

Bureaucratic Reform and Public Service Quality: Evidence from Simokerto Sub District, Surabaya

Anisah Aprilia Putri¹, Amirul Mustofa^{2*}, Sapto Pramono³

Department of Public Administration, Dr. Soetomo University, Surabaya

Corresponding Author: Amirul Mustofa amirul.mustofa@unitomo.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Bureaucratic reform is widely recognized as one of the government's strategic instruments for promoting principles of good governance, transparency, accountability, and efficient public service delivery. At the sub district level, reform becomes even more significant because this administrative unit serves as the closest point of interaction between the government and citizens. Therefore, the quality of governance at this level directly influences public trust and societal satisfaction with governmental performance. This study aims to critically examine the existing challenges and propose feasible strategies to enhance bureaucratic reform within Simokerto Sub district, Surabaya. A descriptive qualitative method was applied, utilizing literature review and policy analysis supported by secondary data obtained from official documents and previous empirical studies. The findings reveal several persistent obstacles, including limited professional capacity among civil servants, resistance to organizational and cultural change, insufficient digital competence among the population, and fragmented integration of information systems in administrative procedures

INTRODUCTION

Bureaucratic reform has become a fundamental national agenda in Indonesia aimed at realizing a governance system that is clean, effective, and oriented toward public service quality. The enactment of the Grand Design for Bureaucratic Reform 2010–2025 (Perpres No 81 TAHUN 2010, 2025). Reflects the government's commitment to transforming institutional arrangements, simplifying work systems, and enhancing performance accountability across the public sector. This transformation is increasingly urgent given the widespread perception of bureaucracy as being slow, procedural, and insufficiently responsive to citizens' needs. Previous studies highlight that bureaucratic reform is not merely a structural adjustment but a multidimensional effort involving organizational culture, human resource competence, and digital innovation to improve public service delivery (Widyawati et al., 2023).

The sub district simokerto functions as the frontline unit of government that interacts directly with citizens, making it a crucial locus for the implementation of bureaucratic reform. Sub district Simokerto, as one of the 31 districts in the City of Surabaya, plays an essential role in public administration, population services, and community development facilitation within its jurisdiction. In this context, bureaucratic reform is expected to strengthen transparency, efficiency, and responsiveness in public service delivery at the local level. The adoption of digital governance, procedural streamlining, and improved human resource capabilities are regarded as key pillars for accelerating administrative transformation in district government (Sanjaya et al., 2023)

However, the implementation of bureaucratic reform at sub district Simokerto continues to face several substantive challenges. On the one hand, public expectations for fast, transparent, and accessible services have surged in line with technological advancements and the development of electronic government. On the other hand, the district office still encounters limited human resource competencies, insufficient technological infrastructure, and bureaucratic work culture rigidity that hinder the optimization of reform policies. (Firmansyah & Haeril, 2024) assert that digital transformation in Indonesian public institutions frequently meets resistance due to a lack of digital literacy, comfort with conventional routines, and misalignment between innovation and institutional readiness. Consequently, bureaucratic reform demands not only procedural adjustments but also cultural change supported by effective leadership and continuous competency development.

The aforementioned circumstances highlight the urgency of conducting a comprehensive evaluation to identify the barriers that hinder the implementation of bureaucratic reform and to formulate solutions that are aligned with the contextual needs of the district level. An effective reform framework requires the integration of digital governance readiness, civil servant professionalism, and community participation in monitoring public services to ensure long-term and sustainable transformation. In line with this urgency, the present study focuses on evaluating the implementation of bureaucratic reform in sub district Simokerto, with particular attention to the challenges faced during the reform process and the development of suitable strategies to enhance the overall quality

of public service delivery. The results of this research are expected to contribute theoretically to the academic discourse concerning bureaucratic reform and practically to local government efforts in strengthening public service performance.

Based on this background, the study concentrates on answering two core research problems the first is to determine the specific challenges encountered in implementing bureaucratic reform in sub district Simokerto, Surabaya, in relation to public service improvement, and the second is to identify practical and strategic solutions that can be applied to overcome these challenges so that the reform process can be carried out effectively and lead to better public service outcomes. Correspondingly, the objectives of the study are to identify and analyze the various barriers to the reform process in sub district Simokerto and to formulate strategic recommendations that support the optimization of bureaucratic reform for improving public service quality at the sub district level. The novelty of this research lies in its integrated approach, which simultaneously examines both the challenges and the potential solutions for bureaucratic reform at the district level an institutional layer that has received relatively little attention in prior studies. While existing research often focuses on program implementation or general policy impacts, this study provides an in-depth evaluative analysis of both internal and external barriers, and introduces a solution model grounded in multi-actor collaboration tailored to the context of district level governance. Additionally, the study offers practical contributions by proposing policy recommendations that local governments, particularly in Surabaya, can use as a reference in designing more effective and sustainable bureaucratic reform strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Bureaucratic Reform

