

The Important Role of the Public Administration Paradigm in Realizing Quality Public Services in the Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the strategic role and substantive challenges of public administration in implementing quality public services in the digital era. Based on a literature review, this study synthesizes findings on how digital transformation, e-government, and smart governance reshape the functions of public administration as a manager of public value, rather than merely an executor of bureaucratic procedures. The analysis shows that digitalization contributes to increased efficiency, accessibility, transparency, and citizen satisfaction, but its impact is highly determined by the quality of governance, institutional capacity, and human resource readiness. The main challenges identified include gaps in infrastructure and digital literacy, bureaucratic resistance to change, regulatory fragmentation, as well as cybersecurity risks and personal data protection. This article emphasizes that digital technology only becomes an enabler of service quality if integrated with institutional reform, strengthening of civil servants' digital competence, an adaptive regulatory framework, and inclusive citizen participation mechanisms. Artikel ini mengajukan rekomendasi kebijakan berupa penguatan visi digital government yang terintegrasi, systematic capacity building and digital literacy, strengthening cyber security governance and data protection, as well as developing a smart governance model that positions citizens as co-producers of public services

INTRODUCTION

Public administration is the backbone of government administration, responsible for managing the country's resources while ensuring that services to the public can be realized effectively, efficiently, and fairly. Throughout its history, public administration has undergone a very clear paradigmatic transformation, from the classical bureaucracy model of Old Public Administration (OPA) which is oriented towards hierarchy and procedural compliance, then shifting to New Public Management (NPM) which emphasizes market-based efficiency, up to the emergence of New Public Service (NPS) which places citizens at the center of the entire government process [1], [2]. Each of these paradigm shifts is not merely a change in academic theory, but a real response to the social, political, and technological challenges that are highly dynamic in each era [3]. The shift in public administration paradigms towards the New Public Service is a response to the weaknesses of OPA and NPM, which are considered less adaptive to changes in culture and the demands for more inclusive good governance [4]. In this context, comprehensively understanding the role of public administration paradigms is a crucial foundation for any effort to reform government management oriented towards the quality of public services.

The challenges faced by public administration are becoming increasingly complex alongside the acceleration of digital transformation that affects all sectors of life, including the government sector. Information and communication technology is no longer merely an administrative tool but has become a core infrastructure that determines the quality of interaction between the state and its citizens. The digital transformation of bureaucracy in Indonesia has brought significant progress in service delivery, transparency, and citizen engagement, although challenges such as resistance to change among officials, digital literacy gaps, and infrastructure disparities between regions still remain real obstacles [5]. Meanwhile, in an analysis of the digital transformation of government administration in Indonesia, it was highlighted that the implementation of digitalization has successfully reduced the service delivery time substantially, from an average of 5–10 days to 1–3 days post-digitalization, while also increasing transparency through real-time public access to government financial data and decision-making processes [6]. This dynamic underscores the urgency of in-depth studies on how the public administration paradigm can effectively adapt to and leverage the digital era to achieve quality public services.

Meanwhile, in an analysis of the digital transformation of government administration in Indonesia, it was highlighted that the implementation of digitalization has successfully reduced the service delivery time substantially, from an average of 5–10 days to 1–3 days post-digitalization, while also increasing transparency through real-time public access to government financial data and decision-making processes [6]. This dynamic underscores the urgency of in-depth studies on how the public administration paradigm can effectively adapt to and leverage the digital era to achieve quality public services. This hybrid condition is clearly visible in the context of Indonesia, where bureaucratic reforms that have been ongoing since the Reform era still face tensions between the legacy of patrimonial culture and the demands of modern good governance.

Although Indonesia has recorded regulatory and digital infrastructure progress reflected in the increase of the E-Government Development Index (EGDI) score from 0.3690 in 2012 to 0.6612 in 2022, the implementation of good governance on the ground still faces structural obstacles in the form of digital gaps between regions, institutional resistance rooted in patrimonial administrative culture, and a transparency paradox between policy rhetoric and actual practice [8]. This condition makes the study of the role of public administration paradigms in the digital era increasingly relevant and urgent to be conducted.

The quality of public services is a critical indicator of the success of public administration because the public assesses the effectiveness of the government based on their direct experiences in accessing various state services. The use of information technology in public administration, in addition to increasing operational efficiency, also strengthens transparency and accountability, which are fundamental prerequisites for establishing public trust in government institutions [9]. Studies on citizen-centric services in e-government show that an approach focused on citizens not only increases user satisfaction with services but also expands public participation in governance processes and contributes to the creation of more inclusive and representative policies [10]. Furthermore, bibliometric studies reveal that the convergence between digital governance and collaborative governance opens up significant potential for addressing complex policy challenges and strengthening democratic legitimacy in contemporary public administration, with the caveat that technological innovation must be aligned with inclusive governance practices [11]. These empirical findings collectively affirm that the public administration paradigm adopted by a government will determine the extent to which the potential of the digital era can be optimized for quality public services.

