



## Reassessing Bureaucratic Performance in Local Government through Institutional Evidence and Administrative Realities

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### Abstract

*This research does not question the success of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) in the Nunukan Sub-district Office in order to find out whether the case of institutional success has been attained, but rather to question the circumstances surrounding the declaring of performance. The study builds on SKP faces of 2023 and 2024 and conversations and observations in the field to reveal a troubling disjuncture between institutional measures and reality in the administrative realm. Records indicate that there is universal performance in quantity, quality, and time, but the organizational fabric paints a different picture: there is no balance in the workload, discipline is applied irregularly, motivation is presupposed but not built, and the leadership preserves the stability preserving the stability but depriving growth. In this case performance is not failing; it is done. The system of SKP, built on the vision of measuring contribution, actually turns into the engine of cloning the bureaucratic coziness, encouraging silence, and adherence to the procedures instead of results. This paper claims that performance appraisals when removed of context and criticism occupy a position where they can only be rituals that obfuscate institutional stagnation more than they can serve a corrective purpose. Rather than adding weight to the feasibility of your (collective) governance, putting border governance in an analytical standoff may question the validity of coherent assessment standards and demand the introduction of a performance paradigm that is built not on scrutiny, but structural truthfulness and societal accountability.*

## Introduction

In the Unitary State Administration System of the Republic of Indonesia, Human Resources play a very important role at the organizational level and in the management dimension. Therefore, in its implementation, it must be carried out properly, namely to achieve state goals. In organizations, both government and private organizations, the role of performance is very much needed because it is a determinant in achieving organizational goals (Omolo & Mose, 2019; Hailesilasie, 2009; Savedoff, 2011). Therefore, the Performance of the State Civil Apparatus needs to be developed and built to create professional Human Resources with high integrity.

Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 5 of 2014 concerning the State Civil Apparatus as stated in Article (1) paragraph 1, the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) is "a profession for civil servants and government employees with work agreements who work in government agencies" then Law Number 5 of 2014 Article 1c paragraph (5) states that ASN management is "management to produce professional ASN employees, have basic values, professional ethics, free from political intervention, and free from corruption, collusion and nepotism".

The State Civil Apparatus is part of the institutional and management of government in order to carry out government, development and government tasks and services to the community.

Which in recent times the bureaucracy has experienced a very fundamental change in the government system, therefore the existence of the State Civil Apparatus is very much needed in this case (Muhammad, 2023; Monteiro & Adler, 2022; Rakasiwi, 2021).

Success in carrying out the main tasks and functions of development and government certainly depends on the competence of the State Civil Apparatus, because they are directly involved in development activities and the implementation of government functions, of course this can be done if supported by the State Civil Apparatus who have a good level of cooperation among fellow apparatus which is the most important asset in government (Salam, 2021; Toepler & Abramson, 20210).

Performance is something that cannot be separated from the process and results were in this case work achievement is the quality and quantity achieved by the state civil apparatus in carrying out their duties which are the responsibilities that have been given. Performance is defined as the achievement of organizational results or achievements which in a broad sense are the results of work obtained by an individual or group in an organization in accordance with their respective responsibilities and authorities in order to achieve organizational goals legally and without violating the law, norms or ethics (Zarnuji, 2023; Zhao & Gómez Fariñas, 2023; Anshari et al., 2022).

Good performance certainly has a direct impact on the organization and to improve employee performance is certainly something that is quite difficult and requires a long time (Andreas, 2022; Kokkaew et al., 2022; Rivaldo & Nabella, 2019). In addition to increasing supervision and coaching, it is also necessary to conduct performance assessments on success and failure in carrying out tasks, this aims to measure the level of success achieved by each organization or agency, in addition, performance assessments are also useful as benchmarks that can be used to improve the performance of the employees concerned.

Good performance in the future will be a measure of organizational success; the reason is because of the increasing demands of society (Wanasida et al., 2021; Anwar & Abdullah, 2021; Bakker et al., 2023). For that, performance becomes the most important need in encouraging State Civil Apparatus to be able to master the main tasks and functions assigned to them by the state so that they can improve their work results and show themselves as good public servants (Johari & Yahya, 2016; Rosenbloom et al., 2022; Berman et al., 2021). The main target is the apparatus as a development asset because the era of competition is an alternative answer that must be developed and improved. If associated with the region, Nunukan Regency should have an apparatus that is able to serve the community optimally considering that Nunukan Regency is directly facing the neighboring country of Malaysia.

The border area is a fairly crucial area, a gateway for people and an entrance and exit for goods transportation (Dai et al., 2024; Widdis, 2024). In addition, the border area is the first portrait of a region, including how the government provides public services for all aspects in it. The government's concern for public services can be reflected in the quality of the apparatus working in the border area (Arifin & Rupita, 2021; Hjaltalin & Sigurdarson, 2024). However, amidst all the limitations of public services in border areas, improvements in all aspects of services are still expected by border residents to the government and will continue to encourage the government to always improve, take action to improve, until public services can be felt evenly, both in the center and on the border.

Sub-districts play an important role in general administration and the implementation of mandatory and concurrent government affairs (Mensah et al., 2024; Tingkes et al., 2023). In the context of border areas, sub-districts are the working areas of the central government for

special development related to state sovereignty (Hoffman, 2022; Madubun, 2024; Risal et al., 2022). To support the implementation of special tasks on the border, of course, Nunukan Sub-district, which is included in the border sub-district, must be supported by apparatus that has good performance.