Bureaucratic reform refers to a profound transformation of the state administrative apparatus aimed at improving government effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, and accountability. It typically involves institutional restructuring, streamlining of regulatory procedures, the development of civil servant competencies, and the institutionalization of good-governance principles across all levels of public service (Wijayanti et al., 2025). In Indonesia, such reform has been framed as a critical effort to rebuild public trust and to establish a bureaucracy that is more responsive to citizens' needs. The Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (PANRB) formalized this ambition through its Grand Design of Bureaucratic Reform 2010–2025, which functions as the strategic blueprint guiding the reform process (Masrully, 2025).

The Grand Design articulates three principal objectives: first, to establish a clean government free from corruption, collusion, and nepotism; second, to create a more effective and efficient governance architecture; and third, to enhance the quality of public services (Masrully, 2025). To realize these aims, the government has launched a comprehensive transformation agenda across critical dimensions, including organizational restructuring, human resource management, regulatory reform, governance processes, and oversight

mechanisms. In particular, the reform underscores the development of civil servant capacities and the enforcement of ethical norms, backed by both internal capacity-building and external supervisory frameworks. Moreover, the approach draws on dynamic governance ideas emphasizing adaptability, innovation, and system responsiveness to cope with persistent institutional resistance and cultural inertia (Widowati et al., 2023).

Public Services and Their Quality

Public service refers to all forms of service activities carried out by government institutions to meet the needs of citizens in accordance with prevailing laws and regulations (Finanda et al., 2024). In the public administration field, quality service is strongly associated with the principles of effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, responsiveness, and accountability, which collectively determine whether services align with citizen expectations. Parasuraman et al., through the well Established SERVQUAL model, identify five dimensions of service quality tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy that remain relevant for evaluating the performance of governmental institutions. These dimensions serve as analytical tools to assess whether government services are not only procedurally correct but also human centered and citizen oriented. As the frontline of government administration, districts play a strategic role in ensuring that these dimensions are consistently implemented in the delivery of basic public services to the community.

The Sub District Integrated Administrative Services Program (PATEN), regulated under the Ministry of Home Affairs Regulation No. 4 of 2010, represents one of the government's direct interventions to improve service quality by simplifying procedures, promoting transparency, and strengthening accountability in administrative processes (Purnawan et al., 2022). The PATEN initiative reflects the recognition that service improvements require not only regulatory adjustments but also operational innovations that reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and enhance accessibility for citizens. When districts adopt PATEN, they are expected to enhance service speed, standardize procedures, and improve interactions between citizens and the local administration. In practice, the effectiveness of PATEN is linked to the ability of sub-districts to integrate structured workflows, trained personnel, and a service-oriented culture that supports continuous improvements in public service quality. Therefore, improving service quality at the district level represents a key pathway to strengthening the government's legitimacy and increasing public trust.

Challenges of Bureaucratic Reform

The implementation of bureaucratic reform at the district level faces a number of significant challenges that affect the consistency and effectiveness of service transformation. According to (Firmansyah & Haeril, 2024), the primary issues include limitations in human resources, where many civil servants still lack the competencies required to operate digital based service systems efficiently. In addition, the persistence of hierarchical and rigid bureaucratic cultures often results in resistance to change, slowing the adoption of innovative service mechanisms and organizational restructuring. These constraints demonstrate that reform is not only a technical endeavor but also a socio-cultural process that demands behavioral adaptation and continuous capacity building

among public officials. Without addressing these internal factors, the goals of bureaucratic reform are unlikely to achieve their full potential at the district level. External challenges also contribute to reform barriers, particularly concerning public readiness and technological infrastructure. (Siti Marfu'ah, Ana Kumalasari, 2024) highlight that low digital literacy among citizens remains a critical obstacle, as many community members are not yet fully prepared to use digital civil administration applications introduced by the government. Furthermore, suboptimal technological infrastructure including uneven availability of information technology facilities and internet connectivity continues to hinder the operationalization of digital-based public services. These gaps indicate that reform initiatives must be adapted to local conditions and accompanied by investments in both technological support and citizen digital education. Therefore, systematic identification of these challenges is essential to formulate targeted and realistic solutions that strengthen bureaucratic reform implementation at the district level.

