

Public Service Motivation, Formal Control Strength, and Incentive Consistency: Civil Servant Performance Patterns in Yogyakarta

Sri Hartati¹, Teresa I. Nangameka^{2*}, Ira Meiyenti³, M. Imam Gazali⁴, Marvin Persulesy⁵

^{1,2,3,4} Institut Pemerintahan Dalam Negeri, Indonesia

⁵ Yeungnam University, South Korea

*Corresponding Author, E-mail: teresanangameka@ipdn.ac.id

Abstract

This study examines how public service motivation (PSM), formal control strength (FCS), and performance incentive consistency (PIC) relate to civil servant performance patterns in two local government agencies in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative embedded multiple-case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 12 informants and a review of performance-related documents. The data were analyzed using cross-case thematic analysis guided by an interpretive configurational perspective. The findings identify three configurations: two associated with relatively favorable performance and one indicating shortcomings in task execution. PSM may differentiate performance patterns, while PIC is perceived as an additional motivational factor. However, consistently high FCS across all configurations limits conclusions about its differentiating role. Evidence of low PSM in the third configuration came primarily from one agency and should be interpreted with caution. The findings also suggest possible partial motivational substitution and functional complementarity, although causal relationships cannot be established. Overlapping reporting requirements, resource constraints, and an emphasis on administrative targets further complicate assessments of substantive performance. This study contributes an interpretive configurational explanation of civil servant performance by integrating motivational and institutional conditions. It highlights the practical importance of strengthening service orientation, improving incentive transparency, and evaluating the quality of substantive work beyond administrative target attainment.

Keywords: Civil Servant Performance; Configurational Perspective; Formal Control Strength; Performance Incentive Consistency; Public Service Motivation.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis keterkaitan motivasi pelayanan publik (PSM), kekuatan kontrol formal (FCS), dan konsistensi insentif kinerja (PIC) dengan pola kinerja pegawai negeri sipil (PNS) pada dua organisasi perangkat daerah di Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi multikasus tertanam (*embedded multiple-case study*). Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur terhadap 12 informan dan telaah dokumen kinerja, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik lintas kasus dengan menggunakan perspektif interpretatif konfigurasional. Hasil penelitian mengidentifikasi tiga konfigurasi, yaitu dua konfigurasi yang berkaitan dengan kinerja relatif baik dan satu konfigurasi yang menunjukkan kelemahan dalam pelaksanaan pekerjaan. PSM berpotensi membedakan pola kinerja, sedangkan PIC dipersepsikan sebagai faktor motivasional tambahan. Namun, tingkat FCS yang relatif tinggi pada seluruh konfigurasi membatasi perannya sebagai kondisi pembeda. Bukti rendahnya PSM pada konfigurasi ketiga terutama berasal dari satu instansi, sehingga memerlukan interpretasi yang hati-hati. Temuan juga menunjukkan kemungkinan substitusi motivasional parsial dan komplementaritas fungsional, meskipun hubungan kausal tidak dapat dipastikan. Tumpang tindih pelaporan, keterbatasan sumber daya, dan orientasi target administratif turut mempersulit penilaian kinerja yang substantif. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi berupa penjelasan konfigurasional interpretatif mengenai pola kinerja PNS melalui integrasi kondisi motivasional dan kondisi kelembagaan. Temuan menegaskan pentingnya penguatan orientasi pelayanan, peningkatan transparansi insentif, serta penilaian kualitas kerja yang substantif di luar pencapaian target administratif.

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Kata Kunci: Kinerja Pegawai Negeri Sipil; Konsistensi Insentif Kinerja; Kekuatan Kontrol Formal; Motivasi Pelayanan Publik; Perspektif Konfigurasi.

INTRODUCTION

Civil servant performance plays a strategic role in Indonesian public governance because it shapes the effectiveness of public organizations, the implementation of government responsibilities, and the quality of public services (Jakobsen et al., 2023; Maula et al., 2026). The substantial size of Indonesia's civil service further underscores the importance of this issue across levels of government. The National Civil Service Agency (Badan Kepegawaian Negara, 2026) reported that Indonesia had 6,546,083 state civil apparatus (Aparatur Sipil Negara [ASN]) personnel in December 2025, representing a 25.37% increase from 5,221,381 in June 2025. This total included 3,557,697 civil servants (Pegawai Negeri Sipil [PNS]), as well as full-time and part-time government employees under employment agreements (Pegawai Pemerintah dengan Perjanjian Kerja [PPPK]). The inclusion of part-time PPPK personnel in the official ASN statistics partly accounted for this increase. Of the total ASN workforce, 5,118,660 personnel (78%) worked in regional government institutions, while 1,427,423 personnel (22%) served in central government institutions. This distribution highlights the substantial responsibility of regional bureaucracies for translating government policies into services that communities receive. However, a large civil service workforce does not necessarily ensure effective performance. Governments therefore need performance management systems that extend beyond administrative target attainment to emphasize work quality, accountability, and the substantive benefits of public service delivery (Oppi et al., 2022; van der Kolk, 2022).

This issue becomes particularly important when improvements in institutional performance indicators do not fully explain the substantive quality of civil servants' work. The Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia (2024) reported that 494 of 587 public service entities (84.16%) received a green-zone rating, compared with 414 of 586 entities (70.70%) in 2023. These results indicate improvements in compliance and in the quality of public service delivery, according to the Ombudsman's assessment framework. Meanwhile, the Government Agency Performance Accountability System (*Sistem Akuntabilitas Kinerja Instansi Pemerintah*, SAKIP) uses planning, performance measurement, reporting, and evaluation to strengthen institutional accountability. Nevertheless, institutional performance indicators do not necessarily reflect the quality of individual civil servants' performance. Bevan and Hood (2006) explained that target-based measurement systems may shift organizational priorities from substantive objectives toward measurable indicators. Kelman and Friedman (2009) also examined the potential unintended consequences of performance targets, although their empirical analysis did not establish substantial performance dysfunction in the case they investigated. Accordingly, a central challenge in public sector performance management extends beyond meeting targets and ensuring administrative compliance to understanding how management mechanisms can support substantive improvements in civil servants' work.