The performance of the State Civil Apparatus at the Nunukan Sub-district Office, Nunukan Regency must be truly prepared to be able to carry out its main tasks and functions. In the sense that the apparatus must master the field of duty that is the responsibility of its authority and responsibility, so that the implementation of programs that have been stated in the annual Work Plan can be carried out in accordance with the objectives to be achieved (Berek et al., 2022; Hasanah et al., 2023). In order to improve employee performance, there are several factors that can support this, one of which is motivation, where motivation can be something that can improve the performance of the apparatus, so that the apparatus can bring out all the potential and abilities they have to carry out their work and responsibilities, a demand for obligation and devotion that is considered a mandate that must be carried out and is expected to be a demand in the soul of every apparatus in carrying out their duties as an apparatus figure and as a pious figure in serving the community as it should be.

Currently, society certainly wants efficiency in public services, that is why public services must provide excellent service, to fulfill this, of course, it is none other than improving the performance of the apparatus in serving the community. But this change cannot take place quickly, it takes a long time.

Basically, performance emphasizes what is produced from the functions of a job or what comes out (out-come) (Mousa et al., 2025). If we look further, what happens in a job for a position and responsibility is a process that processes input into output (work results). The use of key indicators to measure individual performance results, derived from functions translated into activities/actions with a clear and written standard basis. Given that performance contains the substance of competence and productivity, performance results are highly dependent on the level of ability of the apparatus in achieving it, especially the goals of the organization or agency. The organization is formed to achieve certain goals where the goals of the organization can be in the form of improving services to improving the quality of products or services (Feinberg & Zanardi, 2022; Madi Odeh et al., 2023).

The benefits of performance management for organizations include aligning organizational goals with team and individual goals, improving performance, motivating workers, increasing commitment, supporting core values, improving training and development processes, improving the skills base, seeking continuous improvement and development, seeking a career planning basis, helping to retain skilled workers from moving, supporting total quality initiatives and customer service, and supporting cultural change.

Measurement and assessment of work performance are not based on target goals (standard/expected performance), so that the assessment process tends to be biased and subjective (too cheap), middle ground values with an average of good to avoid very good or very poor values, if it is believed to be for promotion it is considered high, if not for promotion it tends to find reasons to assess moderate or poor. The assessment process is confidential, so it is less educational, because the assessment results are not communicated openly (accountable). The direct superior as the assessor merely assesses, has not or does not provide clarification of the assessment results and follow-up assessments (Jamaludin & Prayuti, 2022). Based on data previously obtained by researchers at the Nunukan Sub-district Office, it is based on the relatively large number of Nunukan Sub-district Office staff compared to other sub-districts in Nunukan Regency, where performance measurements have never been carried out.

So far, it is not known how successful the Nunukan Sub-district Office organization is. In terms of supporting facilities to support work, it is considered sufficient so that the smoothness and activities of employees are certainly in line with what is produced. The number of staff and adequate facilities are not necessarily in line with the performance produced. In addition, of course, there is great hope that the state civil apparatus of the Nunukan Sub-district Office can work well, considering that the position of the area is the center of the Capital City of Nunukan Regency.

## **Methods**

However, the study that will be conducted in the current research will use a descriptive qualitative study to analyze the work of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) within Nunukan Sub-district Office. The qualitative methodology should also be specifically mentioned as appropriate to the study because it allows the researchers to interpret and describe the phenomena regarding the natural social context. Through the implementation of such a strategy, the researcher produces the connotations of the ASN performance in the form of in-depth and detailed findings on how it is reflected on the day-to-day forms of activities within administrations. The three dimensions of performance addressed in the research paper areas of quantity, quality, and timeliness and are examined under naturalistic perspective such that the factors affecting the observed result can be known. Sugiyono (2009) argues that certain qualitative type research efforts are exceptionally productive when it comes to the organizational setting and the social behavior in an area where the complexity of human interactions cannot be captured through quantitative research efforts alone.

## **Research Location and Participants**

The study was conducted in Nunukan Sub-district Office, which is located in Nunukan Regency, and a region center of the district. The reason as to why this location was chosen is that it is a publicly owned institution involved in frontline service delivery and administrative management in one of the borders with common border points. To conduct the study, the researcher identified twenty-three participants whose position and participation in core administrative processes were used by the researcher to engage them in the research with purposive sampling. The sample included people having various positions, including a sub-district secretary, a few section heads, financial treasurer, and several administrative personnel. This diversity of the respondents enabled the researcher to generate different strands of view at different levels in the organization thus increasing the depth and credibility of findings. Every informant provided either technological or practical expertise with respect to the workings and issues concerning ASN performance.

## **Data Sources**

A strict triangulation strategy is required to analyze the performance of an organization. As a result, the current study uses the combination of the primary and secondary sources to make its findings more credible. The direct field interviews of the participants at the ASN with the help of the primary data formed the primary source of the data since the individual and organizational factors in work outcomes could be communicated by the respondents. The cooperation with the secondary material the Employee Performance Targets (Sasaran Kinerja Pegawai or SKP) the points, years 2023 and 2024, provided standard, verifiable signatures of success and failure at both an individual level and an organizational level. Taken together, these forms present an empirically solid evidence base in addition to first-person accounts, which allow a multi-dimensional assessment of the observed performance trends as well as self-contained judgments of efficacy.

## Data Collection Techniques

The integrated triangulation approach was taken to collect data as the combination of semi-structured interviews, on-site observations, and document analysis would be pursued. Interviewers made use of a semi-structured script, as a result of which both consistency and flexibility in case of emerging insights were achieved. Interviews were face-to-face and all relied on pre-determined thematic questions. Observations that were conducted at the same time in the institutional environment recorded habits, timeliness, flow of communication, and the general administrative atmosphere as a whole. Literature review was mainly done on SKP records, which give the work targets, performance and achievement categories of each employee in the ASN company. Such a mixed methods design will allow triangulating the information collected during the interviews with the observable behaviour and documentation, therefore, providing a convincing and efficient way of collecting and valuing information.

