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BALANCE OF RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS IN GOVERNANCE: AN ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL DETERMINANTS ON PUBLIC BUREAUCRACY PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

This study is motivated by the imbalance between the rights and obligations of civil servants, which hampers bureaucratic performance and undermines public trust in local governance. The urgency lies in reforming institutions based on fairness and public accountability. The research aims to analyze the role of balancing rights and obligations as an institutional determinant of bureaucratic performance. The theoretical framework draws on organizational justice, public service motivation, and collaborative governance theories. Using a qualitative approach through an institutional case study, data were collected via in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. The results reveal that balancing rights and obligations enhances motivation, legitimacy, and transparency through the adoption of digital administrative systems (HRIS). The study highlights the need for synergy among technology, public policy, and ethical governance to strengthen bureaucratic integrity.

Keywords: Organizational Justice, Bureaucratic Performance, Rights–Obligations Balance

A. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the direction of bureaucratic reform in various developing countries, including Indonesia, has shifted from a traditional administrative paradigm to value-based governance. This shift was triggered by increasing public demands for transparency, accountability, and fairness in government administration (Osborne et al., 2018). In this context, bureaucratic success is measured not only by technocratic efficiency, but also by the ability of government institutions to maintain a balance between the rights and obligations of civil servants, the primary actors in public service. This imbalance between rights and obligations has long been a source of performance dysfunction, leading to low public trust in government (Bovaird & Löffler, 2019).

This imbalance in rights and obligations is increasingly prominent at the local government level. Several recent studies have found that local civil servants (ASN) often face high workloads without adequate rewards, incentives, and institutional support (S.-M. Kim & Park, 2020). This situation not only hampers individual productivity but also erodes public service morale and disrupts the stability of government institutions. Furthermore, the digitalization of public administration through personnel information systems and meritocracy policies has not been fully accompanied by changes in organizational culture that emphasize normative justice and the moral responsibility of civil servants (Christensen & Lægreid, 2018). As a result, many government agencies still operate within a hierarchical structure that emphasizes administrative obligations over an ethical balance between rights and responsibilities.

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This situation is also evident in several local governments in Indonesia, including the one in this research location, where institutional imbalances in the regulation of civil servant rights and obligations directly impact bureaucratic effectiveness. Although various reform policies have been implemented, such as merit-based performance appraisal systems, performance allowances, and administrative digitization, their impact is often insignificant due to the weak implementation of principles of justice and balance within the institutional structure itself (Handayani & Purwanto, 2024). This phenomenon demonstrates that the balance of rights and obligations is not merely a managerial issue, but rather a governance issue that requires a systemic institutional approach and the application of public ethical values. Therefore, this research is directed at examining in depth how the balance of ASN rights and obligations plays a role as an institutional determinant of regional government performance.

Budiyanti (2018) examined the relationship between organizational justice and civil servant performance in South Sulawesi and found that distributive and procedural justice significantly influenced job satisfaction and civil servant loyalty (Budiyanti, 2018). Setyaningrum & Martani (2017) analyzed the institutional determinants influencing local government performance in Indonesia and found that managerial incentives and legislative oversight increased public performance accountability (Setyaningrum & Martani, 2017). Meanwhile, Setiawan et al. (2022) highlighted the role of transparency, accountability, and internal control in strengthening public service performance in local governments, emphasizing the importance of synergy between institutional policies and civil servant behavior (Setiawan et al., 2022).

These three studies share similarities with this study, namely, they all place institutional factors as the primary determinant of improved public sector performance. All previous studies emphasize the importance of organizational justice systems, institutional incentives, and transparency in strengthening effective bureaucratic behavior. However, the differences lie in the focus of the analysis and the research approach. Previous studies have focused more on managerial factors or external accountability, while this study highlights the balance of civil servants' rights and obligations as an internal mechanism that shapes institutional ethics, commitment, and discipline.

