



The Role of Ombudsman as A 'Watchdog' in Supporting Public Service Reform

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Abstract

This article examines the role of the Ombudsman as a 'watchdog' in ensuring accountability and fairness in the public service in Indonesia. Using Watchdog theory, this research explores the role of the Ombudsman as a watchdog institution that safeguards democracy and is responsible for ensuring compliance with public service standards. The Ombudsman has a crucial role in overseeing the government bureaucracy, particularly about maladministration, corruption and abuse of power. The research also illustrates the unique challenges faced by the Ombudsman, due to the limited authority to compel the reported party or agency to comply with the recommendations made by the Ombudsman. The performance report on the Ombudsman's performance in 2023 related to public services shows an increase in the number of reports from the public. However, the increase in the number of reports is an indication of a decline in the quality of public services. The revision of the law to strengthen the Ombudsman's authority is still pending so that reports, conclusions of maladministration, and suggestions for reported parties and their superiors are limited to recommendations.

Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas peran Ombudsman sebagai 'watchdog' dalam memastikan akuntabilitas dan keadilan dalam pelayanan publik di Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan teori Watchdog, penelitian ini menggali peran Ombudsman sebagai lembaga pengawas yang menjaga demokrasi dan bertanggung jawab untuk memastikan kepatuhan terhadap standar pelayanan publik. Ombudsman memiliki peran krusial dalam mengawasi birokrasi pemerintahan, khususnya yang berkaitan dengan maladministrasi, korupsi, dan penyalahgunaan wewenang. Penelitian juga menggambarkan tantangan unik yang dihadapi Ombudsman, akibat keterbatasan kewenangan untuk memaksa terlapor atau instansi terlapor untuk mematuhi rekomendasi yang disampaikan oleh Ombudsman. Laporan kinerja mengenai performa Ombudsman di tahun 2023 terkait pelayanan publik menunjukkan peningkatan jumlah laporan dari masyarakat. Namun, kenaikan jumlah laporan menjadi indikasi terjadinya penurunan kualitas pelayanan publik. Revisi Undang-Undang untuk memperkuat wewenang Ombudsman masih tertunda sehingga laporan, kesimpulan maladministrasi, dan saran bagi terlapor dan atasannya hanya sebatas rekomendasi.

INTRODUCTION

1. Formation of the Ombudsman

The birth of the Ombudsman brought a breath of fresh air to the bureaucracy and public services as a supervisor or known as *Watchdog*. Its role is crucial, in order to uphold the effectiveness as a complaint service center utilized by the public (Hakim, 2015) (Septiani, 2022). As an independent institution, the Ombudsman has the main task of supervising any fraud, inefficiency, and maladministration that occurs in all levels of central or regional government, whether administrative or non-administrative, private or non-private, as long as it is related to public services (Septiani, 2021).

The establishment of the Ombudsman was the result of demands for reform after the transition of power between the New Order government of President Soeharto to the Reform Order era of BJ Habibie (Nugraha, 2021). This institution is the aspiration of the people who hope for the creation of a clean government free from KKN (Corruption, Collusion and Nepotism) practices. The establishment of the Ombudsman first received the green light on March 10, 2000, through Presidential Decree Number 44 of 2000 concerning the Establishment of the National Ombudsman Commission dated March 10, 2000 (Kanisius, 2020).

As a relatively new institution, the process of establishing the Ombudsman has experienced quite long twists and turns. The initial phase or known as the first phase was carried out by the aspiration process carried out by academics and the mass media in the reform era. Emphasizing that the state needs a supervisor of state and government institutions. Then followed by phase two, namely the comparative study phase carried out during the BJ Habibie and Abdurrahman Wahid administrations. During BJ Habibie's administration, he gave orders to his staff to conduct a comparative study in Europe in 1999. This comparative study was intended to find out what and how the role of the Ombudsman could be implemented in Indonesia (Husodo & Puspitaningrum, 2019). Then in the third phase the Ombudsman was inaugurated under the leadership of Abdurrahman Wahid through presidential decree Number 44 of 2000 dated March 10, 2000 (Nugraha, 2021).