Strategic Solutions for Bureaucratic Reform

Various studies have proposed several strategic measures to ensure that bureaucratic reform yields sustainable improvements in public service delivery. (Suddin et al., 2024) emphasizes that strengthening human resource capacity through training programs and competency certifications is crucial for enhancing the professionalism of public service personnel, particularly in digital service environments. Capacity development must therefore be designed not only to introduce new technical skills, but also to cultivate a performance-oriented mindset aligned with accountability and service excellence. In addition, continuous evaluation mechanisms are necessary to ensure that training interventions genuinely contribute to improved administrative efficiency and citizen satisfaction. When these initiatives are institutionalized properly, human resource development becomes a long-term driver of reform rather than a short term intervention.

Furthermore, strategic solutions must take into account digital inclusion and collaborative governance to maximize the effectiveness of reform efforts. Digitalization initiatives must be accompanied by efforts to improve digital literacy among citizens to prevent the emergence of access disparities and unequal utilization of e government services. (Zuraida et al., 2023) highlight that collaboration among local government, the private sector, and civil society can accelerate the adoption of public service innovations, particularly in areas where resource limitations persist. Such collaborative approaches create an ecosystem of shared responsibility in which stakeholders contribute expertise, technology, and support to expand service outreach. Ultimately, reform strategies that combine human resource development, digital empowerment, and multi-stakeholder collaboration are more likely to generate resilient and citizen-centered public services.

Theoretical Gap

Previous studies have widely discussed bureaucratic reform within the context of public service delivery. For instance, (Firmansyah & Haeril, 2024) examined reform strategies in Bima Regency, while (Marfu'ah et al., 2024) explored challenges in digitalizing public services in Bojonegoro. Despite these contributions, prior literature still tends to highlight bureaucratic reform from a generalized perspective, focusing primarily on the execution of programs without fully analyzing their effectiveness or long-term implications for public service quality. Moreover, many studies do not sufficiently capture the multi-layered dynamics that occur at the district level, even though districts serve as frontline administrative units that directly interact with citizens and thus significantly influence public satisfaction.

Additionally, earlier studies often examined internal factors (such as staff competencies and organizational culture) and external factors (such as community literacy and infrastructure support) separately, without integrating the two dimensions. This fragmented analytical approach makes it difficult to holistically understand the complexity of bureaucratic reform and its operational implications in real service environments. Yet, the interplay between these factors is critical for the success of bureaucratic reform at the district level, particularly in areas with diverse socio-economic characteristics. Therefore, this study aims to address this theoretical gap by offering a comprehensive evaluation of the challenges and strategic solutions associated with bureaucratic reform to enhance public service quality in Simokerto District, Surabaya, and by providing an evaluative framework that can be replicated in other regions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Type and Approach

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method, which is designed to provide an in-depth depiction of social phenomena within their real-life context (Hasan et al., 2022). This methodological choice aligns with the research goal of understanding bureaucratic reform in a holistic manner rather than attempting to quantify causal relationships statistically. The descriptive qualitative method allows the researcher to capture institutional dynamics, behavioral patterns, and contextual determinants that shape the delivery of public services in sub district Simokerto. Through this method, the study seeks to obtain rich and detailed information derived from documents, observations, and scholarly literature that reflect the authentic implementation of bureaucratic reform.

This approach is considered appropriate because the research aims to evaluate the challenges and potential solutions associated with bureaucratic reform in enhancing public service quality in sub district Simokerto, Surabaya. A descriptive qualitative design facilitates the exploration of meanings, experiences, and contextual factors of bureaucratic reform by examining secondary data, findings from previous studies, and relevant policy documents. The method also offers flexibility for the researcher to interpret emerging patterns and implications within a practical administrative environment. Ultimately, this approach is expected to generate a comprehensive analytical

interpretation that can inform public administration practices and policy development.

Research Location and Focus

The research is centered on sub district Simokerto, one of the administrative districts in the City of Surabaya, East Java Province. This district is selected because it serves as a frontline governmental unit that provides direct public services to citizens, thereby reflecting the practical outcomes of bureaucratic reform initiatives implemented by the local government. As a decentralized administrative institution, its service performance acts as an indicator of the success of governance transformation at the municipal level. To enrich the contextual understanding of service delivery, this study also includes brief interviews with local citizens as service users to capture their perceptions, experiences, and level of satisfaction related to the quality of public services in sub district Simokerto.