The relationship between institutional accountability and substantive performance among civil servants warrants particular attention in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The Yogyakarta Provincial Government maintained the highest AA rating in the Government Agency Performance Accountability System (SAKIP) evaluations for six consecutive years, from 2018 to 2023 (Pemerintah Daerah Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, 2023). This achievement reflects recognition of the government's institutional performance accountability system but does not explain how performance management mechanisms relate to individual civil servants' work practices and achievements. This issue merits

examination within the Investment and One-Stop Integrated Services Agency (*Dinas Penanaman Modal dan Pelayanan Terpadu Satu Pintu*, DPMPTSP) and the Regional Development Planning, Research, and Innovation Agency (*Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan, Riset, dan Inovasi Daerah*, Bapperida). These agencies undertake direct public service delivery and development planning, respectively, and therefore operate under different work requirements. Their distinct responsibilities provide a relevant context for examining relationships among public service motivation, formal control strength, and performance incentive consistency. The research problem thus concerns not only whether these conditions relate to civil servant performance but also how their combinations correspond to different performance patterns within bureaucratic environments characterized by formal control systems.

Research on public sector employee performance generally follows three major streams: public service motivation, formal control, and performance incentives. The first stream conceptualizes public service motivation (PSM) as a motivational orientation associated with commitment to the public interest and work performance. Through an experimental study, Bellé (2013) demonstrated that emphasizing the social impact of public work can strengthen the relationship between PSM and performance. Ritz et al. (2016) further established the relevance of PSM through a systematic review of 323 publications. More recent research has clarified the contextual nature of this relationship. In a meta-analysis of 34 studies, Fan et al. (2022) identified a positive association between PSM and individual job performance, with variations across cultural contexts and performance measures. Thuy and Phinaitrup (2023) found that job satisfaction and person-organization fit helped explain the relationship between PSM and public servants' performance in Vietnam. Similarly, Tang et al. (2024), in a meta-analysis of 177 studies, identified positive associations between PSM and multiple performance dimensions while highlighting cross-cultural variation. Collectively, these studies suggest that the relationship between PSM and performance depends on individual characteristics, organizational conditions, and institutional contexts.

The second research stream emphasizes formal control and performance measurement as mechanisms for managing public organizations and ensuring accountability. Speklé and Verbeeten (2014) demonstrated that the relationship between performance measurement systems and organizational performance depends on how organizations use these systems and on the characteristics of their work. Gerrish (2016), through a meta-analysis, identified a relatively small average positive effect of performance management on public organizational performance, with variations across implementation practices. More recent studies have further clarified the complexities of performance measurement. Oppi et al. (2022) identified various forms of ambiguity in public sector performance measurement that can influence how organizations use and interpret performance information. Through a review of two decades of survey research, van der Kolk (2022) highlighted the relationships among system clarity, perceived fairness, measurement practices, and outcomes at individual and organizational levels. Grøn and Kristiansen (2022) also identified differences in the use of performance information across managerial levels in public organizations. These findings suggest that the presence of formal control instruments alone cannot adequately explain performance variation because their effectiveness also depends on system design, organizational use, and implementation contexts.

The third research stream examines performance incentives and their relationships with employee motivation. Through *Motivation Crowding Theory*, Frey and Jegen (2001) explained how external interventions may strengthen (crowding-in) or weaken (crowding-out) intrinsic motivation. Weibel et al. (2010) demonstrated that performance-based incentives can encourage work effort while also generating motivational costs. More recent studies indicate that the consequences of incentives depend on employee characteristics and implementation practices. Using a survey experiment involving public officials, Ki

(2022) found that responses to financial rewards and promotion opportunities varied according to employees' levels of PSM. Larsson et al. (2022) showed that employees may perceive performance-related pay as either motivating or demotivating, depending on performance appraisal and reward management practices. Tu et al. (2024) further identified relationships among PSM, performance-contingent pay, and job satisfaction among street-level bureaucrats, including the role of perceived job control. Together, these studies suggest that performance incentives do not operate uniformly; instead, their motivational implications depend on employees' motivational orientations, perceptions, and organizational performance management arrangements.

Although previous studies have examined the relationship between PSM and performance (Fan et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2024), the implementation and limitations of formal control and performance measurement (Oppi et al., 2022; van der Kolk, 2022), and the motivational consequences of incentives (Ki, 2022; Larsson et al., 2022; Tu et al., 2024), the interrelationships among these three conditions within civil servants' work experiences and performance patterns require further investigation. The configurational perspective emphasizes the importance of examining combinations of conditions to understand differences in organizational outcomes (Fiss, 2011; Misangyi et al., 2017). However, the literature reviewed here has not specifically explained how PSM, formal control strength, and performance incentive consistency jointly characterize work practices and performance patterns within regional bureaucracies. This gap highlights the need for a contextual explanation of potential compensatory and complementary relationships among these conditions, particularly where formal control remains relatively consistent while service motivation and incentive consistency vary. Accordingly, this study adopts a configurational perspective as an interpretive framework for examining relationships between motivational and institutional conditions and civil servants' performance patterns in two local government agencies in the Special Region of Yogyakarta.

To address this gap, this study aims to identify configurations of public service motivation, formal control strength, and performance incentive consistency associated with civil servants' performance patterns in two local government agencies in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. It also examines the relative roles of these conditions through comparisons across configurations and interprets potential substitution and complementarity while considering contextual limitations. The study employs a qualitative embedded multiple-case study design involving DPMPTSP and Bapperida, with civil servants' work experiences and situations serving as embedded analytical foci. The researchers analyze interviews with 12 informants and performance-related documents through cross-case thematic analysis, using configurational logic as an interpretive framework rather than applying formal Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) procedures. Through this approach, the study contributes to a contextual understanding of how motivational and institutional conditions relate to civil servants' performance patterns.

