

STUDY OF GOVERNMENT AGENCY DELAYERING POLICY: URGENCY AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the urgency and challenges of delayering policies in government agencies. Delayering, as a core component of bureaucratic reform, aims to create an organizational structure that is leaner, more adaptive, and performance-oriented. The research method employed is a systematic literature review, analyzing academic journals, government policy documents, and official articles. The findings indicate that the urgency of delayering lies in its potential to improve organizational agility, coordination effectiveness, and decision-making speed. Furthermore, it promotes individual accountability and simplifies coordination flows. However, structural changes must be synchronized with shifts in organizational culture, leadership patterns, and work value systems. This process demands transformational leadership capable of managing resistance and fostering a new organizational culture. The article recommends several policy implications: continuous development of functional competencies, integration with performance management systems, and strengthening change management. These insights serve as a practical reference for policymakers in optimizing the implementation of delayering.

Keywords: Bureaucratic Reform, Change Management, Delayering, Organizational Simplification

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of global public administration has undergone a seismic shift over the last three decades, transitioning from rigid, rule-bound structures to more flexible, result-oriented frameworks. In an era defined by rapid technological advancement and socio-political volatility—often characterized as the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) world—the traditional "Weberian" bureaucracy is increasingly viewed as an obstacle to national progress. For a developing nation like Indonesia, the necessity of transforming its bureaucratic DNA is not merely an administrative preference but a survival imperative. The Indonesian bureaucracy has historically been criticized for being "OBES"

(over-sized, bloated, inefficient, and slow). With thousands of structural positions spanning across numerous echelons, the vertical distance between decision-makers and citizens has created a "communication chasm" that stifles innovation and delays public service delivery.

The evolution of Indonesian bureaucratic reform can be traced back to the post-1998 Reformation era, but it gained unprecedented momentum under the leadership of President Joko Widodo. The central thesis of the current reform era is that a nation's economic health is intrinsically linked to the agility of its institutions. To attract investment, foster a thriving digital economy, and improve the Global Competitiveness Index, the government must act as a facilitator rather than a gatekeeper. This realization led to the conceptualization of "Delayering"—the systematic reduction of organizational tiers. By trimming the middle-management layers, specifically Echelons III and IV, the government aims to flatten the hierarchy, thereby shortening the chain of command and empowering functional experts who possess the technical expertise to navigate modern governance challenges.

Maulana, Indriati, & Hidayah (2022) emphasize that bureaucratic simplification is a cornerstone of this "Long Overdue Reform." The traditional structure of Indonesian government agencies relied heavily on a "structural-based" authority, where power was derived from one's position in the hierarchy rather than professional competence. This system created a "silo mentality," where departments functioned as isolated islands, guarding their information and authority. Delayering seeks to break these silos by replacing administrative echelons with functional positions. This shift is intended to create a "knowledge-based organization," where coordination is horizontal and expertise is the primary currency.

However, the transition is fraught with complexity. As identified by Khurohman & Desiana (2024), delayering is not just a structural change; it is a profound psychological event. For many civil servants (ASN), a structural title was a symbol of social status and a clear roadmap for career progression. The removal of these titles often leads to a "valence gap"—a situation where employees do not perceive the personal benefits of the change, leading to anxiety and resistance. In the Indonesian context, where organizational culture is deeply rooted in paternalistic values, the loss of a formal "Echelon" title can be perceived as a loss of identity. Therefore, the success of delayering depends heavily on organizational trust and the presence of transformational leadership capable of bridging the gap between old habits and new requirements.

This study delves into the "why" and "how" of this transition. It explores the tension between structural efficiency and human resource stability. How does an organization maintain coordination when the traditional "boss-subordinate" reporting lines are blurred? How can performance be measured when "attendance" and "compliance" are replaced by "output" and "impact"? By examining the literature and empirical evidence from the Ministry of Finance, this research seeks to provide a roadmap for navigating the "Great Thinning" of the Indonesian bureaucracy. The ultimate objective is to define a model of governance that is not only leaner but also smarter, ensuring that the Indonesian government is fit for the challenges of the 21st century.

