positions bureaucratic simplification as an organizational variable that should be assessed not only through policy design but also through the behavioral and performance effects it generates.

2.3. Work Motivation

Work motivation is a psychological mechanism that explains why employees are willing to exert energy, sustain effort, and direct their behavior toward achieving organizational goals. The literature consistently shows that motivation originates not only from internal drives but is also shaped by organizational context. Emron (as cited in Khaeruman, 2021) defined motivation as an inner drive that directs actions toward certain outcomes, whereas Robbins and Judge (2017) argued that motivation explains the intensity, direction, and persistence of individual effort in pursuing goals. Nawawi and Daft (as cited in Khaeruman, 2021) broadened this framework by showing that motivation is influenced both by internal forces, such as the desire to grow and achieve, and by external factors, such as rewards, recognition, and a supportive work environment. Rahmawati (2020), Handoko (2020), and Rifa'i and Rosalia Sela (2021) further reinforced that motivation functions to trigger, direct, and sustain work behavior. Thus, work motivation in public organizations should be understood as the product of interaction between individual aspirations and the organization's ability to create a work environment that offers meaning, certainty, and support.

In a bureaucracy undergoing change, motivation becomes even more important because structural reform may alter employees' perceptions of their roles, status, job security, and career opportunities. Sartika et al. (2022) found that changes in work culture following position equalization led to declining work motivation, influenced by lack of understanding of new duties, low self-confidence due to competency mismatch, and inequities in the compensation system. This finding indicates that motivation cannot be treated as a stable individual attribute; rather, it is highly sensitive to the design of organizational change. At this point, classical motivational theory—such as physical needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem, and the drive to achieve goals from Hasibuan (as cited in Adha et al., 2019)—remains relevant, but it must be reinterpreted within the context of bureaucratic restructuring. When bureaucratic simplification is perceived as threatening security, reducing status, or obscuring opportunities for self-development, employees' basic needs are disrupted and motivation is likely to weaken. Conversely, if reform is perceived as opening space for self-actualization and professionalization, motivation may strengthen.

Previous studies also indicate that motivation is closely associated with performance, although the strength of this relationship depends heavily on organizational context. Wahyuningsih et al. (2021) demonstrated a relationship between motivation and the performance of civil servants in higher education institutions, confirming the relevance of motivation as a predictor of public-sector performance. However,

these findings do not automatically explain how motivation operates in local bureaucracies undergoing simultaneous changes in job structures and work systems. In other words, the theoretical and empirical gap lies in the limited number of studies that specifically position motivation as a mediator in the relationship between bureaucratic simplification and performance. Most of the literature still treats motivation as a direct independent predictor of performance and has not sufficiently explored its role as an adaptive mechanism explaining the success or failure of bureaucratic reform at the individual level. Therefore, positioning work motivation as a mediating variable is not only conceptually relevant but also important for explaining why a policy designed to increase efficiency may nonetheless generate diverse behavioral responses.

2.4. Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is employees' affective and cognitive evaluation of their work, reflecting the extent to which the job fulfills their expectations, needs, and values. Locke (as cited in Lestari & Damayanti, 2024) conceptualized job satisfaction as an individual evaluation of one's work in relation to the fulfillment of basic values, while Sedarmayanti (as cited in Lestari & Damayanti, 2024) emphasized the practical consequences of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, ranging from psychological stability and work enthusiasm to absenteeism. Blum and Wexley and Yuki (as cited in Adnan, 2014) showed that job satisfaction is multidimensional because it is shaped by work experience, social adaptation, and perceptions of different aspects of the job. Therefore, job satisfaction is not merely a temporary emotional response but a comprehensive judgment of whether the organization provides working conditions perceived as fair, meaningful, and supportive.

In public organizations, job satisfaction is important because it is directly related to productivity, loyalty, absenteeism, turnover, and even employee health. Merdiaty and Nugraha (2024) found that high job satisfaction promotes productivity, performance, and both physical and mental well-being, whereas dissatisfaction increases turnover intention, absenteeism, and health problems. The indicator framework proposed by Widodo (as cited in Nabawi, 2019)—salary, work itself, coworkers, supervisors, and promotion—as well as Robbins and Judge (2017)—financial rewards, work relationships, working conditions, career development opportunities, and reward systems—shows that job satisfaction is influenced by a combination of transactional and relational factors. This is highly relevant in the context of bureaucratic simplification because the reform of functional positions does not merely change formal structures but also affects employees' perceptions of promotion opportunities, recognition, relationships with supervisors, and the clarity of reward systems. In this sense, job satisfaction becomes the point at which policy changes at the organizational level intersect with behavioral responses at the individual level.