Theoretically, this study builds on the argument that understanding civil servants' performance patterns requires examining relationships between individual motivational orientations and performance management mechanisms within institutional environments. Public service motivation theory identifies commitment to the public interest as a source of work motivation that does not depend entirely on material rewards (Perry et al., 2010; Perry & Wise, 1990). Motivation Crowding Theory further explains that external interventions can strengthen or weaken intrinsic motivation depending on whether individuals perceive them as supportive or controlling (Frey & Jegen, 2001). The configurational perspective emphasizes that researchers should interpret the relationship between a particular condition and an outcome in conjunction with other relevant conditions rather than considering each factor's independent contribution in isolation (Fiss, 2011; Misangyi et al., 2017). Integrating these perspectives,

this study proposes that PSM may help sustain service orientation and work effort when incentives are inconsistent, while formal control may provide clear objectives and accountability mechanisms. Under these circumstances, incentives may offer additional motivation rather than constitute the sole source of work motivation. Conversely, strong formal control without a corresponding service orientation may encourage procedural compliance more than substantive work quality. This argument treats partial motivational substitution and functional complementarity as possible interpretations of relationships among conditions without presuming crowding-out effects or specific causal mechanisms. The study therefore seeks to extend theoretical understanding of public sector performance through an interpretive configurational analysis of relationships among public service motivation, formal control, and performance incentives.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach using an embedded multiple-case study design based on Yin (2018). The researchers conducted the study at two local government agencies in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia: the Investment and One-Stop Integrated Services Agency (*Dinas Penanaman Modal dan Pelayanan Terpadu Satu Pintu*, DPMPTSP) and the Regional Development Planning, Research, and Innovation Agency (*Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan, Riset, dan Inovasi Daerah*, Bapperida). The researchers selected these agencies because they perform distinct functions in licensing services and development planning. The study treats the two agencies as organizational cases and examines civil servants' work experiences and practices as embedded analytical foci within each case. Twelve civil servants participated as informants and provided accounts of how motivational conditions, formal control, incentives, and performance intersect in different work situations. The researchers conceptualized configurations as interpretive patterns derived from the work situations described by informants rather than as mutually exclusive classifications of individual civil servants.

The researchers collected primary data through semi-structured interviews with 12 purposively selected informants, including seven civil servants from DPMPTSP and five from Bapperida. The participants comprised two structural officials, seven functional officials, and three administrative staff members, with 1–15 years of work experience. The selection criteria required at least one year of work experience, clearly defined individual performance indicators, and involvement in performance reporting or evaluation. The researchers considered information adequacy according to the principle of information power (Malterud et al., 2016). They determined the number of participants based on the availability of eligible civil servants during fieldwork in June 2026, without claiming that the interviews achieved thematic saturation. Secondary data included Employee Performance Target documents (*Sasaran Kinerja Pegawai*, SKP), records of target achievement, internal policies, and agency performance reports. The researchers used these materials to supplement and cross-check the informants' accounts. Table 1 presents the informant profiles.

Table 1. Profiles of Key Research Informants

No.	Position	Agency	Informant Code
1	Structural official	DPMPTSP	I1
2	Structural official	DPMPTSP	I2
3	Functional official	DPMPTSP	I3
4	Functional official	DPMPTSP	I4
5	Functional official	DPMPTSP	I5
6	Functional official	Bapperida	I6
7	Functional official	Bapperida	I7
8	Functional official	Bapperida	I8
9	Functional official	Bapperida	I9
10	Administrative staff member	DPMPTSP	I10
11	Administrative staff member	Bapperida	I11
12	Administrative staff member	DPMPTSP	I12

Source: Compiled from the authors' research data (2026).

The researchers collected data through semi-structured interviews and document reviews. The interview guide covered public service motivation (PSM), formal control strength (FCS), performance incentive consistency (PIC), and civil servant performance. The researchers examined PSM through service orientation and professional responsibility; FCS through target setting, procedures, supervision, and evaluation; and PIC through the regularity of rewards and their relationship to work achievements. They assessed performance through five indicators: target attainment, work output quality, task completion timeliness, supervisor evaluations, and contributions to organizational unit programs. The researchers distinguished evidence of motivation from evidence of performance to avoid circular reasoning. They also examined SKP documents, internal policies, and performance reports to cross-check interview accounts (Yin, 2018). To strengthen the credibility of the findings, they triangulated evidence across informants, agencies, and data sources and examined evidence that contradicted emerging interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researchers protected participants' identities by assigning the codes I1–I12.

The researchers conducted thematic coding of interview and documentary data based on the principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), followed by cross-case comparisons of work experience patterns. They interpreted high and low categories of PSM, FCS, and PIC by considering empirical indicators, consistency across evidence, and the contexts of specific work situations. They assessed performance patterns using the five predefined indicators. The researchers applied a configurational perspective as an interpretive framework to examine relationships among conditions within the identified patterns. Each configuration represented a thematic synthesis of civil servants' work situations and experiences, allowing a single informant to provide evidence relevant to multiple configurations. This classification did not generate individual-level scores or set calibrations as required in formal Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). Accordingly, the researchers used configurational comparisons to interpret patterns of association among conditions without establishing causal relationships or identifying necessary or sufficient conditions.

RESULTS

Configurational Patterns of Motivation, Formal Control, and Incentives in Civil Servant Performance

The cross-case analysis of DPMPTSP and Bapperida in the Special Region of Yogyakarta identified distinct strengths and weaknesses in civil servant performance across five indicators: individual target attainment, work output quality, task completion timeliness, immediate supervisor evaluations, and contributions to organizational unit programs. Regarding individual target attainment, clearly defined Employee Performance Targets (*Sasaran Kinerja Pegawai*, SKP) and civil servants' commitment supported the achievement of established targets. However, the tendency to establish realistic and relatively conservative targets meant that administrative target attainment, including 100% achievement rates, did not necessarily indicate performance quality beyond established standards. Standard operating procedures (SOPs), multilevel verification, and employee professionalism supported work output quality. Nevertheless, limited human resources required employees to perform multiple tasks simultaneously, potentially compromising work quality. Routine monitoring and multilayered appraisal mechanisms supported timely task completion and supervisor evaluations, although overlapping supervision and reporting instruments increased employees' administrative workloads. Civil servants also contributed to organizational programs by assisting colleagues across functional areas. However, the long-term outcomes of planning and policy formulation made these contributions more difficult to measure. Overall, these findings indicate that compliance with formal performance indicators does not necessarily correspond to substantive performance quality, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Strengths and Weaknesses of Civil Servant Performance Indicators Based on Cross-Case Analysis

Performance indicator	Identified strengths (supporting conditions)	Identified weaknesses (constraining conditions)
Individual target attainment	Civil servants achieved SKP targets with support from clear objectives (FCS) and employee commitment (PSM).	Relatively conservative targets meant that 100% target attainment did not necessarily reflect high substantive performance.
Work output quality	SOPs, multilevel verification, and employee professionalism supported work quality (FCS and PSM).	Human resource constraints required employees to manage multiple tasks simultaneously, potentially reducing work quality over time.
Task completion timeliness	Routine monitoring (FCS) and individual responsibility (PSM) supported timely task completion.	Overlapping supervision and reporting requirements consumed time that employees could otherwise devote to service delivery.
Immediate supervisor evaluations	Structured evaluations through SKP assessments, staff assemblies, and meetings supported work accountability.	Multiple evaluation instruments with similar functions could shift evaluations toward administrative and procedural compliance.