Furthermore, the concept of "Job Crafting" emerges as a vital adaptive mechanism during this period of transition. Firmadhani et al. (2025) suggest that in the absence of rigid structural boundaries, functional officials must proactively redefine their roles to ensure organizational sustainability. Job crafting allows employees to align their new functional tasks with their personal strengths and the organization's strategic goals. This bottom-up adaptation is essential because, in a flattened structure, the traditional "top-down" instructions are often replaced by broader, result-oriented mandates that require high levels of individual initiative.

The Ministry of Finance and the Indonesian Customs Authority serve as critical laboratories for this transformation. As "first movers," these institutions provide empirical evidence on how delayering impacts employee engagement and coordination effectiveness. By

analyzing the experiences of these agencies, this research aims to explore the multifaceted nature of delayering—from the macro-level goals of national efficiency to the micro-level realities of employee trust and proactive role-shaping.

In summary, while the structural rationalization of the Indonesian bureaucracy is a mandatory evolution for a modern state, its success is tethered to the complex interplay between organizational agility and human resource stability. This study identifies a critical gap in the existing literature: the need to move beyond technical metrics of 'thinning' to understand the socio-technical essence of the transition. Therefore, the primary objective of this research is to analyze the 'why' and 'how' of delayering by examining the tension between structural efficiency and the psychological impact on civil servants. By synthesizing empirical evidence from 'first mover' agencies like the Ministry of Finance, this study aims to achieve a comprehensive roadmap for navigating the 'Great Thinning'. Ultimately, the research provides a new governance model that is not only leaner but also smarter, ensuring that the Indonesian government is fit for the challenges of the 21st century by integrating behavioral adaptations such as job crafting into the reform narrative.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To provide a solid academic foundation for this study, the following literature review is structured to move from the macro-level organizational theories that justify bureaucratic restructuring toward the micro-level behavioral adaptations required of individual civil servants. This transition is essential for understanding delayering not merely as a mechanical reduction of hierarchy, but as a complex socio-technical shift.

The review begins by situating delayering within the broader evolution of public administration, contrasting traditional Weberian models with the agility demanded by modern governance. It then bridges into the psychological and social dimensions of reform, drawing on recent empirical evidence regarding organizational trust, the critical role of transparent leadership, and the proactive strategies employees use to redefine their professional identities. By synthesizing these diverse perspectives—structural, psychological, and behavioral—the following points establish the multi-dimensional framework necessary to evaluate the current state of reform in the Indonesian public sector.

Theoretical Framework: From Weberian Hierarchy to Agile Governance

The conceptual foundation of bureaucratic structure has long been dominated by Max Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy, characterized by a fixed division of labor, a clearly defined hierarchy of offices, and a set of impersonal rules. However, in the 21st century, this "command-and-control" model is increasingly viewed as an obstacle to organizational agility. The shift toward delayering is rooted in New Public Management (NPM) and New Public Governance (NPG), which advocate for public sector efficiency through the adoption of private-sector practices and networked coordination.

Maulana, Indriati, & Hidayah (2022) argue that delayering in the Indonesian context is a response to institutional "fatigue." Their research positions delayering as a structural intervention to reduce the "span of control" and "scalar chains" that traditionally slowed down government responsiveness. In organizational design theory, reducing these vertical layers—often referred to as "flattening"—aims to decentralize decision-making power, placing it closer to the operational front lines where expertise resides.

The Structural Urgency: Rationalizing the "Long Overdue Reform"

The Indonesian bureaucracy has historically suffered from what is colloquially termed "structural obesity." With numerous echelons acting as intermediaries, the flow of information was often distorted or delayed. Maulana et al. (2022) provide a critical analysis of why this reform was necessary. They highlight that a multi-layered bureaucracy creates high transaction

costs and a "silo mentality," where departments prioritize internal procedures over public outcomes.

Delaying serves as a diagnostic tool for identifying roles that add little value to the final public service output. By transitioning administrative structural positions (Echelons III and IV) into expertise-based functional positions, the government seeks to foster a "knowledge-based organization." This transition aligns with Mintzberg's theory of "Adhocracy," where specialized teams are formed to solve complex problems rather than following a rigid line of command.

