

Panel 4a: New Public Management and Administrative Reform

Shared Pessimism in Public Services: Inhibiting Factors for A Progressive Administrative Reform?

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Previous studies have revealed the existence of widespread pessimism shared between citizens and street-level bureaucrats in public service setting. However, its potential implications toward public service reform attempts remain underexplored. This article investigates the existence of three hypothetical attitudes that underlie the existence of shared pessimism in public service agencies, namely (1) bureaucrats' overrating attitude, and (2) their pessimistic view towards citizen rating, as well as (3) citizens' tendency to underrate the performance of street-level bureaucrats in public service organizations. Finally, the implications of shared pessimism toward reform progress are also examined. Our findings demonstrate that both citizens and street-level bureaucrats respectively are not as bad as they reciprocally perceived. The data suggests that bureaucrats' reflection on their own performance serves as an invaluable input to improve public managers' problem mapping.

Keywords

Shared Pessimism, Public Service Performance, Administrative Reform, Behavioural Public Administration

How does shared pessimism between street-level bureaucrats and citizens inhibit public service reform progress?

Introduction

Public managers around the world commonly introduce systematic reform plan to promote tangible improvements in public services. However, most of them are failed to produce the predetermined goals (Polidano, 2001; Samaratunge & Wijewardena, 2009). Despite the variation in measurement dimensions, performance information has been widely used, as a starting point for public managers and scholars to identify the existing obstacles from which further advancement plan is developed (Moynihan & Pandey, 2010; Behn, 1995; Boyne, 2003). Previous studies (see, among others,

Amirkhanyan et al., 2013; James & Van Ryzin, 2017; Del Pino & Díaz-Pulido, 2016; Marvel, 2015) have indicated that street-level bureaucrats and citizens maintain perceptual divergence in appraising public service performance and thus stimulating pervasive negative views toward each other. Despite commonly found, however, to our knowledge, no particular attempt has been made to identify potential implications of shared pessimism toward reform in public sector. Better understanding of shared pessimism in public services, particularly within a public service reform context, provides several theoretical and practical advantages.

Driven by the intention to win back citizen trust in government, most public managers have allocated considerable efforts to gain a reputation as a good listener to citizen voices and supporter for greater public participation (Dalehite, 2008; Wang & Wan Wart, 2007; Wang, 2001). Meanwhile, the perspectives of street-level bureaucrats on their own performance remain underexplored as a potential self-enhancing bias is presumed (Meier & O'Toole Jr., 2012). We contend that abandoning internal point of view on their own performance (as a valuable complement to citizen appraisal) may complicate public managers' effort to create tangible improvement in public sector, particularly due to their inability to conduct perceptual cross-checking that may lead to misleading problem identification. Burnes (2004) argues that low successful reform rate signalizes a serious problem rooted from the inexistence of a valid framework to provide a clear guideline on how to effectively direct an organizational change process.

This article improves our understanding of the multiplex nature of shared pessimism in public service setting and its potential implications toward reform progress aiming at improving public service quality. Focusing on six public service agencies operating under two provincial governments in Indonesia, we operationalize shared pessimism concept based on its three underlying perceptual attitudes, namely: (1) Bureaucrats' pessimism towards citizen performance appraisal, (2) street-level bureaucrats' overrating bias, and (3) citizens' underrating bias. We conduct further assessment to examine the degree of readiness for change among multi-rank public street-level bureaucrats as a necessary component to indicate a reform progress. Finally, through a comparison of findings from upper- and lower-performing agencies, several potential implications toward reform progress are highlighted.

We start by explaining the concept of shared pessimism in public services and its three underlying perceptual attitudes. Relevant hypotheses are then developed

accordingly. The survey method and data employed during the analyses are described afterwards. Next, reflecting from the findings across two performance-based groups, namely the upper- and lower performing agencies, we examine the implications of shared pessimism toward reform. Finally, we conclude the main results of our study and suggest several institutional characteristics that are likely to encourage public service reform progress.

Conceptualization of Shared Pessimism in Public Services

Unsympathetic attitude towards public services, both as institution and group of individuals, has been consistently found across a growing number of studies (see for instance, Marvel, 2016; Hvidman & Andersen, 2016; James & Van Ryzin, 2015; Berman, 1997). On the other hand, scholars have also identified widespread pessimism among public street-level bureaucrats towards perceived citizen rating (Melker & Thomas, 1998; Wu & Yang, 2011). In the present study, we refer this phenomenon as “shared pessimism” which represents negative attitudes jointly shared between street-level bureaucrats and citizens in appraising public service performance. Despite commonly found in public service setting, little is known about its potential implication towards a systematic effort to improve public service performance. This article advances this research agenda by analysing the views of citizens and street-level street-level bureaucrats toward each other in the realm of public service evaluation. Despite a number of literature has suggested the superiority of multi-perspective approach to assess public service performance by integrating the view of public street-level bureaucrats on their own performance as a complementary input to the already predominant citizen-based feedback (see Poister & Thomas, 2007), internal insights generally remain in equivalently counted.

The “pessimism” term is intentionally used in this study to underscore the value of expectation or belief created by individuals to predict particular future outcomes. Some scholars describe it as a particular coping skill strategy to anticipate potential failure or possible threat to self-esteem (see for instance, Norem & Cantor, 1986; Elliot & Church, 2003). Seligman (2006) explains it as one out of two explanatory-style alternatives (either to be pessimistic or optimistic) which individual chooses to explain the situation to his or herself. Moreover, he also underscores that pessimism is rooted from a profound feeling of helplessness, including a belief that our action is totally meaningless to do something that matters.