Performance indicator	Identified strengths (supporting conditions)	Identified weaknesses (constraining conditions)
Contributions to organizational unit programs	Employees' willingness to assist colleagues across functional areas supported organizational program implementation (PSM and FCS).	The long-term effects of planning and policy formulation made employees' contributions difficult to measure directly.
Source: Compiled from the authors' research analysis (2026).		

Based on a thematic synthesis of informant accounts and research evidence, the cross-case analysis identified three interpretive configurations linking public service motivation (PSM), formal control strength (FCS), performance incentive consistency (PIC), and civil servant performance patterns. Two configurations associated motivational and institutional conditions with relatively favorable performance, whereas the third indicated shortcomings in task execution and work outcomes. These configurations represent work situations and experiences described by informants rather than mutually exclusive classifications of individual civil servants or configurations established through formal Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). Table 3 presents the characteristics of each configuration.

Table 3. Configurational Patterns of Motivational and Institutional Conditions in Civil Servants' Work Situations

Pattern	PSM	FCS	PIC	Reported performance pattern	Informant evidence
1	High	High	High	Performance tended to be high; informants perceived incentives as providing additional motivation for organizational achievement.	I1, I2, I3, I4 (DPMPTSP); I6, I8, I9, I11 (Bapperida)
2	High	High	Low	Informants reported relatively favorable performance despite inconsistent incentive provision.	I1, I2, I3 (DPMPTSP); I6, I7, I8, I9 (Bapperida)
3	Low*	High	Low	Informants reported task delays, inadequate work quality, and performance oriented primarily toward administrative compliance. Evidence indicating low PSM came primarily from DPMPTSP, while informants from both agencies described shortcomings in task execution.	I1, I2 (DPMPTSP); I6, I7 (Bapperida)

Source: Compiled from the authors' research analysis (2026).

Note: The researchers developed these configurations through a thematic synthesis of informants' accounts of civil servants' work situations and experiences. Informant codes identify the sources of evidence relevant to each configuration, and a single informant may provide evidence supporting multiple configurations. The classifications reflect qualitative interpretations rather than set calibration or formal QCA results.

*The classification of low PSM in Pattern 3 is provisional and supported primarily by evidence from DPMPTSP informants. Bapperida informants contributed evidence concerning shortcomings in task execution, but the available data did not independently establish low PSM within Bapperida. Informant

codes should not be interpreted as indicating that all informants reported the same motivational conditions.

The first configuration describes situations in which high public service motivation (PSM), strong formal control (FCS), and high performance incentive consistency (PIC) coincide with relatively favorable performance among civil servants. The researchers identified this pattern by synthesizing accounts from eight informants: I1, I2, I3, and I4 from DPMPTSP and I6, I8, I9, and I11 from Bapperida. Their accounts suggest that a service-oriented mindset encouraged responsibility toward the public, while structured supervision helped clarify work objectives and monitor task completion. In these circumstances, informants perceived incentives as an additional motivator for improving organizational performance. For example, Informant I2 from DPMPTSP described a shift in evaluation priorities from merely fulfilling administrative requirements toward improving the organization's performance ranking, including an aspiration to move from 11th place into the top 10. However, this account reflects an orientation toward organizational achievement rather than direct evidence of improved individual performance. Thus, the first configuration illustrates functional relationships among service orientation, formal supervision, and incentives within civil servants' work experiences, as the following statement demonstrates:

"A service-oriented mindset ensures that employees continue to perform their duties effectively. Supervision ensures that employees complete their work and achieve their targets. Incentives provide additional motivation. Therefore, all three elements are interconnected; relying on just one is insufficient" (Informant I6, Bapperida, interview, June 2026).

Unlike the first configuration, the second configuration indicates that high public service motivation (PSM) and strong formal control (FCS) can coexist with relatively favorable performance even when performance incentive consistency (PIC) remains low. The researchers developed this pattern by synthesizing accounts from seven informants: I1, I2, and I3 from DPMPTSP and I6, I7, I8, and I9 from Bapperida. Informants explained that some nonroutine incentives depended on budget availability and specific reward provisions, making the relationship between work achievements and incentives inconsistent. Nevertheless, their accounts reflected a continued commitment to completing assignments, maintaining work quality, and sustaining public services. Under conditions of financial and human resource constraints, informants perceived service orientation and professional responsibility as continuing sources of support for task implementation. These findings suggest that inconsistent incentives do not necessarily coincide with declining work effort when service orientation and formal control remain strong. However, this pattern does not demonstrate that public service motivation can fully replace incentives in improving individual civil servant performance.

"Motivation does not come solely from incentives. We also have an internal sense of responsibility to carry out our duties and provide the best possible service" (Informant I1, DPMPTSP, interview, June 2026).

The third configuration describes work situations characterized by indications of low public service motivation (PSM) and low performance incentive consistency (PIC), despite strong formal control (FCS). The researchers developed this pattern from accounts provided by four informants: I1 and I2 from DPMPTSP and I6 and I7 from Bapperida. However, the evidence supporting the motivational and performance-related characteristics of this configuration was unevenly distributed across the two agencies. Indications of low PSM emerged primarily from DPMPTSP informants' accounts of employees' reluctance to accept assignments or to participate in organizational rotations. Meanwhile, informants from both agencies reported shortcomings in task execution, including delays in task completion and

inadequate quality of work. Although these accounts suggest that strong formal supervision does not necessarily coincide with optimal task performance, the evidence from Bapperida did not independently establish a similarly low level of PSM. Therefore, the third configuration should be interpreted as a preliminary synthesis of specific work situations rather than evidence that low PSM characterizes employees in both agencies. The findings also do not establish a causal relationship between low PSM and civil servant performance.