Over time, the autonomous status of the Ombudsman was then strengthened through Law Number 37 of 2008 and Law Number 25 of 2009 which regulate public services. Through these two laws, the position of the Ombudsman was then clarified by being given the authority to supervise public services at the central and regional levels. As an independent institution and not related to other government agencies/institutions, the Ombudsman is given the freedom and authority to carry out its duties without interference from any party in the field of supervising public services as an effort to realize *good governance* in order to create public welfare (Izzati, 2020).

2. Public Service Reform

As a form of integration of bureaucratic reform, public service is one of eight parts included in the realization of the bureaucratic reform program. Literally, bureaucratic reform carried out by the Ministry of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform (Kemenpan-RB) is a restructuring process, in order to improve and perfect the bureaucracy towards a better direction (Holidin, 2013). The word "good" in this sense has many meanings, but the resulting connotation certainly leads to something positive. Whether it means carrying efficiency, effectiveness, productivity and professionalism, all of which are included in the reform process itself (Suwidyanti, 2023). Bureaucratic reform can also be said to be an effort, a form of renewal and change to the system in good governance. Or what has been known as *Good Governance* (Suwidyanti, 2023).

Reviewing the condition of bureaucracy in Indonesia can be traced through the Government Effectiveness Index (IEP). Data shows that Indonesia's bureaucracy score in 2023 reached 64.76. An increase compared to the previous year (2022) with a score of 66.04, making Indonesia a country with a bureaucratic quality ranked 73 out of 214 countries (Admin KSP, 2023). It is worth saying that this achievement is indeed progress when viewed from the index score, but the fact that Indonesia still ranks 73 out of 214 countries proves that bureaucratic reform is still far from successful and requires more improvement (Setwapres, 2023).

Several factors regarding bureaucratic problems in Indonesia can be viewed from a series of problems originating from internal bureaucratic cases that always occur from generation to generation. First, the problem with the mindset of bureaucrats still tends to be bad. This is because bureaucrats still consider their status as rulers rather than public servants. This problem was conveyed in connection with the opinion of the Minister of Coordinating for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs Mahfud MD who criticized slow public services and the practice of corruption, collusion, and nepotism secretly due to the culture of affiliation. Supported by data stating that as many as 59 districts or cities have not fully implemented the bureaucratic reform program (Rahman, 2022) (Septiani, 2020). Second, the weak commitment factor of bureaucratic leaders is a supporting factor at the same time. This is because in overhauling bureaucratic modernization and improving bureaucratic governance, leaders are needed who are committed to cutting all bureaucratic defects in order to create *clean governance* and *good governance* in the work environment of government agencies (Humas MenpanRB, 2023).

Based on the background above, the study will discuss the role of the Ombudsman in supporting public service reform in Indonesia. Most of the data used is data from 2020-2023.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted by the author from Political Science Study Programme, Bakrie University, which specifically highlights the existence and performance of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia as an independent public service oversight institution. This research was conducted using a descriptive qualitative approach, because the author wanted to understand more deeply how the role of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia encourages the improvement of public services in Indonesia. Instead of focusing on numbers or statistics alone, this approach allows the author to see social phenomena more fully and thoroughly including the values, experiences, and challenges faced by this watchdog institution in carrying out its duties (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In the data collection process, the author used the literature study method. This means that the sources used come from credible and relevant written documents, such as the annual report of the Ombudsman RI, laws governing public services, books, scientific journal articles, and news from official media. This approach was chosen because it is believed to be able to provide a complete picture of the context and dynamics being studied, without having to go directly to the field (Zed, 2014) (Solechan, 2018).

The focus of this research is the role of the Ombudsman as an independent supervisory institution (watchdog) in encouraging public service reform in Indonesia, especially in following up public reports related to maladministration that occurred in government institutions. The main subject of this research is the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, which is positioned as the central actor in the external oversight system of public service delivery. In addition, the author also pays attention to the position of the public as a reporting party, as well as state institutions that are the object of supervision (Izzati, 2020).