From citizen's standpoint, bureaucrats as the main objects of reform seem unable to learn from their former experience and therefore consistently fail in their attempt to create progress (Yang & Holzer, 2006). Meanwhile, on the other hand, the bureaucrats feel that despite they have done everything they could, the citizens consistently underrate their performance in delivering the requested services (Melker & Thomas, 1998). As a logical consequence, bureaucrats may act defensive towards citizen's (negative) feedback while at the same time maintaining reluctance mainly because they could not see the urgency of any performance improvement initiatives. At such point, reform stagnation is then more likely to emerge. This argument is widely supported by change management scholars (for instance, Armenakis, et al., 1993; Cumming & Worley, 2005; Piderit, 2000), who emphasize the primary role of employees' internal consideration as the basis behind their rejection or support to the proposed change plan.

In this study, we operationalize shared pessimism as a phenomenon rooted from three hypothetical perceptual attitudes, namely (1) street-level bureaucrats' pessimistic view towards perceived citizen rating, and (2) their overrating attitude, and (3) citizens' predisposition to provide underrating appraisal. Using relevant social psychological literature, we describe the theoretical basis for the respective variables.

Street-level bureaucrats' Pessimistic View towards Perceived Citizen Rating

Previous studies show growing pessimistic tendency among street-level bureaucrats about their perceived citizen rating, expecting more negative feedback than the actual citizen feedback (Melker & Thomas, 1998; Poister & Thomas, 2007). A number of studies examining the issue of public street-level bureaucrats' trust in citizen provides valuable insights to understand this pessimistic phenomenon.

Street-level bureaucrats' Overrating Bias

Individual's general tendency to overrate own performance has been extensively discussed in social psychological field. It is known as positive illusion (Taylor et al., 1989; Robins & Beer, 2001), unrealistic optimism (Coelho, 2010), self-enhancement (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009; Gregg, 2008; Guenther & Alicke, 2007; Jordan & Audia, 2012), or self-serving bias (Campbell & Sedikides, 1999). In order to make it easier for the readers, we will consistently use the 'self-enhancement' term to represent street-level bureaucrats' overrating attitude.

Kwan and colleagues (2008) describe two general conceptions of self-enhancement existing in the current literature: Firstly, the social-comparison theory proposed by Festinger (1954) which compares perceptions of the self with perception of others. According to Festinger, self-enhancers are individuals who see themselves more positive than they see others; meanwhile, the second conception is promoted by Allport's (1937) notion of self-insight that emphasizes perceptual comparison by own self and by others. Self-enhancer is therefore an individual who recognizes his/herself better than he/she is perceived by others.

Alicke & Sedikides (2009) provides a comprehensive explanation linking self-enhancement and self-protection concepts based on the framework of psychological interest and social and political philosophy. They suggest that the willingness to exert primary or secondary control to enhance or to protect the interests indicates individual possession of particular interests. Rothbaum and colleagues (1982) formerly introduce the discrimination between primary and secondary control. Primary control involves effective or instrumental action to change an objective state of affairs, meanwhile secondary control is conducted by modifying how one perceives or interprets particular events. In public service setting, administrator with an interest in viewing himself as an excellent public service provider can advance this interest by allocating his best efforts to satisfy citizens receiving services (primary control) or alternatively, by exaggerating how close he is to accomplish the excellent status or by rationalizing negative feedbacks (secondary control).

Citizens' Underrating Bias

Citizens' predisposition to underrate the performance of public service street-level bureaucrats has been extensively found in previous literatures. We contend that citizens' negative personal experience or widespread negative stories that they received from media or significant persons, such as family members or close friends, underlie this underrating attitude. Marvel's (2015) and Hvidman & Andersen (2016), among others, provide empirical evidence that citizens' appraisal on public service organizations has been weighted down by their deep-seated and unconscious negative view of public sector organizations. were proven to contribute more in shaping their perceptual rating of public service quality than their positive experiences (Kampen, et al., 2006; Van Ryzin,

et al., 2004). Hvidman & Andersen (2016) also found citizens' negative bias by associating poor performance with public service organizations due to its public status.

The Value of Comparing Internal & External Perspectives

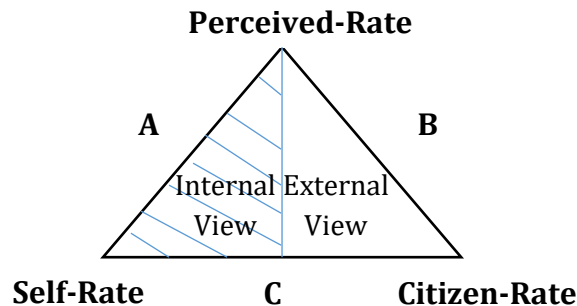
Having known that collecting multi-level street-level bureaucrats' self-rating is considered not common in public sector, as a complement to citizen feedback, therefore apparently the shared pessimism phenomenon is a covert occurrence. We argue that inability to compare citizens' and street-level bureaucrats' view on public service performance potentially complicates public manager's effort to encourage reform progress. A number of scholars suggested that, when used exclusively, neither citizen-based appraisal nor bureaucrat's self-rating are free from erroneous or perceptual bias.

Kelly & Swindell (2002), for instance, underlined two common sources of error made by citizens while evaluating the quality of a given public service, namely attributional error, and assessment error. The error of attribution occurs when individual citizen falsely attribute particular types of services provided by another jurisdiction to their local government, or inaccurately assume that their government is not providing certain services when it actually gives. Meanwhile, assessment error happens when citizen-based evaluation is divergent from the result of objective performance indicators. Yang & Holzer (2006) argue that such discrepancy may occur, among others, due to non-transparent government evaluation which encourages citizens to use anecdotal sources as the point of reference, or simply because the issue being questioned is not proportionally connected with citizens' daily life situation. Furthermore, apparently a greater degree of freedom in both media and expression has been providing the society with abundance of free-flowing information without sufficient capacity to differentiate facts from rumours. Huang (2015), based on his study about the political effects of rumors among the Chinese internet users, found that negative rumors surrounding the government could decrease citizens' trust in government and their support for the regime.