Based on the background narrative, this article conducts a study on the important role of public administration paradigms in implementing quality public services in the digital era. Specifically, this article aims to: (1) examine the development of public administration paradigms from classical approaches to modern governance; (2) analyze the scope of public administration and its relevance to service quality in the digital era; and (3) explore how various public administration theories and approaches can be integrated to promote a bureaucracy that is increasingly responsive, accountable, and citizen-oriented. Urgensi artikel ini bertambah nyata mengingat masih terbatasnya kajian komprehensif yang secara khusus menjembatani dimensi paradigmatis administrasi publik dengan praktik pelayanan publik berbasis digital dalam konteks Indonesia. Implementasi New Public Service yang efektif di era digital mensyaratkan komitmen kepemimpinan yang kuat, komunikasi yang efektif, kolaborasi lintas sektoral, serta partisipasi aktif masyarakat dalam ekosistem layanan publik yang terintegrasi [12]. Artikel ini diharapkan mampu memberi kontribusi akademis yang berarti untuk perkembangan literatur administrasi publik di Indonesia, sekaligus menjadi referensi praktis bagi para pemangku kebijakan dalam merancang reformasi birokrasi yang adaptif di tengah akselerasi transformasi digital.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Basic Concepts of Public Administration

Public administration becomes a crucial foundation for managing the relationship between the state and citizens through the implementation of effective governance. A holistic understanding of the concepts and scope of public administration is required so that policies can be designed accurately and in accordance with public needs [13].

1. Definition of Public Administration

Public administration is essentially a system that integrates the activities of government organizations to serve the needs of society. This definition emphasizes the coordination of human resources, finances, and public policies in order to achieve common goals that prioritize the public interest. Within this framework, public administration is seen not merely as a bureaucratic process, but also as a key instrument that bridges the aspirations of the people with the state's obligation to provide the best services. Various experts place public administration as a branch of science that focuses on the application of management and policy theories in the government sector. The existence of public administration differs from other disciplines because its orientation is the public interest, not profit or gain, thus its practice has a high level of complexity. Through the understanding of this definition, it can be seen that public administration, besides handling procedures, also builds the legitimacy of the state in responding to the needs of its citizens [14].

The importance of the definition of public administration is also seen in its relation to political and social dynamics. When a country faces the challenges of globalization, decentralization, and technological developments, the definition of public administration undergoes adjustments to remain relevant. Public administration is no longer viewed merely as a matter of formal bureaucracy, but includes aspects of service, public participation, and clean governance. In many literatures, this concept is expanded to touch on the fields of sustainable development and digital services that are responsive to public needs. This reflects that public administration is not a static entity, but an adaptive discipline that is constantly evolving according to social changes. A comprehensive understanding of the definition will assist policymakers, academics, and practitioners in assessing the quality of government systems at various levels [15].

In line with these developments, researchers emphasize that public administration becomes a central point of analysis in the relationship between the state and society. Public administration is understood as a process that includes activities of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling resources in order to achieve shared goals oriented towards public interest, emphasizing the principles of accountability and transparency as the basis of governmental legitimacy. This definition emphasizes the role of public administration as a link between government policies and the needs of society, functioning to maintain the continuity of the democratic system and create social justice. Understanding the definition of public administration becomes a crucial foundation for fostering governance that is increasingly better and responsive to the challenges of the times [16].

2. The Development of Public Administration Thought

Thoughts on public administration have always evolved over time, in line with social, political, and economic changes. In the early 20th century, public administration was still heavily influenced by the classical approach, which emphasized efficiency, hierarchy, and strict division of labor. Entering the mid-20th century, views began to emerge that placed more emphasis on the human dimension, where the role of humans as organizational actors received primary attention. This paradigm shift has resulted in a new approach that increasingly emphasizes behavioral aspects, communication, and the dynamics of relationships between actors in the bureaucracy. Public administration is understood not only as a machine that enforces rules but also as a system that involves complex interactions between individuals, organizations, and society [17].

Entering the modern era, public administration thought is influenced by globalization, democratization, and the development of digital technology. These new challenges encourage the emergence of the New Public Management (NPM) paradigm, which is oriented towards efficiency, service quality, and market mechanisms in the delivery of public services. Furthermore, the concept of Good Governance also develops, which emphasizes transparency, accountability, public participation, and cross-sector collaboration. These changes indicate that public administration is a dynamic science and capable of adapting to the needs of society. By understanding the development of this thought, it can be seen that public administration continues to evolve in responding to the complexity of public problems in contemporary times [18].

The development of public administration thought is influenced by the need to adapt to social and technological changes, which require the bureaucracy to be more responsive, participatory, and oriented towards quality public service, and not just fixated on formal procedures. The development of public administration thought can be understood as a continuous intellectual and practical transformation process, aimed at improving the governance system in accordance with the demands of the times [19].

3. Elements of Public Administration

Elements of public administration are important components that are interrelated to form a system of government governance. These elements include humans, organizations, policies, finances, as well as infrastructure that supports the operation of public services. Humans play a role as policy implementers as well as beneficiaries, so the capacity of human resources becomes a key aspect that determines the effectiveness of public administration. Government organizations as structural entities serve as a framework for carrying out tasks and functions in a coordinated manner. Public policies designed through political processes also become important elements because they regulate the direction and objectives of government administration [20].

Public finance also becomes a crucial aspect because it is related to the government's ability to provide services that are equitable and sustainable. Transparent and accountable management of the state budget increases citizens' trust in the government. Elements of facilities and infrastructure such as

technology, infrastructure, and public service facilities become the main support for the effective implementation of public administration. All of these elements are interconnected and must be managed properly to achieve the goals of state administration. Without solid coordination, the administration of public services will be hindered and less responsive to the needs of society [21], [22].

