

Public Service Problems In The Indonesian Government Bureaucracy

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ABSTRACT

Quality public services are one indicator of successful good governance. However, many problems remain in the delivery of public services in Indonesia, such as a lack of responsiveness, a lack of information, and a lack of accountability. Therefore, improvements and enhancements to the quality of public services are needed through the implementation of more effective and efficient public service models.

Keywords: Problems, Quality, Bureaucracy, Public Services, Government.

INTRODUCTION

In this era of democracy, the public demands good public service from the government bureaucracy. Public service delivery has become a primary goal in governance. In Indonesia, public service delivery has become an increasingly strategic policy issue because improvements in public services in this country tend to be stagnant, while the implications, as is well known, are vast, touching all spheres of public life, including political, economic, social, and cultural life.

Poor public services will lead to a decline in investment, which can lead to layoffs in industry and the lack of new job opportunities, which will also contribute to rising unemployment. A further consequence of this problem is the emergence of social insecurity.

Furthermore, poor public services have been a key factor contributing to the crisis of public trust in the government. This crisis of trust has manifested itself in unhealthy protests and demonstrations, demonstrating public frustration with the government.

The devastating consequences are evident in the riots and anarchic actions in various regions. Consequently, people tend to choose shortcuts that lead to negative consequences, including various irrational and potentially illegal actions.

Improvements in public services would improve the investment climate, which is crucial for this nation to emerge from its prolonged economic crisis. Unfortunately, efforts to achieve these improvements have been largely lip service.

Various studies on public services have shown that they are not aligned with reforms in various sectors, resulting in negative investment growth. Consequently, the economic growth expected to help this nation emerge from its various economic crises has not been realized as expected.

In this regard, improving public services is absolutely necessary so that the public's negative image of the government can be repaired, because improving the quality of public services can influence public satisfaction so that public trust in the government can be rebuilt.

UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC SERVICES

Definition of Services

Public services are essentially provided by the government for its citizens. It is natural for every citizen to need services; in fact, it could be argued that services are inseparable between the government as the provider and its citizens. According to the life cycle theory of leadership, service is highly valued in the early stages of human life, but the need for services declines as people age.

The public constantly demands quality public services from bureaucrats, even though these demands often fall short of expectations. Empirically, existing public services are characterized by complexity, slowness, cost, exhaustion, and uncertainty. This situation occurs because the public is still positioned as the "servant," not the "servant." Public service can be conceptually explained by examining it word for word.

According to **Philip Kotler**, service is all activities performed by sellers and organizations that can provide added value to customers.¹ **Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler** define service as the interaction between service providers and customers that occurs during the sales process.²

Valarie Zeithaml defines service as the interaction between customers and service providers with the goal of providing customer satisfaction.³ Meanwhile, **Budi Supriyatno** defines service as a process involving both the service provider and the customer, with the customer benefiting from the service.⁴

From these experts, it can be concluded that service is an effort undertaken by the service provider to provide services to customers.

Understanding the Public

The term "**public**" in everyday Indonesian is often understood to mean the state or the general public. The word "**public**" has actually been accepted into standard Indonesian as "publik," meaning the general public or the masses. According to **James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt**, in their book "**Managing Public Relations**," they define the public as a group of people who have consequences or impacts from an organization's actions.⁵ According to **Budi Supriyatno (2025)**, the public is a group of people with specific interests.⁶

Based on the explanations above, various definitions of public service can be interpreted as providing services to individuals or communities with an interest in the organization, in accordance with established basic rules and procedures.

In Decree of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform No. 63/KEP/M.PAN/7/2003 concerning General Guidelines for the Provision of Public Services, public service is defined as all service activities carried out by public service providers to meet the needs of service recipients and to implement statutory provisions.⁷ Thus, public service is the fulfillment of the desires and needs of the community by state officials.

Understanding Public Services

Law Number 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services defines public services as activities or a series of activities designed to

fulfill the service needs of every citizen and resident, in accordance with statutory regulations, for goods, services, and/or administrative services provided by public service providers.⁸

Public services essentially encompass a broad range of aspects of life. In national life, the government has the function of providing various public services required by the public, ranging from regulatory services to other services to meet public needs in education, health, utilities, and other areas.