This research focuses on the period 2020 to 2023, which is the timeframe where there is an increase in the number of public reports to the Ombudsman. This time span was chosen because it is considered relevant to see the effectiveness of the Ombudsman in responding to public complaints at the national scope, with an emphasis on public services at the central and regional levels as reflected in the annual reports and compliance survey results of the Ombudsman RI throughout Indonesia. This research was conducted because of the need to understand the effectiveness of Ombudsman's role, especially during an increasing number of public complaints that can reflect a decline in service quality. In addition, there is an academic and practical need to evaluate how much power this institution has in ensuring administrative justice and government accountability.

The data reviewed includes the agency's performance reports from 2020 to 2023, legal regulations such as Law No. 37/2008, as well as various academic articles from within and outside the country. The author also explored the thoughts of experts, such as Anita Stuhmcke and Elzbieta Rutynowska, who highlighted the important role of watchdog institutions in maintaining democracy and fairness in public services

(Rutynowska, 2021b). Once the data was collected, the author analysed it using content analysis techniques. This means that each piece of information found was carefully analysed to find patterns, themes and deeper meanings. The aim is to answer the main questions in this research, namely the extent to which the Ombudsman can carry out an effective supervisory role, and what are the obstacles and potential it has in encouraging bureaucratic reform (Ishak, 2022).

Through this approach, the author hopes to present a narrative that is not only academically informative, but also meaningful to readers who care about the quality of public services in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Ombudsman as 'Watchdog'

Hearing the basic meaning of the word Watchdog itself may still cause a stigma in the ears of the public. Watchdog is analogous to a guard dog (Sinaga, 2023). However, when viewed from an organizational perspective, Watchdog itself means an individual or organization that is responsible for ensuring that the company can comply with established standards and does not commit illegal acts (Christianto & Soeherman, 2019).

Classification of Watchdog as a theory has a series of different approaches in various disciplines. In general, the term Watchdog is often used in media circles or known as *Watchdog Journalism*. The term can be defined as an effort to document the activities of government, business, and public institutions to find out hidden activities that are not known to the public (Jamieson & Hall, 2005).

On the other hand, it is different when looking at the term *Watchdog* from the perspective of institutions and government science. Anita Stuhmcke (2022), states the role of Watchdog in government as a guarantee that the government wants to be accountable to its people (Stuhmcke, 2022). This institution appears in various legal systems and plays an important role in improving administrative standards. And acts as an administrative mechanism to prioritize justice in terms of efficiency and administration for citizens (McMahon, 1971). To realize the justice in question, Watchdog is required to correct and improve various bad government activities that have implications for decreasing public trust in the government (Mahsyar, 2011). Criminal behavior such as corruption, maladministration, and others need to be followed up, and should be a crucial role of supervisory institutions, both internal and external supervisors. Maladministration occurs due to low awareness and integrity of stakeholders (Ananda & Anggraini, 2022).

Sackville (2005) argues that institutions such as the Ombudsman fall into the category of Statutory Watchdog. A body that has legal jurisdiction and has legal oversight in certain areas of government activity (Sackville, 2005). As the Ombudsman is tasked with supervising public services, the Corruption Eradication Commission in the field of corruption, or the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) in the field of elections. All three have their respective legal jurisdictions in accordance

with their duties and authorities. James Spigelman explains that the legal jurisdiction mandate held by the supervisory bodies is not used arbitrarily, but rather ensures that each government institution exercises the powers granted in accordance with the manner expected and required for the purpose of granting the power and not for other purposes (Spigelman, 2004). Universally, the objectives of the watchdog bodies generally have a series of patterns that are the same as each other. First, to protect the rights and interests of individuals. Second, to articulate the wishes of the community regarding what decisions the government should and should not make. In accordance with the mandate of Law Number 37 of 2008 concerning the Indonesian Ombudsman, it states that the Ombudsman is tasked with supervising public services to prevent maladministration, process and resolve public reports (Ombudsman, 2021).

