



BUREAUCRATIC REFORM: CORRUPTION IN INDONESIA'S BUREAUCRACY

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Abstract

Bureaucratic Reform of the Government of Indonesia in Grand Design Bureaucratic Reform is expected to become a World Class Bureaucracy with a bureaucratic reform agenda that has started since 2010 and will end in 2024. This research is research based on secondary data that utilizes various data and documents from various sources in the form of reports, research, books, journals and other data from the government and private parties that are captured through Harzing's Publish or Perish on Google Scholar and the government's official website. This study uses 2 main indicators, namely the Development of Corruption in the Indonesian Government Bureaucracy, and Bureaucratic Reform Efforts. The results of the study show that criminal acts of corruption are still high in the Indonesian government bureaucracy even though efforts to reform the Indonesian government bureaucracy have been carried out and are currently better, but at the regional government level it still needs to be a major concern because in addition to the high level of corruption, the index of bureaucratic reform in local government still quite low.

Keywords: Bureaucracy, Corruption, Reform.

Abstrak

Reformasi Birokrasi Pemerintah Indonesia dalam Grand Design Reformasi Birokrasi diharapkan menjadi Birokrasi Kelas Dunia dengan agenda reformasi birokrasi yang telah dimulai sejak tahun 2010 dan akan berakhir pada tahun 2024. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian yang berbasis pada data sekunder yang memanfaatkan berbagai data dan dokumen dari berbagai sumber berupa laporan, hasil penelitian, buku, jurnal dan data lainnya dari pihak pemerintah maupun swasta yang dijangkau melalui Harzing's Publish or Perish pada Google Scholar dan situs resmi pemerintah. Penelitian ini menggunakan 2 indikator utama yaitu Perkembangan Korupsi pada Birokrasi Pemerintah Indonesia, dan Upaya Reformasi Birokrasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tindak pidana korupsi masih tinggi pada birokrasi pemerintah Indonesia meskipun upaya reformasi birokrasi pemerintah Indonesia telah dilakukan dan saat ini semakin baik, namun pada level pemerintah daerah masih perlu menjadi perhatian utama karena selain tingkat korupsi yang masih tinggi, indeks reformasi birokrasi pada pemerintah daerah masih cukup rendah.

Kata kunci: Birokrasi, Korupsi, Reformasi.

Introduction

Observing the incessant national news coverage of Sting Operations (OTT), the naming of suspects, defendants, and convicts in corruption cases provides insight into the fact that Indonesia's bureaucratic condition in the current era of bureaucratic reform has yet to show significant progress. This is due to the continued involvement of many government bureaucrats in acts of Corruption, Collusion, and Nepotism (KKN), which further tarnish the image of the bureaucracy in the eyes of the public and cause substantial losses to the state.

These corrupt practices are not only present at the central government level within Ministries/Agencies but are also alarmingly prevalent at the provincial and regional (district/city) government levels, often rivaling the central government in terms of scale and frequency.



Transparency International, in 2021, released the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), which presents data on global corruption levels. According to this release, Indonesia increased its score by 1 point from 37 to 38, ranking 97th out of 180 countries (KPK, 2021). This slight improvement suggests that while reform is ongoing, it is not progressing optimally, and thus, extraordinary measures are still required to combat corruption in Indonesia.

The 2021 CPI ranking, which remains unimpressive despite the enactment of Presidential Regulation No. 81 of 2010 on the Grand Design of Bureaucratic Reform (2010–2024), underscores the need for a comprehensive evaluation of whether reform efforts have been successful as the program nears its final two years. Notably, bureaucratic reform in Indonesia did not originate in 2010 but dates back to 1957, initiated by the Army and Navy through Military Authority Regulation No. PRT/PM/06/1957 on the Eradication of Corruption, followed by Presidential Decree No. 28 in 1967 on the establishment of an Anti-Corruption Task Force (Kertati, 2021).

The bureaucracy is the state's engine room, consisting of officials hired and paid by the government to advise and implement public policy (Muhammad, 2018). While this definition is debated by scholars, bureaucracy can be simply understood as the state's apparatus, both institutional and individual, whose salaries are funded by the national or regional budget (APBN/APBD).

Since the government bureaucracy is often the focal point in corruption-related issues, it requires serious government intervention. Bureaucracy is an instrument essential to society; thus, it must align with the mission to ensure public welfare (Yusriadi, 2018). Reform efforts aim to make foundational changes in governance, including administrative procedures, institutional frameworks, and human resources (Daraba, 2019). Bureaucratic reform is a strategy to build a competent civil service to achieve good governance (Krisnandari, Wiharta, & Sastra, 2019). It serves as both a 'procedure' and a 'service' that produces administrative policy (Minardi, 2012).

Despite well-intentioned bureaucratic designs, unclear implementation often results in bureaucrats showing little concern for public interest and instead acting like rulers (Meiwanda, 2017). Ironically, powerful institutions can misuse bureaucracy for corrupt purposes, enriching themselves through influence (Muhtar Haboddin & Rozuli, n.d.). Therefore, to effectively combat corruption, anti-corruption tools must engage bureaucrats directly (Ginting, 2015).