On the other hand, relying exclusively upon internal self-rating is also problematic, particularly with street-level bureaucrats' general tendency to overrate their own performance (see, for instance, Meier & O'toole, 2013). Despite the potential bias when used exclusively, combining both citizen and bureaucrat appraisals may serve as a promising alternative. Besides enabling perceptual cross-checking, previous studies

have shown that it also increases internal interest in and the utility of citizen-based performance feedback (Poister & Thomas, 2007). Figure 1 below shows how internal and external points of view were employed in this study:

Figure 1. Comparing Bureaucrat and Citizen Views



Notes:

A: Pessimistic View towards Citizen Rating

B: Citizens' Underrating Attitude

C: Street-level bureaucrats' Overrating Attitude

As depicted in Figure 1, the insights from public service providers were classified under two variables, namely "Self-Rate" and "Perceived-Rate". Street-level bureaucrats' reflection on their own performance was explored using two simple questions:

- "From your perspective, how the citizens would rate the current performance of your institution in delivering the requested public service(s)" (Perceived-Rate)
- "From your perspective, how would you rate the current performance of your institution in delivering the requested public service(s)?" (Self-Rate)

Meanwhile, how well the citizens feel that their expectations have been fulfilled by the respective agencies on a consistent basis was assessed using SERVQUAL (SQ) instrument developed by Parasuraman and colleagues (1994). Service quality is defined as "the degree of discrepancy between customers' normative expectations for the service and their perceptions of the service performance" (Parasuraman et al., 1994 p.202). In addition, to obtain a better sense of citizens' sentiment toward cumulative public service performance the so-called 'Zone of Tolerance', which represents the range of service performance that is still perceived as acceptable for customers, is also portrayed in this study by separating the ideal and the minimum scores.

Using these three variables (Public-Rate, Self-Rate, and Service Quality), we are interested in clarifying the following issues: First, the existence of street-level bureaucrats' pessimistic view towards citizen rating (A); Second, citizens' tendency to

underrate public service performance (B); and third, street-level bureaucrats' predisposition to overrate their own performance (C). Finally, based on the collected evidence, the implications of shared pessimism towards reform progress are analysed. It is important to note that each of the three aforementioned issues is computed as discrepancy scores between two responsible variables.

Potential Implication towards Reform Progress

Shared pessimism between street-level bureaucrats and citizens in public services is likely to hinder the reform progress. From citizen's point of view, street-level bureaucrats seem unable to learn from the past and to create progress (Yang & Holzer, 2006). On the other side, general street-level bureaucrats presume that the citizens underrate their performance in delivering the requested services (Melker & Thomas, 1998). As logical consequences, street-level bureaucrats may act defensive towards citizen's (negative) feedback and reluctant to be changed mainly because they could not see the urgency of any performance improvement initiatives. Such attitude represents a phenomenon called the self-serving bias that combines both self-enhancement and self-protection (Campbell & Sedikides, 1999; Mezulis, et al., 2004). At some point, subsequently, reform stagnation is then expected to emerge.

We argue that shared pessimism is rooted from street-level bureaucrats' self-enhancing bias and citizens' underrating attitudes. Alicke & Sidikides (2009) introduce the concept of "self-serving" that integrates self-enhancement and self-protection as two inseparable motivational constructs. The two constructs basically represent individual interests to pursue one or more self-domains, or to protect themselves against negative views. Taylor and colleagues (1989) conducted a systematic literature review to explore possible psychological impacts of positive illusion (overrating attitude). Reflecting from traditional psychological concept, they describe the overrating attitude as an essential characteristic of a mentally health individual. Their study concluded that such unrealistic optimism does not always tend to encourage unsuccessful outputs mainly because of our ability to simultaneously acknowledging and learning from cynical feedback while preserving self-enhancing bias. It is argued that despite acknowledging that overly optimistic self-conception is commonly cause some deceptions of the reality, Taylor and colleagues argue that mentally health individuals are able to maintain positive perception of their own self while at the same time adaptively learning from negative feedback. On the contrary, Yammarino and Atwater (1997) contend that the

over-estimators will bring a very negative outcome for individual and organization as it is rooted from personal ignorance of how he/she is actually perceived by others.

Overly positive attitude towards own performance may serve as a fertile ground for creating reluctance. Growing organizational change literature describes employees' resistance as one of the primary inhibiting factors for various change initiatives (see Armenakis, et al., 1993; Armenakis, et al., 1999; Miller, et al., 1994; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). Furthermore, according to Weiner, Amick, & Lee (2008), based on their analysis of 106 peer-reviewed articles on organizational readiness for change, despite the central role of organizational readiness for change behind successful change initiative has been supported by a growing number of scholars, only four percent of the existing studies on organizational readiness for change have been reported to investigate government organizations as the main object of study. This indicates lack of scientific efforts to understand how a change initiative should be managed in public sector.

Readiness is identical to the unfreezing concept proposed by Lewin (1951) that reflects organizational members' beliefs, attitudes, and intentions in examining the change necessity and organizational capacity to successfully conduct the expected change. In other word, it serves as a cognitive precursor of individual behaviour, either to support or to resist a change initiative (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993, p.681). This study employs Readiness for Organizational Change instrument developed by Holt and colleagues (2007) to investigate the readiness for change (RFC) level of every single agency under investigation. Holt (2002) proposes five components that underlie the measurement of readiness for change, namely: the extent to which employees perceive a legitimate need for the proposed change and believe that the change is of benefit to the organization (Appropriateness); viewing the change as personally beneficial (Personal Benefits); feeling that they can cope with the change (Change Efficacy); and whether or not management have demonstrated support for change (Management Support).