Elements of public administration include human resources, organizational structure, public policy, finance, and supporting facilities, which, when managed synergistically, can improve the quality of services and strengthen citizens' trust in government institutions. Understanding these elements helps clarify that public administration is a complex system, yet it remains integrated in achieving national development goals [23].

Theories and Approaches in Public Administration

Public administration has a theoretical foundation that has developed based on various classical thoughts up to modern approaches that emphasize governance. Understanding these theories and approaches is important because they serve as an analytical framework in explaining how public administration is carried out, how public organizations are managed, and how society receives services from the government [24].

1. Classical Approach

The classical approach in public administration is rooted in the view that public organizations can be managed efficiently through rational and systematic management principles. This thinking was greatly influenced by figures such as Max Weber with the concept of bureaucracy, and Frederick Taylor with scientific management. The main characteristic of the classical approach is the emphasis on hierarchical structure, clear division of work, along with strict rules and procedures in controlling organizational behavior. In the context of public administration, this approach emphasizes that service effectiveness can be achieved through the implementation of uniform standards and compliance with formal regulations. This approach also assumes that public organizations function as bureaucratic machines operating based on formal logic, not personal interests. Thus, the concepts of rationality, predictability, and stability become key in the execution of public administration in this era [25].

Although considered too rigid, the classical approach makes a significant contribution in building the foundation of modern public administration, particularly in terms of organizational structuring and enforcement of rules. Criticism of this approach mainly comes from the view that an overly hierarchical bureaucracy actually slows down innovation and responsiveness to the needs of society. However, until now the basic principles of the classical approach are still seen in public administration practices, for example in personnel management procedures and state financial governance. Weberian bureaucracy principles remain relevant in ensuring accountability and transparency of public services, although they need to be complemented with managerial innovations so as not to be trapped in mere formalities. This shows that the legacy of the classical approach still has a strong influence in the framework of public administration, even as it continues to be adapted to contemporary challenges [26].

2. Neo-Classical Approach

The neo-classical approach emerged as a response to the weaknesses of the classical approach, which focused too much on structure and formal procedures. Neo-classical thinking began to pay attention to the human aspects of organizations, such as motivation, job satisfaction, and interpersonal relationships. The main focus of this approach is on human behavior in public organizations and how social interactions affect administrative performance. Important figures such as Elton Mayo, through the Hawthorne studies, demonstrated that social and psychological factors of employees play a critical role in productivity improvement. In public administration, the neoclassical approach emphasizes that bureaucracy, besides being a set of rules, is also a human community with aspirations, feelings, and needs. In this regard, public organizations must develop leadership, communication, and participation strategies that are increasingly open in efforts to improve the quality of services to the public [27].

This approach is relevant in the context of modern governance, which requires public officials not only to work according to regulations but also to be able to provide services with a humanistic approach. Aspects of trust, loyalty, and commitment become important in building a responsive bureaucracy. Public organizations that emphasize employee participation and pay attention to psychosocial factors can significantly improve the quality of public services, because employees who feel valued tend to work more productively and innovatively. Therefore, the neoclassical approach provides an understanding that humans are at the center of public administration, so the effectiveness of bureaucracy is measured not only based on procedural compliance, but also on the satisfaction and involvement of employees in performing their duties [28].

Systems and Contingency Approach

The systems approach in public administration views an organization as a unity composed of various interconnected elements. Public administration cannot be understood solely based on a single dimension but must be considered as an interaction between structure, processes, environment, and resources. From this perspective, government bureaucracy is understood as an open system that continuously interacts with its environment, including society, politics, and the economy. The systems approach also emphasizes that the effectiveness of an organization is determined by its ability to adapt to environmental changes. This concept was further developed into contingency theory, which emphasizes that there is no single ideal public administration model; rather, effectiveness depends on the situational conditions experienced [29].

Systems and contingency theory provide an understanding that public administration must be adaptive and flexible, because the challenges faced can vary in each context. Local governments, for example, must adjust administrative strategies to the socio-cultural conditions of the local community, while the central government may be more focused on macro policies. The application of a systems approach in public administration can enhance the ability of government organizations to anticipate environmental changes, while the contingency approach helps bureaucracy find strategies that suit the specific challenges faced.

Thus, the systems and contingency approaches encourage the creation of public administration that is increasingly responsive, contextual, and effective in facing global and local dynamics [30].

3. *New Public Management (NPM) Approach*

The New Public Management (NPM) approach was developed in the late 20th century as a response to the weaknesses of traditional bureaucracy, which was considered slow, wasteful, and unresponsive. NPM introduces private management principles into public administration aimed at increasing efficiency, effectiveness, and a results-oriented approach. The main focus of this approach is on creating output-based performance, decentralizing authority, and enhancing competition in the provision of public services. In practice, NPM encourages the use of performance indicators, contractualization, and outcome measurement to ensure that each public institution works according to targets. This approach also emphasizes the importance of transparency and accountability, which is realized through more systematic performance evaluation mechanisms. For public administration, NPM offers the latest way of providing services with increasingly higher quality to the public, while also reducing government budget waste [31].

Although it has contributed a lot, NPM has also received criticism for being considered to emphasize economic and efficiency aspects too much, sometimes neglecting public values such as social justice and inclusivity. Nevertheless, the implementation of NPM in many countries has produced positive results in the way bureaucracy conducts its work. The use of information technology, for example, has become one of the critical instruments to facilitate transparency and accountability in public services. The implementation of NPM principles in public bureaucracy increases administrative efficiency, especially through the digitalization of services and the use of more measurable performance systems, although supervision is needed to ensure that ethical values and public interests are not neglected. This shows that although not perfect, NPM still makes a significant contribution to the modernization of public administration and expands the space for innovation in government administration [32].