“For example, when supervisors assign tasks, some employees do not begin working on them immediately. They only start toward the end of the day, and their work is of poor quality, even though they have received clear instructions” (Informant I1, DPMPTSP, interview, June 2026).

Overall, the cross-case analysis identified three interpretive configurations of public service motivation, formal control, and performance incentives: two associated with relatively favorable performance and one indicating weak or primarily administrative performance. Both relatively favorable configurations shared high PSM and strong FCS but differed in PIC. The third configuration, meanwhile, reflected work situations involving strong formal control, inconsistent incentives, and reported performance shortcomings, with indications of low PSM derived primarily from DPMPTSP. Although informants from both agencies contributed evidence concerning performance shortcomings, indications of low PSM emerged primarily from DPMPTSP. Therefore, the uneven distribution of motivational evidence limits the generalizability of this finding across both organizations. These differences suggest that strong formal control does not necessarily coincide with high substantive performance. However, the limited evidence supporting the third configuration and the consistently high level of formal control constrain conclusions about the relative roles of individual conditions.

Motivational and Institutional Roles in Civil Servant Performance Differences

Building on the three identified configurations, the researchers compared patterns to examine the relative roles of public service motivation (PSM), formal control strength (FCS), and performance incentive consistency (PIC) in explaining differences in civil servant performance patterns. The analysis compared pairs of configurations that shared two conditions but differed in the third. The researchers then examined whether the difference coincided with a change in performance patterns or merely indicated additional motivational support. Through this procedure, they identified conditions whose variation coincided with differences in performance patterns as potentially central conditions. They classified conditions that provided additional support without changing the underlying performance pattern as supporting conditions. They treated conditions that remained constant across configurations as institutional background conditions because the available evidence could not establish their role in differentiating performance. These classifications relied on qualitative comparisons rather than causal testing through formal Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). Consequently, the distinction between potentially central and supporting conditions remains provisional and applies only to the configurations observed within the two agencies. This comparative framework guides the examination of each condition's potential role in differences in civil servant performance.

The comparison between the second and third configurations provides preliminary indications that public service motivation (PSM) may help differentiate civil servant performance patterns. Both configurations are characterized by high formal control strength (FCS) and low performance incentive consistency (PIC), but they differ in their interpreted levels of PSM and reported performance patterns. In the second configuration, high PSM coincides with relatively favorable performance, as informants describe continued service commitment, professional responsibility, and efforts to maintain work quality

despite inconsistent incentives. In contrast, the third configuration includes preliminary indications of low PSM alongside reported shortcomings in task execution. However, evidence of low PSM was derived primarily from DPMPTSP informants' accounts of employees' reluctance to accept assignments or organizational rotations, whereas informants from both agencies reported performance-related shortcomings. This uneven distribution of evidence limits direct comparisons of motivational conditions across the two agencies. Although PSM represents the principal differentiating condition in the interpretive characterization of these configurations, the findings do not establish that low PSM characterizes both agencies or that PSM independently determines performance outcomes. Consequently, its potentially central role should be regarded as a provisional interpretation restricted to the observed work situations. Further research, drawing on more balanced evidence from across organizations, is needed to assess whether differences in PSM consistently correspond to differences in substantive civil servant performance.

"We continue our efforts to provide services because public service delivery must go on. Although we face budget constraints and limited staffing, our team continues to strive for the best possible results" (Informant I7, Bapperida, interview, June 2026).

Unlike public service motivation, performance incentive consistency (PIC) appears to play a supporting role by providing additional motivation for civil servant performance. The researchers identified this pattern by comparing the first and second configurations, both of which feature high public service motivation (PSM) and high formal control strength (FCS) but differ in incentive consistency. In the first configuration, high PIC coincides with relatively favorable performance and additional motivation to improve organizational achievements and rankings. The second configuration also indicates relatively favorable performance despite low PIC, which results from uncertainty in incentive provision and budgetary constraints. This comparison suggests that variation in PIC does not coincide with changes in the overall performance pattern, although it relates to differences in employees' motivation to improve organizational outcomes. DPMPTSP informants described a shift in evaluation priorities from merely fulfilling administrative obligations toward improving the organization's position in performance rankings. However, this evidence primarily reflects a stronger orientation toward organizational achievement rather than directly measured improvements in individual performance. Accordingly, PIC emerges as a supporting condition that may provide additional motivation when both PSM and FCS remain high, but the findings do not establish it as the primary determinant of performance patterns. This interpretation remains provisional because it relies on a single comparison between configurations and does not establish the magnitude of incentives' contribution to individual civil servant performance.

"Previously, we tended to conduct evaluations merely to fulfill formal requirements. Now, we have a stronger motivation to improve our ranking, for example, by moving from 11th place into the top 10" (Informant I2, DPMPTSP, interview, June 2026).

Formal control strength (FCS), meanwhile, displays a different pattern from public service motivation and performance incentive consistency. The cross-case analysis indicates high FCS across all three configurations, including those associated with relatively favorable performance and the configuration indicating weak or primarily administrative performance. Both agencies demonstrate this consistency through their use of Employee Performance Targets (*Sasaran Kinerja Pegawai*, SKP), standard operating procedures, routine monitoring, and multilevel performance evaluations. Although these instruments clarify work objectives and establish accountability mechanisms, their presence does not necessarily coincide with high substantive performance. Because the researchers did not identify a

configuration with low FCS, they could not compare performance patterns across different levels of formal control strength. They therefore interpret FCS as a relatively constant institutional background condition within the observed configurations rather than as an empirically established central or supporting condition. This finding does not imply that formal control lacks importance for performance; instead, it reflects the available evidence's limitations in determining its differentiating role. Consequently, the configurational comparisons provide preliminary insights into the potential roles of PSM and PIC, while the contribution of FCS to performance differences requires further investigation in organizations with varying levels of formal control. Table 4 summarizes these interpretations.

Table 4. Interpretations of the Roles of PSM, FCS, and PIC Based on Configurational Comparisons

Condition	Indicated role	Interpretive basis and limitations
Public service motivation (PSM)	A condition that may differentiate performance patterns	The second and third configurations share the same FCS and PIC categories but differ in PSM and reported performance patterns. Evidence of low PSM comes primarily from DPMPSTP, making this interpretation provisional.
Performance incentive consistency (PIC)	A perceived source of additional motivation	The first and second configurations both indicate relatively favorable performance despite differences in PIC. Informants perceive incentives as providing additional motivation, but the study does not directly measure improvements in individual performance attributable to incentives.
Formal control strength (FCS)	A relatively constant institutional condition	All three configurations feature strong formal control. The absence of a configuration with low FCS limits the study's ability to determine whether formal control differentiates performance patterns.