H₃: The actual citizen rating will be equal or lower than the prediction made by street-level bureaucrats across the six agencies regardless the variation of services and performance level → 3. Potential Implication towards Reform Progress

H₄: The internal self-rating will negatively influence the degree of street-level bureaucrats' propensity for change as imposed by the administrative reform → 3. Potential Implication towards Reform Progress

The Case Study: Public Service Reform in Indonesia

The Indonesian case has been selected as the main focus of our study primarily due to two reasons: Firstly, Indonesian government has been struggling with public sector reform stagnation since the late twentieth century. In response to the stagnancy, starting from 2010 Indonesian government has introduced an ambitious fifteen-year grand design of administrative reform aiming at achieving the “world class government” status by 2025. The situation in Indonesia provides an excellent case study that fits our interest to explore the potential roles of shared pessimism behind reform progress. At the same time, considering that the reform stagnation is a common challenge for many governments around the world, it is expected that the lessons from Indonesian case can be useful for a wider context. Secondly, this study contributes to facilitate better understanding on the way public administration is organized in Asian context. Based on a manual search conducted using Web of Sciences to explore articles published within the last five years (2012 to 2017) in the two leading public administration journal, namely *Public Administration Review*, and *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, we found that most of the existing studies were conducted either in the United States or European setting. Meanwhile, only 55 out of 624 articles (8.8 per cent) scrutinizing existing phenomena in Asian context.

Since 2010 Indonesian government emphasizes to radically transform the existing administrative culture inherited from the past authoritarian regime into a new culture based on good governance principles. The five-year reform’s road map 2010-2014, in particular, aims at significantly improving public service quality. However, at the practical level, several government institutions at central and regional level apparently do not (want to) integrate the reform plan as their institutional priorities (Prasojo, 2013). Mardiasmo and colleagues (2008) contend that Indonesian government’s attempt to introduce a new set of good governance rules has been challenging due to internal insecurity feeling as the familiarity with the old system has to be replaced by a new system that is full of uncertainty.

On the other hand, although supportive employees have been widely recognized by numerous scholars as the main ingredient of various successful change initiatives (Cumming & Worley, 2005; Piderit, 2000), the point of view of public service providers on their own performance seems to be inadequately considered. Within an administrative reform context, we argue that inadequate consideration of

administrator's point of view in public sector performance evaluation may impede a progressive reform because public managers do not possess adequate data to clarify whether some performance-related issues, if raised by the citizens, are also considered by the service providers (as crucial points for improvement) or not. At the latter stage, it is arguably the street-level bureaucrats themselves to decide whether or not to implement and support the improvement plan. Kroll (2015) emphasized the central role of public managers' mind set to promote the use of performance feedback data (i.e. to convince them of the potential advantages).

Data & Methods

Selection of Participants

The data were collected between May and September 2014 during the final implementation phase of 'Road Map 2010 - 2014' in Indonesia. The research participants were determined following three consecutive selection stages: Provincial, institutional, and respondent selections. At the provincial level, two out of thirty-three provinces were selected using two main criteria, namely geographical proximity from the capital, and its variation in public service performance rank (according to a recent publication of Indonesian Ministry of Administrative Reform). In addition, the issue concerning the research access granted by top level officials was also part of the main consideration to be managed. Considering the given criteria, the West Java and West Sumatra provinces were chosen as the two investigated jurisdictions.

Furthermore, two criteria were employed to determine six agencies as the unit of analysis for this study: (1) Considering the context of study, it is important to ensure that the selected agencies were taking part in the ongoing public service reform as indicated by the existence of performance improvement projects conducted at the agency by the time of study; and (2) To enable comparison between the two provinces, the types of services provided by the selected agencies must exist in both provinces under investigation. Through a series of discussion, finally three agencies that are responsible with the provision of three different types of services were selected to represent each government: State hospital, E-procurement, and One-Stop Services. In addition, one public hospital under a municipal government (Depok) was selected as the place to conduct a pilot study.

Finally, two general groups of respondents, namely public street-level bureaucrats and citizens, were chosen to take part in this study. The first group includes

multi-rank public street-level bureaucrats (i.e. high-, middle-, and low-ranking street-level bureaucrats). The pilot study involved responses from street-level bureaucrats working at the selected public hospital. In order to ensure that the collected data could adequately represent the view of all street-level bureaucrats working at the respective agencies, we ensure that the existing departments at the agencies should be represented by at least one administrator. As a general procedure, following the leader's approval for conducting this study at the agency, an administration staff was appointed to discuss further technical details. Then referring to the organizational structure map on hand, the researcher proposed the number of street-level bureaucrats required from each department. The appointed staff assisted the coordination of when and where to approach the respondents. In some cases, during rush service hour, the composition of respondents was subjected for change. The second group incorporates citizens who were randomly collected one by one in several waiting zones at the agencies to ensure that only those who have already possessed relevant personal experiences could participate in the study and thus avoiding potential attributional error. Throughout the study, the anonymity of respondents was maintained to ensure that each individual could express his/her opinion without any hesitation. Summary of the respondents can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Summary of Respondents

	Citizen	Street-level bureaucrats
Pilot Study	16	32
Main Survey	248	207

Research Instruments

Two sets of instruments were employed to collect the data from the citizen and bureaucrat respondents respectively. The first instrument for the citizen is adopted from the SERVQUAL instrument developed by Parasuraman and colleagues (1988, 1994) to measure citizens' appraisal on twenty-one service-related aspects based on their personal experience with the given public services provided by the agency. An updated three-column format SERVQUAL (see Parasuraman, et al., 1994 for reviewing the alternative scales for SERVQUAL) was employed in this study to measure the minimum- (the minimum level of service performance that is consider adequate), desired- (the level of service performance that respondent desires), and actual-service

(the level of service performance that actually received) levels using nine-point Likert scale. The SERVQUAL instrument has been widely used to measure service quality in public sector (see, for instance, Breibarth, et al., 2010; Ilhaamie, 2010; Donnelly, et al., 1995; Babakus & Mangold, 1992). Thorough discussion on its psychometric properties can be found in Parasuraman et al., 1993 and Brown et al., 1993.

