

Research Article

Innovative Strategies for State Civil Apparatus (ASN) Performance Management in Improving Bureaucratic Professionalism in the Regional Personnel Agency of Sidoarjo Regency

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Abstract: This research intends to examine novel performance management techniques for Civil Servants (ASN) to improve bureaucratic professionalism at the Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) in Sidoarjo Regency. The research arises from the increasing use of digital performance systems via the e-Performance application, which has yet to show notable changes in behavior among bureaucrats. The study examines the efficiency of the e-Performance system, organizational culture, leadership roles, and management innovations at BKD. Employing a qualitative case study method, data were gathered through extensive interviews, observations, and document review with structural officials and staff. The results indicate that the e-Performance system has enhanced administrative efficiency and transparency, yet it still falls short in fostering employee participation and feedback processes. Deficiencies in digital skills and insufficient training for fostering culture were noted as well. The research suggests fostering a reflective workplace culture centered on recognition, ongoing digital skills training, and establishing a reciprocal feedback mechanism in performance assessments. Working with outside organizations is crucial to maintain accountability and impartiality. These results are anticipated to enhance ASN professionalism and foster an adaptive, innovative bureaucracy in the era of digital governance.

Keywords: ASN Professionalism; Bureaucratic Innovation; Bureaucratic Professionalism; Civil Servants; Performance Management.

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1. Introduction

Changes in the performance management of State Civil Apparatus (ASN) are a crucial element in the bureaucratic reform agenda because ASN performance has a direct impact on the quality of public services, the efficiency of regional policies, and the legitimacy of government; national policy emphasizes the implementation of a merit system and the use of technology to assess competencies, map talents, and link promotions to performance achievements so that ASN careers are more open and data-based. (Mahardhani, 2023; Raharjanto, 2019).

The Sidoarjo Regency Government has begun digitizing employee management through the “Smart ASN” platform, which integrates personnel services, e-performance (electronic employee work targets), and competency data as an effort to improve bureaucratic professionalism and support the Smart City program. The implementation of this initiative was highlighted in the Smart City evaluation conducted by the regional government in 2024, but operational implementation still faces technical and user capacity constraints (Yang & Zhen, 2024).

The issues that arise are both general and specific: in general, many regions in Indonesia still face challenges in data integration, low competency assessment capabilities, and a bureaucratic culture that is not fully focused on results, making the merit system difficult to

internalize. Specifically in Sidoarjo, field findings and reports from regional apparatus organizations indicate obstacles to access and digital literacy for civil servants, suboptimal integration of competency data between work units, and the need to develop an adaptive talent management model to fill strategic positions professionally.

Previous research (Choirudin et al., 2023; Herwanto et al., 2023) Provides practical evidence and recommendations: a study of human resource and talent management systems emphasizes the benefits of digitalization for accelerating performance evaluation and career management, but also highlights the importance of organizational change design and assessor capacity; an evaluation of the implementation of Smart ASN and the experiences of other regions recommends data integration, the involvement of independent assessors, and the creation of a public performance dashboard as best practices that enhance employee accountability and motivation.

Given these conditions, this paper will focus its analysis on innovative strategies for managing ASN performance at the Sidoarjo Regency Regional Personnel Agency (BKD), including (1) the integration of e-Kinerja/Smart ASN with the talent management system and competency database, (2) a multi-layered competency assessment model (internal and independent assessors), (3) a results-oriented reward and coaching mechanism, and (4) a change management and capacity building strategy to enhance digital literacy and a merit culture. The goal is to develop an operational policy package and implementation roadmap that enhances bureaucratic professionalism, ensures performance-based promotions, and strengthens ASN's contribution to improving the quality of public services in Sidoarjo.

2. Theoretical Review

The theoretical basis for formulating innovative strategies for ASN performance management at the Sidoarjo Regency Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) must begin with the merit system framework that underpins ASN management in Indonesia: the principle that job placement, promotion, and career development must be based on qualifications, competencies, and performance requires a fair, measurable, and non-competitive assessment mechanism—a requirement that has now been formalized in national regulations and received oversight from relevant institutions.

Human resource management theory demonstrates that digitizing HR functions not only replaces manual processes but also transforms an organization's ability to collect, integrate, and analyze performance data directly, leading to evidence-based talent management and promotion policies. Empirical research in Indonesia shows that implementing e-HR improves administrative efficiency and the potential for better performance when accompanied by changes in work culture and increased employee digital literacy. (Gusty et al., 2020; Raharjanto, 2019).

Talent management literature in the public sector (Putranto et al., 2022; Seno, 2022) emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive approach, from human resource needs planning and talent identification to career development, succession planning, and retention. Without effective talent management, organizations risk losing qualified employees and experiencing competency shortages in strategic positions. Practical experience shows that digitalized talent management simplifies competency mapping but requires data integration across units and commitment from leadership.