The focus of the study consists of two primary components: 1) identifying the challenges encountered in implementing bureaucratic reform in sub district Simokerto, and 2) analyzing strategic solutions that can effectively improve the quality of public service delivery. The inclusion of community interviews as part of the research focus aims to ensure that the findings reflect not only the perspective of government documents and institutional reports but also the lived experiences of the public. This expanded focus enables the study to detect gaps between existing service standards and real conditions experienced by citizens. By doing so, the study intends to contribute practical recommendations that are applicable and responsive to local needs.

Data Sources and Data Collection Techniques

The data used in this study consist primarily of secondary sources, including policy documents, institutional performance reports, academic publications, and Sinta 3 indexed journal articles related to bureaucratic reform and public service delivery. The use of secondary data provides broad and comprehensive insights into the evolution of bureaucratic reform initiatives at both the conceptual and practical levels. The literature review incorporates previous research relevant to the topic ((Firmansyah & Haeril, 2024), (Zuraida et al., 2023), (Marfu'ah et al., 2024), (Suddin et al., 2024)). to support the development of theoretical and empirical arguments throughout the analysis. These sources collectively describe trends, constraints, and innovations in public service reform in Indonesia.

Data collection techniques involve documentation, literature review, and analysis of official materials such as the Grand Design of Bureaucratic Reform 2010–2025, the Ministry of Home Affairs Regulation No. 4 of 2010 on PATEN, and the annual reports of the Surabaya City Government. These materials are examined to validate the relevance and credibility of information related to bureaucratic reform practices. The triangulation of multiple documentary sources ensures that the collected data are accurate and reliable. The systematic organization of these materials forms the empirical foundation for evaluating the implementation of bureaucratic reform in sub district Simokerto.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis process includes three key stages: 1) Data Reduction selecting, categorizing, and organizing relevant information related to the challenges and solutions of bureaucratic reform, supported by secondary data, observations, and documentation, 2) Data Display presenting the findings in a structured analytical narrative, and 3) Conclusion Drawing interpreting the compiled data to develop a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and strategic solutions to bureaucratic reform in sub district Simokerto. Each stage is carried out systematically to ensure that the research findings accurately reflect the realities observed in the field. The structured flow of analysis enables the transformation of raw information into coherent and meaningful conclusions.

This analytical framework follows the model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which is widely applied in qualitative research. Applying this analytical model ensures methodological rigor and supports the transparency and traceability of qualitative interpretations. The approach also deepens analysis by linking empirical findings with theoretical insights derived from scholarly literature. Through this process, the conclusions developed in the study are expected to provide evidence based recommendations for strengthening bureaucratic reform and improving public service quality in sub district Simokerto.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

General Overview of Sub District Simokerto, Surabaya

Sub district Simokerto is one of the 31 administrative districts within the City of Surabaya, covering an area of approximately 4.13 km² and consisting of five sub-districts. The geographic landscape of this district is marked by a high population density combined with dynamic socioeconomic mobility, which influences patterns of settlement and public service demand. Various economic activities particularly trade, services, and home-based industries play a central role in supporting the livelihood of local residents and contributing to the economic value of the region. As a frontline governmental unit, sub district Simokerto plays a strategic role in facilitating public services, civil administrative functions, and localized development programs. Its position makes the district an essential interface between the community and the broader administrative system of the Surabaya City Government.

As a core executor of public administration, sub district Simokerto is responsible for delivering essential services such as civil documentation, basic licensing, coordination of governmental programs, and community empowerment initiatives. In recent years, the Surabaya City Government has intensified efforts to modernize public service delivery through multiple digital innovations, including e-letter, e-PATEN, and application-based administrative services, aiming to increase efficiency and transparency. These modern systems are intended to simplify service procedures while reducing bureaucratic delays and supporting broader bureaucratic reform policies. However, implementation at the district level including in sub district Simokerto still encounters several challenges, particularly in terms of digital literacy readiness, technological infrastructure adequacy, and administrative adaptation. Such obstacles have

hindered the optimal execution of bureaucratic reform initiatives and demonstrate the need for continued evaluation and capacity strengthening to ensure the sustainability of digital based public services.

Challenges of Bureaucratic Reform in Improving Public Service Quality

- **Limited Human Resource (HR) Capacity**

Another challenge that affects the implementation of bureaucratic reform in sub district Simokerto is the low level of digital literacy among the general population. Although online platforms and mobile applications have been introduced to simplify public administration, many residents remain unfamiliar with the procedures for submitting documents or tracking requests electronically. One society participant explained,

“Honestly, I want to try using the online service, but when I opened the application, I got confused. I didn’t know where to upload the documents and which menu to choose, so I ended up going to the office instead.” (Interview Mr Budi, November 2025).