In recent literature, job satisfaction is often positioned as one of the determinants of civil servant performance. Wahyuningsih et al. (2021) showed that job satisfaction has a significant effect on improving the performance of civil servants, particularly in state higher education institutions. However, as with work motivation, these studies have been conducted mostly in relatively stable organizational contexts rather than in bureaucracies undergoing structural simplification. This is where an important empirical gap emerges. Bureaucratic reform may fundamentally alter the sources of job satisfaction: employees may feel more satisfied if the new structure opens opportunities for professionalization, but they may also become dissatisfied if the change creates career uncertainty, unequal treatment, or reward systems that have not yet adapted to the new job demands. Therefore, testing job satisfaction as a mediating variable is crucial for explaining whether the effect of bureaucratic simplification on performance occurs directly or primarily through changes in employees' perceptions of their work.

Overall, the literature synthesis shows that the relationship among bureaucratic simplification, work motivation, job satisfaction, and employee performance is interconnected and cannot be understood in isolation. Performance is not merely an administrative output but the result of interaction among organizational design, experiences of change, and employees' psychological conditions. Bureaucratic simplification normatively promises efficiency, flexibility, and results orientation, yet prior studies also reveal resistance, demoralization, role ambiguity, and adaptation challenges (Aziza et al., 2022; Tumanggor, 2021;

Robbins & Judge, 2017). At the same time, work motivation and job satisfaction have been shown to be associated with performance (Wahyuningsih et al., 2021), but they have rarely been examined simultaneously as mediating mechanisms in the context of local bureaucratic reform. Accordingly, the theoretical contribution of this study lies in its attempt to bridge this gap by positioning work motivation and job satisfaction as explanatory pathways linking bureaucratic simplification to employee performance. This position is important because it allows a more comprehensive analysis of the success or limitations of bureaucratic reform, not only from the standpoint of structure and regulation but also from the perspective of the civil servants who must enact it.

III. Research Method

This study employed a quantitative explanatory approach with a cross-sectional survey design to examine the effects of bureaucratic simplification on civil servant performance, with work motivation and job satisfaction as mediating variables, in the Salatiga City Government, Indonesia (Sugiyono, 2017; Sinambela, 2014). The population consisted of 2,883 civil servants, from which 148 respondents were selected using Slovin's formula and proportional random sampling, while five public service users were purposively included as supporting interview informants. Data were collected through an online closed-ended questionnaire, supported by interviews, observation, and documentation (Priadana & Sunarsi, 2021). The variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale, covering bureaucratic simplification, work motivation, job satisfaction, and employee performance. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.1, as this method is suitable for testing complex direct and indirect relationships among latent variables (Bougie & Sekaran, 2010; Hair et al., 2022). Instrument validity was assessed through outer loading and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), while reliability was evaluated using Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha. The structural model was examined using VIF, R-square, F-square, Q-square, and bootstrapping, with significance determined at $t > 1.65$ and $p < .05$ (Hair et al., 2022).

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1. Result

The hypothesis testing results indicate that most of the proposed relationships are positive, although not all are statistically significant. Table 1 shows that bureaucratic simplification has a positive and significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.322$; $t = 4.117$; $p = 0.000$), work motivation ($\beta = 0.478$; $t = 6.672$; $p = 0.000$), and job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.477$; $t = 7.359$; $p = 0.000$). Job satisfaction also has a positive and significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.404$; $t = 4.732$; $p = 0.000$). In contrast, work motivation has a positive but statistically insignificant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.130$; $t = 1.873$; $p = 0.061$). For indirect effects, the mediating role of work motivation is not significant ($\beta = 0.062$; $t = 1.721$; $p = 0.086$), whereas job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between bureaucratic simplification and employee performance ($\beta = 0.193$; $t = 3.911$; $p = 0.000$). Overall, these findings suggest that bureaucratic simplification improves employee performance both directly and indirectly, but the indirect mechanism is more robust through job satisfaction than through work motivation.