4. *Modern Governance Approach*

The modern governance approach marks a new development in public administration that emphasizes collaboration between the government, private sector, and civil society in the process of government administration. Governance is no longer understood merely as a government activity, but as a mechanism for coordinating various actors in managing public interests. The concept emphasizes the principles of transparency, participation, accountability, effectiveness, and the supremacy of law. In practice, modern governance requires the bureaucracy to be more transparent, responsive, and to encourage public involvement in the formulation and implementation of public policies. Thus, the role of the government is no longer dominant as the sole controller, but becomes a facilitator coordinating various interests to achieve common goals. This approach is also relevant in facing the challenges of globalization, as it stresses the importance of cross-sectoral and even cross-country cooperation networks [33].

Modern governance provides a new direction for public administration to be more democratic and inclusive. In the era of information openness, the public has wide access to decision-making processes, thus increasing public control over the bureaucracy. The application of modern governance principles enhances the legitimacy and public trust in the government, as the public is involved in policy processes and gains increasingly broader access to information transparency and accountability mechanisms. This proves that modern governance is not merely a theoretical framework, but also a practical instrument that can improve the quality of public services and strengthen the relationship between the government and the public. Through this approach, public administration, in addition to carrying out administrative functions, also becomes an increasingly open, collaborative, and sustainability-oriented arena of interaction [34].

METHODOLOGY

This article uses a qualitative literature review approach as a research method. A qualitative literature review is a study approach that aims to provide a comprehensive descriptive-interpretative synthesis of relevant literature on a topic, giving more emphasis to depth of analysis, contextual understanding, and theoretical exploration rather than data quantification. Unlike systematic literature reviews (SLR) that follow strict protocols such as PRISMA and use standardized inclusion-exclusion criteria, qualitative literature reviews provide greater methodological flexibility for researchers to integrate perspectives from various subdisciplines, explore interconnections between concepts, and build a more holistic theoretical framework. This approach is considered most suitable for studies that are conceptual and theoretical in nature, such as research on public administration paradigms and their role in realizing quality public services in the digital era, which require cross-theory and cross-approach synthesis in a flexible and interpretative manner.

The process of collecting sources in this research was carried out by purposively tracing the literature across various reputable academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, and open-access journals in the fields of public administration, public policy, and governance. Selected sources were prioritized from scientific journal articles published primarily between 2020 and 2026, taking into account topic relevance, journal reputation, and the conceptual contribution offered. The data collected were further analyzed using thematic analysis, which is a qualitative analysis technique that allows researchers to identify, organize, and interpret the main themes that repeatedly emerge across various literature sources. In this process, researchers do not merely summarize the findings from each source, but instead perform a critical synthesis aimed at constructing a coherent academic argument and identifying research gaps that still need to be addressed.

To maintain the quality and credibility of the study, this research applies the principles of increasing rigor in qualitative literature reviews recommended by various methodologists, including: (1) setting clear research objectives from the outset; (2) transparently documenting the source search strategy; (3) critically evaluating the quality and relevance of each included source; and (4) presenting

findings thematically and argumentatively, allowing readers to trace the logic of the analysis used. Although qualitative literature review does not have reporting standards as strict as SLR, its approach is actually very effective in building a deep understanding of topics that are complex, multidimensional, and constantly evolving, such as the dynamics of public administration paradigms in the context of digital transformation. Thus, this methodology provides a solid epistemological foundation for the analysis and discussion presented in this article [35], [36], [37].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Scope of Public Administration

Public administration has a very broad scope and serves as a main instrument in the management of state administration. Its scope is not limited to administrative activities alone, but includes various aspects directly related to governance, development, bureaucracy, financial management, and public services [38].

1. Government Administration

Government administration is the most fundamental part of the scope of public administration because it involves the process of carrying out state functions that are directly related to the public. Government administration not only includes the implementation of policies but also involves the regulation, control, and evaluation of government programs to ensure they align with national development goals. In practice, government administration requires synergy between the executive, legislative, and judicial institutions, so that the policies produced are not only democratic but also capable of reflecting the broad public interest. The management of modern governance increasingly demands transparency, participation, and accountability in order to cultivate public trust in the state. Effective government administration must be able to ensure the achievement of state objectives through a system that is transparent, participatory, and accountable, because without such governance, the administration of government will be susceptible to inefficiency and abuse of authority. This proves that government administration, in addition to being oriented towards bureaucratic structure, is also oriented towards how the bureaucracy works responsively to the needs of the community [39].

In global developments, government administration faces major challenges in the form of digitalization, demands for democratization, and the complexity of modern society. Governments that still adhere to traditional methods tend to lag in terms of effectiveness and speed of public services. Therefore, the implementation of information technology through the e-government concept becomes a strategic step to optimize government administration. Digitalization allows government processes to be more transparent, faster, and easily accessible to the public, thereby improving the quality of interaction between the state and its citizens. Government administration functions as a platform that bridges public interests with state policies, making the bureaucracy more adaptive to changes. Government administration, in addition to administrative activities, is also a strategic

mechanism that ensures the stability, sustainability, and legitimacy of governance in achieving national objectives [40].