Because of difficulties like this, a large proportion of residents continue to rely on face to face services instead of adopting digital channels. Consequently, administrative officers must handle manual service queues while also managing online requests, which increases their workload. The limited digital abilities of residents also influence how they assess the quality of government services. When users encounter errors or delays while using online platforms, they often perceive the system as ineffective rather than recognizing their own unfamiliarity with digital procedures. Another society interview echoed this sentiment, stating,

“Sometimes when the system doesn’t work or I make a mistake, I get frustrated and think the government service is slow, even though maybe I just don’t understand the steps.” (Interview Ms Yulia, November 2025).

These findings are consistent with the argument of (Firmansyah & Haeril, 2024), which states that the success of bureaucratic reform depends not only on the readiness of civil servants but also on the capability of citizens to engage with digital services. Therefore, efforts to improve digital literacy through guidance centers, community socialization programs, and easy to follow instructional materials are necessary to support the sustainability of bureaucratic reform in sub district Simokerto.

Resistance Within Bureaucratic Work Culture

Another significant obstacle is the persistence of a rigid and hierarchical bureaucratic culture. Although reform initiatives are being implemented, many citizens report that public services at the district office still do not fully demonstrate the expected improvements. Several residents explained that staff continue to rely on traditional procedures and are not consistently responsive when urgent needs arise, creating the impression that reforms remain mostly superficial. During an interview, stated that

“The administrative procedures are still relatively complicated and do not match the government’s promise of efficiency. And also, even though some services have moved to online platforms, face to face services still follow long or even complicated processes. So in my opinion, the staff are polite, but residents often have to wait a long time for document approval because signatures must still be obtained from higher level officials, which slows down the entire workflow. That’s how it really is.” (Mr. Riyanto, a resident of Sidodadi, November 2025).

His testimony reflects the view that reforms have not yet fully addressed the bureaucratic mindset that prioritizes hierarchy over service efficiency. Similar concerns were expressed by other residents who frequently interact with the district office for administrative purposes. In an interview, explained that

“Although digital tools are already available, some employees have not fully adapted to the new system, which causes delays, but sometimes it is fast if the district office is not crowded.” (Mrs. Nur Hayati from Kapasan, November 2025).

Other residents echoed her observations, noting that reform appears more visible through improved facilities rather than through meaningful changes in internal work culture or employee responsiveness. These findings indicate that although bureaucratic reform has progressed in terms of system upgrades and service platforms, behavioral and cultural transformation within implementing agencies remains limited. This supports the argument by (Jayadi et al., 2024), who assert that bureaucratic modernization requires not only new technology and updated regulations but also a transformation in mindset and work orientation; without such transformation, modernization remains merely superficial.

Low Levels of Digital Literacy Among Citizens

The success of digital-based bureaucratic reform depends not only on staff readiness but also on the ability of citizens to utilize online services. As demonstrated by (Marfu’ah et al., 2024), limited digital literacy is a major barrier to the adoption of technology-driven public services. This challenge is evident in sub district Simokerto, where many residents find it difficult to access or operate applications such as the Surabaya Single Window or administrative village. Interviews with residents further reinforce this issue. For example, stated,

“I want to try using the application, but I get confused about where to start. I am afraid of pressing the wrong menu, so usually I ask my children for help or just go to the district office because the instructions are clearer face-to-face.” (Interview Mrs. Lilis, resident of Simolawang, November 2025).

Her statement illustrates that elderly residents often lack the confidence to use digital platforms independently and tend to rely on manual service mechanisms. Meanwhile, Mr. Santoso, resident of Sidodadi, shared a similar experience from a different perspective. He explained,

“Digital systems are great for young people who are used to smartphones, but many of my neighbors still struggle to upload documents or check the progress of their submissions. Sometimes the internet connection is also slow, which makes the process even longer. I have even helped several neighbors because they didn’t know which menu to click.” (Mr. Santoso, resident of Sidodadi November 2025).

These accounts demonstrate that the problem is not caused by rejection of technology but by insufficient knowledge and technical constraints. These insights suggest that community preparedness is a vital component of digital reform. Without sufficient digital literacy, citizens revert to manual service mechanisms, limiting the effectiveness of bureaucratic modernization. Consistent with this observation, (Marfu’ah et al., 2024) emphasize that digital literacy is a foundational requirement for the successful implementation of digital public service innovations.