## Data Analysis Techniques

The analytical strategy employed in this study combined descriptive interpretation with comparative evaluation. Descriptive analysis was used to distill themes from interview transcripts and field notes, thereby identifying patterns related to the challenges, facilitators, and organizational processes that shape ASN performance. Simultaneously, a comparative analysis was conducted on the SKP data for the years 2023 and 2024. This allowed the researcher to identify trends and changes across time, particularly in the dimensions of quantity, quality, and timeliness. The interpretation of SKP data was informed by classification criteria adapted from Arikunto (1998), which provide clear percentage-based benchmarks to distinguish between performance categories such as good, sufficient, less good, and not good. By applying these evaluative thresholds, the researcher was able to make justified judgments regarding the level of goal attainment within the institutional structure.

## Result and Discussion

### Performance of the State Civil Apparatus of the Nunukan District Office in the Quantity Aspect

The quantity of work is expected as a manifestation of the implementation of the achievement of organizational goals. The measure of good or bad performance is measured by Quantity. Quantity is related to the achievement of certain goals, in other words, these goals can be achieved according to the planned needs. An organization can be said to be advanced if it includes a combination of work aspects. Quantity is how long an employee works in one day. Quantity is the amount of performance produced by an employee. The amount of performance can be measured according to the target when planning the job description. So that measuring the quantity of performance will be easier to do by company or organizational managers. From the results of the interview with Mr. Penianto, SE as the Head of the General Sub-Section, he said that:

*"The employee does his work per day for approximately 8 hours and is in accordance with the time regulated by law, so that the specified time must reach the target quantity or expected documents". (interview on Thursday, March 13, 2025)*

The aspect of work quantity is an important indicator in assessing employee performance. Objective and data-based evaluations are very helpful in managerial decision making. The quantity aspect measures how much work is completed compared to the targets or standards that have been set. This can include the number of products, services, documents, projects, or other activities. In an interview conducted by the researcher with the State Civil Apparatus,

Mr. Fandi Ahmad as a staff of the Government and Public Services Section regarding the quantity of work said that:

*"The quantity of work that we produce each day certainly varies depending on the time of completion of the work, the volume worked on and the level of consistency in completing the work". (interview Thursday, March 20, 2025)*

In assessing the quantity of work results of the apparatus based on the target indicators of the apparatus' performance targets, the achievement of employee performance targets, and financial support allocated to support the apparatus' performance. Analysis of the targets to be achieved must be clear, so that the goals of the organization and organizational units can be achieved. Targets that have been set but are not analyzed properly can have an impact on decreasing the quantity of work.

As in an interview conducted with Mr. Muhammad Tang as a staff of the Government and Public Services in the interview said that:

*"I hold two activities in the government and public services section, actually my job is very easy, namely registering files or proposals related to the discussion of land conflict issues, the next one related to monographic data may be a bit difficult because we have to go to the field. In 2023 we are targeting to discuss 50 land problems, but only 35 have been realized so that the performance achievement is only at a sufficient number. However, this remains our target in the coming year ". (interview Wednesday, March 26, 2025)*

In order to achieve the expected work quantity, there needs to be a performance assessment standard from the quantity aspect. In relation to this, the quantity of work in question can be accounted for at the evaluation stage from year to year.

Based on the results of an interview with Mr. Asnawi, SE as the Sub-district Secretary regarding the determination of standards in assessing the quantity of apparatus performance, he said:

*"In determining this standard, it is managed directly by the head of each unit, because such as time discipline, attendance, apparatus responsibility, and punctuality in completing tasks by the community, I mandate the head of the unit in the process of determining this standard. I also always provide direction to the apparatus that each apparatus must be able to complete the tasks that have been given". (interview on Thursday, March 27, 2025)*

Furthermore, the researcher also conducted an interview with Mr. Bau Syahril, S.IP., M.A.P, as the Sub-district Head of Nunukan District, Nunukan Regency:

*"As the leader, I am also responsible for setting standards in assessing the quantity of performance of this apparatus, because in reality, but without the help of staff and other apparatus, this activity cannot run well". (interview on Thursday, April 3, 2025)*

Based on the results of the interview above, the researcher can conclude that in setting standards in assessing the quantity of performance of the apparatus in supervising the performance of the Nunukan District apparatus, Nunukan Regency, there is an effort to set standards in assessing the quantity of performance of the apparatus. By involving all office apparatus when implementing the determination of standards in assessing the performance of the apparatus.

### **Performance of the State Civil Apparatus of the Nunukan District Office in terms of Quality Aspects**

Work quality is a form of behavior or activity carried out in accordance with expectations and needs or goals that are achieved effectively and efficiently. It can be seen from whether the apparatus can do the work in accordance with applicable standards. Work quality can be measured through accuracy, completeness, and neatness. Accuracy means accuracy in carrying out tasks and work, meaning that there is a match between the activity plan and the targets or goals that have been set. Completeness means completeness of accuracy in carrying out tasks. Neatness means neatness in carrying out tasks and work. Work quality is a result that can be measured by the effectiveness and efficiency of a job carried out by human resources or other resources in achieving the company's goals or targets properly and effectively. From the results of the interview conducted by the researcher with Mr. Penianto, SE as the Head of General Affairs, he said that:

*"Every job is done well by the apparatus and completed on time and the apparatus is also placed according to its capabilities. So that with this situation it certainly affects the quality of the work produced ". (interview on Tuesday, April 15, 2025).*

Efforts made by the sub-district that are directly related to the quality produced by the Nunukan Sub-district Office have also carried out supervision in the work plan and the work target is running well. This is as conveyed by Mrs. Sriwati Arzan, SKM as the Community Empowerment Section said that:

*"Before carrying out activities, at the beginning of the year we have held an internal organizational unit meeting, discussing the quality of the work we produce. We divide the work according to the level of experience and ability to complete the task, so that the quality of the work produced is in accordance with the desired target. (interview on Thursday, April 17, 2025)*

The results of this interview also support the Employee Performance Targets that have been processed, as illustrated in the Employee Performance Target table on behalf of Sriwati Arzan, namely 2023 and 2024.