Public performance management theory emphasizes that an effective performance system includes clear outcome measures, feedback mechanisms, and consistent incentives and consequences. However, evaluative studies highlight three key challenges: technical (indicators & systems), systemic (policy integration), and actor engagement (user support), which must be addressed for performance management to impact bureaucratic professionalism (Fauzi & Rusi, 2020; Listiani, 2011).

Organizational change management theory is important because performance change requires interventions on culture, leadership, and assessor capabilities; implementing human resource management systems, competency assessments, and reward systems without a change management strategy (communication, incremental training, champions, and adaptive evaluation) usually leads to incomplete implementation and resistance from the organization (Putri et al., 2024; Wardhana et al., 2022). Successful practices across various regions underscore the importance of a change roadmap that integrates technology and human capacity building.

Finally, this theoretical framework recommends cross-concept integration: a merit system as a normative objective, a human resource management system and talent

management as technical-operational infrastructure, performance management as an evaluation and accountability mechanism, and change management as an implementation bridge, enriched by regular monitoring and evaluation learning to assess the impact of performance policies on bureaucratic professionalism. This foundation provides a starting point for formulating concrete, innovative strategies for the Sidoarjo Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD), such as a public performance website, a multi-layered assessment model, an integrated talent development program, and a change management package tailored to the regional context.

3. Method

This study applies a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to analyze in-depth and contextually innovative strategies in ASN performance management to improve bureaucratic professionalism at the Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) of Sidoarjo Regency. This strategy was chosen because it can show the dynamics of policy implementation and the perspectives of bureaucratic actors regarding the implemented digital performance management system. Initial data were obtained through in-depth interviews with BKD structural officials, performance management staff, and ASN from various fields involved in the implementation of the Smart ASN program and talent management, accompanied by direct observation of the input process and performance evaluation in the e-Kinerja system. Secondary data were obtained from regional policy documents, bureaucratic reform evaluation reports, as well as relevant academic literature and national regulations. The data collection process was carried out in stages over three months, encompassing planning, field observation, document collection, and interview verification to ensure data validity. Data analysis was conducted using interactive analysis methods, including data reduction, data presentation, and simultaneous conclusion drawing to identify patterns, strategies, and constraints in ASN performance management. To ensure data validity, this study utilized source and method triangulation by comparing interview results, official documents, and field observations. The analysis findings were then compiled into strategic recommendations that can be implemented by the Sidoarjo Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) to strengthen the merit system, enhance ASN professionalism, and accelerate the transition to a transparent and accountable digital bureaucracy (Pahleviannur et al., 2022).

4. Results and Discussion

Integration Of E-Performance and Smart ASN Systems in ASN Performance Management

Research results indicate that the integration of the e-Performance system with the Smart ASN platform at the Sidoarjo Regency Regional Personnel Agency (BKD) has been a crucial initial step in the digitalization of employee performance management. This system facilitates online input of daily work achievements, annual targets, and personal performance indicators for each ASN. However, based on observations and interviews with BKD staff, technical barriers remain in data synchronization between the e-Performance application and the national personnel system. Some performance data is not automatically updated due to limited bandwidth and information technology infrastructure. This aligns with e-HRM theory, which emphasizes that the success of HR digitalization depends not only on the system's existence but also on the readiness of the infrastructure and users to operate it optimally.

In addition to technical issues, research indicates that system integration has not been fully accompanied by adjustments to organizational culture and work processes. ASN at the BKD still report manually, leading to data redundancy between physical documents and digital formats. According to Kotter's change management theory, (Jasmine et al., 2025), The transition to a digital system requires an internal communication strategy and ongoing training to ensure all employees understand the importance and benefits of the change. The Sidoarjo Regional Personnel Agency (BKD) has conducted outreach programs, but the frequency is insufficient to cover all areas and regional apparatus. As a result, there are differences in understanding and varying input quality among civil servants.

From an efficiency perspective, the integration of e-Kinerja and Smart ASN has been proven to accelerate the performance appraisal process and the preparation of annual civil servant reports. The Head of the Performance Appraisal Division revealed that the time required for data recapitulation has now been reduced by approximately 40% compared to the manual method. These results support performance management theory, which states that digitalization can improve organizational efficiency if performance parameters and results are

directly accessible (Fauzi & Rusi, 2020). However, the quality of evaluations has not shown significant improvement because most assessments still focus on the quantity of activities, rather than outcomes. In other words, administrative transparency has been achieved, but substantive transparency still needs to be improved.

Furthermore, comparisons with other regions such as Banyuwangi and Sleman show that the success of e-Performance integration depends on feedback between system users. In the Sidoarjo Regional Personnel Agency (BKD), the system remains one-way, with civil servants entering data and evaluators providing assessments without any dialogue or clarification. From the perspective of good governance theory Denhart and denhart (2007), This hinders the principles of participation and accountability in the performance management system. Therefore, the Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) needs to develop the Smart ASN function to include feedback features and online discussion forums to improve horizontal communication between employees and assessors.