Suboptimal Technological Infrastructure

Technological infrastructure remains a major obstacle in advancing bureaucratic reform, particularly as public service delivery has become increasingly dependent on digital platforms. In reality, many government offices still rely on outdated hardware, insufficient numbers of devices, and unstable internet connectivity, which collectively hinder smooth and efficient operations. These limitations weaken the responsiveness of digital systems, especially during peak administrative hours when public demand is high. As a result, delays frequently occur, interrupting service workflows and causing dissatisfaction among citizens who now expect faster and more modern administrative processes. This concern was also reflected in a community interview, where a resident of sub district Simokerto stated,

“When I tried to process my domicile letter last month, the computer at the counter stopped working twice. The staff mentioned that the internet connection was unstable. I had to wait and return several times, even though I was in a hurry because I still needed to go to work. The digital system is supposed to make things easier, but it feels ineffective if the technology keeps failing.” (Mrs. Nur Hayati from Kapasan, November 2025).

These structural weaknesses repeatedly result in technical interruptions that slow down bureaucratic activities and electronic based transactions. According to (Zuraida et al., 2023), the success of digital government services is strongly dependent on sufficient technological infrastructure, emphasizing that infrastructure readiness is a prerequisite for effective administrative reform. Even in situations where public officers possess adequate digital skills and citizens demonstrate acceptable levels of digital literacy, innovation in service delivery cannot function optimally without consistent technological support. Therefore, enhancing digital infrastructure must be treated as a priority to ensure that online public service systems operate reliably, transparently, and efficiently in addressing administrative needs.

Strategic Solutions for Bureaucratic Reform in Enhancing Public Service Quality

To overcome the previously identified challenges, a set of strategic, measurable, and well-coordinated actions is necessary to ensure that bureaucratic reform in sub district Simokerto meaningfully improves the quality of public services. These actions should encompass infrastructure enhancement, workforce development, and service management innovation to form an integrated reform blueprint. This aligns with the perspective of (Faedlulloh et al., 2020), who assert that successful reform requires not only structural change but also a transformation in bureaucratic mindset and work culture. Furthermore, partnership-based governance involving local authorities, technology providers, and community actors is expected to accelerate modernization and support long term digital adoption, consistent with (Maulana & Firmansyah, 2023) who highlights the role of cross sectoral collaboration in advancing digital public service ecosystems. With synchronized implementation, the proposed interventions are projected not only to resolve existing constraints but also to proactively mitigate similar issues in the future.

The strategic framework proposed in this study is grounded in literature review, comparative assessment of relevant regional practices, and analysis of current conditions in the local administrative environment to ensure contextual feasibility. Key recommendations include strengthening digital infrastructure, implementing targeted capacity building programs for civil servants, and promoting public engagement through structured awareness initiatives intended to increase the utilization of online government services. These measures reflect insights from (Prasodjo, 2025) who emphasizes infrastructure preparedness and human resource competency as essential components for advancing digital governance. Moreover, long-term policy formulation should integrate continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to maintain platform reliability, service transparency, and user accessibility. This corresponds with arguments by (Herawati et al., 2024) who underline the necessity of systematic performance evaluation to sustain improvements in service delivery. Collectively, these strategies are expected to reinforce bureaucratic reform efforts and contribute to the establishment of a more accountable, efficient, and citizen responsive administrative system.

Beyond conceptual and institutional viewpoints, perspectives from local residents provide important evidence of how digital public service reforms are perceived and experienced in daily practice. One citizen from the Sidodadi area noted ongoing challenges with the responsiveness of digital administrative services

“When I tried to apply for a certificate online, the process took too long. I waited for one or two days without any response, so eventually I went to the district office directly. If the online system were faster and clearer, I would prefer using it” (Interview Mr Budi, November 2025).

This account illustrates that despite ongoing digitalization efforts, public expectations related to efficiency, clarity, and timeliness remain unmet. The testimony further reinforces the urgency of optimizing digital platforms, improving communication mechanisms, and enhancing institutional capacity to ensure that digital services fulfil their intended purpose simplifying access rather than creating additional constraints.

Enhancing Civil Servant Competence and Professionalism

Human resource capacity is widely acknowledged as a fundamental component in successful bureaucratic reform, as the performance of public institutions is closely tied to the competencies of the civil servants who operate within them. Continuous efforts to enhance civil servant capabilities may be realized through comprehensive technical training programs and professional certification, particularly in the field of information and communication technology, which is increasingly essential for supporting digital governance frameworks. Beyond technical proficiency, the development of soft skills such as service oriented communication, adaptive leadership, and change management remains critically important for preparing employees to respond to ongoing administrative transitions. Sustained and structured learning activities allow civil servants to strengthen both technical and interpersonal competencies required for delivering effective and responsive public services.