Source: Compiled from the authors' research analysis (2026).

Overall, the comparisons across configurations indicate that public service motivation (PSM), formal control strength (FCS), and performance incentive consistency (PIC) may play different roles in civil servants' work situations. PSM may differentiate performance patterns, whereas informants perceive PIC as an additional motivational factor that encourages organizational achievement. Meanwhile, FCS remains relatively constant across configurations, preventing the researchers from determining its role in explaining performance differences. These interpretations remain tentative because they draw on a limited number of thematic configurations with unevenly distributed evidence rather than formal causal testing. The findings provide a basis for examining potential partial motivational substitution, functional complementarity among conditions, and contextual factors that constrain substantive civil servant performance.

Mechanisms of Substitution, Complementarity, and the Limits of Substantive Civil Servant Performance

The different roles of motivational and institutional conditions identified in the preceding findings suggest the possibility of motivational substitution when performance incentive consistency (PIC) is low. The second configuration particularly illustrates this possibility, as high public service motivation (PSM) and strong formal control (FCS) coincide with sustained civil servant performance despite inconsistent

incentive provision. Interview findings indicate that some nonroutine incentives depend on unspent budget funds and specific eligibility requirements. Consequently, employees cannot always predict or clearly establish the relationship between their individual achievements and the rewards they receive. Under these circumstances, commitment to serving the public and professional responsibility continue to motivate civil servants to complete assignments, maintain work quality, and contribute to organizational programs. Informants from both agencies explained that financial and staffing constraints did not necessarily interrupt service delivery because employees continued to make the best use of available resources. These findings suggest that PSM may partially compensate for inconsistent external incentives, while formal control continues to provide clear objectives and mechanisms for evaluating work. However, this possible substitution does not imply that PSM fully replaces incentives or eliminates the consequences of uncertain rewards. The findings therefore suggest partial motivational substitution within the configurations and work experiences examined in this study.

“Some incentives depend on unspent budget funds, while others follow specific provisions. Employees also do not always consider the amounts substantial” (Informant I1, DPMPTSP, interview, June 2026).

Beyond partial motivational substitution, the findings suggest possible complementarity among public service motivation (PSM), formal control strength (FCS), and performance incentive consistency (PIC) because these conditions perform different functions in supporting civil servants' work. PSM reflects employees' commitment to prioritizing public interests and maintaining responsibility for service delivery. Formal control provides clear objectives, structured supervision, and mechanisms for evaluating work achievements. Both agencies implement these mechanisms through Employee Performance Targets (SKP), standard operating procedures (SOPs), routine monitoring, and multilevel evaluations that help employees align their activities with organizational objectives. Meanwhile, informants perceive performance incentives as additional rewards that encourage efforts to improve organizational achievements, including the pursuit of higher performance rankings. Nevertheless, informants also reported that reductions in incentives could generate complaints and potentially weaken work motivation. Thus, incentives remain meaningful to employees even when they do not constitute their sole source of motivation. These accounts suggest that service orientation, formal control, and performance rewards perform distinct but potentially complementary functions in civil servants' work experiences. Accordingly, the identified complementarity primarily reflects employees' perceptions of the functional relationships among these conditions rather than evidence that their interaction causally improves individual performance.

“We should not regard incentives as the only source of motivation. However, reducing or eliminating incentives may also weaken employees' motivation. Therefore, all three elements complement one another” (Informant I1, DPMPTSP, interview, June 2026).

Although formal control supports orderly task execution, the findings also reveal overlapping supervisory instruments that civil servants perceive as administrative burdens. Both agencies manage performance through Employee Performance Targets (SKP), standard operating procedures (SOPs), routine staff assemblies, evaluation meetings, and monitoring through digital communication channels. These instruments help clarify work objectives, monitor task completion, and strengthen accountability for program implementation. However, informants reported that different organizational units and supervisory authorities often required similar monitoring and reporting activities, creating repetitive administrative tasks. These overlapping requirements increased employees' reporting responsibilities

alongside their primary duties and potentially reduced the time available for substantive public service delivery. Informants also described the psychological demands of managing numerous digital communication channels, which required them to follow multiple streams of information and coordination simultaneously. The researchers identified control overload as an inductively derived theme that captures the tension between formal control's accountability function and the administrative demands accompanying its implementation. However, they did not classify overlapping supervisory requirements as a higher level of FCS because their coding framework did not distinguish adequate control from excessive control. The available evidence also does not establish that administrative control burdens directly reduce civil servants' motivation or performance. Therefore, control overload represents an empirically reported challenge to the effective implementation of formal control rather than an established direct cause of weak substantive performance.

“Numerous monitoring and reporting instruments come from different parties. Sometimes, these instruments cover almost identical matters, so employees feel burdened by the large number of reports they must prepare” (Informant I3, DPMPTSP, interview, June 2026).

In addition to administrative control burdens, the findings identify budget availability and workplace facilities as contextual conditions that constrain program implementation and civil servant performance. Informants from DPMPTSP and Bapperida explained that financial limitations could require adjustments to program targets, while inadequate facilities and supporting resources could restrict employees' capacity to perform their duties. Budgetary dependence also contributes to inconsistencies in performance incentive provision. The agencies distribute some nonroutine incentives according to the availability of unspent funds, while certain rewards recognize collective achievements rather than individual contributions. Consequently, employees cannot always identify a clear relationship between their personal performance and the rewards they receive. Furthermore, employees do not necessarily receive proportionate recognition for achievements beyond their routine duties. For example, a Bapperida informant explained that publishing a scholarly article in a Scopus-indexed journal did not necessarily result in an additional incentive. These accounts indicate gaps in the recognition of individual contributions and uncertainty about how work achievements relate to rewards. Under these circumstances, incentive arrangements do not consistently provide predictable recognition based on individual achievements. Nevertheless, this study treats budget availability and workplace facilities as contextual conditions rather than additional configurational conditions subjected to separate testing. Resource constraints and reward arrangements therefore provide important context for interpreting the sustainability of civil servant performance within the identified motivational and institutional configurations.