Meanwhile, the second instrument consists of two distinct measurements. The first measurement was used to investigate street-level bureaucrats' self-rating on their own performance. It consists of two direct questions developed by the authors: First, *"From your perspective, how the citizens would rate the current performance of your institution in providing the requested public service(s)?"*; and second, *"From your perspective, how would you rate the current performance of your institution in providing the requested public service(s)?"*. In addition, the level of street-level bureaucrats' change readiness was examined using the Readiness for Organizational Change tool created by Holt and colleagues (2007). Weiner and colleagues (2008) based on their examination of 106 peer-reviewed found that there are forty-three existing instruments to measure organizational readiness for change. However, only seven instruments that were found to satisfactorily fulfilled a systematic assessment of reliability and validity, including the Holt's readiness for organizational change instrument. This instrument was chosen considering its robustness, user-friendly, and suitability with the research in public service context. It consists of twenty-five items measuring four dimensions of readiness, namely: Perceived appropriateness of the proposed change, managerial support, personal benefits, and self-efficacy. Seven-point likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" was used as alternative options for administrator respondents.

A preliminary draft was revised in advance based on the feedback received during a discussion forum attended by a group of doctorates and postdocs in political science at the University of Hannover. On the next stage, the revised instruments were translated into Indonesian, the language commonly used by the targeted respondents. The translated drafts were cross-checked by two bilingual doctorate students (both were native Indonesian and possess good English proficiency) and re-modified accordingly. Subsequently, prior to the pilot study, the assessment items (Indonesian version) were again reviewed by six scholars, who were candidates to become a psychologist by training, as the basis to develop the final draft instruments to be tested

in a real public organization setting. Finally, a pilot study was conducted, and accordingly the final instruments used in the main study were then created.

The surveys were conducted during normal public service hour at the investigated agencies. The citizen data were randomly collected one by one in several waiting zones at the agencies to ensure only those who have already possessed relevant personal experiences could participate in the study and also to avoid attributional error. Meanwhile, to assure the representativeness of internal data therefore as a general procedure, with support from an administration staff, the researchers proposed the number of street-level bureaucrats required from each existing department at the agency based on the specified organizational structure map. In some cases, during rush service hour, the composition of respondents may be subjected to change.

Empirical Test

To test our hypotheses, we compiled the perspectives of citizens as well as street-level bureaucrats on the performance of each agency under investigation. Citizen-based rating on service quality (henceforth called as SQ) was used as the basis to observe possible variation of attitudes across agencies with different performance levels. SQ score was calculated by subtracting individual citizen's Ideal Score (the desired service level) from the Reality Score (the actual service level being provided). Therefore, a negative score indicates an existing performance gap. Linear regression analysis was conducted in advance to examine whether citizens' demographic background, namely age, gender, domicile, educational level, and amount of visits, significantly influence the overall SQ scores or not. It is important to note that, despite collected, the religious and ethnic background variables were not included because of the homogeneity situation in the respective provinces, i.e. most of respondents are Muslim, and describe themselves as either Sundanese or Minang. As shown in Table 1 below, the analysis result (n = 248) reveals that among the five investigated demographic backgrounds, only the age of respondent that positively influence the given SQ scores. The older respondents are proven to give higher SQ scores than the younger respondents.

Table 1. Citizens' Demographic Background and SQ Scores

SQ	Coef.	t	P> t
Age	.1341751	3.46	0.001
Gender	.0133156	0.11	0.911

Domicile	-.0499267	-0.95	0.343
Education	-.0390189	-0.91	0.361
Amount of Visits	.0737546	1.65	0.101

Furthermore, Table 1 summarizes the ranks of all six agencies based on their SQ scores. The agencies were classified based on the percentiles under five performance groups: High-Performer (HP), Mid-Performer (MP), Under-Performer (UP), and Poor Performer (PP).

Table 2. Citizen-Based Rating

Agency	SQ Rank	SQ Score		SD	Min	Max
ONESTOP2	1 st	-0.44	MP	0.62	-1.33	2.43
ONESTOP1	2 nd	-0.63	MP	0.48	-1.43	0.10
EPRO2	3 rd	-0.66	MP	0.52	-1.52	0.10
HOSPI2	4 th	-0.74	UP	0.63	-2.05	1.05
EPRO1	5 th	-0.76	UP	0.62	-2.29	0.24
HOSPI1	6 th	-1,31	PP	1.07	-5.10	0.81

As summarized in Table 2, according to the citizens, none of the six agencies is good enough to be perceived as the High-Performers. However, three agencies (ONESTOP2, ONESTOP1, and EPRO2) are rated above the median as the Mid-Performers. Meanwhile, the rest of them are grouped below the median value: Two Under-Performers, and one Poor-Performer. According to the results of Kruskal-Wallis test, HOSPI1, in particulars, receives significantly lower SQ scores than each of the other five agencies. This finding enables further comparison to analyze the existence of shared-pessimism and its potential implications toward reform progress across two performance-based groups, namely between the “upper-performer group” (ONESTOP2, ONESTOP1, and EPRO2) and the “lower-performer group” (HOSPI2, EPRO1, HOSPI1).