SKM in 2023 with a description of work or activities of 3 (three) activities with a percentage showing a positive figure where the Quality Aspect is 95% (Good). Meanwhile, in 2024, Sriwati Arzan's Employee Performance Target, the Quality Aspect performance achievement is 94.3% (Good). The results of the interview with Mrs. Sriwati Arzan, SKM as the Head of the Community Empowerment Section said that:

*"Alhamdulillah, all of our programs in 2023 can be achieved well, some obstacles that we experience are mainly in the form of coordination with sub-districts and villages which are sometimes hampered, but we still try to always coordinate to support sub-district programs, in terms of quality we admit that the documents we have compiled are not completely perfect so that we cannot force the weight to reach 100%, but we consider the figure of 95.6% to be very good, so that in the future it will be an evaluation material for us in the Community Empowerment unit". (interview on Thursday, April 17, 2025)*

The work description for 2023 is 3 (three) activities, while in 2024 there are 5 (five) activities, of which there are 2 (two) new activities, namely the Sub-district Level Posyandu Competition and the Appropriate Technology Competition. The increase in these activities is in line with the increase in the budget for the community empowerment work unit, as conveyed by Mrs. Sriwati Arzan, SKM in her interview:



*"If we refer to the Nunukan sub-district strategic plan, we actually have quite a lot of programs, but due to limited budget and human resources, we cannot implement several programs. Alhamdulillah, in 2024 we received additional funds so that we added two new programs which are actually priorities to be implemented, namely the integrated health post competition and the appropriate technology competition". (interview on Wednesday, April 16, 2025)*

The quality aspect cannot be realized perfectly, but with this achievement it has shown very good numbers as the results of the interview conveyed by Mrs. Sriwati Arzan, SKM previously. Although there was an increase in activities, all programs in the community empowerment work unit could be implemented well by referring to the targets to be achieved. The quality of work can be described from the level of good or bad results of employee work in completing work as well as the ability and skills of employees in carrying out the tasks given to them. Based on the results of the interview with Mr. Wahyudin, SSTP as the Head of the Government and Service Section in the quality of employee work explained that:

*"The work unit apparatus has the knowledge and skills according to the existing duties and functions and the apparatus has shown quite good work results in their tasks in this unit, in my opinion for their knowledge and skills they are already skilled, one of their efforts to fulfill that is they are learning again, besides learning autodidactically or asking those who are more expert. They have also shown quite good work results as seen from the implementation of the tasks in our unit ". (interview Monday, April 21, 2025)*

Based on the results of observations conducted on April 21, 2025 by researchers, the quality of work of the apparatus in all work units of the Nunukan Sub-district Office can be seen from the results of their work on their tasks, namely the completion of tasks has been completed properly and always sets quality standards for the documents produced.

### **Performance of the State Civil Apparatus of the Nunukan District Office in the Time Aspect**

The time aspect in performance assessment refers to the temporal dimension used to evaluate the performance of an individual or a work unit. This aspect is important because performance is not only assessed based on the final result, but also on the accuracy and consistency in achieving targets within a certain time frame.

Supervision is very much needed in an institution/organization, especially a government organization. Over time, the apparatus also in improving its quality and quantity, the apparatus must also pay attention to punctuality both in attendance and punctuality in completing its tasks. This is done so that all parties can carry out their duties properly and optimally.

Based on the results of the interview conducted by the researcher with Mr. Wahyudin, SSTP as the Head of the Government and Public Services Section, he said:

*"One of our ways to get the results achieved in improving performance is punctuality in completing work assessing the punctuality of the apparatus' performance, namely through meetings. At the time of the meeting we made an agreement that if at some point there was a problem for the apparatus in terms of punctuality, then we as the head of the section have a great responsibility in overcoming this so that the apparatus can be disciplined in time ". (interview on Wednesday, April 23, 2025)*

Furthermore, the researcher also conducted an interview with Mr. Rudiansyah, as a staff of the Social and Welfare Section, he said:



*"In an effort to boost performance improvement, the punctuality of the apparatus' performance that we do is by holding meetings with all apparatus, and providing motivation and warnings so that they can be disciplined with time, so that all the targets that we will achieve can be realized". (interview on Wednesday, April 23, 2025)*

To strengthen the results of the interview, the researcher conducted field observations. The researcher saw that a meeting was indeed carried out in assessing the punctuality of the apparatus' performance at the Nunukan District Office. Wilson (2012:233) states that each job has different characteristics for certain types of work that must be completed on time, because they depend on other jobs. So, if the work in a certain section is not completed on time, it will hinder the work in other sections, thus affecting the quantity and quality of the work results. At a different time, the researcher also conducted an interview with Mr. Muhammad Arpah as a staff of the Program Planning and Finance Sub-Division, he said:

*"In the Nunukan sub-district office, there are 23 ASN but they have different main tasks and functions, this automatically affects the time to complete the work. However, even though I have a lot of tasks, I still try to achieve the targets that we have set in our work unit ". (interview on Wednesday, April 23, 2025)*

To strengthen the interview, the researcher presented data processing of targets and realization of performance achievements based on the time aspect of the ASN interviewed.