The Psychological Contract and Employee Engagement

Structural change cannot be viewed in isolation from the "human element." When hierarchy is removed, the "psychological contract"—the unwritten set of expectations between the employee and the organization—is fundamentally altered. For many Indonesian civil servants, a structural title (Echelon) represented social status, authority, and a clear career path.

Khurohman & Desiana (2024) explore this dynamic within the Indonesian Customs Authority (Douane). Their study is pivotal in understanding how delaying affects "Employee Engagement." They argue that engagement is not merely about job satisfaction but about a deep emotional commitment to the organization's goals. In a delayed environment, where traditional promotions are replaced by horizontal shifts, maintaining engagement becomes a significant challenge. Their findings suggest that engagement is heavily influenced by the employee's perception of the reform's fairness and their future role within the new system.

Organizational Trust and Transparent Communication

A core challenge identified in the literature is the "information vacuum" that occurs during major transitions. Khurohman & Desiana (2024) identify Organizational Trust as the primary mediator between reform policy and employee acceptance. Trust is built when employees believe the organization is acting in their best interest and is being honest about the implications of the change.

Central to building this trust is Transparent Communication. In the absence of clear information, rumors and "change fatigue" often set in. The literature suggests that communication must be two-way; it is not enough for leadership to simply announce changes. There must be mechanisms for feedback and dialogue. When communication is transparent, it reduces the "valence gap"—the difference between the organization's goals and the individual's perceived benefits.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research is grounded in a qualitative paradigm, specifically utilizing a systematic literature review (SLR) through a phenomenological lens. By employing this approach, the study moves beyond a mere descriptive account of policy changes to uncover the "essence" of the lived experiences of civil servants affected by the delaying policy in Indonesia. The philosophical underpinning of this qualitative study is rooted in the belief that organizational transformation is not simply a structural event but a deeply personal and social phenomenon that must be interpreted through the eyes of those who navigate its complexities daily.

The systematic literature review was conducted as an interpretive journey, treating existing academic journals, government reports, and empirical studies as primary narratives of the bureaucratic experience. The process began with the identification of core scholarly works, specifically focusing on the recent findings of Maulana et al. (2022) regarding structural reform, Khurohman and Desiana (2024) on the psychological impact within the Customs Authority, and Firmadhani et al. (2025) concerning the adaptive behaviors of functional officials. By synthesizing these diverse sources, the research was able to construct a "virtual

field" where different institutional realities—from the Ministry of Finance to local government bodies—could be compared and contrasted.

In alignment with phenomenological inquiry, the data analysis followed a rigorous process of "bracketing" or *epoché*, where preconceived notions about the efficiency of delaying were set aside to allow the actual experiences described in the literature to emerge. The study analyzed the textual descriptions of what happened—such as the physical removal of echelon levels—and the structural descriptions of how it was experienced, including the resulting feelings of role ambiguity, loss of prestige, or the newfound sense of professional autonomy. This interpretive process allowed the researchers to identify recurring "meaning units" that represent the collective consciousness of the Indonesian civil service during this period of transition.

Furthermore, the methodology emphasized the importance of "triangulation" by comparing official government narratives found in ministerial regulations (such as PMK 77/PMK.01/2020) with the empirical findings of independent researchers. This approach ensured that the study captured the tension between the "top-down" expectations of organizational agility and the "bottom-up" reality of employee engagement and job crafting. The literature served as a proxy for in-depth interviews, providing a wealth of qualitative data that spans different geographic locations and institutional cultures within Indonesia.

The validity and trustworthiness of this methodology were maintained through a process of constant comparative analysis. Themes derived from one study, such as the necessity of transparent communication highlighted in the Customs Authority study, were tested against the findings of other studies to see if they held true across different contexts. This meta-synthesis of qualitative data allowed the research to achieve a level of depth and "thick description" that would be difficult to attain through a single-site case study. By integrating these multiple perspectives into a unified narrative, the methodology provides a comprehensive understanding of the delaying phenomenon as a complex human experience rather than a simple administrative exercise.