6.1 Pessimistic View on Citizen-Based Rating

Street-level bureaucrats’ performance self-rating (called as Self-Rate) and their prediction on possible citizens’ rating (called as Perceived-Rate) were compared to examine the existence of street-level bureaucrats’ pessimistic view on citizen-based rating. In addition, the Delta-Rate scores were also calculated by subtracting Self-Rate

from Perceived-Rate scores to show the discrepancy level. Negative Delta-Rate score indicates street-level bureaucrats' belief that they basically deserve to obtain better citizen appreciation, higher than what the citizen used to rate.

The result of statistical investigation on the potential influence of street-level bureaucrats' demographic profile toward their performance rating is summarized in Table 3 below. Religion and ethnicity are excluded from the analysis due to the homogeneity situation in the respective provinces under investigation. Based on the regression analysis shown below, at five percent significance level, none of the investigated demographic data that influence either Self-Rate or Perceived-Rate.

Table 3. Street-level bureaucrats' Demographic Background and Self-/Perceived-Rate

Self-Rate	Coef.	t	P> t
Age	-.07253	-0.55	0.581
Gender	-.0977699	-0.58	0.565
Education	.1721837	1.70	0.091
Organizational Level	-.0509478	-0.52	0.607
Tenure Period	.0246092	0.42	0.675

Perceived-Rate	Coef.	t	P> t
Age	.0334518	0.28	0.778
Gender	-.0137838	-0.07	0.943
Education	.1533425	1.37	0.171
Organizational Level	-.1089879	-1.05	0.295
Tenure Period	0160503	0.29	0.772

Based on the analysis of all three variables, i.e. Self-Rate, Perceived-Rate, and Delta-Rate, as depicted in Table 4, it reveals a widespread cynical thought among the street-level bureaucrats towards possible citizen-based evaluation across the six investigated agencies. Interestingly, further statistical analysis shows that, comparing the two performance-based groups, namely the upper- and lower-performing groups, only the street-level bureaucrats from the lower performing agencies who maintain considerable discrepancy between their Self-Rate and Public-Rate scores (Delta-Rate).

Moreover, the Self-Rate and Perceived-Rate ranks are found to follow an identical type-of-service pattern. The street-level bureaucrats working at EPRO-type agencies were proven to hold the highest self-confidence among the three service types, and followed by their fellow providing one-stop permit issuance services (ONESTOP-type) and those providing public health related services (HOSPI-type) successively. This finding implies that the street-level bureaucrats working at two different agencies but providing similar service types are likely to unconsciously share a relatively identical level of performance-related self-confidence. Despite of the ranks, according to the percentile-based classification, all six agencies under investigation apparently hold relatively high level of self-confidence. In other words, it indicates that the street-level bureaucrats providing services at the six investigated agencies, including those in the three lower performers, may not consider underperformance issue as a substantial problem in their work environment.

The findings supported our hypothesis that internal pessimistic view towards citizen rating is consistently found in all six public service organizations under investigation notwithstanding their variation in performance level and type of services.

Table 4. Street-level bureaucrats’ Pessimism towards Estimated Citizen Rating

SQ Rank	Agency	Self-Rate (SR)		SR Rank	Perceived -Rate (PR)		PR Rank	Delta-Rate
1st	ONESTOP2	5.63	High	4th	5.43	High	4th	-0,20
2nd	ONESTOP1	5.75	High	3rd	5.50	High	3rd	-0,25
3rd	EPRO2	6.75	High	1st	6.50	High	1st	-0,25
4th	HOSPI2	5.32	High	6th	4.86	Mid	6th	-0,46*
5th	EPRO1	6.36	High	2nd	5.86	High	2nd	-0,50**
6th	HOSPI1	5.47	High	5th	5.18	High	5th	-0,29**
Average		5.88	High		5.56	High		

Notes: ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

6.2 Investigating Street-level bureaucrats’ Self-Enhancing Attitude

Table 5 provides a comparison between SQ scores and street-level bureaucrats’ self-rating (SR) across the six agencies to examine the street-level bureaucrats’ tendency to inflate their own performance higher than they deserve. The presence of self-enhancing attitude among street-level bureaucrats is proven if the street-level bureaucrats’ SR scores are higher than citizen-based SQ scores. The data has been

normalized to enable comparison. The findings suggested that only the street-level bureaucrats working at three out of six agencies (namely EPRO2, EPRO1, and HOSPI1) are proven to significantly inflate their own performance. Meanwhile, their fellows from the other three agencies hold lower SR scores than the factual citizen-based appraisal scores. This finding rejects the premise of general street-level bureaucrats' predisposition to overrate their performance.

Table 5. Comparison between Self-Rate and SQ Scores

SQ Rank	Agency	Mean SQ (n)	Mean SR (n)	SR& SQ		
				t	df	P
1st	ONESTOP2	0,437 (54)	0,027 (35)	-1,884	57,056	0,065
2nd	ONESTOP1	0,182 (15)	0,130 (8)	-0,194	14,934	0,849
3rd	EPRO2	0,143 (22)	0,980 (12)	4,593	31,896	0,001*
4th	HOSPI2	0,036 (75)	-0,238 (63)	-1,812	-1,812	0,072
5th	EPRO1	0,014 (36)	0,646 (14)	2,524	24,329	0,019**
6th	HOSPI1	-0,710 (46)	-0,106 (74)	2,537	74,281	0,013*

Notes: ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

However, as depicted in Figure 1 below, better consideration should be given to the upward skewed Self-Rate distribution across the six investigated agencies. Reflecting from this data, we may expect that the street-level bureaucrats working at the six investigated agency would have the tendency to question the urgency of any performance improvement initiative, mainly because they presume that they are relatively doing fine.