As in the interview, it can be seen that the time aspect in performance assessment is very important in achieving organizational goals. In field observations which were then continued with interviews to further examine other aspects besides those stated in the regulations that became the researcher's framework of thinking. The next interview was conducted with Mr. Asnawi, SE as the Sub-district Secretary who said that:

*"I do not close my eyes that there are still officers who do not comply with the disciplinary regulations, and we will continue to try to improve the discipline of the officers, because this concerns service to OPD, the assessment indicator for the Employee Income Supplement (TPP), one of which is measured based on employee compliance with office hours and office hours, in addition to neatness in dress". (interview on Thursday, April 24, 2025)*

A similar thing was stated by Mr. Penianto, SE as the Head of the General Sub-Section explaining that:

*"talking about discipline (hours of entry and exit from the office) still needs improvement. I admit that because honestly I also often come late to the office where each apparatus has their own reasons, whether they complete tasks until overtime so they come late to the office. However, discipline in terms of dressing neatly is in accordance with the regulations, and regarding the problem of completing work quickly, it is always on time according to the directions and orders of each leader". (interview on April 23, 2025)*

### **What factors influence the performance of the State Civil Apparatus**

In the analysis above, the performance of the State Civil Apparatus has been explained based on the Quality Aspect, Quantity Aspect and Time Aspect as stated in the Regulation of the Minister of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform Number 6 of 2022. Of course, in achieving the realization or performance achievements, there are obstacles, which of course have an impact on the percentage of achievements listed in the Performance Targets of the apparatus that have been prepared in 2023 and 2024.

Based on observations and interviews conducted in the field, researchers found different responses and responses. In an interview with Mr. Bau Syahril, S.IP., M.A.P as the Nunukan Sub-district Head, he said:

*"If you look at the number of personnel in the Nunukan Sub-district Office, it is quite a lot, the tasks in the sub-district are only limited to facilitating activities by related OPDs, while the activities we carry out are all non-physical, in fact in our job analysis it is already more. So that personnel are needed who have good abilities to analyze every job that exists, the sharper their analysis, the better the performance achievement. With the condition of the large number of personnel and the intensity of work that is quite small, if good performance is not achieved, of course this is related to the ability of each apparatus to manage activities. On the other hand, even with many tasks, if you have good abilities, all difficult jobs can be overcome well. In terms of achievement, we do have obstacles related to the implementation of tasks, but we continue to socialize the improvement of the ability to master tasks ". (interview Thursday, April 24, 2025)*

Improvement in the quality of human resource performance depends on the level of work motivation felt by individuals from the organization where they work. Apparatus can achieve increased performance when they get adequate motivational encouragement. Conversely, lack of adequate motivation can result in a significant decline in performance. (Arianto & Kurniawan, 2020).

### **Civil Service Apparatus Performance**

It would be a lapse on the part of the academics to take the institutional performance narratives at face value especially where the nature of institutional performance is homogenized in the quantitative ratings that represent a fig leaf on the deep-rooted structural imbalances. This problem is reflected by the SKP data produced by the office of the Nunukan Sub-district which reports perfect or near-perfect performance in terms of quantity, quality as well as timeliness: the SKP data produce administratively-convenient data that are analytically empty unless these data are subject to interpretive scrutiny. The reported accomplishment of 100 % in terms of quality and time labeled as good is not in terms of uniform behavior, discipline, and effect; rather this resembles the effect of a bureaucratic culture where compliance is considered as competency. According to Moehariono (2012), one of the typical artifacts of this kind of performance inflation can be found in conditions in which the assessment is uncalibrated and is integrated into power structures. The critical question then is not whether the apparatus are performing-it is whether the system of measurement has the intellectual scrupulousness and moral alertness that is needed to distinguish between actual performance and procedural mimicry.

This gap between the governmental performance registered and the reality of administration can hardly be narrower when the work burden among the personnel is considered. Others have just one job description to work under whereas some receive five job descriptions. Such gap is not only logistical but it is a loss of bureaucratic fairness and performance morality. The field of public administration is not a playground where the disregard or misuse of human resources is a forgivable offense in case the numerical goals are achieved. Along with Mangkunegara, (2005) and Moehariono, (2012) stress that performance goes already hand in hand with the apportionment of accountability. An inefficient and unfair organization is the one where job dispensations do not consider capacity and fairness. When this intra-organizational asymmetry is not addressed, it discourages employees and creates informal chains of power that destroy the accountability culture. The figures can sound a cheer of the word good, but the institutional

spirit, to resort to the phrase of Sedarmayanti (2001) can be said to be ruined by the structural apathy.

The element of quality is ethically and semantically vague in the sub-district governmental concept. There still is no stringent definition. It is observed that, practically, the quality labeling characteristically includes the speed of receipt and sendoff of the documents, the thoroughness of the administrative review, the clarity of the citizen-friendly discourse, and the extent of the compilation of the data. But little clarification is found in the empirical corpus. Without participatory forms of investigating, poor audit procedures that trace procedure processes to actual results and lack of independent scrutiny then such performance indicators are bound to become institutional toasting. This is a threat emphasized by Rivai (2004) and Zainal et al. (2014): the threat of mirroring the internal consensus with the external legitimacy. A regime that fails to seek the expressions of the good performance in the population loses its right to accountability and the statement can unknowingly contribute to institutional conservatism.

Interview information also shakes up the self portrait of the institution. Unit head and support staff report protracted lateness, uneven application of disciplinary actions, and the application of discretionary standards that make procedural reviews prolonged process of the evaluative lottery. Official governance that externally appears to be hierarchic is informal, based on the principle of convincing leadership and harmony loyalty. This could generate temporary friendship but at the same time it generates performance relativism. In cases of delegation of appraisals without moderation as may be the case in the above relations as depicted by the sub-district secretary and the heads of units, critical differentiation dissipates with neither pluralism nor procedural intensity being revealed. Overall, Sule and Kurniawan (2014) claim that performance appraisal systems that do not imply horizontal calibration cause divided accountability and are used to support the myth of impersonal evaluation.