Finally, the study recognizes the researcher as the primary instrument of interpretation. The analysis was conducted with a deep awareness of the Indonesian socio-political context, acknowledging that cultural values such as hierarchy and paternalism significantly color the experience of delaying. This reflexivity ensured that the conclusions drawn from the literature review were not only academically rigorous but also culturally sensitive, providing a realistic portrayal of the challenges and opportunities inherent in transforming one of the world's largest bureaucratic systems. Through this qualitative and phenomenological methodology, the research successfully distills the core essence of bureaucratic reform in Indonesia: a journey from a status-driven hierarchy to a competence-driven functional network.

RESULTS

The implementation of delaying within the Indonesian bureaucracy, specifically as observed in the Ministry of Finance and the Indonesian Customs Authority, represents a profound shift from a vertical, rank-based hierarchy to a horizontal, competency-based network. This transformation, while structurally aimed at efficiency, has triggered a cascade of psychological and behavioral responses among the civil service. By synthesizing the findings from Maulana et al. (2022), Khurohman and Desiana (2024), and Firmadhani et al. (2025), alongside the internal literature review of the Ministry of Finance, the results of this study illuminate the "essence" of the delaying phenomenon across structural, relational, and individual dimensions.

Structural Rationalization and Organizational Agility

The primary objective of delayering, as established in government mandates, was the creation of a "lean and agile" organization. The structural results indicate a massive reduction in administrative tiers. At the Ministry of Finance, the Fiscal Policy Agency (BKF) and the Financial Education and Training Agency (BPPK) serves as primary examples of this rationalization. BKF transitioned 19 out of 36 Echelon III positions and 74 out of 124 Echelon IV positions into functional roles. Similarly, BPPK reduced its Echelon III units from 24 to 13 and Echelon IV units from 46 to 32.

The "essence" of this structural shift is the transition from "Structural Authority" to "Expertise-Based Coordination." Maulana et al. (2022) note that this reduction in layers has shortened the scalar chain, allowing policy recommendations to reach top-level decision-makers with significantly less distortion. Previously, a policy draft would undergo multiple "gatekeeping" reviews at each echelon level; in the post-delayering era, functional teams interact more directly with high-level leadership. This structural rationalization has effectively increased organizational agility by removing the "bottlenecks" inherent in multi-layered hierarchies.

The Psychological Impact: Trust, Engagement, and the Valence Gap

While the structural results show efficiency gains, the phenomenological experience of the employees reveals a more complex reality. Khurohman and Desiana (2024) provide critical insights into the Indonesian Customs Authority, where they analyzed the data of 424 functional officials. Their results demonstrate that delayering created a significant "Psychological Shock." Many employees experienced a sense of loss—not just of their title, but of their perceived authority and career certainty.

A central theme emerging from the results is the "Valence Gap." Employees often understood the national urgency of reform (High Strategic Valence) but struggled to see how the reform benefited them personally (Low Individual Valence). The removal of structural "perks" and the ambiguity of the new functional career path led to a temporary dip in organizational trust. However, the data confirms that Transparent Communication served as the most effective antidote to this distrust. When leaders provided clear, honest, and frequent information regarding the transition, employees reported significantly higher levels of engagement.

The results highlight that trust is the "connective tissue" of a delayered organization. In a hierarchy, trust is often replaced by "compliance" (doing what is told). In a flat structure, where officials must collaborate across boundaries without a formal "boss" in every room, trust becomes the primary driver of productivity. Khurohman and Desiana (2024) emphasize that Transformational Leadership—leaders who inspire, intellectually stimulate, and show individualized consideration—was the key factor in converting "resistant" employees into "engaged" functional experts.

Behavioral Adaptation: Job Crafting as a Survival and Growth Mechanism

One of the most striking results of this study is the emergence of "Job Crafting" as a grassroots response to structural change. Firmadhani et al. (2025) provide qualitative evidence that functional officials did not remain passive during the transition. Instead, they engaged in proactive behaviors to redesign their work lives.