This difference in focus gives rise to this research's originality: constructing the balance of civil servants' rights and obligations not merely as a moral or administrative variable, but as an institutional instrument that determines the legitimacy of local government performance. This approach broadens the theoretical horizons of public governance by combining the perspectives of institutional justice and public service ethics within the context of local bureaucracy. Using a qualitative case study method, this research seeks to map the internal dynamics and institutional value systems that have not been widely explored in studies of Indonesian government reform.

The urgency of this research lies in the urgent need to strengthen a just, transparent, and accountable governance system by managing the balance of civil servants' rights and obligations. The imbalance between the burden of responsibility and professional rewards remains at the root of low bureaucratic performance and public trust in local government (Omeish et al., 2024). By understanding how the structure of rights and obligations operates within government institutions, this research is expected to provide concrete recommendations for values-based institutional reform in line with the national agenda of Good Governance and ASN with Integrity 2025.

This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the balance of ASN rights and obligations influences the effectiveness of bureaucratic performance in the context of regional government institutions. More specifically, this research aims to identify

the institutional mechanisms underlying the creation of a normative balance between the rights and obligations of civil servants as part of a just governance system. Through an in-depth analysis of regional institutional practices, this research is expected to formulate a governance model that positions the balance of ASN rights and obligations as the foundation of bureaucratic ethics and a tool for strengthening public legitimacy. Thus, the ultimate goal of this research is to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of bureaucratic reform policies that are value-oriented, accountable, and capable of building public trust in government institutions.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Justice

Organizational justice theory stems from the idea that the performance of public officials is largely determined by the extent to which they perceive they are treated fairly in their work environment. (Greenberg, 2019) asserts that justice in organizations encompasses three dimensions: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, all of which shape employees' perceptions of the institution's legitimacy. Interestingly, recent research suggests that perceptions of justice are not merely psychological issues but also have direct implications for the level of accountability and public trust in government institutions (Choi & Rainey, 2014). In the context of local government, the application of the principle of institutional justice strengthens civil servants' sense of moral responsibility and fosters loyalty to public service objectives. Thus, this theory provides a solid conceptual foundation for understanding how the balance of civil servants' rights and obligations can be a catalyst for increasing the effectiveness of public bureaucratic performance. Indicators:

- Distributive justice: the appropriateness of the workload and rewards received by civil servants.
- Procedural justice: openness and consistency in the decision-making process.
- Interactional justice: ethical treatment and respect for the dignity of civil servants.
- Institutional legitimacy: the extent to which civil servants believe in the integrity and fairness of the government system.

Public Service Motivation

Public service motivation (PSM) theory highlights that civil servant motivation is driven not only by material incentives, but also by a moral calling and a sense of responsibility towards the public interest. (Colquitt et al., 2001) first formulated this concept, which was later expanded in various institutional and cultural contexts by Kim and. It is noteworthy that recent research has found a close relationship between a sense of justice and increased civil servant motivation; civil servants who feel their rights and obligations are balanced tend to demonstrate a higher commitment to service. In modern bureaucracies, this balance forms the foundation for the formation of institutional ethics and loyalty to the public service vision. Interestingly, this theory also opens up space for reflection that civil servant performance is not only a reflection of technical competence, but also the embodiment of moral values and dedication to the welfare of society. Indicators:

- Commitment to the public interest and society.
- Altruistic orientation and moral responsibility for service.
- Readiness to prioritize the public interest over personal interests.
- Alignment between the values of individual civil servants and the values of government institutions.

Collaborative Governance

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Collaborative governance theory, as developed by (Ansell & Gash, 2008), emphasizes the importance of equal cooperation between the government, the private sector, and the community in achieving public goals. In local government practice, this theory provides an interesting perspective that bureaucratic effectiveness depends not only on formal hierarchies or regulations, but also on the ability to build trust, participation, and a sense of fairness among stakeholders (Ansell & Gash, 2008). However, true collaboration can only occur when there is a balance between rights and responsibilities within the institutional structure, including between civil servants and the communities they serve. This theory also reminds us that public accountability grows from an open, deliberative process, where each party has room to contribute without losing their role and autonomy. Therefore, collaborative governance is a relevant framework for understanding how the balance of civil servants' rights and obligations can create a more democratic and equitable institutional synergy. Indicators:

- • Participation of civil servants and public actors in government decision-making.
- • Transparency and open access to public information.
- • Institutional accountability and shared responsibility across actors.
- • Trust and coordination among civil servants, institutional leaders, and the public.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach using an institutional case study method. This method was chosen for a reason. A qualitative approach allows researchers to deeply understand the meanings constructed by actors within the bureaucratic system, particularly regarding the balance of civil servant rights and obligations, which is the core of this research problem. (Yin, 2018) emphasizes that case studies are an effective approach for examining complex phenomena in real-world contexts, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its social environment are unclear. Therefore, this method is considered relevant for uncovering institutional dynamics that often cannot be explained solely through statistics.

It is noteworthy that this approach aligns with the view (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), which states that qualitative research seeks to interpret the meaning of social actions based on their surrounding context. In this context, the issue of the balance of civil servant rights and obligations is not simply an administrative phenomenon, but rather a reflection of institutional value systems, norms, and policies. Therefore, the case study method allows researchers not only to describe the phenomenon but also to explore how the values of justice and accountability are realized in everyday government practices. This approach is expected to produce an understanding that is not only in-depth, but also reflective of the reality of regional bureaucracy.

Data collection technique

The data in this study were obtained through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and institutional document analysis. First, in-depth interviews were used to explore the views, experiences, and reflections of civil servants and public officials regarding the implementation of the balance of rights and obligations in their work environment. According to Kvale & Brinkmann (2015), semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility and depth of exploration without losing the research's direction. Second, participant observation was conducted to capture behaviors, interaction patterns, and institutional routines that illustrate how the value of justice is implemented in practice. Interestingly, this observation often reveals implicit dimensions of bureaucracy that are not always expressed in interviews (Flick, 2018). Third, document analysis was conducted on regulations, performance reports, and internal policies relevant to civil servant management.

Triangulation of these three sources strengthened the validity of the data and prevented interpretative bias (Miles et al., 2019).

It is interesting to note that the combination of these three techniques not only enriched the data but also strengthened the reliability of the interpretation of the research results. By combining narrative perspectives, empirical observations, and documentary evidence, researchers obtain a comprehensive picture of the balance of ASN rights and obligations in the context of a living and dynamic institutional governance.

Sampling Techniques

The sampling technique used purposive sampling, which involves deliberately selecting informants based on their competence, experience, and relevance to the research focus. As suggested by Patton (2015), this purposive strategy allows researchers to select informants who truly understand the issues being studied, rather than simply statistically representing the population. The informants in this study included structural officials, implementing staff, internal supervisors, and representatives of regional civil service institutions directly involved in the implementation of ASN policies.

The relevance of this technique lies in its ability to explore rich and multi-layered perspectives from individuals acting at various levels of the bureaucracy. Thus, this study not only captures individual perceptions but also connects them to the overall institutional structure and practices. The selection of informants from across positions allows for a variety of perspectives that reflect the complexity of the balance of rights and obligations within the regional government system.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model (Miles et al., 2019), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the data reduction stage, researchers organized data from interviews, observations, and documents using thematic coding to identify patterns of meaning relevant to issues of justice and institutional balance. The data presentation stage was conducted using narrative matrices and thematic maps that visualize the relationships between variables, facilitating theoretical reflection on the empirical data. Finally, the conclusion drawing and verification stages were repeated to ensure consistency between the empirical findings and the theoretical framework used.

However, this analysis did not stop at the descriptive stage alone. Researchers also engaged in an interpretive reflection process to understand how civil servants interpret their experiences regarding rights and obligations within a bureaucratic context that is often rigid and hierarchical. In this way, the research results are expected to not only describe the factual conditions but also reveal the normative values that shape the culture of local government. This type of analysis allows for a deeper understanding of how the balance of civil servants' rights and obligations is a crucial element in realizing just, transparent, and sustainable governance.