The various public reform movements experienced by developed countries in the early 1990s were largely inspired by public pressure for improvements in the quality of public services provided by the government. This is also evident in various scholarly works written by experts related to public services, including those developed in the United States with the emergence of the post-bureaucratic paradigm by **Barzelay (1992)**. The post-bureaucratic view is a new paradigm in government management that focuses on innovation, flexibility, and results-oriented. **Barzelay** argues that traditional bureaucratic approaches are no longer effective in facing the challenges of modern governance and that a post-bureaucratic approach can help improve government efficiency and effectiveness.⁹

Then, at almost the same time, the reinventing government paradigm emerged, proposed by **Osborne and Gaebler** which was then operationalized by **Osborne and Plastrik in 1997** in their work, "**Banishing Bureaucracy: The Five Strategies for Reinventing Government**." This paradigm is also known as New Public Management. The perspective of this paradigm emphasizes that the government or bureaucrats must provide the best possible service to the public.¹⁰ They believe that the government must transfer its control authority to the public. The public is empowered to control the services provided by the government.

Another explanation of public service can be found in the work of **J.V. Denhardt and R.B. Denhardt** in their book, **The New Public Service (2003)**. This paradigm provides a perspective on service, namely that public administration should serve citizens, not customers, prioritize the public interest, and serve rather than control.¹¹ The theoretical

¹ Philip Kotler (2019), Marketing Management, Publisher: Prentice Hall.

² Valarie Zeithaml, (1990), Delivering Quality Service: Balancing Customer Perceptions and Expectations. Publisher: Free Press.

³ Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, (2017) Services Marketing: Integrating Customer Focus Across the Firm. Publisher: McGraw-Hill Education.

⁴ Budi Supriyatno (2025) Government Public Services to Its Citizens. International Journal.

⁵ James E. Grunig dan Todd Hunt (1984), Managing Public Relations. Publisher: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

⁶ *Ibid*, James E. Grunig dan Todd Hunt (1984).

⁷ Decree of the Minister of State Apparatus Empowerment No. 63/KEP/M.PAN/7/2003 is regarding General Guidelines for the Provision of Public Services.

⁸ Law Number 25 of 2009 Concerning Public Services.

⁹ Michael Barzelay, (1992). Breaking Through Bureaucracy: A New Vision for Managing in Government. Publisher: University of California Press.

¹⁰ *Op.Cit.* Janet V. Denhardt dan Robert B. Denhardt, (2003).

¹¹ *Ibid*. Janet V. Denhardt dan Robert B. Denhardt, (2003).

basis of the ideal public service according to the new public service paradigm is that public service must be responsive to various existing public interests and values.

According to **Budi Supriyatno**, public services are activities carried out by the government or other public organizations to meet the needs of the community.¹² Public services can include:

1. **Administrative Services:** Producing official documents required by the public, such as birth certificates, passports, and so on.
2. **Goods Services:** Producing goods used by the public, such as infrastructure, public facilities, and so on.
3. **Service Services:** Producing services needed by the public, such as healthcare, education, and so on.

The goal of public service is to improve the quality of life of the community and meet their basic needs. According to **Budi Supriyatno**, good public service must possess the characteristics of **TAPE F** (*Transparent, Accountable, Participatory, and Friendly*), as follows:

1. **Transparent:** Open and easily accessible to the public.
2. **Accountable:** Accountable in accordance with statutory provisions.
3. **Participatory:** Encouraging public participation in the provision of public services.
4. **Effective:** Meeting community needs efficiently and effectively.
5. **Friendly:** Serving the public in a friendly and courteous manner.

Thus, good public services can increase public trust in the government and improve the quality of life.

The task of government bureaucracy is to negotiate and elaborate on the various interests of its citizens. This perspective implies that the character and values embodied in public services must reflect the prevailing values within society. Because society is dynamic, the character of public services must also constantly evolve to reflect societal developments. Furthermore, this new model of public service must be non-discriminatory, as intended by the theoretical basis used: democratic theory, which guarantees equality for citizens without distinction of origin, ethnicity, race, ethnicity, religion, or political affiliation.

SERVICE PROBLEMS

The various theories, approaches, perspectives, and paradigms of public service mentioned above are constantly evolving to adapt to the dynamic developments in public needs in developed countries and elsewhere. This shift aims to create a framework for implementing public services that is better, more efficient, more responsive, and more oriented toward the public interest.

For developing countries, including Indonesia, the wave of pressure to change the face of government and the substance of its public service operations is inextricably linked to pressures from international institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, and other donor agencies. This is inextricably linked to the interests of these institutions operating in Indonesia.

Demands for improved public services are sometimes a primary prerequisite for international institutions or donor countries in providing aid. For example, the IMF and the World Bank, these two highly influential financial institutions have been increasingly pushing political demands for developing countries to devolve their monopolistic governance and public service systems over the past two decades, advocating policies to strengthen regional autonomy, privatize the public sector, and provide broader opportunities for sectors outside the government bureaucracy.