2. Development Administration

Development administration is one of the important scopes in public administration because it functions as a driver of sustainable national development. This concept includes planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation of various development programs in the economic, social, political, and cultural sectors. In addition to being oriented towards economic growth, development administration also needs to consider aspects of equity, environmental sustainability, and improvement of the quality of life of the people. Essentially, development administration is a mechanism that ensures every development policy can be translated into real programs that directly touch people's lives. Development, besides being viewed as a government agenda, is also a collective effort involving the participation of all elements of society. Development administration must prioritize the principles of inclusivity, sustainability, and public participation because without public participation, development has the potential to create social disparities and injustice in the distribution of its results. Development managed through good administration will produce an equitable distribution of benefits and support the achievement of sustainable development goals [41].

Development administration plays a role in strengthening the capacity of state institutions to implement directed development programs. The challenges of modern development are very complex, ranging from issues of poverty, inequality, to climate change, so development administration is required to be able to adapt to global dynamics. A good development process requires careful planning, cross-sectoral coordination, and continuous evaluation to ensure it does not deviate from national goals. In practice, development administration must also be supported by good financial governance, so that budget usage is truly effective and on target. The digitalization of administrative processes in development becomes a strategic solution to ensure information openness, budget transparency, and public involvement in monitoring development programs. With this approach, development administration, besides being a tool to achieve economic growth, is also an important instrument in realizing social justice, environmental sustainability, and community welfare [42], [43].

3. Personnel Administration and Bureaucracy

Personnel administration and bureaucracy are pillars that support the effectiveness of public administration because they involve the management of human resources who serve as state apparatus. Personnel matters, in addition to addressing the regulation of the number of employees, are also related to recruitment, training, promotion, and performance assessment aimed at improving the professionalism of civil servants. Birokrasi sendiri adalah struktur organisasi yang mengatur jalannya pemerintahan, di mana tiap posisi mempunyai fungsi, tanggung jawab, serta kewenangan secara jelas. Kualitas birokrasi sangat menentukan keberhasilan administrasi publik karena birokrasi berfungsi menjadi pelaksana kebijakan sekaligus perantara antara pemerintah dengan publik. A professional, transparent, and accountable public bureaucracy

is able to improve the effectiveness of public services while also strengthening citizens' trust in the government. This proves that the success of public administration greatly depends on how the bureaucracy is managed and directed for the benefit of the wider community [44].

Bureaucracy often faces challenges in the form of overlapping authorities, a slow work culture, and corruption practices that reduce the effectiveness of public services. Bureaucratic reform is a critical agenda in modern personnel administration. The reform includes simplifying organizational structures, improving merit-based recruitment systems, and implementing digital technology to speed up services. Bureaucracy digitalization enables personnel management to become more transparent through the use of personnel management information systems that facilitate employee performance supervision. Personnel administration also plays a role in improving the capacity of apparatus through training programs that are relevant to the needs of society in the era of globalization. Personnel administration and bureaucracy, in addition to being seen as technical tools, are also strategic mechanisms to ensure that governance runs professionally, efficiently, and adaptively to changes in the times [45], [46], [47].

5. *Public Financial Administration*

Public financial administration is a scope of public administration that is directly related to how the state manages its financial resources for the benefit of society. This aspect includes budget planning, revenue collection, expenditure management, as well as financial supervision to ensure that all processes run in alignment with the principles of transparency and accountability. Public finance becomes a vital instrument because it concerns the allocation of limited resources to meet the needs of citizens broadly. Good public financial management will ensure that every budget is used effectively, appropriately targeted, and provides real benefits. Accountable public financial management is a crucial foundation for building good governance, considering that poor management leads to waste and reduces public trust in the state. Public finance, besides being a technical issue, also concerns the government's legitimacy in managing the people's mandate [48].

In the modern context, public financial administration is also faced with the demands of digitalization and integration of financial systems to be more transparent and easily monitored by the public. The use of technology in state financial management enables the creation of efficiency, data accuracy, as well as broader public access to budget information. In addition, public financial administration plays an important role in supporting the achievement of national development goals, because every development policy heavily depends on the availability and proper management of the budget. The main challenges faced are how to avoid corrupt practices, budget misuse, and ensure equitable distribution of finances across all regions. Public financial administration must continue to be strengthened through strict regulations, independent supervision, as well as public participation in monitoring the use of state budgets. In this way, public finance can truly become an instrument that facilitates the realization of social justice and collective welfare [49], [50], [51].

6. Public Service Administration

Public service administration is the aspect of public administration that is closest to the community because it involves the provision of services that are directly experienced in daily life. Public services cover various sectors such as education, health, transportation, and population administration, all of which aim to improve community welfare. The quality of public services is a critical indicator of the success of public administration because the public assesses government performance based on how well these services are delivered. Public service administration plays a role in regulating service standards, delivery mechanisms, and service quality evaluation to meet the needs of the public. Effective public services are determined by information transparency, the quality of human resources, and systems that are responsive to public needs, so public service administration must be designed to ensure citizen satisfaction. This confirms that public service administration is the main bridge between the state and its citizens [52].