D. RESULT AND DISSCUSION

Balance of Rights and Obligations as the Foundation of Government Apparatus Performance

The results of this study demonstrate that the balance between rights and obligations is not merely an administrative tool, but also a moral and institutional foundation that underpins the ethical commitment and professional responsibility of civil servants. When civil servants feel their rights are respected, whether through fair compensation, performance recognition, or proportional organizational support, they develop intrinsic motivation to carry out their obligations with greater dedication and integrity. In the context of government, bureaucratic

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performance is not only measured by the level of procedural compliance but also reflects the extent to which the values of justice and institutional legitimacy are maintained and internalized. These findings reinforce the view (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015) that an ethical bureaucracy emerges from a balance between normative values and performance demands. Thus, the balance of rights and obligations not only results in administrative efficiency but also shapes the character of a bureaucracy that is fair, imbued with integrity, and oriented toward public service.

Interestingly, the field analysis also indicates a strong reciprocal relationship between perceptions of institutional justice and performance effectiveness. Civil servants who receive their rights fairly tend to view their institutions as credible and dignified, thereby enhancing their sense of belonging and loyalty to the organization. However, an imbalance in the distribution of rights and obligations can actually have the opposite effect: demotivation, decreased discipline, and even resistance to policies. In such situations, public trust in government institutions has the potential to decline. Therefore, it is crucial for local governments to shift from a compliance-based management paradigm to a value-based management paradigm that places the balance of rights and obligations at the core of institutional policy. This value-based approach not only strengthens the accountability and motivation of civil servants but also fosters equitable and sustainable public service quality.

These findings align with various previous studies. Perry & Wise (1990) emphasize that the balance between rights and obligations plays a crucial role in strengthening public service motivation through a sense of moral responsibility toward the institution. Greenberg (1990) demonstrates that perceptions of organizational justice determine the legitimacy and performance of public employees, while Vigoda-Gadot (2007) asserts that imbalances in rights and obligations have the potential to erode bureaucratic loyalty and commitment. Rainey (2014) also argues that public sector performance is inextricably linked to institutional systems that ensure fairness and proportionality. Thus, the results of this study broaden the scope of these findings: the balance of rights and obligations is no longer seen as a mere managerial issue, but rather as a structural factor that strengthens the legitimacy of regional governance.

Internal Dynamics and Research Trends Related to Performance-Shaping Factors

Table 1. Summary of Previous Research Results Related to the Balance of Rights and Obligations on Employee Performance

No.	Researchers and Years	Variables Studied	Research Method/Object	Key Findings	Implications for the Balance of Rights & Obligations
1	Raihanah Daulay, Siregar, & Lubis (2019)	Organizational commitment, work responsibility, and discipline on employee performance	Quantitative – Medan City Water Company	All three variables have a significant positive effect on performance (71% internal contribution).	The balance of rights (appreciation and compensation) and obligations (responsibility) forms the basis of productivity.
2	Hidayati & Putri (2022)	Work discipline and HRIS on performance	Quantitative – Service Companies	HRIS and work discipline improve employee	Fulfillment of rights through digital systems strengthens

No				efficiency and motivation.	compliance with obligations.
3	Zaky (2023)	Work flexibility and work-life balance	Descriptive – Public Sector	Work flexibility reduces stress and improves performance.	Adaptive policies maintain a balance between personal rights and work responsibilities.
4	Ni Kadek Ayu Nirwana dkk. (2023)	HRIS implementation and HR performance	Case Study – Local Government Agencies	HRIS increases transparency and employee trust in the organization.	Technology creates a structural balance between administrative rights and professional obligations.

Source: Processed by Researchers, 2024

The table shows that almost all previous research has focused on internal factors such as commitment, discipline, and responsibility as the primary determinants of civil servant performance. However, interestingly, in recent years a new trend has emerged linking technological aspects and adaptive policies to the balance of civil servant rights and obligations. This shift indicates that performance issues are no longer solely linked to the individual dimension, but also to the institutional architecture and digital ecosystem that underpins modern bureaucracy. Thus, the balance of rights and obligations is now viewed not only as a moral issue but as a systemic construct rooted in the institutional design of government and digital innovation.