Tracing the problems of public services in Indonesia can actually be seen across several periods of government administration, for example, beginning with the New Order era and ending with the Reformation era. This paradigm shift in public services is inextricably linked to changes in the political climate, which have implications for the policies formulated and implemented by the government.

In Indonesia, for example, during the New Order era, public services were characterized by state dominance over various aspects of national life. This period was known as the strong state or autonomous state paradigm, where socio-political forces, including market forces, had little influence on public policy, even in its implementation.

The reform era was marked by a paradigm of half-hearted deregulation, where the government selected certain sectors for deregulation, primarily focusing not on achieving efficiency in public services but on business security between state officials and large businesses.

Then, there was the paradigm of public service reform. This paradigm reexamined the role of government and redefined it according to its context, namely global economic and political changes, strengthening civil society, good governance, and the increasing role of markets and communities in the formulation and implementation of public policy.

Even though in Indonesia politically the reform era has been running for around 27 years since the fall of President Suharto in 1998, the implementation of public services is still marked by various weaknesses, even though many efforts have been made by the government

¹² *Op.Cit.* Budi Supriyatno (2025) Government Public Services to Its Citizens.

in an effort to improve services to the community, including the reformulation of the Law on Regional Government which actually provides expanded authority at the regional government level, seen as one of the efforts to cut bureaucratic obstacles which often result in the provision of services taking a long time and being expensive.

With the decentralization of regions, they inevitably have to be able to implement various authorities that have been carried out by the central government, along with the services that must be provided. Efforts to improve services have long been implemented by the government, among others, this policy can be seen in the Decree of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform Number 81/1993 concerning Guidelines for Public Service Management.¹³ Then, Presidential Instruction No. 1 of 1995 concerning the improvement and enhancement of the quality of government apparatus services to the public.¹⁴

In the latest development, the Decree of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform Number 63/KEP/M.PAN/7/2003 concerning General Guidelines for the Implementation of Public Services has also been issued.¹⁵ Efforts to improve service quality are not only pursued through decisions, but also through improving the capabilities of officials in providing services. This effort is carried out by providing various materials on service management in structural training at various levels.

Despite the government's various efforts to improve public services, weaknesses remain. This is evident in the frequent public complaints received through various media outlets, with findings that efficiency and effectiveness, responsiveness, equality of treatment, and the extent of bureaucratic rents still fall short of expectations. Therefore, comparing the government's efforts with the current state of public services demanded in the era of decentralization, it appears that these efforts have not significantly contributed to improving the quality of public services. Furthermore, the public service bureaucracy remains incapable of providing fair and non-partisan services.

Considering the various problems facing public service delivery in Indonesia, the main issue currently relates to improving the quality of the service itself. According to Albrecht and Zemke (1990), the quality of public service is the result of the interaction of various aspects, namely the service system, human resources providing services, strategy, and customers.¹⁶ According to **Budi Supriyatno**, the quality of public service can be measured using several aspects, including:

1. **Reliability:** The ability to provide accurate and reliable services.
2. **Responsiveness:** The ability to provide services quickly and responsively to public needs.
3. **Assurance:** The ability to provide safe and reliable services.
4. **Empathy:** The ability to understand and meet public needs with full attention.
5. **Tangibles:** The adequate and comfortable physical condition of service facilities.

Good quality public services can increase public trust in the government and improve people's quality of life. Some indicators of good quality public services are:

1. Fast and efficient service times.
2. Accurate and reliable service.
3. Availability of clear and transparent information.
4. Friendly and courteous service.
5. Adequate and comfortable service facilities.

Thus, good quality public services can increase public satisfaction and improve people's quality of life.

Public Service Problems

1. **Delivery Patterns:** Public services in Indonesia still have various weaknesses, including: (a) lack of responsiveness, (b) lack of information, (c) lack of accessibility, (d) lack of coordination, (e) bureaucracy, (f) lack of willingness to listen to public complaints/suggestions/aspirations, and (g) inefficiency.
2. **Human Resources:** The main weaknesses relate to professionalism, competence, empathy, and ethics.
3. **Work Patterns:** The work patterns used by most current government bureaucracies are still influenced by the classical bureaucratic model, namely structured/hierarchical, formal legalistic, and closed systems.
4. **Institutions:** The main weakness lies in organizational design, which is not specifically designed for providing services to the public. It is full of hierarchies that make service delivery complicated and uncoordinated. The tendency to carry out two functions simultaneously, the regulatory function and the implementation function, is still very strong in the government, which also leads to inefficient public services.