Beyond organizational resource constraints, the findings identify performance target-setting practices as contextual conditions that limit assessments of substantive civil servant performance. The cross-case analysis indicates that agencies tend to establish realistic and relatively conservative Employee Performance Targets (SKP). Consequently, high administrative target attainment, including 100% achievement rates, does not necessarily demonstrate work quality beyond established standards. This distinction becomes particularly important when performance measurement emphasizes output quantities and compliance with numerical indicators rather than work quality and the substantive benefits of public services. The findings also reveal measurement challenges in Bapperida's planning and policy formulation functions. Short-term indicators cannot easily capture employees' contributions to these activities because their outcomes and impacts often emerge over longer periods. These observations highlight the limitations of formal indicators in representing all dimensions of individual performance,

especially when administrative target attainment lacks sufficient supporting evidence of substantive work quality and benefits. In this context, target design and resource availability constitute two contextual conditions that researchers must consider when interpreting relationships among PSM, FCS, PIC, and civil servant performance. The study does not treat these conditions as additional configurational factors or formally tested moderating variables. Instead, they establish empirical boundaries for interpreting the identified configurations and assessing their applicability. Accordingly, evaluations of favorable performance patterns require careful consideration of target-setting practices, job characteristics, and organizational resource support. Table 5 summarizes these findings and their interpretive limitations.

Table 5. Synthesis of Empirical Findings and Interpretive Limitations in Civil Servant Performance

Finding	Empirical indications	Interpretive limitations
Partial motivational substitution	Informants described sustained task performance despite inconsistent incentives, with service orientation and professional responsibility providing sources of work motivation.	The evidence suggests a possible compensatory role for PSM but does not demonstrate that PSM causally substitutes for incentives.
Functional complementarity	PSM relates to service orientation, FCS provides clear objectives and evaluation mechanisms, and informants perceive PIC as an additional motivational factor.	These relationships reflect informants' accounts of distinct functions rather than empirically tested interaction effects.
Administrative control burden (control overload)	Informants reported overlapping monitoring and reporting instruments that increased administrative workloads.	The evidence does not establish direct effects on individual motivation or performance.
Resource dependence	Informants reported that budgetary constraints, inadequate facilities, and staffing limitations affected program implementation and the consistency of nonroutine incentives.	These constraints represent contextual conditions rather than formally tested moderating variables.
Orientation toward formal target attainment	Informants described relatively conservative performance targets and an emphasis on quantitative outputs.	Administrative target attainment alone cannot establish the substantive quality of work performance.

Source: Compiled from the authors' interviews, performance documents, and cross-case analysis (2026).

Overall, the findings provide preliminary indications of possible partial motivational substitution and functional complementarity among public service motivation (PSM), formal control strength (FCS), and performance incentive consistency (PIC). Informants perceived service orientation as a factor that could sustain task execution when incentives remained inconsistent. They also described formal control and performance rewards as serving distinct functions in supporting civil servants' work. However, overlapping reporting requirements, resource constraints, and an emphasis on administrative targets shaped the work situations in which these relationships emerged. These contextual conditions underscore the importance of distinguishing formal target attainment from substantive performance quality.

Accordingly, the five findings represent interpretations of observed work experiences and institutional conditions rather than evidence of causal relationships or interaction effects among the conditions.

DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that civil servant performance patterns relate to the interplay of motivational and institutional conditions across different work situations. The cross-case thematic analysis identified three interpretive configurations: two associated with relatively favorable performance and one indicating shortcomings in task execution. Comparisons across configurations provide preliminary evidence that public service motivation (PSM) may differentiate performance patterns, whereas civil servants perceive performance incentive consistency (PIC) as an additional motivational factor. Formal control strength (FCS), meanwhile, represents a relatively constant institutional condition. The findings also suggest possible partial motivational substitution and functional complementarity, subject to contextual constraints related to administrative burdens, resource availability, and an emphasis on formal target attainment. From a configurational perspective, these relationships highlight the importance of examining motivational and institutional conditions together rather than treating them as independent influences (Fiss, 2011; Misangyi et al., 2017). However, the identified configurations represent interpretive syntheses of civil servants' work experiences, not causal relationships established through formal Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) or mutually exclusive classifications of individual employees.

The second and third configurations illustrate the potential role of PSM in differentiating performance patterns. Both configurations feature high FCS and low PIC, but they differ in service orientation and reported task performance. Informants' accounts of sustained service commitment despite inconsistent incentives suggest that a public service orientation may help maintain work effort. This finding aligns with Bellé (2013) and Fan et al. (2022), who demonstrated the relevance of PSM to performance, and with Tang et al. (2024), who highlighted contextual variation in this relationship. Thuy and Phinaitrup (2023) also emphasized the roles of job satisfaction and person–organization fit in explaining the relationship between PSM and public servants' performance. Unlike these studies, the present research examines PSM within patterns of work experience that also involve formal control and inconsistent incentives. The findings therefore provide preliminary indications that PSM may serve a compensatory motivational function. However, they do not establish that PSM independently determines performance or eliminates the need for external rewards. The concentration of evidence concerning low PSM within DPMPTSP further limits this interpretation.

Performance incentive consistency appears to provide additional motivation depending on the context of civil servants' work experiences. Comparisons between the first and second configurations indicate that differences in PIC do not coincide with changes in the generally favorable performance pattern when both PSM and FCS remain high. Informants perceived incentives as an additional source of motivation to improve organizational outcomes, while uncertainty about rewards did not necessarily weaken their service commitment. Motivation Crowding Theory provides a conceptual basis for interpreting these findings by explaining how employees' perceptions of external interventions shape their motivational consequences (Frey & Jegen, 2001). Ki (2022) demonstrated that responses to rewards may vary according to employees' levels of PSM, while Larsson et al. (2022) identified both motivating and demotivating implications of performance-related pay. Tu et al. (2024) further examined the relationships among PSM, performance-contingent pay, and job satisfaction through perceived job control. Similarly, van Triest (2024) highlighted the relevance of external rewards to employee effort. The present study extends this discussion by examining incentive consistency within civil servants' work experiences rather

than directly measuring reward amounts or their effects on individual performance. These findings suggest possible partial motivational substitution and functional complementarity, but they do not establish causal crowding-in or crowding-out mechanisms.

