

The Role of Work Culture in Enhancing Employee Performance at the Department of Public Works and Spatial Planning, North Gorontalo Regency

Yeni Latif^{1*}, Udin Hamim¹, Ellys Rachman¹

¹Universitas Bina Taruna Gorontalo, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: yenilatif768@gmail.com

Abstract: This study aims to analyze employee work culture in the implementation of duties and functions at the Public Works and Spatial Planning (PUPR) Office of North Gorontalo Regency. The background of the study is based on the importance of work culture as a foundation for improving the performance of state civil servants (ASN), particularly in realizing good, accountable, and service-oriented governance. Issues that emerged included low work discipline, weak accountability, lack of coordination, and declining employee loyalty. The study used a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation, then analyzed descriptively to gain a deeper understanding of employee work culture and the factors hindering its implementation. The research results indicate that the work culture, reflected in the aspects of discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and loyalty, is not yet optimal. Some employees still lack consistency in carrying out their duties, show little initiative, and are dependent on leadership direction. Furthermore, inhibiting factors such as weak leadership, an unsupportive work environment, a non-transparent reward system, and minimal training also impact the effectiveness of task implementation. This study concludes that strengthening the work culture of employees at the Public Works and Housing Agency (PUPR) of North Gorontalo Regency is an urgent need to improve organizational performance. Recommended strategic efforts include leadership development, competency development, and an objective reward system to create a productive and sustainable work environment.

Keywords: Work Culture, Discipline, Loyalty; Responsibility, Cooperation Collaboration.

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Introduction

The role of government bureaucracy is highly vital as the executor of public policies, the provider of public services, and the unifying force of national integration (Aisyah & Nurlaela, 2022). The success of public officials in carrying out their duties and functions is not only determined by organizational structure, budget availability, or the adequacy of facilities and infrastructure but also largely influenced by the quality of human resources that drive the organization (Hasibuan, 2020). One of the fundamental aspects of human resource development among civil servants is work culture, which encompasses the values, attitudes, and behaviors that serve as the foundation for officials in performing their duties effectively, efficiently, and with integrity (Luthans, 2018; Sugiyono, 2019). Work culture within an organization plays a crucial role in efforts to improve both organizational and individual performance (Rahmawati et al., 2020). The set of values and habits embedded in employees' behavior forms what is known as organizational culture. When such culture is linked to the quality of work, it becomes what is referred to as work culture—applicable both within and outside the organization (Andriani & Permana, 2023).

The Department of Public Works and Spatial Planning (PUPR) of North Gorontalo Regency is an essential regional agency responsible for implementing part of the local government's authority in public works and spatial planning. This institution requires employees who can perform their main duties properly, efficiently, and with integrity (Putra & Wibowo, 2021). This includes carrying out operational and technical tasks in governance and administrative services according to applicable regulations and in line with public expectations. Currently, the human resources condition at the North Gorontalo PUPR Office faces several challenges despite having a number of competent professionals. Some key issues include a limited number of technical experts, particularly in areas such as infrastructure planning and management. This limitation often results in project delays and suboptimal infrastructure management (Nasution & Lubis, 2021).

The organizational structure of the PUPR Office in North Gorontalo Regency consists of several ranks and employment statuses supporting the

smooth execution of institutional duties. The top management (Echelon I) consists of one person responsible for strategic decision-making and overall supervision. Echelon II, with one official, acts as a mid-level manager overseeing planning and coordination across divisions. Echelon III comprises five officials responsible for managing and implementing programs and projects, while Echelon IV, with three officials, handles field supervision and operational execution. Furthermore, there are four functional staff members specializing in technical areas such as infrastructure planning, construction supervision, and data management. Fourteen permanent civil servants (PNS) handle administrative and operational tasks, ensuring data and reporting systems run smoothly. Additionally, ten contract-based staff members (honorary employees) support both administrative and field operations (Rahardjo, 2021).

However, in practice, the North Gorontalo PUPR Office still faces significant challenges in developing and implementing a productive work culture. These challenges include issues of employee discipline, low awareness of responsibility, weak inter-departmental coordination, resistance to change, limited innovation, and suboptimal monitoring and evaluation systems (Sutrisno & Handayani, 2021). These issues impact organizational performance, leading to delays in program implementation, reduced work quality, and less-than-optimal public service delivery. Such conditions underscore the importance of strengthening work culture to enhance organizational effectiveness (Suharto & Lestari, 2022). A strong work culture not only fosters a conducive work environment but also enhances work ethics, employee loyalty, and collective commitment toward achieving organizational goals (Rivai & Sagala, 2020). Therefore, understanding, identifying, and reinforcing the work culture within the North Gorontalo PUPR Office is an urgent necessity that cannot be overlooked (Rahardjo, 2021).