The role of the Ombudsman as a Watchdog can be said to be quite sacred, because it acts as a guardian of democracy (The Guardian of Democracy) (Rutynowska, 2021). The essence of the purity of the Ombudsman is created because of its independent role, therefore the Ombudsman must be maintained as a "Watchdog" and not a "Lapdog" (an organization controlled by one or more people). However, it is undeniable that what is called the collapse of democracy (Flawed Democracy) harms the purity of the Ombudsman when the executive body intervenes in the making of laws and steps towards justice in several countries in the modern world today (Surkati, 2002).

Despite the crucial role of the Ombudsman, each Ombudsman in each country faces unique challenges in consolidating the foundation for dealing with the imbalance between state power and community power (Victorian Ombudsman, 2023). Correcting administrative injustice in state institutions is not easy. Therefore, it is not uncommon for the Ombudsman's function to experience its own *Moral Dilemma*. On the one hand, a Watchdog as a supervisor is needed to ensure clean and fair governance. But on the other hand, how much the Ombudsman can be involved is analogous to a toothless dog (*Toothless Bulldog*). The Ombudsman's position as a neutral supervisory institution tends to be difficult in the reality faced. In addition, the limitations of the Ombudsman's policies and implementation of authority are one of the inhibiting factors in preventing maladministration and poor public services (Ishak, 2022).

2. Ombudsman Reporting Procedure

The Ombudsman mechanism in Indonesia has a series of fairly long procedures in accordance with the principles of Law No. 37 of 2008 (Law Number 37 of 2008 concerning the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, 2008). It should be noted that the basis of the Ombudsman's legal product is a report that is compiled into a recommendation to be used for the reported agency. In terms of administrative legal sanctions, based on the Ombudsman Law, it states that the Ombudsman can issue sanctions if necessary (Setiawan, 2020) including the law of coercive demands for the

government, cancellation of government agency decisions that are considered beneficial, administrative fines and coercive money (Hasjimzoem, 2015).

The Ombudsman's movement process primarily begins when the public makes a written or direct report if the reporter feels disadvantaged due to maladministration by the agency. The reporting process will not be charged a fee or reward, even the victim's identity will be kept confidential for privacy reasons (Septiawan, 2019). If the reporter meets the reporting requirements by not reporting an incident that has not passed for more than 2 years, the Ombudsman will process the report. On the other hand, the reporter can act on their own behalf or in certain circumstances can be given to another party as long as it is concerned (Regulation of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia Number 58 of 2023 concerning Procedures for Examination and Settlement of Reports, 2023).

After going through the process of submitting files and reports from the reporting party, the Ombudsman conducts a substantive examination in accordance with Article 24 paragraph 1 of the Ombudsman Law. The Ombudsman can choose whether to have the authority to continue the examination. In terms of examinations, the Ombudsman can take various approaches to the reported party. First, summon the reported party along with witnesses to provide information. Second, ask the reported party to explain the incident in writing. Third, direct examination. The Ombudsman has the right to conduct periodic or substantive examinations, to request original documents related to the reporting event. However, it should be remembered that in the examination process, the Ombudsman, according to his oath, is obliged to maintain independence and not be biased or discriminatory (Redi & Bakry, 2018). And on the other hand, consider the opinions obtained from the reporting party and the reported party (Andhika, 2021)

According to Law No. 37 of 2008, if the reported party does not follow the instructions given by the Ombudsman, the Ombudsman has the right to bring the case to the legal realm by involving the Police if the reported party does not comply with the summons three times (Undang-Undang Nomor 37 Tahun 2008 Tentang Ombudsman Republik Indonesia, 2008) (Nov, 2014). This action proves that the Ombudsman as a supervisory institution can bring cases to the legal realm, but its authority only reaches the reporting level. The results of the examination conducted by the Ombudsman can produce several *outputs* to accept or reject the report and provide recommendations to the relevant agencies. The Ombudsman can decide to reject the report if the reporting party objects verbally or non-verbally to the reported party. Or the report has been submitted for court examination. Unless the report still concerns maladministration in the court process, the Ombudsman can be involved (Regulation of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia Number 002 of 2009 Concerning Procedures for Examination and Settlement of Reports, 2009).