Table 1. Hypothesis Testing Results (Direct and Indirect Effects)

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	t-statistics	p-value	Result
H1	Bureaucratic Simplification → Employee Performance	0.322	4.117	0.000	Supported
H2	Bureaucratic Simplification → Work Motivation	0.478	6.672	0.000	Supported

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	t-statistics	p-value	Result
H3	Bureaucratic Simplification \rightarrow Job Satisfaction	0.477	7.359	0.000	Supported
H4	Work Motivation \rightarrow Employee Performance	0.130	1.873	0.061	Not Supported
H5	Job Satisfaction \rightarrow Employee Performance	0.404	4.732	0.000	Supported
H6	Bureaucratic Simplification \rightarrow Employee Performance through Work Motivation	0.062	1.721	0.086	Not Supported
H7	Bureaucratic Simplification \rightarrow Employee Performance through Job Satisfaction	0.193	3.911	0.000	Supported

The empirical pattern further indicates that bureaucratic simplification exerts its strongest direct influence on work motivation and job satisfaction, with both coefficients approaching 0.48. However, only job satisfaction is capable of translating this organizational change into a significant improvement in employee performance. This means that bureaucratic reform in Salatiga City Government is not merely a structural intervention, but also a psychological and organizational process whose effectiveness depends on how employees perceive and experience the new work system.

4.2. Discussion

a. The Direct Effect of Bureaucratic Simplification on the Work Motivation of Civil Servants in the Salatiga City Government

The findings indicate that bureaucratic simplification has a positive and significant direct effect on the work motivation of civil servants. This result suggests that the better the implementation of bureaucratic simplification, the higher the employees' work motivation. Substantively, structural streamlining, procedural reduction, and improved coordination have created a work environment that is more adaptive, clear, and collaborative, thereby encouraging employees to work with greater enthusiasm. The relatively strong path coefficient for this relationship confirms that organizational change aimed at reducing bureaucratic complexity can serve as a psychological stimulus for public employees to become more focused and proactive in their work. This finding is consistent with Robbins and Judge (2017), who define motivation as the process that explains the intensity, direction, and persistence of individual effort toward achieving goals. In this context, bureaucratic simplification provides clearer roles and more measurable responsibilities, enabling employees to have a more defined work orientation. This result is also aligned with Hasibuan's indicators of motivation (as cited in Adha et al., 2019), particularly in terms of security, recognition, social needs, and the drive to achieve goals. Empirically, this finding is supported by interviews with employees at the Regional Financial and Revenue Management Agency, who reported that shorter and digitally integrated work processes reduced administrative burdens and accelerated service delivery. However, some employees also noted that decision-making authority remained insufficiently clear following the elimination of Echelon IV positions. Thus, bureaucratic simplification has been shown to enhance work motivation, although its effectiveness remains dependent on clarity of authority and managerial support.

b. The Direct Effect of Bureaucratic Simplification on the Job Satisfaction of Civil Servants in the Salatiga City Government

The study also found that bureaucratic simplification has a positive and significant direct effect on job satisfaction. This means that a simpler bureaucratic structure, shorter communication lines, and a more

efficient work system have improved the quality of employees' work experience. Within a leaner bureaucratic setting, employees perceive clearer work division, more open working relationships, and lower stress resulting from long and complicated procedures. These conditions strengthen employees' sense of comfort, appreciation, and attachment to the organization.

This finding is in line with Locke (as cited in Lestari & Damayanti, 2024), who argues that job satisfaction reflects an individual's evaluation of the extent to which work fulfills important personal values. The perspectives of Robbins and Judge (2017) and Widodo (as cited in Nabawi, 2019) also emphasize that job satisfaction is influenced by job content, relationships with supervisors and colleagues, and opportunities for career development. In this study, interviews with employees from the Regional Financial Agency, the Investment and One-Stop Integrated Service Office, and the Civil Service and Human Resource Development Agency revealed that employees felt more satisfied because work became more focused, digital systems reduced repetitive manual tasks, and broader opportunities for self-actualization emerged. This result is also consistent with the studies of Arie Pratama, Adnan Rajak, and Rahmat Sabuhari (2024), as well as Ai Yeti Mulyati and Irma Setyawati (2023, 2024), which show that bureaucratic simplification can improve job satisfaction among public servants. Therefore, bureaucratic simplification functions not only as an administrative efficiency instrument but also as a mechanism for enhancing employees' psychological well-being.

c. The Direct Effect of Work Motivation on the Performance of Civil Servants in the Salatiga City Government

Unlike the two previous relationships, this study found that work motivation has a positive but insignificant direct effect on employee performance. This finding indicates that although employee motivation tends to increase, such an increase is not strong enough to produce a statistically significant improvement in performance. Empirically, this suggests that higher enthusiasm, initiative, and psychological drive do not automatically translate into better work outcomes. In other words, motivation is an important condition, but it does not independently determine employee performance in a bureaucracy undergoing reform. This finding can be explained through Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964), which argues that motivation will affect performance only when individuals believe that their effort will lead to outcomes and rewards they value. In this context, employees may become more motivated after procedures are simplified, but certainty regarding promotion, rewards, and career systems remains incomplete, particularly for functional officials resulting from job equalization. This result is also consistent with Stoner (as cited in Indrasari, 2017), who states that performance is a function of motivation, ability, and role perception. Interviews with employees at the Population and Civil Registration Office further showed that motivation increased, yet digital system disruptions, service queues, and other technical barriers still impeded optimal performance achievement. Thus, in this study, work motivation was not a single determinant of performance, as its influence remained dependent on structural, technical, and organizational support factors.