The results categorize these adaptations into three types:

1. **Task Crafting:** Functional officials began to focus on specialized technical outputs (e.g., deep-dive data analysis) rather than the administrative meeting-heavy schedules of their previous structural roles.
2. **Relational Crafting:** Officials built new "Communities of Practice." Without the silos of Echelon IV sub-units, employees began to collaborate with peers in different directorates based on shared expertise rather than shared department labels.

3. **Cognitive Crafting:** This represents the most profound shift—redefining one's identity. Officials moved from seeing themselves as "Administrators" to seeing themselves as "Strategic Partners" or "Technical Experts."

Firmadhani et al. (2025) argue that this job crafting is not just an individual survival tactic but a prerequisite for Organizational Sustainability. By proactively finding ways to add value in their new roles, employees ensure that the organization remains functional during the chaotic "middle period" of reform. This behavioral adaptation effectively fills the "authority vacuum" left by the removal of structural managers.

Coordination Challenges and the "Authority Paradox"

Despite the gains in agility and proactivity, the results also uncover a significant "Authority Paradox." In the old system, coordination was simple: the boss gave an order, and the subordinates followed it. In the delayed system, coordination must be achieved through negotiation and influence.

The Ministry of Finance Literature Review identifies that "Role Ambiguity" remains a primary challenge. Many functional officials feel they have the "responsibility" for outcomes but lack the "formal authority" to command resources or personnel from other units. This tension requires a shift in the organizational value system—moving away from "Position Power" to "Influence Power." The results suggest that organizations that fail to redefine their coordination protocols often experience "Coordination Paralysis," where teams spend more time debating who has the right to make a decision than actually executing the work.

The Role Of Technological Infrastructure

The data from the Ministry of Finance underscores that delayering cannot succeed in a "paper-based" or "analog" environment. A flat structure requires a Boundaryless Information Flow. The implementation of integrated IT systems, such as the digital "Office Automation" tools used in the MoF, allowed for data transparency that bypassed old hierarchical filters. The results show that technology acts as a "Structural Substitute"—providing the coordination and tracking that was previously performed by middle managers. Without robust digital infrastructure, delayering leads to information silos that are even more difficult to manage than the original hierarchy.

Summary of the "Essence" of Delayering

Synthesizing these findings, the research concludes that the "essence" of the delayering phenomenon in Indonesia is the transformation of professional identity. It represents a fundamental shift from being a "cog in a machine" within a rigid hierarchy to becoming an "agent in a network" within a flat organizational structure. The results demonstrate a clear causal chain where structural delayering first creates the necessary opportunity for organizational agility. This structural shift is then supported by transformational leadership and transparent communication, which foster the organizational trust essential for employee engagement. Finally, job crafting acts as the individual adaptation mechanism required to ensure organizational sustainability during the transition.

In conclusion, the discussion reveals that delayering is a "high-risk, high-reward" strategy. When executed with a narrow focus on structural reduction alone, it risks hollowing out the organization and alienating the workforce. However, when integrated with human-centric management—prioritizing trust, open communication, and proactive role-shaping—it creates a bureaucracy that is not only leaner but significantly more capable of serving the public in a complex and rapidly changing world.

CONCLUSIONS

The journey of bureaucratic transformation in Indonesia, specifically through the strategic mechanism of delayering, represents a watershed moment in the nation's administrative history. This research, conducted through an interpretive phenomenological

lens, reveals that the essence of delayering extends far beyond the technical act of merging echelons or renaming structural positions. It is, at its core, a fundamental re-imagining of the social and professional contract between the Indonesian state and its civil servants. The transition from a status-driven, vertical hierarchy to an expertise-oriented, horizontal network is a profound evolutionary leap that challenges long-standing cultural norms of paternalism and rank-based authority.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the structural rationalization of government agencies, as exemplified by the Ministry of Finance and the Indonesian Customs Authority, has successfully laid the groundwork for organizational agility. By removing the redundant layers of middle management—specifically Echelons III and IV—the government has effectively shortened the distance between strategic intent and operational execution. This structural "thinning" has created a more direct line of communication, reducing the information distortion that frequently occurs in multi-layered bureaucracies. As synthesized from the work of Maulana et al. (2022), this agility is not merely an internal administrative benefit but a critical component of national competitiveness, allowing the state to respond with greater speed and precision to the volatile demands of a globalized economy.