Along with technological developments, public services have also undergone significant transformation through digitalization. The presence of e-service or digital-based public services allows the public to easily access services without being limited by space and time. In addition to increasing efficiency, digitalization also opens up room for public participation to provide input and oversight of service quality. Nevertheless, challenges remain, such as gaps in technology access in certain regions, limitations in digital literacy, and the need for personal data security. Public service administration must be designed not only for efficiency but also to ensure equitable access for all public elements. Public service administration, in addition to being a technical function, also serves as a means to realize social justice, strengthen government legitimacy, and improve the quality of democracy in national life [52], [53], [54].

The Role of Public Administration in Realizing Quality Public Services

1. The Role of Public Administration in Community Life

Public administration has a fundamental role in community life because it serves as the main instrument of the state in providing public services. Through public administration, the government can channel policies into concrete programs whose benefits are directly felt by the community. This role includes the provision of basic services such as education, health, security, and infrastructure. Without good public administration, government policies would only remain documents without implementation. Public administration acts as an important bridge between political decisions and the needs of the community [55], [56].

Public administration also functions to maintain social stability and improve the quality of democracy. Through the principles of transparency and accountability, public administration ensures that every policy is implemented according to the law and can be accounted for to the public. This encourages the growth of public participation in the governance process. In addition to serving, public administration also strengthens the reciprocal relationship between the state and its citizens. The success of public administration in performing its role

will increase public trust in the government and reinforce the legitimacy of democracy [57], [58].

Public administration plays an important role in shaping the quality of life of society through the provision of fair, effective, and sustainable services, while also strengthening governmental legitimacy through accountability and public involvement in the decision-making process. This proves that public administration has a broad impact, not only on basic services but also on the quality of democracy and national development [59].

2. The Importance of Public Administration Paradigm

The public administration paradigm plays a very important role in shaping how the government provides services to the community, especially amid the ongoing wave of digital transformation. A paradigm is a fundamental framework of thinking that guides how a science and practice develop, so the choice of the right paradigm has a direct implication on the quality of government governance. In the context of public administration, the shift from the Old Public Administration (OPA) paradigm toward New Public Management (NPM) and then New Public Service (NPS) reflects the evolution of understanding about the role of the state and citizens. The public administration paradigm is not static, but continues to undergo hybridization between Weberian bureaucracy, NPM, and New Public Governance models, especially in the context of digitalization strategies in various countries [60]. .

The importance of the New Public Service (NPS) paradigm is increasingly recognized in contemporary public administration literature, particularly in order to implement high-quality public services in the digital age. NPS, coined by Denhardt and Denhardt, emphasizes that the government should provide services to citizens, rather than directing or controlling them, while paying attention to democratic values, active citizenship, and the public interest [61], [62]. This paradigm becomes highly relevant when faced with the context of the digital era, where society demands transparency, speed, and inclusiveness in every government service. Digital and collaborative governance is a modern embodiment of the NPS principles, where digital platforms facilitate multi-stakeholder collaboration and the co-production of more responsive public services [11].

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One of the most important aspects of the public administration paradigm in the digital era is its ability to promote transparency as well as broader accountability in the delivery of public services. The paradigm based on good governance and the New Public Service encourages the use of information technology as an instrument to open public access to government information, strengthen public oversight, and improve administrative process efficiency. The implementation of e-government significantly increases public administration transparency, with 70% of respondents reporting improved access to public information through digital platforms, although the challenge of digital literacy gaps remains an obstacle [64].

The New Public Governance (NPG) paradigm, which is increasingly developing in the digital era, has crucial impacts on the quality of public services with its emphasis on collaborative networks among stakeholders. Unlike NPM, which tends to treat citizens as customers, NPG views citizens as active partners in the coproduction of public services, thereby producing more contextual and sustainable service quality. This approach becomes more relevant in the digital age because technology platforms allow citizens to participate in real-time in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of government services. NPG as a new paradigm is capable of handling the complexity of contemporary governance by integrating elements of bureaucratic hierarchy, NPM market mechanisms, and collaborative networks, thereby producing a more adaptive and responsive service ecosystem [65], [66], [67].

The implementation of the appropriate public administration paradigm also determines the effectiveness of government digital transformation in realizing quality services. Without adequate paradigmatic changes, the adoption of digital technology will only automate long-standing bureaucratic processes without producing added value for society. It is important to distinguish between digitization, digitalization, and digital transformation, where true digital transformation requires comprehensive changes in social systems, organizational culture, and governance structures, not merely the replacement of analog channels with digital ones [68], [69]. This understanding emphasizes that a public administration paradigm oriented towards public value, not just technical efficiency, becomes the foundation for the success of government digital transformation in delivering high-quality and equitable services.

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Overall, the importance of the public administration paradigm for implementing quality public services in the digital era lies in its ability to provide a framework of values, principles, and clear direction for the entire government transformation process. The right paradigm not only determines how technology

is utilized, but also for what purpose and for whom the technology is used. The COVID-19 crisis revealed how much the adopted paradigm of the government determines the speed and depth of their digital transformation, where governments that have moved towards a citizen-centric paradigm were able to adapt much more quickly. Thus, strengthening the New Public Service and New Public Governance paradigms, which position citizens as partners of the government—rather than merely service recipients—becomes a fundamental prerequisite for achieving quality, accountable, and equitable digital public services in Indonesia.