d. The Direct Effect of Job Satisfaction on the Performance of Civil Servants in the Salatiga City Government

The findings show that job satisfaction has a positive and significant direct effect on the performance of civil servants. This result confirms that employees who are satisfied with their jobs tend to demonstrate higher levels of discipline, loyalty, productivity, and organizational commitment. In the bureaucratic context, job satisfaction appears to be a more stable factor and more readily translated into actual work behavior than work motivation. Thus, the higher the employees' job satisfaction, the greater the likelihood of achieving effective and sustainable performance. This finding supports Robbins and Judge (2017), who argue that job satisfaction is closely related to productivity, work engagement, and organizational citizenship behavior. It is also consistent with Locke (as cited in Lestari & Damayanti, 2024) and Sedarmayanti, who emphasize that satisfied employees exhibit stronger loyalty and better performance, whereas dissatisfied employees are more vulnerable to stress and declining morale. Interviews with employees from the Investment and One-Stop Integrated Service Office and the Civil Service and Human Resource Development Agency showed that

satisfaction derived from clearer work procedures, better working relationships, and more meaningful recognition encouraged employees to work more productively and remain focused on organizational goals. This finding is also consistent with studies by Arie Pratama et al. (2024), Ai Yeti Mulyati and Irma Setyawati (2023, 2024), as well as Taufik M. and Yudi Nur Supriadi (2024), all of which highlight the importance of job satisfaction in improving public employee performance. Therefore, job satisfaction can be positioned as one of the main mechanisms linking organizational change to improved employee performance.

e. **The Direct Effect of Bureaucratic Simplification on the Performance of Civil Servants in the Salatiga City Government**

This study demonstrates that bureaucratic simplification has a positive and significant direct effect on the performance of civil servants. In other words, the simpler the bureaucratic structure and procedures, the better the employee performance. This finding indicates that structural reform in the Salatiga City Government has led to tangible improvements in task completion speed, coordination effectiveness, clarity of responsibilities, and the quality of public service delivery. Thus, bureaucratic simplification affects not only organizational arrangements but also employees' actual work outcomes. This finding is supported by Weber's (1947) critique of traditional bureaucracy as rigid and slow in decision-making. In contrast, Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory and Lewin's change model (as cited in Purwanto & Elu, 2024) suggest that simplified structures enable organizations to become more adaptive. Field evidence also reinforces this result. Service users at the Population and Civil Registration Office perceived that services had become faster, employee explanations clearer, and procedures simpler. Observations further showed that digital queue systems and more concise procedures supported employee effectiveness. However, interviews with employees also revealed that performance improvement was not driven solely by structural simplification, but was strongly reinforced by public service digitalization. Therefore, the study indicates that the direct effect of bureaucratic simplification on performance becomes stronger when structural reform is accompanied by digital transformation.

f. **The Indirect Effect of Bureaucratic Simplification on the Performance of Civil Servants through Work Motivation**

The findings reveal that the indirect effect of bureaucratic simplification on employee performance through work motivation is positive but insignificant. This means that although bureaucratic simplification successfully improves work motivation, the resulting motivational increase is not strong enough to serve as an effective mediating pathway for improving employee performance. In other words, work motivation plays only a weak mediating role rather than functioning as a principal mediator in the relationship between bureaucratic simplification and civil servant performance. Theoretically, this result can be explained through Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964), which emphasizes that motivation will effectively influence performance only when individuals believe that their effort will lead to clear outcomes and rewards. In this study, employees' motivation did increase as structures and procedures became simpler, but their confidence in promotion certainty, reward systems, and career patterns remained insufficient. Interviews with employees at the Population and Civil Registration Office and with public service users showed that employees appeared more alert and enthusiastic, yet service outcomes were not always consistent because technical constraints and limitations in digital systems still existed. This finding is consistent with Stoner (as cited in Indrasari, 2017), Chatab, and studies by Febrianti et al. (2025), Taufik and Supriadi (2022), and Ulum and Ichsanuddin (2025), which indicate that motivation or similar mediating variables do not always significantly affect performance when organizational systems remain weak.