The law also states that if the reported party is not within the authority, the Ombudsman cannot intervene. Thus strengthening the evidence that the role of the Ombudsman is nothing more than a supervisor and mediator between the two parties

when maladministration occurs (Sari & Karay, 2020). If after going through the examination process and the Ombudsman finds evidence of maladministration, the agency will receive a recommendation containing several descriptions. Among them are descriptions of reports and examinations of maladministration practices, as well as conclusions issued by the Ombudsman for the reported party and all superiors of the reported party. All of these descriptions are valid for fourteen days from the time the recommendation is prepared and signed by the chairman of the Ombudsman (Republic of Indonesia Ombudsman Regulation Number 10 of 2012 concerning the Implementation of Government Regulations concerning the Establishment, Composition, and Work Procedures of the Republic of Indonesia Ombudsman Representatives in the Regions, 2012).

The reported parties are required to carry out recommendations and instructions by submitting a report on the practice of recommendations together with the results of the examination up to a deadline of sixty days. If the reported party does not do so, the Ombudsman has the right to test the credibility of the relevant agency and submit the case to the House of Representatives (DPR) and the President. Special reports to the DPR and the President are generally carried out periodically every three months and at the turn of the year. The Annual Report (Ombudsman RI, 2023) submitted by the Ombudsman contains a series of the number of cases handled, officials and agencies that do not fulfill the request for recommendations, legal actions against the reported party, financial reports, types of reports that are rejected and many more related to supervisory duties. In the 2023 annual report, the Ombudsman handled 26 thousand public service cases (Naibaho, 2024).

As an independent institution, all ranks of the board and members of the Ombudsman are not allowed to examine cases that have elements of conflict of interest as stated in Article 29 paragraph 1 of Law No. 37 of 2008. So that the management of the examination and its resolution is regulated according to existing regulations. For parties who try to intervene in the interests of the Ombudsman, then in accordance with Article 44 states that there will be criminal sanctions of imprisonment for up to two years and a fine of up to one billion rupiah (Law Number 37 of 2008 concerning the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, 2008).

3. Ombudsman Performance in 2023 Regarding Public Services

The following are the types of public reports and the number of public reports received by the Ombudsman regarding Indonesian bureaucratic services.

Table 1. Data on Types of Reports Submitted to the Ombudsman

Criteria	Amount
Investigation on Own Initiative	118
Non-Report Consultation	15,348
Community Report	7,392
Quick Response	948
Appeal to the Ombudsman	2,655
Amount	26,461

Source: (Ombudsman RI, 2023)

The 2023 Ombudsman Annual Report shows that 26,461 reports were submitted to the Ombudsman. The highest substance of the reports was related to the agrarian sector (land and spatial planning), government personnel, education, police, rural areas, civil & political rights, transportation & infrastructure, and population administration.

Table 2. The Highest Substance of Community Reports

Substance of the Report	Amount
Agrarian	1,190
Government Employment	955
Education	743
Police	679
Rural	589
Civil & Political Rights	544
Transportation & Infrastructure	489
Population Administration	474

Source: (Ombudsman RI, 2023)

Regarding the annual report released by the Ombudsman in 2023, the total number of reports reached 26,461. This figure has increased significantly from the previous year which received 22,197 reports (2022). In percentage terms, the increase in the number of reports from 2022 and 2023 reached 4,264 reports or 8.39 percent. If reanalyzed, the number of reporters has its own pros and cons which describe the condition of public services and the role of watchdogs in Indonesia. On the one hand, the large increase in reports indicates that public awareness and the role of the Ombudsman as a supervisor of agencies are quite effective. But on the other hand, the increase can also mean that the quality of public services in Indonesia is declining. However, according to the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform, the

Public Service Index (IPP) nationally is at 3.93 (good) on a scale of 5 (Humas MenpanRB, 2024).