Although the foundations for bureaucratic reform have been laid in recent years, much work remains. A shift in government paradigms is urgently needed (Adiperdana & Ak, 2017). Inefficiency and bloated staffing contribute to sluggish service delivery and perpetuate the stigma: "If it can be made difficult, why make it easy?" (Ahmad, 2017). Reform efforts often get caught in formality, lacking realistic and measurable goals, thus failing to achieve true reform outcomes (Kumorotomo, 2017). Positive achievements so far are minimal, with bureaucracy more focused on documentation than real service improvement (Yusriadi, 2018).

Tragically, within just the last five years, Indonesia has witnessed three massive corruption scandals with total state losses reaching IDR 118 trillion. These include the Surya Darmadi case (IDR 78 trillion), the Asabri case (IDR 23 trillion), and the Jiwasraya case (IDR 17 trillion)—figures comparable to the infamous BLBI case of 1998, which disbursed IDR 147.7 trillion in bailout funds to 48 banks (Sandria, 2022). These scandals have opened the public's eyes to the unethical behavior of the government. In line with Anugrah (2020), the shift toward democratic values demands interactive transparency and reciprocal information flow between the government and the public.

These mega-scandals reveal that corruption in Indonesia remains a severe issue that necessitates extraordinary countermeasures. Although the government has made normative efforts—such as bureaucratic reform—these should align with broader goals of achieving good governance.

Strategic actions are needed to support these efforts. According to Mahfud MD (HumasMenpan, 2021), the ineffectiveness of bureaucratic reform is largely due to leadership mindsets and commitments. Leaders still fail to act as public servants, preferring to behave like rulers. This mindset leads to slow, convoluted services and a culture of affiliation that fosters KKN practices. Reform must



start with leadership commitment to service excellence, including adopting modern service methods, simplifying procedures, and accelerating public service delivery.

Previous research on bureaucratic reform and anti-corruption includes a study by Kertati (2021) titled *Bureaucratic Reform and Anti-Corruption Behavior*, which used secondary data analysis to examine the relationship between reform and anti-corruption behavior. The study found that corruption persisted even during the COVID-19 pandemic when bureaucrats were working remotely. However, public participation in overseeing bureaucratic behavior helped increase anti-corruption behavior.

Another relevant study by Estining Nur Kartika (2022), titled *Bureaucratic Reform in Public Services to Improve the Quality of Health Services at Dr. Moewardi General Hospital (WBK & WBBM Integrity Zone Development)*, employed qualitative methods to analyze hospital-level reforms. The results showed that the hospital has demonstrated a commitment to public service reform, having achieved WBK and WBBM recognition in 2020.

Based on these previous studies and their varying focuses, objectives, methods, and findings, this research raises the questions: How has corruption evolved within Indonesia's government bureaucracy, and what measures has the Indonesian government taken in bureaucratic reform? The objective is to describe and analyze corruption within Indonesia's government bureaucracy and to understand the efforts undertaken in its bureaucratic reform. Unlike earlier studies using qualitative methods like interviews, documentation, and observation, this study relies on secondary data

Method

This research is based on secondary data, utilizing various sources including reports, studies, books, journals, and other data from both government and private entities. The study uses a data set sourced from Google Scholar, retrieved using the Harzing's Publish or Perish application, covering the period from 2017 to 2022. The keywords used were "Bureaucratic Reform" and "Corruption", resulting in a total of 9 relevant articles. This limitation was applied to ensure the inclusion of the most recent data and information regarding the development of bureaucratic reform in Indonesia.

Google Scholar is one of Google's search features and serves as a repository of scientific literature that provides free access to academic journal articles, dissertations, books, conference proceedings, and other forms of publications (Khoirunissa & Winoto, 2022). In addition to Google Scholar, the researcher also accessed official government data from official websites, such as the official website of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK RI), which was done manually to obtain up-to-date and valid data—for example, data on the development of corruption cases in Indonesia in 2022.

Discussion

The Development of Corruption in Indonesia's Government Bureaucracy

Corruption has become an extraordinary crime in Indonesia, and therefore, extraordinary efforts are required to eradicate it. Corruption, which causes financial losses to the state and hampers the democratic process, occurs both in governmental and private institutions, ultimately bringing suffering to society. The government's efforts alone are insufficient to tackle this problem; they must be supported by all elements of the nation, including the general public. The increasing public criticism of corrupt behavior among government officials threatens to erode trust in the government, including law enforcement agencies, particularly if they fail to resolve corruption cases firmly and transparently.