g. **The Indirect Effect of Bureaucratic Simplification on the Performance of Civil Servants through Job Satisfaction**

Unlike work motivation, job satisfaction was found to be a significant mediator in the relationship between bureaucratic simplification and civil servant performance. This finding indicates that an important

part of the success of bureaucratic simplification in improving employee performance occurs through increased job satisfaction. In other words, when employees feel more comfortable, appreciated, secure, and clearer about their roles following bureaucratic reform, they tend to work more productively, more disciplinarily, and with stronger commitment to organizational goals. This mediating pathway is one of the most important findings of the study because it demonstrates that the effects of structural reform are not merely administrative but also psychological. This result is consistent with Locke (as cited in Lestari & Damayanti, 2024), Sedarmayanti, and Robbins and Judge (2017), who argue that job satisfaction shapes loyalty, emotional stability, and performance effectiveness. Interviews with employees from the Investment and One-Stop Integrated Service Office showed that simplified bureaucratic procedures made work more focused and efficient, while public service users perceived faster and easier services through support from the Online Single Submission system and the SMART Public Service Mall of Salatiga. This finding is also consistent with studies by Arie Pratama et al. (2024), Ai Yeti Mulyati and Irma Setyawati (2023, 2024), Taufik M. and Yudi Nur Supriadi (2024), as well as Dessy Kristanti Pangaribuan and Seta A. Wicaksana (2023), all of which emphasize the important role of job satisfaction in strengthening the impact of bureaucratic reform on public servant performance. Therefore, this study confirms that job satisfaction is a stronger and more stable mediating pathway than work motivation in explaining how bureaucratic simplification improves employee performance in the Salatiga City Government.

V. Conclusion

This study concludes that bureaucratic simplification plays an important role in improving work motivation, job satisfaction, and the performance of civil servants in the Salatiga City Government. Reform implemented through organizational restructuring, procedural simplification, and improvements in coordination systems has been shown to create a work environment that is more effective, efficient, and conducive. More specifically, bureaucratic simplification has a positive and significant effect on work motivation, job satisfaction, and employee performance, while job satisfaction also has a positive and significant effect on performance. By contrast, work motivation shows only a positive but insignificant effect on performance. In the indirect pathways, job satisfaction is proven to be an effective mediator in transmitting the effect of bureaucratic simplification on performance, whereas work motivation has not been able to function as a strong mediating variable. These findings confirm that the impact of bureaucratic simplification extends beyond administrative efficiency and also reaches the psychological dimension of employees, particularly through the formation of job satisfaction that strengthens loyalty, discipline, and commitment to the organization.

Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on organizational behavior and public management by demonstrating that, in the context of local bureaucratic reform, job satisfaction is more dominant than work motivation in mediating the effect of structural change on performance. This finding reinforces the frameworks of Robbins and Judge (2017), Mangkunegara, as well as Mondy, Noe, and Premeaux regarding the importance of the interaction between organizational structural factors and employees' psychological factors in shaping performance, while also extending the relevance of the New Public Management and Good Governance paradigms, which emphasize bureaucratic efficiency and the quality of public service. From a managerial perspective, the results suggest that bureaucratic simplification will be effective only if it is followed by the strengthening of reward systems, clarity of career paths, functional position development, clearer communication of change, and position-adaptation training. For the Salatiga City Government, bureaucratic reform should therefore be positioned not merely as an agenda of structural downsizing, but as a strategy for civil service management that balances administrative efficiency with employees' psychological well-being. In policy terms, these findings also support the importance of continuous evaluation, policy synchronization between central and local government, and the strengthening of promotion systems, allowances, and competency development so that civil servants' satisfaction and motivation can truly be translated into sustainable performance improvement.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, it is a perception-based study, meaning that the data depend heavily on respondents' subjective assessments and do not fully reflect objective conditions in the field. Second, although the questionnaire distribution covered all local government agencies, supporting interview data were collected only from four agencies, so the results cannot yet be generalized to represent the overall organizational condition of the Salatiga City Government. Third, the research model remains limited to a quantitative approach and has not fully captured social dynamics, organizational culture, or other contextual factors; indeed, field findings indicate that public service digitalization is an important factor that was not explicitly included in the model. In addition, time constraints, limited observational access, and technical obstacles during interviews also affected the depth of the data obtained. Therefore, future studies are recommended to expand the scope of locations and sectors, incorporate additional variables such as leadership style, organizational culture, compensation, and technological support, and employ mixed-methods or longitudinal designs in order to explain more comprehensively the long-term dynamics of bureaucratic simplification on motivation, job satisfaction, and employee performance.

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