In terms of the type of public report, Non-Report Consultation has the highest number of up to 15,348 received at the Ombudsman Head Office and Representative Offices. The type of Non-Report Consultation occurs when the public submits a problem by contacting the Ombudsman directly or online to obtain related consultation, but not in the form of a report but rather a recommendation given by the Ombudsman to the reporter (Regulation of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia Number 58 of 2023 concerning Procedures for Examination and Settlement of Reports, 2023). The result of this type of consultation can be referred to as a public report or simply a consultation without a report.

In addition to Non-Report Consultation, the second largest number of reports was achieved through Public Reports with a total of 7,392 reports. The public report mechanism occurs when the reporting party who feels aggrieved due to maladministration requests that the Ombudsman follow up with the relevant agency through further investigation. The result of the public report product is a summons to the reported party and can be resolved through a mediation process or through the legal realm. The number of copies of reports for state administration agencies is 2,655 reports consisting of abuse of authority, discrimination, poor service, delays and others (Ombudsman RI, 2023).

The high number of alleged cases of maladministration that occurred in local governments proves that the quality of public services produced is not yet commensurate. So, it is difficult to say that the Bureaucratic Reform program has been fully effective in realizing *Good Governance* in local governments. Based on the predicate of compliance with service standards in 2023, the Ombudsman conducted a survey of 586 district/city governments. The results, 414 were in the green category (good), 133 yellow (sufficient), and 39 red (bad) (Ombudsman Public Relations, 2023). The data above shows that the quality of national public services has not fully met the predetermined service standards.

The bad mindset of bureaucrats in public service agencies has been passed down since the Dutch colonial era. Unknowingly, bureaucratic culture has become a "parasite" in various eras and is embedded through the apparatus. The form of the bureaucratic system formed during the New Order era especially applies personal principles that should not be applied (Madjid, 2017). Cultures such as feelings of respect, excessive respect for superiors, debts of gratitude and others become strong relationships in the lives of Indonesian society. This mindset is analogized by Clifford Geertz as a culture in a "*Power House State*" where people position themselves as *masters* and not *managers* (Yusriah, 2012).

The application of paternalism culture in public services has several approaches (Maulidiah, 2015). The first approach is an external relationship between the apparatus and the community. The second approach refers more to an internal approach, or building a relationship between "superiors and subordinates" (Rachman,

2021). The emergence of these two approaches that are thick in bureaucratic culture presents its own moral dilemma for the apparatus (Choirulsyah & Azhar, 2024). On the one hand, bureaucratic apparatus must serve the community. But on the other hand, bureaucrats also prioritize the interests of their leaders so that they can leave a good image (Carolina & Mukti, 2020).

The issue of paternalism culture in the bureaucracy was then studied by the University of Queensland in Australia about corrupt mindsets both materially and non-materially. Through an interview process conducted with 30 government officials, the results showed that the culture of corruption in the New Order era had become a daily activity for government employees (Falah, 2016). The causes of this behavior are accompanied by factors of low sense of responsibility, unequal salaries, and the behavior of leaders who commit corruption normalize these actions and are emulated by employees (Hariyani et al., 2012) (Wicaksono & Prabowo, 2022) (Hardinto et al., 2020).

The low sense of responsibility and maladministration behavior among employees is an obstacle for the bureaucracy and has a negative impact on society. This is also due to the large number of "*discarded employees*" in the bureaucracy since the New Order era. The definition of a discarded employee is when an agency accepts employees who do not have the competence, service and ability to work, so that employees cannot carry out the tasks given by their superiors (Wahyudi et al., 2015). The reason behind this phenomenon is because in the New Order era, the government opened an increase in the number of government employees to increase support for the Golkar Party and the regime in power at that time. Many of them do not have competence and productivity (Mahdiana, 2018).