It is important to conduct an intense inquiry into the theoretical assault of the time factor of government performance. Traditionally time becomes a relegated system to adhering to the clock. In other words as a relational variable. However, timeliness in administrative settings is more than mere ability to fulfill artificial deadlines; it should also consider the complexity of the task, the cross departmental dependence and the ripple effect of delays thereof. As he notes, the delay in one office turns into a dysfunction in another, and the disruption of time is quite systemic rather than individual (Wilson 2012). Then, this situation is further worsened seemingly by the SKP framework that atomizes performance measurements thus encouraging the behaviour that optimises the individual record but undermines the group effort, what Moleong (2019) refers to as the bureaucratic siloism. The division of the registers of performances into exact entries creates fragmentary outcomes: departments look efficient on paper but exhibit a lack of unification in the reality.

The vivid discussion of motivation that comes out of the interview data could be analyzed on a more theoretical level. In this case, motivation is not psychological but an institutional artefact created by leadership cues, reward strategy and a sense of fairness. The constant mentioning of the lack of incentives, the limited variety of recognition and the use of internalised willpower also shows that there is lack of a sound climate of motivation, that Hamzah (2006) claims relies only on the individual definitions of duty and personal virtue to work and is therefore not enduring to performance. Lack of formalised motivational systems, be they in form of symbolic remuneration, promotion, or social recognition, provides a sentiment economy of obligation, burnout, and sometimes bitterness. According to Busro (2018) and Dufrizen (2021), the effectiveness of public bureaucracy cannot have its long-term

basis on person virtuousness. Without formalised encouragements, the attitude of apathy can be established as a logical reaction.

The primary dimension through which loyalty has been depicted in this research is of an affective relationship as opposed to a strategic process. Loyalty in government service needs to be achieved beyond the traditional one of the personal loyalty to immediate supervisors but one based on common institutional principles. Where loyalty is horizontal or between peers, or vertical but unofficial, it may anchor short-term practices, but will at the same time continually undermine accountability that is based on rules. According to Nawawi (2011), without the standards of professionalism, loyalty is a kind of justification of poor performance and protective of inefficiency. The culture of delivering weekly briefings instead of formulating performance dialogue supports the fact that the culture of performance management is not in its maturity. Bureaucracies are socially intact but at the same time, administratively average without data guiding discussions and without measurements underpinning loyalty.

The leadership is touched upon briefly but is not limited to charisma of a particular person or level of organizational responsibility. To be effective in the leadership of the public institution involves vision-setting, boundary-spanning coordination and mobilization of institutional capital to public value creation. The informants outline the leadership styles that are based on teaching and small hints, but they do not serve this purpose. No signs of strategic planning of human resources are observed, no performance patterns over time are recorded, and no description of improvement trajectories can be found. This kind of leadership as a result seems to be reactive and supervisory as opposed to developmental and strategic. Modern leadership in the field of public affairs, as Zainal et al. (2014) suggests, should be equally concerned with knowledge governance and talent development as it should be connected with the adherence to policies.

After all, the Nunukan Sub-district case reveals a complex over contradiction: the performers do perform, but their performance is not developmental. The institution does not get long-term capacity building-based results. There is the use of performance assessments, but most of those processes serve to conserve career more than promote organizational change. The administrative machine functions but it does not develop. This frames the system as an example of performative bureaucracy- or such an arrangement where the performance is a category that is abstract rather than a governing strategy. According to Sudarmanto (2009), authentic performance involves moving the institution to the level of excellence, as compared to the existing systems, which pretty much adhere to annual checklists. In turn, the existing scheme is by no means appropriate.

The case study of the Nunukan sub-district office also reveals a bigger policy mystery. Administrative reform legislation in Indonesia institutionalized decentralized governance that was aimed at creating adaptive innovation, localized excellence, and responsive bureaucracy. However, there still exists resolute structural inertia, which hides behind the rhetoric of compliance. The performance measures as instruments have been raised to the status of ends. It is silent that there will be no sustained change until and unless SKP framework is recalibrated, performance-based multi-source feedback loop is initiated, and the feedback is directly linked to the professional growth. Without these changes, the performance certification process will go on: certify (the state); perform certify (the apparatus); and the citizen, the supposed beneficiary, is still not there. The nature of public administration is not harmony within the system as Marihot (2002) puts it but external accountability. As long as this principle does not dictate the performance logic, what comes out as data may not be telling the truth.

## **Performance determinants**

The action of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) in the Nunukan Sub-district Office does not occur singularly but is a result of intercession of institutional, individual and relational forces that shape work behavior, production and productivity. Of these, foremost is competence which must be defined as not a fixed credential but as an ability in the sense of being able to continuously develop and refocus. Specifications of performance difficulties provided by interviewees often locate them within the framework of ability that is the combination of technical expertise and responsive capacity, i.e., the capacity of an Academic Service Network (ASN) to turn technical know-how into administrative workability under changing policy requirements. This can be explained by the fact that Sudarmanto (2009) postulates that in case of not-so-intentional investment in the competency-based human resource strategies, the functional stagnation with the staff working by the rule and not by skill is the most likely consequence. This fact can be seen in the fact that there are discrepancies in the job performance that is observed despite SKP ratings being performed on the surface.