Figure 1. Self-Rate Scores across Six Agencies



6.3 Clarifying Citizen’s Negative Bias

Another attempt was made to clarify the validity of street-level bureaucrats’ presumption towards general citizens’ negative bias. Does citizen really underrate in their rating? For this purpose, the discrepancy between Public-Rate (PR) and SQ scores were analyzed. All scores have been normalized prior to the analysis. As summarized in Table 6, citizen's negative bias was only found at two out of six investigated agencies, namely EPRO2 and HOSPI1. Generally, the data evinced that the citizens’ rating was not as bad as the general beliefs of the street-level bureaucrats. In fact, the citizens who received services from two agencies (ONESTOP2 and HOSPI2) gave better ratings than predicted, and therefore the hypothesis was rejected.

Table 6. Comparison between Public-Rate & SQ Scores

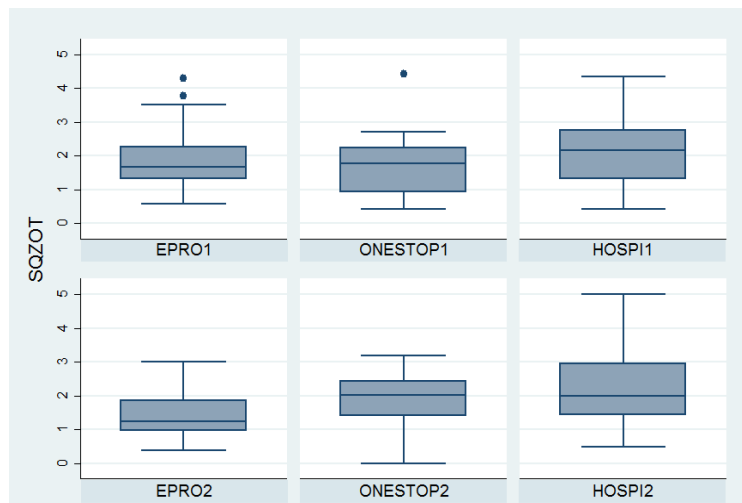
SQ Rank	Agency	Mean SQ (n)	Mean PR (n)	PR& SQ		
				t	df	P
1st	ONESTOP2	0,437 (54)	0,132 (35)	-1,525	62,310	0,132
2nd	ONESTOP1	0,182 (15)	0,186 (8)	0,018	15,407	0,986
3rd	EPRO2	0,143 (22)	0,955 (12)	3,066	20,405	0,006*
4th	HOSPI2	0,036 (75)	-0,307 (63)	-2,219	123,083	0,028**

5th	EPRO1	0,014 (36)	0,461 (14)	1,559	20,859	0,134
6th	HOSPI1	-0,710 (46)	-0,063 (74)	2,731	73,155	0,008*

Notes: ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

To facilitate a better understanding of how tolerance the citizens towards variations in service quality level, Figure 2 shows the Zone of Tolerance (ZOT) representing the range of service quality level that remains acceptable for the citizens across the six agencies. As a general rule, higher score indicates higher tolerance. Despite the result of Kruskal-Wallis test does not reveal statistically significant difference of ZOT scores among the six agencies in comparison, however the boxplot shows that HOSPI-type agencies relatively enjoy higher citizens' tolerance than the other agencies providing either one-stop or e-procurement services. In addition, this result also indicates that, similar with public service providers, the citizens also unconsciously maintain certain expectation of service quality level to be fulfilled by a particular agency that follows the type of services pattern.

Figure 2. Zone of Tolerance across Six Agencies



6.4 Implications toward Reform Progress

Having clarified the existence of shared-pessimism between street-level bureaucrats and citizens, we are interested in examining further implications toward the reform process. Table 7 overviews the existence of street-level bureaucrats' overrating attitude and their pessimism towards citizen rating, as well as citizens' underrating

attitude, that were found across the six agencies under investigation. In addition, the readiness for change (RFC) column is also included.

Table 7. Overall Result

Agency (ordered based on SQ rank)	SR/PR Rank	Bureaucrat		Citizen	RFC	
		OVERRATING Attitude ^{a)}	Pessimism towards citizen rating ^{b)}	Underrating Attitude ^{c)}	Category ^{d)}	Rank
ONESTOP2	4 th	X	√	X	MRE	3 rd
ONESTOP1	3 rd	X	√	√	MRE	2 nd
EPRO2	1 st	√*	√	√*	RE	1 st
HOSPI2	6 th	X	√*	X*	MRL	6 th
EPRO1	2 nd	√**	√**	√	MRE	4 th
HOSPI1	5 th	√*	√**	X*	MRL	5 th

a) Positive Bias (Self-enhancement) is confirmed if SR > SQ scores

b) Pessimistic View (towards citizen rating) is confirmed if SR > PR scores

c) Negative Bias (Underrating Attitude) is confirmed if SQ ≤ PR scores

d) RFC level is classified based on percentiles under four categories: RE (High Readiness), MRE (Moderate Readiness), MRL (Moderate Reluctance), and RL (High Reluctance)

RFC variable serves as a predictor for the reform progress. Table 8 summarizes RFC scores of the six agencies under investigation. The scores were classified based on percentiles under four categories, namely RE (High Readiness), MRE (Moderate Readiness), MRL (Moderate Reluctance), and RL (High Reluctance). As shown in Table 6, EPRO2 remains as the agency with the highest propensity for change, three agencies show moderate readiness, meanwhile two HOSPI-type agencies are revealed to maintain moderate change reluctance. Further statistical analysis suggests that cumulative RFC scores of EPRO2 is significantly higher than HOSPI2 and HOSPI1. Moreover, comparing the three types of services, the data showed that the RFC scores of the HOSPI-type agencies were significantly lower than the EPRO- and ONESTOP-type agencies, respectively at 1% level.