Another observable issue within the PUPR Office is that several employees, although performing their designated tasks, have not yet demonstrated the expected work culture. Their work patterns often do not align with the values of professionalism and accountability. Some employees exhibit low discipline, lack initiative, and show limited understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the organization (Hasibuan, 2020). In certain

cases, infrastructure projects have experienced delays due to weak supervision and poor coordination among divisions (Nasution & Lubis, 2021).

Several previous studies have highlighted the critical influence of work culture on organizational performance within public institutions. Putra and Wibowo (2021) found that work culture significantly impacts employee performance and organizational effectiveness in local government institutions, where integrity and discipline serve as the main performance drivers. Similarly, Rahmawati et al. (2020) revealed that a positive work culture improves employee motivation, teamwork, and innovation in public service organizations, contributing to higher service quality. Meanwhile, Siregar and Prasetyo (2022) emphasized that in regional public works departments, strengthening work culture through consistent leadership and transparent evaluation systems is essential for achieving sustainable infrastructure development. These findings suggest that fostering a strong work culture within government organizations is a key strategy for enhancing employee performance and overall organizational success (Aisyah & Nurlaela, 2022). The current study builds upon these insights by focusing on the specific context of the North Gorontalo PUPR Office, where human resource capacity and organizational culture remain vital yet challenging aspects of institutional performance (Andriani & Permana, 2023).

This study aims to explore the extent to which work culture has been implemented, identify the factors influencing it, and analyze its impact on the execution of organizational duties and functions. The results are expected to contribute to improving work culture and enhancing employee performance at the PUPR Office in a sustainable manner (Virtus Interpress, 2021). In addition, this research aligns with the national policy direction of bureaucratic reform and improving public service quality. The Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (KemenPAN-RB) has designated the strengthening of civil servant work culture as one of its strategic priorities to realize an ethical, professional, and high-integrity state apparatus (Rahardjo, 2021). Therefore, developing a strong work culture within the North Gorontalo PUPR Office is not only an internal organizational need but also part of a broader national commitment to bureaucratic transformation. The Department of Public Works and Spatial Planning (PUPR) of North Gorontalo Regency thus plays a strategic

role in achieving sustainable infrastructure development and spatial management. The success of this organization largely depends on the quality of its work culture, reflected in employee discipline, responsibility, teamwork, loyalty, and managerial support (Suharto & Lestari, 2022).

Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at understanding the research object in its natural context, with the researcher serving as the key instrument. This aligns with the view of Sugiyono (2019), who states that the qualitative approach is used to investigate a phenomenon in a natural setting, where the researcher acts as the main instrument in the research process. Data collection is conducted through triangulation techniques, data analysis is carried out inductively or qualitatively, and the research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization.

This study also adopts a descriptive research design, in which the researcher seeks to find solutions to problems by describing the research object as it is. As noted by Arikunto (2016), descriptive research aims to provide a detailed picture or explanation of a particular phenomenon. Similarly, Moleong (2016) explains that qualitative research uses a natural setting to interpret phenomena through the application of multiple methods, allowing the researcher to deeply understand the realities being studied.

Result and Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the work culture of employees at the Department of Public Works and Spatial Planning (PUPR) of North Gorontalo Regency can be analyzed through four main aspects: employee discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and loyalty. These dimensions represent the behavioral foundation of civil servants that collectively shape organizational character and performance. The synergy of these four aspects determines how effectively public officials carry out their duties and contribute to organizational productivity and service delivery. In this context, work culture functions not merely as a set of norms and habits but as an integrated system of values that guides employees in achieving institutional objectives (Putra & Wibowo, 2021).

The findings reveal that the culture of work discipline plays a pivotal role in establishing an orderly, structured, and efficient working environment.

Discipline ensures that each employee performs tasks according to procedures and time standards, which ultimately enhances institutional credibility and public trust. Employees who exhibit punctuality, commitment, and compliance with regulations contribute to the smooth functioning of administrative and technical operations. Robbins and Judge (2020) emphasize that discipline represents the foundation of organizational accountability, as it ensures consistency between rules and practice. In public institutions, where service quality is the primary indicator of success, maintaining a high level of discipline reflects both professional ethics and institutional integrity (Sutrisno & Handayani, 2021). However, in the North Gorontalo PUPR Office, the enforcement of discipline has not yet reached an ideal standard. Some employees are still found to be inconsistent in attendance or task completion, which affects coordination and delays project outcomes. Strengthening supervisory mechanisms and internalizing discipline as a shared value rather than mere compliance is therefore essential.