The second very powerful and little-discussed part of the performance ecosystem is motivation. Motivation was both cited by the respondents as an effective-enhancing and an effective-barring factor. However, there is no systematic approach of advice or maintenance of this psychological resource within the institution. Institutionally, motivation is produced by means of rewards, recognition, purpose clarity, and sense of fairness (Hamzah, 2006; Arianto & Kurniawan, 2020). With the motivation being destined to personal commitments or extrinsic challenge, the firm will be prone to a fall in spirits, burnout and disengagement. Moreover, such lack of individual incentives or the opportunities to advance with the performance harms the logic of performance evaluation altogether. According to Dufrizen (2021), in case the association between performance outcomes and motivational reinforcement is severed, the ensuing enhancements will be short-term and fragile.

Also when many leaders have articulated a desire to make discipline an anchor of performance, it is another center of internal contradiction. Procedural adherence and punctuality are formally stressed, but during interviews, informal confessions prove that discipline is arbitrary, subjective, and habitually made reasonable. This kind of inconsistency challenges leadership integrity and lowers the property of joint standards. The article by Prayuti & Jamaludin (2022) proves that in the case of a disciplinary mechanism that is not transparent and are not applied neutrally on all workers, they have unfavorable effects since they create uncertainty about the expectations at work. This ambiguity, in its turn, undermines psychological safety and, what is more, eliminates intrinsic motivation to accountability. Disciplinary practices discussed in the case of Nunukan seem to be dependent on the spot pressure of supervision instead of being institutionalized, reinforced through normalized norms, or peer culture, or arranged sanctions.

Leadership is an empowering pillar and constraining variable. Both the Sub-district Head and the Secretary demonstrate a high degree of determination in the position they hold, but their approach of leadership is by far supervisory and corrective rather than transformational and developmental (Poma, 2024). Evidence lacking in such a way as to demonstrate the achievement of strategic delegation, long term staff development planning, or the mapping of capacity. As a result, the leadership is reactive and focused on the day-to-day compliance rather than the establishment of organizational culture or provision of the meaningful change. This inclination goes against what Tan et al. (2024) had stated; that being a good public leader is not merely ensuring the smooth running of the administrative tasks but should also motivate, train, and enable the employees to exceed the set bars of the administration process. Where there is no visionary leadership in place the organization replicates passivity.

Another rather poorly researched but structurally important factor is that of loyalty. Unlike in numerous bureaucratic trends where loyalty acts as a stabilizing power-tool, in Nunukan it is being used as an interpersonal cohesion generator instead of being installed as a loyalty to the excellence of an institution. The type of loyalty that is predicated on informal solidarity and personal relations consistently elbows out accountability grounded on the outcome of performance. Workers can skip sexual or interpersonal tensions or avoid reporting about under-achievements or justify poor work under the auspices of loyalty. This tension finds a confirmation in the insight of Siagian (1988), who claims that reform agendas, in consequence of being slowed down by practices of uncritical loyalty, might be undermined by a silent privilege of harmony over frankness. Otherwise loyalty can defend laxity and overrule meritocratic urges, especially where personalities tend to define how things get done, whether through formulated rules or not, especially in organizations where the contribution of personal ties will dominate organizational life more than documentations.

All these factors are also bifurcated by the effect of organizational culture. Cultural inclination on normalisation of administrative adequacy against excellence is evident in the Nunukan Sub-district Office. The interview stories provide a context of a workplace that is all about doing enough but not doing well according to the perspective that this difference can never be measured using SKP measurements but one that is central to the quality of performance. According to Busro (2018), it is a minimalist culture of bureaucracy where no complaints are taken as a notorious achievement of efficiency. Where performance systems do not encourage ambition and/or curiosity and/or innovation, they establish within professional cultures an ambiance in which stasis has been entrenched as an absolute protection and in which any improvement is looked at with a grain of salt.

The last thing to consider is shallowing with regard to lack of structural alignment on roles, resources, and expectations. A number of them noted that they could make better use of the existing resources but poor coordination, ambiguity of the assignment, or lack of unclarity impeded their work. This indicates a larger problem of organization design. When jobs are not effectively moderated with staff abilities, when there are no evident end-results of the work assigned, and when the appraisal and real-time monitoring are not integrated, then the system itself will signify inefficiencies irrespective of goodwill by the staff. Performance architecture does count as it has been stressed by Rivai (2004) and Sedarmayanti (2001). No one person could do the work of many, should there be a lack of mechanisms to guarantee coherence along the vertical and horizontal dimensions (from roles to units).

These elements provide a illustration of how performance is not a phenomenon of a few behavior and yet, it is not a by-product of managerial formality. It is a result of institutional design, vision of the leadership, cultural regulations, motivational atmosphere. The Nunukan Sub-district Office shows signs of resilience and dedication among its personnel, but these strengths are insufficiently amplified by the current system. Until the institution begins to confront its contradictions—between documentation and discipline, between compliance and competency, between leadership and development—it will continue to produce results that satisfy evaluators but fail to elevate service quality. That is a dilemma no surface-level SKP rating can resolve.

### **Rethinking Administrative Performance from Within the Apparatus Itself**

What this study accomplishes is not just a re-description of bureaucratic functioning, but a direct confrontation with the epistemology of civil service performance in sub-national Indonesia. It asks not how performance is declared, but how it is made legible, how it becomes institutionalized, and ultimately how it is politically preserved. The SKP documentation

examined across 2023 and 2024 appears at first glance to confirm a successful bureaucracy: 100% good scores in quality and timeliness. But this is precisely the problem. What does it mean when a state apparatus declares total performance success in an evaluative regime that never measures community responsiveness, procedural fairness, innovation, or adaptive learning? As Arianto (2023) has recently argued in his examination of peripheral state institutions, such uniformity of outcome often signals the institutionalization of mediocrity through bureaucratic performance formalism. This study pushes that critique even further by showing how SKP instruments are not simply inadequate—they are functionally protective of the status quo.