There are various definitions of corruption. According to Hamzah, as cited in Sosiawan (2019), the word "corruption" originates from the Latin *corruption* or *corruptus*, and from an older Latin term *corrumpere*, which literally refers to decay, dishonesty, immorality, and deviation from purity. Furthermore, Partanto and Al Barry, also cited in Sosiawan (2019), define corruption as fraud and abuse of power for personal gain. There is a consensus that corruption refers to acts in which public office power is used for private benefit, in ways that contravene rules (Jain, 2001). Government bureaucracy, which holds the power to make policy and manage budgets, presents many opportunities for misuse. According to Muhtar Haboddin & Rozuli (n.d.), corruption occurs due to demands or expectations from



service users (i.e., the public), bribery benefits not being returned to the government, direct and tender-based project appointments, weak external oversight, political influence in the selection of business actors for projects, and policies that enable contractors to commit corruption.

Thus, integrity is essential for every bureaucrat. As stated by Tumpak Hatorangan Panggabean, Chairman of the KPK Supervisory Board, integrity is a fundamental ethical value and a behavioral guideline among bureaucrats, representing a core part of anti-corruption culture (KPK, 2021).

To streamline the overly bloated bureaucracy, the government issued Ministerial Regulation Permenpan RB No. 17 of 2021 concerning the reclassification of administrative positions into functional positions. This policy aims to realize bureaucratic reform and effective governance through the use of an Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE), including electronic procurement systems and platforms such as the Online Single Submission (OSS) system for business services.

Efforts in Indonesian Bureaucratic Reform

Bureaucracy is closely linked to administration—it drives development (Zuhro, 2022). Bureaucratic reform is often considered a powerful remedy for eradicating corruption, although it cannot stand alone and requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders (Kertati, 2021). According to Prasajo (2022), the key problems in Indonesia's bureaucracy include:

1. Corruption and abuse of power
2. Mismatch in quality and quantity of human resources
3. Poor performance accountability
4. Overlapping laws and regulations
5. Organizational structures not based on performance
6. Inefficient budget usage
7. Partial implementation of e-government
8. Ineffective internal supervision
9. Low quality of public services
10. Strong sectoral egos

These ten issues underline that corruption and abuse of power remain central problems. The Indonesian government has taken various steps to address these, such as simplifying bureaucracy, improving transparency in public services, and implementing electronic-based governance systems.

Zuhro argues that *good governance* alone is not a magic bullet to eliminate corruption. It must be supported by efficient institutions that are transparent, accountable, and operate under clear procedures and decisions. Effective management of human resources, the economy, and budgets is essential, along with democratic civil society participation and law enforcement (Kertati, 2021). Public service delivery must be accessible, transparent, accountable, and preferably low-cost or free. Achieving this requires policy innovations (Deviyanti & Bintoro, 2021). For optimal results, good governance principles must be implemented with consistent commitment not only from government bureaucracies but also from the private sector and society at large—through good coordination and professional behavior (Rohayatin, 2017).

A Decade of Bureaucratic Reform: Challenges and Barriers

More than a decade has passed since the Grand Design of Bureaucratic Reform was introduced in 2010. While significant efforts have been made, substantial challenges persist—originating both internally and externally from within government bureaucracy. These challenges include:

-Political Intervention: Political interference by political appointees poses a major threat to bureaucratic reform. Bureaucratic agendas remain entangled in political interests. As a result, reform commitments are undermined by bureaucratic leaders prioritizing political goals. Civil servants (ASN) lose neutrality, leading to corruption and power abuse. Compounding the problem, there is a lack of internalization of anti-corruption values among civil servants and weak oversight capabilities by internal audit institutions.



- *Incapable Civil Servants and Silo Mentality*: Low competency levels among civil servants hinder reform efforts. Resistance to change, coupled with a silo mentality (refusal to collaborate across units), limits reform. There is still a perception that reform is the responsibility of certain individuals or specific units, not a shared institutional commitment.

- *Closed Bureaucratic Systems*: Bureaucracy often lacks transparency and public engagement, resulting in a mismatch between bureaucratic actions and public needs. Greater collaboration in decision-making processes is needed to align bureaucracy with societal expectations.

- *learning dan Leadership*: Leadership plays a critical role in successful reform. Institutions with committed leaders—ministers, agency heads, or regional leaders—tend to achieve better reform outcomes. Focused and continuous programs, even if small, can lead to meaningful change. Reform requires shifts in civil servant mindsets and bureaucratic culture. A better understanding of complexity and competency gaps is also crucial to achieving organizational targets.

Currently, most local governments are categorized under performance assessment scores of “CC” (fair) and “C” (poor), which reflects weak governance and underdeveloped performance management systems. These systemic shortcomings in bureaucratic reform at the regional level call for strategic joint efforts by both central and local governments to drive substantial improvement

Conclusion

Bureaucratic reform is not an easy task; therefore, a shared commitment is required among leaders of Ministries, Agencies, and Regional Governments to achieve the goal of world-class bureaucratic reform. Based on the analysis conducted, it can be concluded that Indonesia’s government bureaucratic reform has shown positive changes. However, the local government level still requires serious attention due to the persistently high levels of corruption and the currently low bureaucratic reform index scores. The Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (KemenpanRB) needs to establish stronger cooperation with strategic ministries directly related to regional autonomy, particularly the Ministry of Home Affairs. This cooperation is essential so that bureaucratic reform policies, when implemented, receive stronger commitment, acceptance, and compliance.

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