This organizational viewpoint aligns with feedback gathered from citizens in sub district Simokerto. One interview participant, a resident of Sidodadi RW 03, reported that although the digitalization of services has improved accessibility, the readiness of some civil servants in guiding digitally unfamiliar users is still limited. As the respondent explained:

“Some public services are now online, and I believe that is a positive improvement. However, there were moments when the officers seemed unsure when I asked for assistance using the application. When I was applying for a relocation letter, I requested guidance on how to access the online service, but the explanation provided was unclear. I hope the officers are well-trained and confident, so the services can genuinely help us.” (Mr. Santoso, resident of Sidodadi November 2025).

This testimony illustrates that enhancing digital competencies is not only an internal administrative need but also a public expectation influencing citizens trust and perceived service quality.

Furthermore, the establishment of performance evaluation systems based on standardized competency frameworks can strengthen accountability and promote professional development. When assessment mechanisms are aligned with measurable competency indicators, institutions are better positioned to identify individual strengths, areas requiring improvement, and appropriate career pathways. As noted by (Firmansyah & Haeril, 2024) argue, consistent capacity building strengthens public service quality while enhancing bureaucratic legitimacy in the eyes of citizens. Therefore, investment in long-term competency development is not merely a functional requirement but also a strategic foundation for maintaining public trust in government institutions.

Transforming Bureaucratic Work Culture

Organizational culture change is a core dimension of bureaucratic reform, as structural restructuring alone does not automatically translate into better service delivery. A work culture that is service-oriented, adaptable, and responsive must be intentionally fostered through the internalization of the ASN BerAKHLAK values namely service orientation, accountability, competence, harmony, loyalty, adaptability, and collaboration. These values function as behavioral standards that strengthen professionalism, innovation, and public engagement across all governmental levels. When institutionalized consistently, they contribute to the formation of an administrative environment where citizen needs, service transparency, and policy responsiveness are treated as core priorities rather than secondary objectives.

Field evidence also reinforces the importance of cultural transformation in improving service experiences. During an interview, one resident from Kapasan in sub district Simokerto commented on the evolving nature of public service interactions. The respondent noted

“The process is faster now and there are online service options, but sometimes the staff are still not very friendly. Some are helpful, but others seem in a hurry and do not clearly explain the procedures,” (Interview Mr Budi, November 2025).

This statement illustrates that for citizens, cultural change is measured not only through improved systems or infrastructure but also through everyday interpersonal encounters with public officers. Strengthening this transformation requires the implementation of structured reward and sanction mechanisms to reinforce expected behavior and address resistance to change. Leadership commitment is equally crucial, particularly when leaders actively model openness, innovation, and a mindset of continuous improvement. As emphasized by (Jayadi et al., 2024) cultural transformation demands long-term consistency and is often the distinguishing factor between stagnant public organizations and those capable of evolving. Therefore, reshaping bureaucratic organizational culture should be regarded as a sustained and integrated process that combines value internalization, incentive systems, and leadership-driven change to produce durable reform outcomes.

Increasing Digital Literacy Among Citizens

Digital reform initiatives cannot be fully realized without ensuring that citizens possess sufficient readiness to utilize digital platforms, as user capability directly influences the accessibility and effectiveness of public services. To support this transition, the district government is encouraged to establish community-based digital learning programs that include structured training, guided practice, and accessible assistance services. Collaboration with local communities, educational institutions, and technology-related organizations may further extend program reach and make digital learning more inclusive. Field evidence reinforces this need. During an interview, a resident from Simolawang expressed hesitation in using online services, stating,

"I actually want to try, but I often get confused. When I tried to register online, there were many menus and buttons I didn't understand. I once asked my son for help, but he isn't always at home." The resident continued, accompanied by a short laugh, "If I press the wrong button and the data disappears, who is responsible? So instead of stressing about it, I prefer to visit the district office directly. It feels safer." (Interview Mr samsul, November 2025). This testimony demonstrates that digital readiness is not solely a matter of technical access, but also involves psychological comfort, confidence, and familiarity with digital tools. Aligned with this observation, (Marfu'ah et al., 2024) emphasize that digital literacy is essential for preventing service inequality and avoiding the exclusion of individuals who lack technological skills. Strengthening digital competencies allows citizens to engage more actively in administrative processes, exercise their rights in digital governance environments, and reduce their dependency on intermediaries. Improved digital literacy is also associated with greater transparency and reduced vulnerability to misinformation during the implementation of online services. Therefore, empowering citizens through consistent and accessible digital learning not only improves their capability to utilize available platforms but also contributes to the inclusiveness, legitimacy, and long-term sustainability of bureaucratic reform.