¹³ Decree of the Minister of State Apparatus Empowerment Number 81/1993 concerning Guidelines for Public Service Implementation.

¹⁴ Presidential Instruction Number 1 of 1995 concerning Improvement and Enhancement of the Quality of Government Service to the Public.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* Presidential Instruction Number 1 of 1995

¹⁶ Karl Albrecht dan Ron Zemke (1985), *Service America: Doing Business in the New Economy*. Publisher: Dow Jones-Irwin.

DISCUSSION ON OVERCOMING PUBLIC SERVICE PROBLEMS

Paradigm shifts in public administration continue to occur in accordance with environmental demands, such as the political, economic, social, and cultural (poleksosbud) situation and conditions of society. Various changes occur along with the growing complexity of the problems faced by government bureaucracies in public services. Scientists respond to this complexity by continuously developing the science of governance.

Denhardt and Denhardt (2003) stated that there are three perspectives in public administration: old public administration, new public management, and new public service.¹⁷ Based on the perspective put forward by Denhardt and Denhardt, who pioneered the new perspective on public administration, namely new public service, these two experts recommend abandoning the principles of classical administration and new public management, renowned for reinventing government, and shifting to the principles of new public service.¹⁸

Based on the perspective put forward by **Denhardt and Denhardt** as the initiators of a new perspective on public administration, namely the new public service, these two experts suggest abandoning the principles of classical administration and new public management which are famous for reinventing government, and switching to the principles of new public service. According to Denhardt and Denhardt (2003), public administration must:

1. Serve citizens, not customers.
2. Prioritize the public interest.
3. Value citizenship over entrepreneurship.
4. Think strategically and act democratically.
5. Recognize that accountability is not easy.
6. Serve rather than control.
7. Value people, not just productivity.

A view that is similar to the perspective put forward by Denhardt and Denhardt, although with a different name, is the perspective put forward by **Bovaird and Loffler (2003)**, that there are three approaches to public administration, namely public administration, public management, and public governance.¹⁹

The final paradigm proposed by **Cheema**²⁰, namely governance, has received significant attention from various countries

through the UNDP's call for good governance. The UNDP's characteristics of good governance include:

1. Participation, meaning that everyone should be given an equal opportunity to express their opinions in decision-making, either directly or through institutions that represent their interests.
2. Rule of law, meaning that legal rules must be fair and enforced impartially.
3. Transparency, meaning that openness must be built on the free flow of information.
4. Responsiveness, meaning that existing institutions and processes must be directed to serve stakeholders.
5. Consensus orientation, meaning that there must be a mediation process to reach a general consensus based on group interests, and, whenever possible, based on policies and procedures.
6. Equity, meaning that everyone has an equal opportunity to improve and maintain their well-being.
7. Effectiveness and efficiency, namely that existing processes and institutions meet the needs of society as much as possible through the best utilization of available resources.
8. Accountability, namely that decision-makers in government agencies, the public sector, and civil society organizations must be able to account for their actions and decisions to the public and to stakeholders.
9. Strategic vision, namely that leaders and the public must have a broad and long-term perspective on human development, considering historical background and socio-cultural complexities.

Meanwhile, according to **Budi Supriyatno**, the perspective of public services from the government to the people can be viewed from several perspectives, including:

1. **Public Services as a Means of Fulfilling Public Needs:** The government has a responsibility to provide quality public services that meet public needs, such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure.
2. **Public Services as a Form of Government Accountability:** The government must be responsible for the quality of public services provided and ensure that these services meet established standards.
3. **Public Services as a Means of Improving the Public's Quality of Life:** The government can improve the public's quality of life through the provision of effective and efficient public services, such as healthcare, education, and social assistance.

¹⁷ Janet V. Denhardt dan Robert B. Denhardt, (2003), The New Public Service: Serving, Not Steerin. Publisher: M.E. Sharpe.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* Janet V. Denhardt dan Robert B. Denhardt, (2003).

¹⁹ *Ibid.* Janet V. Denhardt dan Robert B. Denhardt, (2003).

²⁰ G. Shabbir Cheema (2007). Decentralizing Governance: Emerging Concepts and Practices. Publisher: Brookings Institution Press

4. **Public Services as a Form of Public Participation:** The government can involve the public in the decision-making process and the provision of public services, so that the public can feel ownership and participation in development.
5. **Public Services as a Means of Increasing Transparency and Accountability:** The government must ensure that the public services provided are transparent and accountable, so that the public can monitor and evaluate the quality of the services provided.