Responsibility is another key element of work culture that strongly influences organizational effectiveness. The study indicates that most employees at the PUPR Office demonstrate awareness of their roles and strive to fulfill their obligations within the scope of their duties. Nonetheless, some still lack seriousness in meeting deadlines or completing assignments to expected standards. Hasibuan (2020) asserts that responsibility is a psychological and moral readiness to accept the consequences of one's actions and to remain accountable for results. Responsibility, when embedded as part of organizational culture, creates a sense of ownership among employees. This sense of ownership, in turn, fosters commitment to institutional goals and encourages proactive behavior in problem-solving (Rahmawati et al., 2020). For a technical agency like PUPR, where infrastructure projects demand precision and timeliness, enhancing responsibility through performance-based evaluation systems can improve both efficiency and public satisfaction.

Employee cooperation also emerged as a crucial aspect shaping the success of organizational functions. The study found that teamwork among divisions has started to develop through coordination mechanisms and joint task execution. However, this collaboration has not yet been optimal due to several inhibiting factors such as individualistic tendencies, weak communication

networks, and a lack of shared awareness about collective goals. Effective cooperation requires not only technical coordination but also emotional and social intelligence among staff. According to Suharto and Lestari (2022), collaboration within public institutions enhances innovation, service quality, and collective efficiency because it reduces redundancy and promotes knowledge sharing. In the North Gorontalo PUPR Office, teamwork plays a vital role in ensuring that infrastructure projects are completed on schedule and that inter-departmental coordination supports efficient resource allocation. Building a culture of open communication and mutual respect among staff could further reinforce cooperation and create synergy in achieving organizational objectives.

Loyalty, as a cultural dimension, reflects employees' emotional attachment to their organization. The study shows that most employees at the PUPR Office exhibit loyalty through their willingness to support institutional programs and align their work with the organization's mission. Nevertheless, some staff members still display low commitment, characterized by limited enthusiasm, a lack of sense of belonging, and a tendency to prioritize personal interests. Rivai and Sagala (2020) argue that loyalty is essential for organizational stability and continuity because it cultivates trust, cohesion, and long-term dedication. Loyal employees are not only compliant but also resilient, willing to work beyond formal obligations to achieve institutional goals. Enhancing loyalty requires transparent leadership, fair promotion systems, and recognition of contributions, as these factors strengthen employees' identification with their organization (Andriani & Permana, 2023).

Beyond the internal dimensions of discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and loyalty, the study identifies four external or systemic factors that significantly influence the effectiveness of work culture implementation: leadership, work environment, reward systems, and competency development. Each of these factors interacts dynamically with the organizational structure and determines whether cultural values are sustained or merely formalized.

Leadership emerged as the most dominant factor shaping work culture. The findings suggest that leaders at various levels of the PUPR Office have made efforts to encourage discipline and motivation among employees, but certain weaknesses persist. For instance, a lack of decisiveness in enforcing disciplinary

actions and uneven communication across departments often leads to inconsistent application of rules. Bass and Riggio (2019) explain that transformational leadership—characterized by integrity, inspiration, and individualized consideration—plays a crucial role in cultivating trust and aligning personal aspirations with organizational goals. In the context of public administration, leadership is not limited to authority but also includes the ability to serve as a moral example and agent of change (Virtus Interpress, 2021). Strengthening leadership capacity through training, mentoring, and ethical governance would thus help foster a culture of accountability and innovation within the PUPR Office.

The study also reveals that a conducive work environment greatly enhances employee performance. A supportive environment—both physical and psychosocial—creates comfort, reduces conflict, and promotes collaboration. Rahardjo (2021) found that workplace comfort and social cohesion improve morale and efficiency by encouraging informal communication and mutual trust among colleagues. In North Gorontalo PUPR, most facilities already support administrative functions, yet some departments face limited workspace, outdated equipment, or uneven distribution of workload. Moreover, some employees feel undervalued or lack recognition for their efforts, which diminishes job satisfaction. Addressing these issues through infrastructure improvement, equitable task allocation, and psychological support systems can foster a more inclusive and productive atmosphere.

In terms of the reward and recognition system, the study found that while performance evaluations, promotions, and incentive mechanisms exist, their implementation lacks transparency and consistency. Some employees perceive favoritism or inequality in the distribution of recognition, which can weaken morale and undermine trust in management. Luthans (2018) emphasizes that fair, transparent, and merit-based reward systems enhance employee engagement and organizational commitment. Establishing objective performance indicators and involving employees in evaluation processes could minimize bias and create a sense of fairness. Furthermore, recognition does not always have to be monetary; verbal acknowledgment, professional development opportunities, and symbolic rewards can also strengthen intrinsic motivation (Putra & Wibowo, 2021).