However, the narrative of success is intrinsically tied to the human experience of change. The phenomenological investigation into the lived experiences of officials reveals that structural efficiency often comes at a temporary psychological cost. The "essence" of this experience is characterized by a tension between the strategic necessity of the reform and the individual's search for professional identity. For many, the removal of an echelon title was perceived as a "symbolic loss" that threatened their social standing and career predictability. The results from Khurohman and Desiana (2024) illuminate the fact that engagement during this transition is fragile and highly dependent on the "connective tissue" of organizational trust. This trust is not an automatic byproduct of policy; it is a meticulously crafted outcome of transparent communication and transformational leadership.

One of the most significant conclusions of this research is the emergence of the civil servant as a proactive agent of change. Rather than being passive recipients of top-down mandates, functional officials have utilized "job crafting" as a vital strategy for adaptation and growth. As explored by Firmadhani et al. (2025), the act of redefining one's tasks, relationships, and cognitive perceptions of work is what ultimately gives the new structure its functionality. Job crafting represents the "bottom-up" energy that fills the void left by the disappearing hierarchy. It is the mechanism through which "sustainability" is achieved; when employees find personal meaning and professional autonomy in their new functional roles, the organization becomes more resilient and capable of long-term transformation.

Furthermore, this study concludes that delayering cannot be sustained by structural or behavioral changes alone; it requires a robust technological and systemic infrastructure. The transition to a "boundaryless" organization demands that information flows horizontally and transparently. In the absence of integrated digital systems, the removal of middle managers—who previously acted as information hubs—could lead to coordination paralysis. Therefore, the digital transformation of the office environment is not an optional add-on but a foundational requirement for a delayed bureaucracy.

In final reflection, the "essence" of delayering in Indonesia is a move toward a more "Human-Centric Bureaucracy." It is a shift from the mechanical "cog-in-the-wheel" model to a dynamic "expert-in-the-network" model. While the challenges of role ambiguity and cultural resistance remain significant, the trajectory of the reform points toward a more professional, accountable, and responsive state apparatus. The success of this journey will depend on the government's ability to move beyond the "first wave" of structural cuts and invest deeply in the "second wave" of cultural and competency-based integration.

Based on the synthesis of structural, behavioral, and adaptive findings, this study offers the following narrative recommendations for policymakers and institutional leaders:

First, there is an urgent need to institutionalize the "Change Management" process as a permanent feature of government governance rather than a one-time project. Leadership at all levels must be trained in the principles of transformational leadership, focusing on building organizational trust through radical transparency. This means not only communicating what is changing but why it matters for the individual's professional growth. Leaders should prioritize "individualized consideration," recognizing that the transition affects a senior official differently than a junior one, and tailor their support mechanisms accordingly.

Second, the government must move toward a more sophisticated "Functional Competency Framework." Delaying assumes that officials are experts, but this expertise must be continuously cultivated. It is recommended that agencies adopt "Learning Value Chains" similar to those used by the Ministry of Finance, where functional officials have access to specialized certifications and clear career paths that reward technical excellence rather than administrative longevity. This will help close the "competency gap" and provide officials with a renewed sense of professional purpose.

Third, organizations should actively encourage and formalize the practice of "Job Crafting." Human Resource departments should provide workshops and tools that empower functional officials to redesign their roles. By giving employees the autonomy to align their tasks with their strengths, organizations can foster a culture of innovation and proactivity. This shift requires a change in performance management systems—moving away from monitoring "attendance and compliance" toward measuring "impact and output."

Finally, the digital infrastructure of the bureaucracy must be modernized to support horizontal coordination. Integrated platforms that allow for cross-departmental collaboration, shared data access, and transparent project tracking are essential. These systems will act as the "digital spine" of the flat organization, ensuring that even without the old hierarchical filters, the bureaucracy remains coordinated and focused on the national interest. By embracing these human-centric and tech-enabled strategies, Indonesia can ensure that its delaying policy leads to a truly agile and sustainable government for the future.

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