In this perspective, **Budi Supriyatno** emphasized that the government has an important role in providing quality public services and meeting the needs of the community, as well as ensuring that these services are transparent, accountable, and effective in improving the quality of life of the community.

Considering the perspectives put forward by these experts, and efforts to address issues related to the implementation of public services in Indonesia in line with developments in science and technology, advances in public knowledge, and changes in the more democratic political climate, relevant public administration perspectives that can be applied are the new public service (NPS) and governance perspectives.

NPS, as the latest paradigm of public administration, places public service as the primary activity of bureaucrats. Service in this context differs from customer-based service as conceived in the New Public Management (NPM) paradigm.

One of the core principles of the National Service Delivery System (NPS) is how public administrators articulate and share citizen interests.²¹ To ensure equitable distribution of these interests, a platform is needed between the government and the public, ensuring that all interests are addressed. The government has undertaken several initiatives to improve the quality of public services, including participatory planning activities such as development deliberations at the sub-district, district, provincial, and national levels. However, these activities cannot be held at any time, preventing the government from quickly capturing public needs. Sudden needs, such as healthcare and clean water, can arise at any time. To ensure that public needs can be promptly anticipated and addressed by the government, a communication platform is necessary between the government and the public.

According to the New Public Service and good governance perspectives, **Budi Supriyatno** argues that several public service models can be used to address public service issues in Indonesia, including:²²

1. **Technology-Based Public Service Model:** This model utilizes information and communication technology to improve the efficiency and accessibility of public services,

such as e-government, online portals, and mobile applications.

2. **Community-Based Public Service Model:** This model involves active community participation in the public service process, such as mutual cooperation, participation in decision-making, and oversight.
3. **Customer-Oriented Public Service Model:** This model focuses on customer needs and satisfaction by providing fast, easy, and high-quality services.
4. **Results-Based Public Service Model:** This model focuses on the results the government wants to achieve, such as improving the quality of life, reducing poverty, and boosting the economy.
5. **One-Stop Integrated Service Model:** This model provides integrated public services in one location, eliminating the need for the public to travel to multiple locations to obtain different services.
6. **Public Service Mall Model:** This model provides integrated public services in one location, to improve efficiency and quality of service.

Examples of One-Stop Integrated Services and Public Service Malls:

- a. **Central Java Province** has improved public services through the Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE) and achieved an SPBE index of 3.68 in 2023.
- b. **Karawang Regency** has the Investment and Integrated Services Office, which conducts budget planning to improve the quality and efficiency of services.
- c. **Yogyakarta City**, specifically the Yogyakarta Regional Office of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, has implemented an Integrated Public Service Information System that facilitates various public services on a single platform.
1. **Online-Based Public Service Model:** This model uses information and communication technology to provide public services online, allowing the public to access public services from anywhere and at any time. Some examples of Online-Based Public Services:
 - a. **The Central Java Provincial Government** has also implemented SPBE to improve the efficiency and transparency of public services.
 - b. **The cities of Jakarta and Bandung** have implemented the Smart City concept to optimize city management with technology and data.
 - c. **The Ministry of Law and Human Rights** of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, through the Jogja Regional Office of the Ministry of Law and Human

²¹ Op.Cit. Denhardt dan Denhardt, (2003).

²² Budi Supriyatno, (2025), Public Service Model by Government Bureaucracy. Article.

Rights, provides online services such as the Foreigner Monitoring Application (APOA), the Online Passport Queue Registration Application (APAPO), and the Correctional Database System (SDP).

d. Other online-based public services include the Public Service Information System), e-Samsat for motor vehicle tax payments, and online population and civil registration applications.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Quality public services are crucial for increasing public trust in the government and improving the quality of life. However, many problems remain in the delivery of public services in Indonesia. Therefore, it is necessary to improve and enhance the quality of public services through the implementation of more effective and efficient public service models, such as technology-based, community-based, customer-oriented, and results-based public service models.

Suggestion

1. The government needs to improve the quality of public services through the implementation of more effective and efficient public service models.
2. The government needs to increase transparency and accountability in the delivery of public services.
3. The government needs to involve active public participation in the public service process.
4. The government needs to improve the capabilities and competencies of government officials in providing public services.
5. The government needs to conduct continuous evaluation and monitoring to improve the quality of public services.

Thus, it is hoped that public services in Indonesia can improve and meet the needs of the community.

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