Training and competency development were also found to be critical yet underdeveloped aspects. While several training programs have been conducted—mainly focusing on technical and managerial skills—their frequency and content remain inadequate. Limited budgets, restrictive participant quotas, and outdated curricula have hindered the impact of these programs. Nadeem and Ahmad (2020) argue that continuous learning and professional development are indispensable for improving adaptability and innovation in public institutions. In the case of the PUPR Office, many employees handle diverse technical tasks that require updated knowledge of engineering standards, project management, and digital governance. Therefore, integrating competency-based training into regular work routines and establishing partnerships with professional institutions or universities would significantly enhance staff capacity and institutional resilience (Nasution & Lubis, 2021).

The interrelationship between these four external factors—leadership, work environment, reward systems, and training—forms the backbone of an effective organizational culture. When these factors align, they reinforce the internal cultural values of discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and loyalty, resulting in a more cohesive and high-performing institution. Conversely, misalignment between them can create organizational inertia and reduce the impact of policy reforms.

Overall, the findings of this study reinforce the argument that strengthening work culture within the Department of Public Works and Spatial Planning (PUPR) of North Gorontalo Regency is not merely an administrative task but a strategic necessity for sustainable governance. A strong work culture enhances both internal efficiency and external credibility by ensuring that public services are delivered ethically, promptly, and transparently (Rahmawati et al., 2020). Through disciplined, responsible, cooperative, and loyal employees—supported by transformative leadership, a conducive work environment, equitable reward systems, and continuous competency development—the institution can achieve sustained excellence in public service delivery. Moreover, embedding these cultural values within bureaucratic practices aligns with Indonesia's broader agenda of bureaucratic reform and public sector modernization (Aisyah & Nurlaela, 2022; Suharto & Lestari, 2022). By institutionalizing these principles, the North Gorontalo PUPR Office

can serve as a model of good governance that prioritizes accountability, collaboration, and citizen-oriented service.

Conclusion

The work culture at the Public Works and Spatial Planning Office (Dinas PUPR) of North Gorontalo Regency reflects several important aspects that influence employee performance and organizational effectiveness. The culture of work discipline has been implemented but remains suboptimal, as evidenced by employees who are not yet consistent in managing their time effectively. Although regulations and schedules have been established, adherence to punctuality and attendance still varies among employees, indicating the need for stricter supervision and reinforcement of discipline values.

The sense of responsibility among employees generally shows a positive trend, with most staff striving to complete their tasks according to their duties and functions. However, there are still some who lack seriousness in finishing their work within the designated time frame, which can hinder the overall performance of the institution. Strengthening accountability through clearer job descriptions and performance evaluations could enhance employees' awareness of their responsibilities.

In terms of teamwork, coordination and collaboration across divisions have begun to take shape, reflecting a growing collective spirit among employees. Nevertheless, the teamwork culture has not yet reached an optimal level due to the persistence of individualistic behavior, weak communication, and limited willingness to assist colleagues in achieving shared goals. Building a more cohesive and communicative work environment would help foster a stronger sense of cooperation and solidarity.

Employee loyalty within the Dinas PUPR of North Gorontalo Regency is generally visible through the willingness of staff to support institutional programs and policies. Despite this, several employees still demonstrate low organizational commitment, as seen from their lack of sense of belonging, limited dedication, and tendency to prioritize personal interests. Strengthening internal values, recognition systems, and leadership engagement could help enhance this sense of loyalty and institutional pride.

Leadership plays a crucial role in shaping a positive work culture and boosting employee motivation. The leadership at Dinas PUPR has contributed to fostering enthusiasm and discipline among employees, yet certain weaknesses remain, such as insufficient firmness in enforcing rules and uneven communication across staff levels. Addressing these issues would enhance compliance and foster a stronger sense of collective responsibility.

The existing work environment is relatively conducive, providing adequate physical and non-physical support for task implementation. However, several areas still require improvement, particularly in terms of comfort in some work units, perceptions of uneven workload distribution, and insufficient recognition for employee contributions. A more equitable and supportive work atmosphere would encourage higher morale and productivity.

The reward and recognition system also requires enhancement. Some employees feel that their performance has not been adequately acknowledged through formal incentives or appreciation mechanisms. Inconsistencies and lack of transparency in the reward process can reduce motivation and create dissatisfaction among dedicated employees. Therefore, establishing a fair and consistent reward system is essential to encourage better performance and commitment.

Finally, employee training and competency development programs at the Dinas PUPR of North Gorontalo Regency have not yet been systematically planned or evenly implemented. While some employees have participated in training related to technical and managerial skills, the programs often lack alignment with specific job needs or on-the-ground challenges. Limited budgets, restricted participant quotas, and outdated training materials further reduce the effectiveness of these initiatives. Expanding training opportunities, ensuring relevance to actual job requirements, and adopting continuous professional development practices would significantly enhance employee competence and improve overall institutional performance.

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