Field findings indicate that some ASNs have difficulty understanding individual performance indicators that focus on results. Many ASNs believe the system is more practical for administrative tasks, while innovative or collaborative performance is difficult to assess. However, merit system and public value theory emphasize the importance of performance assessments that reflect positive contributions to society, not just activities within the organization. This suggests the need for reformulation of performance indicators so that the digital system can comprehensively capture the substantive dimensions of ASN professionalism (Negoro et al., 2025).

In conclusion, the integration of e-Kinerja and Smart ASN in the Sidoarjo Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) has laid the initial foundation for efficient bureaucratic digitalization, but remains suboptimal in terms of work culture, in-depth transparency, and user participation. Digital capability enhancements, improvements to results-based indicators, and online feedback mechanisms are needed to ensure performance management aligns with the spirit of a merit system and transparent governance.

Implementation of a Layer-Layed Competency Assessment Model in ASN Evaluation

Research shows that starting in 2022, the Sidoarjo Regency Regional Personnel Agency (BKD) has implemented a multilevel competency assessment model involving an internal performance assessment team and independent assessors from civil servant training institutions. This model aims to objectively evaluate civil servants through a combination of administrative assessments and work behavior analysis. Interviews with the Head of the Training Division indicate that this approach is effective in reducing subjective bias during job promotions. However, the limited number of assessors and assessment costs result in implementation only covering structural positions from echelon IV and above. In the context of talent management theory, this situation indicates a mismatch between system requirements and existing resource capabilities.

During the research, it was revealed that competency assessments had not been fully integrated into the e-Performance system, resulting in manual recording of assessment results and not being stored in a publicly accessible database. However, performance management theory emphasizes that integration between subsystems is crucial for continuous performance and competency evaluation. This lack of data connectivity has resulted in information on ASN competency maps not being optimally utilized for succession planning. Furthermore, several ASN who participated in the assessments stated that feedback from the assessment results was often not provided in detail. They only received a final score without an evaluation of their individual strengths and weaknesses. This can hinder individual development because ASN are unaware of areas for improvement.

From an institutional perspective, the participation of independent assessors has been shown to increase ASN trust in the impartiality of evaluation results. However, there is still resistance from some internal assessors who feel their rights are being diminished. According to change management theory (Phillips & Klein, 2022), This resistance is a common symptom of bureaucratic transformation, which requires a reassignment of roles from administrative control to coaching. The Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) must address this issue through participatory communication methods and an emphasis on the long-term benefits of multi-layered assessments for enhancing organizational professionalism.

Interestingly, this study also revealed that the implementation of competency assessments has increased civil servants' understanding of the importance of merit-based career development. A number of civil servants have begun independently participating in digital, leadership, and public speaking training to improve their scores on future assessments.

This phenomenon reflects a shift in work culture from solely administrative to more competitive, in line with merit system theory (Sulaiman et al., 2025). In general, the tiered competency assessment model at the Sidoarjo Regional Personnel Agency (BKD) can be considered a successful innovation in enhancing bureaucratic professionalism. However, to ensure sustainability, the BKD needs to expand the assessment's reach, connect it to digital systems, and strengthen the feedback loop so that the evaluation process functions as a learning tool, not just an assessment.

Outcome-based Reward System and Counseling Mechanism

Research shows that one crucial strategy for improving civil servant professionalism is implementing an outcome-based reward system. The Sidoarjo Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) has begun developing a reward system with annual performance incentives, service innovation evaluations, and an employee of the month program. However, observations indicate that these rewards are still symbolic and not directly linked to the institution's achievement. According to performance management theory, (Fauzi & Rusi, 2020) An efficient reward system must be based on tangible results that impact organizational performance, not simply administrative fulfillment.

Interviews with civil servants who received awards revealed that many employees felt the reward system was unclear and lacked measurable indicators. This has the potential to reduce internal civil servant motivation and create a sense of unfairness. In the context of good governance, this situation demonstrates the continued weakness of transparency and accountability in the implementation of performance policies. Therefore, changes are needed to the reward mechanism, based on measurable indicators, involving neutral parties, and disseminated transparently to increase employee motivation and trust.

Other findings indicate a lack of linkage between the reward system and performance development programs. High-performing civil servants have not received structured career development programs, while low-performing civil servants lack a clear development plan. According to talent management theory (Seno, 2022), Rewards and development should be two integral aspects of sustainable performance management. Therefore, the Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) must develop a performance-focused talent pool so that each civil servant receives interventions commensurate with their level of achievement and ability.