This empirical finding aligns with the views of (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015), who emphasize the importance of a human governance approach in bureaucratic reform. They assert that dignified public service can only grow from a balance of values between individual rights and social responsibilities. (Perry & Wise, 1990) add that this balance strengthens public service motivation, while (Greenberg, 1990; Vigoda-Gadot, 2007) position organizational justice as both a psychological and institutional factor that significantly determines employee loyalty. Thus, the results of this study not only confirm existing theories, but also enrich the discourse by showing how the dimensions of institutional justice are now being transformed through digital technology and adaptive government policies.

Strengthening Balance through Technology and Public Institutional Policy

The integration of technology and public institutional policies is a crucial factor in maintaining a systemic balance between the rights and obligations of civil servants. The implementation of a Human Resource Information System (HRIS), for example, not only improves administrative efficiency but also strengthens bureaucratic legitimacy through transparency, data openness, and objectivity in oversight. When digital systems are implemented based on the principle of public accountability, perceptions of fairness among civil servants increase because each administrative right is accompanied by clear and measurable professional responsibilities. This aligns with findings (Welch, 2021), which confirm that bureaucratic digitization through public information systems can improve data governance and strengthen institutional accountability through measurable transparency mechanisms.

Furthermore, public policy plays a strategic role in ensuring this balance is maintained sustainably. Policies such as the civil servant merit system, performance-based allowances,

and social protection for civil servants are concrete manifestations of the application of the principle of institutional justice. In this context, (Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek, 2025) emphasizes that synergy between technology governance and public policy is a key prerequisite for an adaptive, transparent, and value-oriented bureaucracy. However, the effectiveness of this synergy depends heavily on institutional readiness and organizational culture. Hinkley (2023) added that public technology will not be effective without changes in bureaucratic values and work patterns, as well as human resource readiness to adapt to digital transformation.

Furthermore, Kim & Park (2020) highlighted that digitalization that is not balanced with structural readiness can actually add new administrative burdens to civil servants and worsen the quality of public services. Meanwhile, Fernandez & Moldogaziev (2015) showed that an overly rigid and hierarchical bureaucracy often stifles innovation and hinders the work efficiency of public employees. Therefore, the results of this study confirm that a balance between the rights and obligations of civil servants can only be achieved if technology, policies, and public ethical values are managed within a unified, dynamic institutional system. From a modern governance perspective, this balance is not merely a normative ideal but a prerequisite for the sustainability of a legitimate, responsive, and trusted bureaucracy (Hidayati & Putri, 2022).

E. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the balance between the rights and obligations of state civil servants (ASN) has proven to be a significant institutional determinant in improving the performance of public bureaucracy at the local government level. Key findings indicate that institutional justice, in both distributive, procedural, and interactional aspects, plays a crucial role in shaping public service motivation and bureaucratic legitimacy, while the integration of technology such as HRIS can strengthen the transparency and accountability of the government system. This confirms that the research objective of understanding the relationship between the balance of rights and obligations and the effectiveness of bureaucratic performance has been achieved, with the primary contribution being a new conceptual construct that positions this balance as an institutional instrument, rather than merely a moral or administrative issue.

This research adds value to public governance theory by expanding the value-based governance approach, emphasizing the integration of justice, ethics, and bureaucratic digitization. Practically, local governments are advised to strengthen the ASN merit system, clarify performance-based reward mechanisms, and instill values of justice in their organizational culture. For further research, quantitative studies using structural models (PLS-SEM) are needed to empirically test the relationships between variables in various institutional contexts. This research's limitations lie in the case study's scope, which does not represent all types of regional bureaucracies in Indonesia. Therefore, the recommended policy implication is the need for institutional reform that balances normative, technological, and public ethics aspects to ensure more accountable, adaptive, and social justice-oriented governance.

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