The absence of professional aspects in employee recruitment and ignoring agency needs results in budget waste during development. In addition to high interest factors, supporting factors such as nepotism and bribery practices due to personal relationships influence the presence of "*disposal employees*" (Puslatbang LAN RI, 2021).

To reduce the bad bureaucracy in the New Order era which inherited the culture of corruption, collusion, and nepotism from generation to generation, the presence of one of the points of Bureaucratic Reform has an urgency in changing the Management of Change and the Arrangement of Human Resources of the State Apparatus (Akny, 2014). Based on the "Guidelines for Assuring the Quality of Bureaucratic Reform" what is meant by Change Management is the mindset and way of working culture by implementing consistent and systematic mechanisms (Permenpan Number 53 of 2011 concerning Guidelines for Assurance of Quality and Monitoring and Evaluation of Bureaucratic Reform, 2011).

While the Human Resources Arrangement of the State Apparatus has the target of emphasizing professionalism in the state apparatus in every government agency, this scope can be realized through a recruitment system for the state apparatus, a clear career ladder based on a *merit system* and competence, realizing transparency among the bureaucratic work environments.

Table 3. Ombudsman Targets for Change Management

Target	Indicator
Increasing commitment to all levels of the board of directors and employees from all government agencies	1. From a team related to the change management program 2. Developing change management strategies and change management communications
Changes in the mindset and working methods of the apparatus in each agency	Standard index for apparatus commitment, participation, and behavior in accordance with procedures
Minimize risks to change and compliance with undergoing the program	Realized through measuring targets and objectives against risk analysis

Source: (Secretary General of the Ombudsman, 2020)

Table 4. Ombudsman Targets for Human Resource Arrangement

Target	Indicator
Improving the governance of Human Resources in every government agency	Using legislation as an indicator for managing human resources
Realizing accountability and transparency in HR governance in government agencies	Require open and transparent recruitment. And implement a clear employee career development system.
Implementing discipline on officers	Using "PP Number 53 of 2010" as an indicator for disciplining officers
Increasing the efficiency of Human Resources (HR) management in each agency	Measurement of target achievement is based on the availability of clearly measurable performance indicators and current and accurate employee data.
Increasing the level of professionalism of Human Resources (HR) of the apparatus in the agency.	The basis for measuring target achievement involves the availability of job competency standard documents and individual competency profile maps.

Source: (Secretary General of the Ombudsman, 2020)

4. Efforts to Strengthen the Ombudsman

In examining the weaknesses of the Ombudsman, the most basic element that needs to be studied is the role of the institution itself. As a supervisor/watchdog, the Ombudsman has the authority to realize an accountable government and a means for the public to ask for first aid when there is a case against public services (Solechan, 2018).

But the problem is that the role of the Ombudsman is only to provide recommendations to the reported agency, so it is not fully adjudicative (the right to decide) (Ramadhan, 2021). Therefore, efforts are needed to optimize the authority of the Ombudsman so that it is not limited to only providing recommendations because the potential that can be generated is very large. It is not uncommon that several attempts by the Ombudsman to provide recommendations to related agencies are often not on target and ineffective (Lubis et al., 2023). However, if the Ombudsman has adjudicative rights, the Ombudsman can play a dual role in supervising but also imposing sanctions at the same time so that each agency can feel the deterrent effect (Ishak, 2022).

The law governing the functions and authorities of the Ombudsman was first passed in 2008. Many parties, especially the House of Representatives, tried to push for policy reform related to the Ombudsman to strengthen the duties and authorities of the institution. The discovery of many inconsistencies between the functions of the Ombudsman and the implementation carried out resulted in deviations (Badan Legislasi DPR, 2023). To improve the points of the law, the DPR included the revision of Law No. 37 of 2008 in the list of Priority National Legislation Programs in order 19. According to information obtained from the Chairman of the DPR Legislation Body, Supratman Andi Agtas, said that there were at least 25 points proposing changes to the contents of the Law. Among the points in the Ombudsman Bill (RUU) are related to the Ombudsman's opinion in the report, making conclusions on maladministration, providing advice to the reported party and their superiors, and making the Ombudsman's recommendations an 'obligation' that must be carried out by the reported party (Thea, 2023). In an effort to improve public services, the form of recommendations must be able to provide a deterrent effect on the career development of officials who manage the reported agency (Sitepu, 2024).