From an organizational culture perspective (Fahrizi & Ali, 2025; Hanifah & Frinaldi, 2025), Research shows a shift in values from an administrative focus to a focus on achievement. Although still minimal, some civil servants (ASN) are beginning to view awards as a symbol of professional pride that can improve their image in the workplace. This suggests that the reward system has significant potential as a behavioral reinforcement tool that fosters a competitive work culture, in line with public service motivation theory, which emphasizes the importance of rewarding achievement to maintain a public service ethos. However, a challenge is the lack of integration of the reward system with e-Kinerja digital data, so decision-making still requires manual validation. This hinders clarity and smoothness in determining award recipients. Based on e-HRM theory, integrating digital systems with reward systems is crucial for objectivity, efficiency, and data-driven selection and evaluation processes.

Therefore, it is concluded that the results-oriented reward mechanism at the Sidoarjo Regional Personnel Agency (BKD) is still in its early stages of implementation and requires strengthening indicators, process transparency, and integration with digital systems to ensure objectivity and sustainability. If these steps are taken, ASN professionalism can develop naturally through encouragement for achievement and a positive recognition culture.

Strategy For Strengthening Digital Literacy and Asn Performance Culture

The main focus of this research emphasizes the significance of improving civil servants' digital literacy as a fundamental prerequisite for successful technology-based performance management. Interviews with Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) employees revealed that many civil servants, particularly those over 45, faced difficulties using the e-Performance and Smart ASN systems. This resulted in delays in data entry and errors in performance reporting. According to change management theory (Kotter, 2021), The transformation of technological systems must be accompanied by behavioral changes, which can only be achieved through training, mentoring, and effective communication.

The Sidoarjo Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) has implemented several measures to improve digital literacy, such as internal training and technical guidance, but their frequency and reach remain limited. Based on field observations, only around 60% of civil servants

actively participate in public administration digitalization training. This situation reflects a capacity gap that could hinder the successful implementation of e-HRD. According to organizational learning theory (M. Nur et al., 2024), Digital training needs to be designed as a continuous process, focusing not only on technical skills but also on a strategic understanding of the benefits of technology to improve organizational performance.

Beyond technical aspects, research also reveals that some civil servants have yet to adopt a results-focused performance culture. Many employees still measure success based on the amount of administrative work completed, rather than the impact or innovation produced. In performance management theory, this is known as output bias, a situation where performance assessments only refer to activities, not results. Therefore, the Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) must instill a results-oriented culture through gradual coaching, mentoring, and the integration of performance values into routine evaluations (Hristov et al., 2022).

Research findings indicate that leadership plays a key role in building a performance culture. Civil servants led by a participatory leadership style tend to have higher motivation and engagement in utilizing digital systems. Transformational leadership theory supports these findings, emphasizing the role of leaders as role models who inspire change through example and moral support for innovation (Nafal et al., 2024; L. Nur et al., 2021). Finally, to ensure sustainability, the Sidoarjo Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) must develop a program of trained civil servant digital champions who act as change agents and mentors in each sector. This approach aligns with leading practices in bureaucratic reform in other regions, which position change agents as drivers of digital literacy and a culture of performance. Thus, digital literacy becomes more than just a technical skill, but also an element of the professional identity of today's civil servants.

In general, improving digital literacy and a culture of performance is fundamental to the success of innovative strategies in civil servant performance management (Sumarti et al., 2020). Without skilled and results-focused staff, digital systems will not deliver maximum benefits. Therefore, the Sidoarjo Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) must align technological innovation with strengthening values, capabilities, and work culture to achieve comprehensive and sustainable bureaucratic professionalism.

5. Conclusion

Research findings reveal that the innovative approach to ASN performance management at the Sidoarjo Regency Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) has had a positive impact on improving bureaucratic professionalism, although challenges remain related to the consistent implementation of digital systems, strengthening a performance culture, and ASN participation in self-evaluations. The implementation of an application-based e-performance system since 2022 has been shown to increase assessment efficiency and accelerate administrative processes, but has not yet fully triggered significant changes in work behavior. It was also found that some ASN still view performance assessments as mere formalities without reflective meaning for the quality of public services. In the context of contemporary performance management theory, this situation reflects the imbalance between technological innovation and human resource readiness, as outlined in the concept of performance-based bureaucracy, which emphasizes the importance of balancing systems, motivation, and professional values. Consequently, this study suggests the importance of a strategy to strengthen a performance culture that focuses on rewards, improve the digital capabilities of civil servants through ongoing training, and implement a two-way feedback mechanism between superiors and subordinates to make the evaluation process more participatory and objective. Furthermore, the Sidoarjo Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) should expand inter-agency collaboration and involve external institutions, such as academics and independent audit institutions, in monitoring the effectiveness of the civil servant performance system to ensure accountability and transparency. Through these steps, it is hoped that a professional, adaptive, and innovative bureaucracy will emerge in the face of changes in performance-based governance in the digital era.

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