3. The Role and Challenges of Public Administration in Realizing Quality Public Services in the Digital Era

Public administration plays a central role in mediating the relationship between digital technology and the quality of services received by society. In the digital era, this role is no longer limited to conventional administrative functions but extends to being a facilitator of innovation, an integrator of cross-agency systems, and a guarantor of data-based public accountability. It has been identified that digital transformation in public administration is driven by three main forces: supranational regulatory pressures, the ever-increasing expectations of citizens for high-quality real-time services, and internal demands for operational efficiency and effectiveness – and that its success is highly determined by how public administrators define, design, and manage these digital transformation projects systematically [68], [69], [72]. A model of digital government evolution (Digital Government Evolution Model) has been developed, explaining that public administration evolves through four phases: digitization (Technology in Government), transformation (Electronic Government), engagement (Electronic Governance), and contextualization (Policy-Driven Electronic Governance) – a framework that emphasizes that the role of public administration is increasingly complex, oriented towards the co-production of public value together with society [73], [74], [75], [76].

Digital transformation has become a strategic instrument that enables public administration to fundamentally improve the quality of services, not merely automating processes. Digital transformation is a process in which digital technology causes disruption that pushes organizations to respond strategically, modify the pathways of value creation while managing structural changes and organizational barriers – a framework that is highly relevant for the public sector, which is laden with institutional complexity [77]. In the context of public administration, in Scopus-indexed literature studies, six dimensions of public value generated by e-government have been identified: improvement of public services, administrative efficiency, open government capability, better ethical behavior and professionalism, public trust, and social value and welfare – where the dimension of public service improvement has been proven to significantly influence the other dimensions [78], [79], [80], [81]. These findings are reinforced through a systematic review of literature based on the Scopus database, developing a model for implementing digital transformation in the public sector consisting of four key elements: external, organizational, citizen, and technological, which affirms that the success of public service digital

transformation is multidimensional and cannot rely solely on the technological aspect [82].

The implementation of e-government is a concrete manifestation of the role of public administration in improving the quality of services, transparency, and government accountability in the digital era. Research analyzing 87 scientific publications (2010–2024) shows that the digital transformation of government administration in Indonesia has resulted in significant improvements in service efficiency, with service completion times reduced from 5–10 days to 1–3 days post-digitalization, as well as increased transparency through real-time public access to government financial data via the Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE) [6]. From a broader perspective, using panel data it is concluded that e-government has a significant positive relationship with the improvement of government governance through mechanisms of increasing administrative efficiency, strengthening transparency, and reducing corrupt practices; however, its effectiveness is highly dependent on the quality of institutions and the capacity of the relevant country's information technology infrastructure [83], [84]. These findings are confirmed by a bibliometric study of publications in Scopus (2020–2024), which shows that research on digital transformation of public services has increased significantly, especially in the fields of social sciences and computer science, with the COVID-19 pandemic proven to be a massive accelerator for the adoption of digital technology in public service delivery [6]. Behind the significant opportunities offered by digitalization, public administration faces serious structural challenges, particularly related to the digital infrastructure gap (digital divide) that hinders the equal distribution of service quality. In a Scopus database-based analysis using VOSviewer, it was identified that the digital inequality between urban and rural areas, infrastructure limitations, and bureaucratic cultural gaps are the main obstacles most consistently appearing in the literature on digital transformation in Indonesia's public sector, and that the success of digital transformation does not merely depend on the adoption of the latest technology, but also requires fundamental structural and organizational cultural transformation [85]. This challenge is also highlighted in research related to the condition of the digital divide in Indonesia post-COVID-19 pandemic, which concluded that the digital gap is not merely a matter of access and infrastructure availability, but concerns the quality of digital competence as a prerequisite for digital equity – making inclusive public service policy innovation that is responsive to the local context an inevitability that cannot be ignored [86].

The most critical challenge that public administration must overcome in realizing quality digital services is the limited capacity of human resources (HR) and the low digital literacy of state apparatus. Research using a qualitative case study approach on government institutions at the national and regional levels in Indonesia found that digital literacy improves efficiency, self-confidence, and engagement of civil servants, but its impact is highly dependent on the organizational environment – adaptive institutions that encourage learning, flexibility, and supportive leadership enable the apparatus to optimally utilize their digital competencies [87].

In the global framework, UNESCO, through the Digital Competency Framework for Civil Servants, emphasizes the urgency of strengthening the capacity of government officials in utilizing digital technology while considering the principles of ROAM-X (Rights, Openness, Accessibility, Multi-stakeholder participation) – where the government needs to invest in four critical competency areas: digital service user skills, socio-emotional skills, professional skills, and digital leadership skills. In line with this, studies in Indonesian public administration emphasize that although Indonesia has shown progress in regulation and digital infrastructure – evidenced by the increase in EGDI from 0.3690 (2012) to 0.6612 (2022) – the implementation of bureaucratic digitalization continues to face serious structural and institutional obstacles, including administrative patrimonial cultural resistance and the transparency paradox between rhetoric and actual practice [8].

Along with the increasing digitization of public services, cybersecurity threats and personal data protection issues have become existential challenges that determine public trust in a digital government. Aryanti (2025), in a comprehensive literature review on cybersecurity governance in public institutions, concluded that the effectiveness of cybersecurity governance requires multidimensional coordination between institutional leadership, regulatory bodies, and information technology systems – where resilience is not merely born from technical readiness, but from an adaptive institutional culture and the proactive implementation of policies as well [88]. Studies on data security and individual privacy in Indonesian public administration reveal that cyber threats such as hacking, phishing, ransomware, and data breaches have caused financial losses, reputational damage, and privacy violations – making a comprehensive data security strategy that includes security policies, encryption technologies, firewalls, access controls, and risk management essential [89]. Law Number 27 of 2022 concerning Personal Data Protection in Indonesia provides a solid legal framework, yet the implementation and enhancement of data protection systems still require continuous strengthening through the active participation of the government, data controllers, law enforcement officers, and public digital literacy education [90], [91], [92].