Given that the Ombudsman does not act as a legal institution, the authority to decide is important in strengthening the role of the supervisory institution to fix public service problems. This mission will be realized through a plan to revise the Law which aims to create a "report card" system for agency performance. So that if more sanctions and recommendations are given to the reported agency, it will have an impact on the career level of the administrators and agencies concerned (Hadi, 2024). These sanctions are expected to have an impact not only on a central scale, but also in all regions considering that the most reported cases come from the regions. As many as 7,284 of the 8,458 public reports in 2023 came from the regions (Ombudsman RI, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that the Ombudsman has a crucial role as a supervisory institution or watchdog in enforcing accountability and the quality of public services in Indonesia. Although the Ombudsman has a role as a guardian of democracy, there are several challenges faced, such as limited authority in carrying out the supervisory function.

The importance of the Ombudsman as a watchdog is especially evident in its efforts to uncover maladministration, corruption, and other illegal acts that can harm the public. The Ombudsman's reporting and inspection process plays an important role in ensuring accountability and transparency in various government agencies. However, there are several problems that need to be addressed, such as the limited authority of the Ombudsman which is only limited to providing recommendations without adjudicatory power. Therefore, the revision of the Ombudsman Law is an important step to strengthen the role and duties of this institution. Recommendations given by the Ombudsman also need to be accompanied by the word "mandatory" to have a stronger binding force on the reported agency.

Open data on the performance of the Ombudsman shows an increase in the number of reports from the public, which can be interpreted as an increase in public awareness of the role of the Ombudsman as a supervisor. However, this also reflects the potential for a decline in the quality of public services in Indonesia. Efforts to revise the Ombudsman Law show seriousness in improving the limitations of the institution. By strengthening the role of the Ombudsman, it is hoped that it can provide a deterrent effect to the reported party and the reported agency and improve the quality of public services.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

This research makes a meaningful contribution in expanding the horizons of understanding of watchdog theory in the realm of public governance. In the Indonesian context, the presence of the Ombudsman shows that independent external oversight can be an important instrument in ensuring transparency and accountability of the bureaucracy that serves the public. This is in line with the view that such an institution is not just a complement to administrative law, but a tangible symbol of a democratic and participatory system of power control (Stuhmcke, 2022).

Theoretically, the results of this study also confirm the importance of the Ombudsman's role as a guardian of democratic values, especially in preventing abuse of power by state institutions. This role reinforces the concept that a watchdog institution is an ethical and functional mechanism that keeps public service practices in line with the principles of administrative justice and the protection of citizens' rights (Rutynowska, 2021b).

However, this study also raises a critical aspect of the theory, namely institutional limitations. When the Ombudsman does not have strong adjudicative authority, the supervisory function carried out tends to be normative and lacks coercive power. This condition places the Ombudsman in a dilemmatic position as a toothless watchdog, which theoretically highlights the importance of revising the authority structure in the development of public oversight institutions (Ishak, 2022).

Furthermore, conceptually, the results of this study also contribute to enriching thinking about horizontal accountability, which is a form of accountability that involves the active participation of civil society in assessing the quality of

bureaucratic services. This encourages the understanding that good governance is not only built through strengthening internal government actors, but also by strengthening the role of oversight institutions that serve as a bridge between the state and citizens (Redi & Bakry, 2018)

Thus, overall, this study expands the understanding that public service reform requires the support of a strong institutional ecosystem, especially in terms of supervision. This also confirms that the theory of good governance will be more contextual if it is implemented by prioritising the role of oversight institutions such as the Ombudsman as a representation of the voice of the community (Solechan, 2018)

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