Table 8. RFC Scores

SQ Rank	Self-/Pub-Rate Rank	Agency	RFC	Category	SD	Min	Max
1st	4th	ONESTOP2	5.46	MRE	0.89	2.80	6.72
2nd	3rd	ONESTOP1	5.76	MRE	1.09	3.60	7.00
3rd	1st	EPRO2	5.87	RE	0.66	4.68	7.00
4th	6th	HOSPI2	5.03	MRL	0.63	4.04	6.72
5th	2nd	EPRO1	5.35	MRE	0.81	4.20	6.80
6th	5th	HOSPI1	5.04	MRL	0.85	3.06	6.76

Reflecting from the configuration of RFC across agencies, we are interested in particular to further examine why EPRO1 that is classified as an underperformer, according to the percentile-based category, could maintain a moderate level of readiness. Therefore, further analysis at dimensional level was carried out to provide better understanding of this finding. As described earlier, the RFC construct consists of four dimensions, namely 1) personal benefit, 2) self-efficacy, 3) appropriateness, and 4) management support. The results are classified under four score groups in descending order: A, B, C, and D.

Table 9. RFC Dimensional Scores

SQ Rank	Agency	Appropriateness		Managerial Support		Self-Efficacy		Personal Benefit	
1st	ONESTOP2	5,81	B	5,14	B	5,17	B	5,67	B
2nd	ONESTOP1	6,06	B	5,50	B	5,46	B	5,83	B
3rd	EPRO2	6,18	B	5,65	B	5,61	B	5,81	B
4th	HOSPI2	5,43	C	4,44	C	4,78	C	5,36	B
5th	EPRO1	5,59	C	5,31	B	5,20	B	4,93	C
6th	HOSPI1	5,25	C	4,83	C	4,67	C	4,93	C

As shown in Table 9 above, investigation at RFC dimensional level reveals that street-level bureaucrats from the three upper performers are relatively more receptive towards change than the three lower performers. In comparison to the bottom three agencies, as indicated by consistent attainment of “B score” for every single dimension, apparently ONESTOP2, ONESTOP1, and EPRO2 did not have any issues related to change appropriateness, management support, self-efficacy, and personal benefits. Moreover, further statistical analysis examining the contribution of each dimension to the overall RFC scores supported the notion that collective uncertainty rooted from a combination of these four factors may potentially complicate the process towards a successful reform. As shown in Table 10, among the four dimensions, consideration of whether the proposed change is required or not (change appropriateness) remains as the most important issue for individual street-level bureaucrats prior to decide to support or to refuse the proposed change, and followed sequentially by their personal thought on individual efficacy to properly conduct the required change-related action, management support, and lastly personal benefit. At this point, it is evident that the reason why an underperformer (EPRO1) could maintain a moderate readiness for change level is because the street-level bureaucrats collectively feel a relatively adequate managerial support towards change, and quite optimistic that they could accomplish the tasks required by the change initiative. However, they are likely to be hesitant about the reform urgency that remains as the most important consideration factor for street-level bureaucrats prior to decide whether to support the change initiative or not, and the incremental benefit that they could get by supporting the reform.

Table 10. Contribution of Each Dimension to the Overall RFC Scores

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. spearman RFC appro mgtsup efficacy benefit
(obs=206)
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	RFC	appro	mgtsup	efficacy	benefit
RFC	1.0000				
appro	0.9120	1.0000			
mgtsup	0.6650	0.4496	1.0000		
efficacy	0.7252	0.6273	0.3629	1.0000	
benefit	0.6048	0.5007	0.1372	0.3729	1.0000

Finally, we conducted a linear regression statistical test to examine how Self-Rate and Public-Rate scores influence the RFC scores. As shown in Table 11, the result suggests that both Self-Rate and Public-Rate variables are positively correlated with RFC variable. In practice, agencies with higher perceptual self-rating and more positive attitude towards citizen rating are more likely to have higher readiness for change than those that did not. We contend that institutions with a conducive atmosphere for change (as indicated by a moderate level of readiness for change, proportional view of possible citizen-based rating, and collective consideration of a room for performance improvement) are likely to produce a progressive reform.

Table 11. Relationship between Public-/Self-Rate and RFC

Variables	Output
pub_rate	0.112* (0.0533)
self_rate	0.167** (0.0590)
Constant	3.697** (0.264)
Observations	206
R-squared	0.147

*Notes: **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05*

The result confirmed a positive correlation between street-level bureaucrats' internal rating and their readiness for change level. In other words, agencies with relatively high performance related self-confidence (high Public- and Self-Rate scores) are more likely to support a change initiative aiming at improving their performance.

Conclusions

This study finds pervasive pessimism among the street-level bureaucrats across the six investigated agencies towards citizen-based performance appraisal. However, the evidences did not adequately support the general presence of street-level bureaucrats' tendency to overrate themselves nor citizens' underrating predisposition towards public service performance. Reflecting from this results, it is suggested that the street-level bureaucrats should reconsider their pessimistic view towards citizen rating. In fact, two agencies received better citizen rating than predicted. Likewise, the citizens should improve their viewpoint towards street-level bureaucrats and public service

performance in general. The data reveals that only three out of six investigated agencies were proven to inflate their performance higher than they deserve.

Considering that Self-Rate and Public-Rate scores as considered by the street-level bureaucrats themselves were proven to positively correlate with the overall readiness for change score, therefore we may expect that street-level bureaucrats who have higher self-confidence on their own performance are more likely to collectively support the reform than those who tend to be pessimistic of citizen-based performance outcome. In this light, as suggested by Melkers & Thomas (1998), we encourage public managers to allocate adequate attention to street-level bureaucrats' internal point of view as an invaluable input to complement the currently predominant citizen appraisal. By integrating two simple questions asking multi-rank street-level bureaucrats to reflect on the overall institutional service delivery performance, as conducted in this study, public managers could obtain by a more comprehensive map of the actual situation as the basis for developing improvement strategy. Only by combining internal and external data then the public managers could clarify whether underperformance issue, if raised by citizens, also consider by their staffs or not.

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