The findings concerning FCS highlight the limitations of formal control as a condition that differentiates performance within the observed configurations. All three configurations involve employee performance targets, standard operating procedures, and multilevel evaluations, yet they exhibit different patterns of task execution. This consistency prevents the study from determining the relative contribution of FCS to performance differences. Gerrish (2016) documented variations in the effectiveness of performance management, while Speklé and Verbeeten (2014) emphasized the importance of how organizations use performance measurement systems. Oppi et al. (2022) identified ambiguities in public sector performance measurement, and van der Kolk (2022) highlighted the complexity of performance measurement practices at individual and organizational levels. Grøn and Kristiansen (2022) also examined differences in performance information use across managerial levels. Furthermore, Johnsen et al. (2024) identified a positive relationship between performance measurement system design and the use of performance information in public organizations. Together, these studies underscore the importance of distinguishing the existence of formal control instruments from the ways organizations design and use them. In the present study, overlapping supervision and reporting requirements reflected this complexity, as informants perceived them as additional administrative burdens. This finding also relates to Hill and Plimmer (2024), who examined competing organizational goals, procedural burdens, PSM, and employee performance management in the public sector. Nevertheless, the present study does not establish that control overload directly reduces civil servants' motivation or performance.

From a theoretical perspective, the relationships among PSM, FCS, and PIC demonstrate the relevance of a configurational perspective for understanding civil servants' work experiences within specific institutional contexts. The comparison between the second and third configurations provides preliminary indications that PSM may differentiate performance patterns. Meanwhile, the comparison between the first and second configurations suggests that PIC functions as a perceived source of additional motivation. The relatively constant level of FCS limits conclusions about its role in explaining performance differences. These interpretations align with Fiss (2011) and Misangyi et al. (2017), who emphasized the importance of combinations of conditions in understanding organizational outcomes. However, the available evidence does not support claims of equifinality, causal asymmetry, or necessary and sufficient conditions as defined in formal QCA (Greckhamer et al., 2018). This study contributes an interpretive configurational explanation that connects the possible compensatory role of PSM, the motivational reinforcement associated with incentives, and the role of formal control across different civil servant work situations. This explanation shifts attention from the separate relationships between individual conditions and performance toward their interrelationships within particular institutional settings, without asserting untested causal mechanisms.

Beyond the relationships among these three conditions, the findings identify resource constraints and target-setting practices as contextual factors that shape task execution and performance assessment. Informants described the dependence of nonroutine incentives on budget availability, limitations in organizational resources, and relatively conservative employee performance targets. These circumstances may allow organizations to meet administrative indicators without providing sufficient evidence of substantive work quality or benefits. This issue corresponds to Bevan and Hood's (2006) critique of the potential distortions associated with target-based performance measurement. However, Kelman and Friedman (2009) demonstrated that performance targets do not necessarily generate dysfunction,

highlighting the importance of implementation contexts. Oppi et al. (2022) and Speklé and Verbeeten (2014) likewise emphasized the characteristics and uses of performance measurement systems. In the present study, resource constraints and target design constitute contextual conditions that limit interpretations of the PSM–FCS–PIC configurations rather than formally tested moderating variables. Accordingly, assessments of substantive performance should consider work output quality and public service benefits alongside formal target attainment.

The practical implications of these findings suggest that civil servant performance management should integrate service orientation, reward consistency, and effective administrative control. Agency leaders and human resource managers could strengthen service orientation through professional development and recognition of employees' contributions while improving transparency in incentive provision. Public organizations should also consider reducing redundant reporting requirements and developing indicators that better capture substantive work quality. However, these recommendations represent interpretive implications that require further empirical evaluation. This study has several limitations, including its focus on two local government agencies and 12 informants, the concentration of evidence concerning low PSM primarily within DPMPTSP, and the relative consistency of FCS across configurations. Moreover, the researchers derived the configurations and performance patterns through qualitative synthesis without fully independent measures of substantive performance. Future studies should include organizations with more varied control arrangements, strengthen the triangulation of performance evidence, and apply more systematic configurational analyses to evaluate the applicability of the identified patterns.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that civil servant performance patterns at DPMPTSP and Bapperida in the Special Region of Yogyakarta relate to the interplay of public service motivation (PSM), formal control strength (FCS), and performance incentive consistency (PIC) across different work situations. The cross-case thematic analysis identified three interpretive configurations: two associated with relatively favorable performance and one indicating shortcomings in task execution. Comparisons across configurations suggest that PSM may differentiate performance patterns, whereas civil servants perceive PIC as an additional source of motivation. Meanwhile, consistently high FCS across all three configurations limits the study's ability to determine its role in differentiating performance. These findings suggest that service orientation may help sustain task execution when incentives remain inconsistent, while strong formal supervision does not necessarily coincide with evidence of high substantive performance.

This study contributes an interpretive configurational explanation of the relationships between motivational and institutional conditions in civil servants' work experiences. The findings suggest the possibility of partial motivational substitution when service orientation helps sustain task execution despite inconsistent incentives. They also indicate functional complementarity when civil servants perceive motivation, formal control, and rewards as performing mutually supportive functions. Furthermore, the findings concerning control overload reveal that employees may perceive overlapping supervision and reporting requirements as administrative burdens. Resource constraints and an emphasis on formal target attainment also underscore the importance of distinguishing administrative compliance from substantive work quality and benefits. Accordingly, this study offers a contextual understanding of the relationships between motivational and institutional conditions without claiming to establish causal mechanisms that the available evidence cannot substantiate.

This study has several limitations. It includes only two local government agencies and 12 informants, draws evidence of low PSM primarily from DPMPTSP, and observes relatively consistent levels of FCS across all configurations. Moreover, the researchers developed the configurational patterns through thematic interpretations of civil servants' work experiences rather than mutually exclusive individual classifications or formal Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) procedures. Assessments of performance patterns also lack fully independent measures of substantive performance beyond informant accounts and administrative indicators. Consequently, the findings do not support broad generalizations or establish causal relationships, necessary or sufficient conditions, or the magnitude of each factor's influence on performance. Future research should examine organizations with more diverse institutional characteristics and levels of formal control, strengthen the triangulation of performance evidence, and apply more systematic configurational analyses to assess the applicability of the identified patterns.

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