Strengthening Technological Infrastructure and Service Innovation

Effective bureaucratic reform requires robust and reliable technological infrastructure as the foundation for digital service transformation. Strengthening internet network quality, improving hardware capabilities, and enhancing cyber security systems are essential steps toward safeguarding service sustainability and protecting public data. Integrating multiple administrative platforms into a unified digital ecosystem enables residents to access services efficiently without navigating fragmented channels. This form of innovation also minimizes procedural complexity and supports faster decision-making in the public sector. To sustain these efforts, fostering cross-sector collaboration among the district government, city government, private sector, and civil society is indispensable for designing and managing digital services. Such collaboration promotes innovation and knowledge exchange, leading to systems that are more user-centered and adaptable to technological advances. (Zuraida et al., 2023) conclude that collaboration and technological innovation are critical drivers of successful bureaucratic reform in the digital era, especially in ensuring that services evolve in line with societal needs. With continuous development of infrastructure and innovation, the district can build a high-performance governance model that aligns with modern digital standards.

Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation

A sustained monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanism is crucial to ensuring that bureaucratic reform initiatives achieve measurable and long-term outcomes. Continuous quality control through structured monitoring procedures enables government institutions to assess progress and detect deviations from reform benchmarks at an early stage, as highlighted by (Ngumbela, 2024). Regular citizen satisfaction surveys can provide valuable insights into community perceptions and service gaps that require improvement,

while internal audits act as an additional control tool for evaluating organizational compliance and identifying managerial shortcomings. Furthermore, the district may organize participatory forums to involve citizens and other stakeholders in reviewing performance indicators and practical service challenges, thereby reinforcing community engagement in oversight functions.

Through continuous evaluation, bureaucratic reform becomes a dynamic and adaptable process aligned with evolving public needs rather than a static administrative agenda. Monitoring and evaluation enable quick corrective action whenever inefficiencies or bottlenecks arise during implementation, particularly in the context of digital governance, where ongoing assessment is crucial to identifying weaknesses and optimizing system performance (Dewi et al., 2025). Transparent reporting of evaluation results additionally enhances public trust and reinforces accountability within the bureaucracy by demonstrating that reform implementation is guided by data and community feedback rather than closed internal assessments. This transparency also establishes performance pressure for institutions to maintain high public service standards over time.

Ultimately, institutionalizing routine M&E ensures that bureaucratic reform initiatives remain relevant, impactful, and responsive to the demands of an increasingly digital society. Within the current landscape of technology-driven government services, M&E plays a determinant role in ensuring that digital transformation strategies do not stagnate and continue to reflect the needs and expectations of citizens. As emphasized by (Latupeirissa et al., 2024), digital transformation projects in local governments succeed only when evaluation systems are embedded systematically to sustain platform functionality, user accessibility, and technological resilience. Therefore, the establishment of an integrated and participatory monitoring and evaluation framework is indispensable to achieving sustainable reform and maintaining long-term improvements in public service delivery.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the implementation of bureaucratic reform in sub district Simokerto demonstrates gradual progress, particularly through the introduction of digital public service systems and improvements in administrative procedures. Despite these developments, the reform process has not yet achieved optimal effectiveness. Several challenges remain, including limited technical competence among civil servants in operating digital service platforms, low digital literacy among citizens as service users, and the persistence of a hierarchical bureaucratic culture that is not fully aligned with principles of innovation and responsiveness. In addition, existing technological infrastructure specially internet stability and availability of operational devices has not sufficiently supported the shift toward digital-based service delivery. These conditions indicate that although progress is evident, significant improvements are still required to ensure sustainable and efficient reform outcomes.

To strengthen the implementation of bureaucratic reform, several strategic recommendations are proposed. The district government should prioritize capacity-building programs for civil servants, including technical training, operational guidance, and continuous professional development to enhance digital readiness. The Surabaya City Government is encouraged to support this process by improving technological infrastructure, ensuring system maintenance, and integrating digital platforms to create seamless access for users. Meanwhile, citizens are encouraged to increase their digital literacy and utilize available online services to promote faster, more efficient administrative processes. With consistent collaboration between government institutions and the community, bureaucratic reform in sub district Simokerto has the potential to produce a more transparent, accessible, and citizen-oriented public service system.

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