The strength of this research lies not in its enumeration of challenges, but in its structural reading of how those challenges are reproduced. The performance inflation observed in Nunukan cannot be reduced to a failure of individual discipline or supervisory laxity; it reflects a deeper culture of administrative survivalism. What is rewarded is not public service excellence, but administrative conformity. Staff who show initiative or disrupt existing routines risk triggering discomfort rather than gaining recognition. The leadership, while technically engaged, relies on affective strategies—verbal reminders, routine meetings, moral appeals—because the system lacks embedded incentives or development-oriented feedback. This confirms recent findings by Jufrizen (2022) and Moeheriono (2012), who contend that performance systems rooted in symbolic supervision, rather than in data-driven personnel development, tend to produce cosmetic stability at the expense of institutional intelligence. This study gives that thesis an empirical home in the context of Indonesia's northern border administration.

A particularly neglected theme in the literature that this study reintroduces with force is the political economy of loyalty within localized bureaucracies. Loyalty in Nunukan functions as both glue and silencer. On one hand, it sustains operational continuity and team cohesion in a high-pressure, resource-thin environment. On the other hand, it constrains horizontal accountability. Staff may underperform, delay, or displace responsibility, yet remain insulated from consequence because relational allegiance supersedes formal review. Previous studies, such as that of Putri (2024), have warned of loyalty networks undermining meritocratic governance in regional offices, but their treatment remains surface-level and often descriptive. This study pushes the conversation further by interrogating loyalty not as a social asset, but as an organizational liability when left unqualified by performance logic. It turns loyalty from a normative virtue into a critical variable of dysfunction.

Where this research also sets itself apart is in its treatment of administrative evaluation not as a procedural act but as a political narrative. The SKP system does not merely fail to measure performance; it actively shapes what counts as performance in the first place. The apparatus perform to meet the form, not the function. In this sense, the SKP becomes both a technical document and a cultural artifact. It dictates pace, limits autonomy, and rewards equilibrium. As Prayuti & Jamaludin (2022) highlight in their critique of evaluative inflation, the problem is not mismeasurement, but the construction of a measurement regime that renders real issues invisible. This study echoes and expands that critique, by showing that the apparatus in Nunukan are not “failing” in traditional terms—they are succeeding within a system that defines success as silence, obedience, and surface order. The implication is not that evaluations should be stricter, but that they must be restructured entirely to account for institutional honesty, community impact, and internal asymmetries of labor (Amengual & Bartley, 20220).

Equally important is the contribution this study makes in destabilizing the assumed neutrality of border administrative structures. Nunukan is not merely another sub-district; it is a



geopolitical node with heightened regulatory burden, cross-border complexity, and sociopolitical volatility. Yet its civil apparatus is held to the same evaluative template as any inland administrative body. There is no SKP mechanism to account for risk mitigation, policy improvisation, or community negotiation—three factors central to the lived reality of sub-national governance in border zones. Marchington et al. (2016) calls this the problem of “template governance”—where local complexity is flattened by national uniformity. This study puts flesh on that critique, arguing that unless evaluative frameworks are regionally differentiated and functionally pluralized, the apparatus will always appear successful on paper while remaining ill-equipped to meet real administrative demands.

If there is a central intellectual assertion made by this research, it is that bureaucratic performance cannot be understood through outcomes alone. It must be read as a field of negotiated behavior, shaped by expectations, constrained by tools, and mediated through a culture of institutional risk avoidance. By putting field narratives into direct dialogue with institutional documentation, the study exposes the quiet contradictions that make up the daily rhythm of civil service work. And in doing so, it offers a methodological posture that public administration scholarship must now take seriously: evaluation must be interrogated, not assumed. Systems must be observed not in what they declare, but in what they suppress. This is the diagnostic terrain that the present study opens, and that future work must now navigate with greater theoretical courage and empirical depth.

## Conclusion

No serious student of public administration can afford to take performance metrics on their face, much less when these metrics scream that everyone is doing equally well, all the time, in all respects. What is revealed in the Nunukan Sub-district Office by this study is not failure of individuals, but failure of institutional imagination: a system that valorizes uniformity over and above equity, compliance over and above contribution and documentation over and above effectiveness. Not only SKP records are inaccurate but they are incomplete. They are not telling us what counts, but that which is measurable. They generate ease to those in charge, nothing real in terms of accountability to the people. When all civil servants are rated as good in terms of quality, quantity, and time, then the measurement ceases to become a measurement. It is ceremonial. This is what this research establishes; both empirically and experientially that performance is a negotiations, adaptive, and a highly contextual process. Civil servants are not in any spreadsheet business; they are in hierarchies, unseen pressures, and institutional cultures that are based on rewards for those establishing equilibrium and not excellence. The sad truth of Nunukan bureaucracy is that it is full of silent contradictions: loyalty protects from poor performance, discipline is not applied evenly, motivation is assumed, and leadership simply stays out of trouble by preserving the procedural tranquility. This is codified, smoothed and made invisible through an evaluative apparatus which values harmony more than truth.

It should be noted that it is not the equipment that is problematic. Nunukan Staff is not defiant and negligent, or incapable. The ubiquitous working environment they hang out in does not know how to appreciate complexity; it cannot even imagine rewarding it. In this environment, performance turns out to be the thing that should be performed rather than bettered. It is the institutional tragedy therein. In a situation where the system rewards not having disturbed rather than having progressed, then it stands to be ideal in maintaining its own limitations. The implications of this study are not procedural. This is not a call to tweak scoring rubrics or add another box to the SKP form. It is a call to rethink the purpose of performance evaluation altogether. We must stop pretending that measurement is neutral, that numbers speak for themselves, or that bureaucratic systems will self-correct without institutional courage. We

must begin to evaluate performance not only by what gets done, but by what gets ignored, who is overburdened, what remains unspoken, and whose labor is protected by silence.

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