The digital transformation of public administration is not merely a matter of technology, but touches the roots of bureaucratic culture and the complex dynamics of institutional resistance. Through a case study on government institutions that have implemented digital public services, it was found that bureaucratic digitalization contributes positively to increased transparency and accountability, particularly in public information access, service efficiency, and internal supervision – however, obstacles such as employee resistance, limitations of digital infrastructure, and policy inconsistencies remain challenges that require strong political commitment, human resource capacity development, and synergy between central and regional governments [93]. From a more holistic perspective, a systematic literature review and cross-country comparative analysis on digital transformation in public sector institutions show that resistance to change among public sector employees, digital literacy gaps, infrastructure disparities between urban and rural areas, as well as concerns

about data security are persistent barriers – and that successful digital transformation requires strategic investment in digital infrastructure, fostering innovation within bureaucratic structures, and ensuring equitable access to digital services [5].

Realizing quality public services in the digital era requires an integrative approach that balances technological innovation with institutional reform, human resource strengthening, and digital inclusivity. Studies on e-government in Indonesia published in international journals conclude that the critical success factors for effective e-government implementation include: strong leadership commitment, adequate resource allocation, an adaptive legal framework, digital literacy of citizens and officials, organizational readiness, system interoperability, and reliable cybersecurity mechanisms [94]. In a study in the *International Journal of Public Administration*, ten areas of artificial intelligence (AI) applications were identified as strategically valuable for the public sector – from virtual agents, predictive analytics, to autonomous cognitive robotics – while also mapping four main AI challenge dimensions that the government must anticipate: data, performance, regulation, and public acceptance [95], [96]. In a systematic literature review of 50 international and national articles (2020–2025) on smart governance and the digital transformation of local public services, three core dimensions of smart governance were concluded to need simultaneous development: the digitalization of administrative processes, data openness and information transparency, and collaborative citizen participation – emphasizing that the success of smart governance depends not solely on technological infrastructure, but on institutional capacity, citizens' digital literacy, and the commitment of collaborative leadership at the local level [97].

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Public administration will only truly be able to realize quality public services in the digital era if technological transformation is closely linked with institutional reform, strengthening human resource capacity, and commitment to democratic values such as accountability, transparency, and inclusivity. Studies on digital government and digital transformation show that digital technology has been proven to increase efficiency, accuracy, accessibility, and transparency, but these impacts are conditional: It only produces improvements in service quality and public trust when accompanied by adaptive governance, strong leadership, and a clear and consistent regulatory framework across all levels of government. Therefore, digitalization is not an end goal, but rather an instrument to strengthen the creation of public value through improving the quality of interaction between the state and citizens.

Empirically, various recent studies on e-government and public service quality indexed in Scopus show that government digital initiatives have resulted in significant improvements in service efficiency indicators, citizen satisfaction, and procedural transparency, including reduced service time and administrative burden, as well as expanded service access for previously marginalized groups. Nevertheless, the literature findings also consistently emphasize that the digital divide, infrastructure disparities between urban and rural areas, and weak digital

literacy among officials and the public remain major obstacles that could potentially reproduce inequality in service access if not addressed systematically. Thus, the quality of public services in the digital age should be understood as the result of a combination between technological sophistication, equitable access, and the institutional social capacity to utilize that technology fairly and effectively.

Based on these findings, the first substantive recommendation is the need for a comprehensive public administration digital transformation strategy (whole of government) that is citizen-oriented, not merely a digitalization of applications or service channels separately. The government needs to develop an integrated national digital government vision, establish key performance indicators (KPIs) for digital service quality from the citizen's perspective (for example, through the E GovQual framework or EGSQUAL scale), and incorporate them into the agency performance evaluation system to focus on real results for the public, such as ease of use, reliability, security, and responsiveness. At the same time, the government must invest sustainably in reliable and inclusive digital infrastructure, strengthening digital literacy for officials and citizens, as well as robust cybersecurity governance and personal data protection, so that the expansion of digital services does not compromise privacy rights, security, and public trust.

The second substantive recommendation is that the success of digital transformation as well as the improvement of public service quality is highly dependent on the institutional capacity to adapt and innovate, including through strengthening digital leadership, collaborative governance, and mechanisms for active citizen participation. Public administration needs to develop a smart governance model that combines three main pillars: end-to-end digitalization of administrative processes, data openness and information transparency to strengthen accountability, and digital participation channels that allow citizens to participate in designing, monitoring, and evaluating public services. International best practices and findings from the OECD Digital Government Index report indicate that the foundation of sustainable digital transformation includes: an adaptive governance framework, resilient digital infrastructure architecture, continuously updated human resource capacity, and ethical and public value-oriented use of new technologies (AI, IoT, cloud). By integrating these dimensions into public administration policies and practices, the opportunities to implement truly high-quality, inclusive, safe, and trusted public services in the digital era will become much greater.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations, so further research is needed on the topic *The Important Role of the Public Administration Paradigm in Realizing Quality Public Services in the Digital Era* to improve this research and add insight for both readers and writers.

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