

# Strategy for Strengthening the AKHLAK Work Culture through the Development of Integrity Zones in the City of Pekanbaru

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## ABSTRACT

The President of the Republic of Indonesia has launched the basic values of AKHLAK ASN as a foundation for strengthening the work culture within the government, in order to support the achievement of individual performance and institutional goals. This article aims to examine various obstacles and identify strategies for implementing the AKHLAK work culture that influence personal performance and organizational goals. Through a case study at the Riau Provincial Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, factors that hinder and support the strengthening of organizational culture were examined. The results of the study show that the factors that hinder and support the strengthening of organizational culture have been evaluated in the context of integrity zone development, especially in the aspect of management change. The higher the fulfillment of values in the aspect of management change, the greater the possibility that factors that hinder organizational culture can be minimized and supporting factors can be realized in practice. Thus, the strengthening of the AKHLAK work culture can be realized through the development of Integrity Zones.

## INTRODUCTION

A strong work culture based on ethical values plays an important role in creating effective, accountable, and public service-oriented governance. Amidst the increasingly complex dynamics of national development, the bureaucracy is required to constantly renew itself in order to respond to the challenges of the times with integrity and professionalism. Therefore, strengthening work culture has become one of the main strategies in bureaucratic reform in Indonesia (Tyastianti, 2022).

A strong work culture builds the integrity of ASNs. Transparency and honesty at work can reduce the potential for corruption and prevent abuse of authority in the government environment. In addition, work culture also creates efficiency in the use of resources and increases the productivity of ASNs. With the implementation of a good work culture, ASNs can build a more positive work environment and be ready to face change (Ghozi et al., 2025).

The city of Pekanbaru, as the capital of Riau Province, is a rapidly developing city with various challenges in governance and public services. In an effort to improve the quality of services to the community, the city government recognizes the importance of strengthening a work culture of integrity and professionalism among ASN. This has become the basis for initiating strategic steps to realize a clean, transparent, and accountable bureaucracy.

One of the strategies implemented is the development of Integrity Zones (ZI) towards Corruption-Free Zones (WBK) and Clean and Serving Bureaucracy Zones (WBBM). Integrity Zones are a concept of change that seeks to transform the bureaucracy into a more effective and efficient one through a shared commitment to preventing corruption and improving the quality of public services. With the ZI in place, it is hoped that the AKHLAK work culture can be more easily implemented and become a key characteristic of the bureaucracy in Pekanbaru.

In addition to technical aspects, strengthening the work culture must also take into account the cultural and social challenges inherent in the bureaucracy. For example, resistance to change, lack of understanding of new values, and long-established practices. Therefore, intensive socialization and continuous guidance are an important part of the Integrity Zone development strategy so that the desired work culture can be fully internalized.

The positive impacts expected from strengthening the AKHLAK work culture through the development of the Integrity Zone include improved quality of public services, reduced corruption, and increased public trust in local government. The implementation of a healthy and ethical work culture opens up opportunities to accelerate the achievement of regional development targets in a more transparent and participatory manner.

Case studies in several government agencies in Pekanbaru show that the establishment of Integrity Zones can encourage significant changes in the way civil servants work, improve discipline, and create a work environment conducive to innovation in public services. However, this success also depends on consistent leadership and support from all elements of the organization.

Therefore, building a strong AKHLAK work culture through Integrity Zones is not merely an administrative program, but a fundamental transformation that requires long-term commitment and synergy between the government, civil servants, and the community. These efforts must continue to be developed so that Pekanbaru can become an example of a city with a modern bureaucracy that is ethical and in the interests of the people.

This article will discuss in depth various aspects related to the strategy of strengthening the AKHLAK work culture through the development of the Integrity Zone in the city of Pekanbaru. With a systematic approach, it is hoped that readers will gain a complete and practical overview of the efforts to transform the work culture in local government.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### a. Work Culture

Work culture is essentially a set of values, norms, and habits that are shared and serve as guidelines for behavior within an organization. Work culture is key to an organization's success in improving the quality of its resources, which in turn will increase employee productivity and lead to high performance. Without a good culture, it will be very difficult for an organization to achieve optimal results (Risman, 2023).

In the context of bureaucracy, work culture is not only interpreted as work ethic or discipline, but also includes professionalism, honesty, responsibility, and public service orientation. A strong work culture in the civil service environment can form habits that support improved performance and work productivity. With a positive work culture, employees are expected to be able to provide dedication and innovation in serving the community. In addition, a good work culture helps reduce negative behaviors such as laziness, corruption, and convoluted bureaucracy, which have been obstacles in public service. Therefore, the development of a work culture in government must be managed systematically through training, guidance, and the implementation of supportive regulations.

Overall, Indonesia's bureaucratic reform needs to continue to prioritize sustainable work culture renewal so that civil servants are able to face national and global development challenges. According to Putra (2015), the implementation of the Grand Design of Bureaucratic Reform with a focus on work culture based on AKHLAK will ensure an efficient, effective, and highly competitive bureaucracy in this modern era.

### b. Morals

The term morals comes from the Arabic word *khuluq*, which means character, nature, or manners. Morals are traits that are ingrained in the soul, giving rise to spontaneous actions without the need for lengthy thought. Thus, morals are not only outward behavior, but also include the inner state that underlies every action.

In Islam, morals occupy a very important position because they are a manifestation of a person's faith. The Prophet Muhammad SAW was sent to perfect

noble morals (*innamā bu'itstu li utammima makārimal akhlāq*). For civil servants, morals are the moral foundation that guides them to work honestly, fairly, trustworthily, and uphold the interests of the community above personal interests. This is in line with the AKHLAK values established by the government as the core values of ASN, namely: Service-oriented, Accountable, Competent, Harmonious, Loyal, Adaptive, and Collaborative.

Furthermore, morals also serve as a counterbalance in bureaucratic practices, which often face challenges of corruption and abuse of authority. By instilling strong moral values, it is hoped that government employees will reject various forms of unethical behavior and maintain professionalism in their work. Good morals will guide ASN to become role models for the community while supporting the creation of clean and transparent governance (Menpan RB, 2021).

c. Integrity Zone

Integrity Zone (ZI) is a title given to government agencies whose leaders and entire staff are strongly committed to realizing a Corruption-Free Zone (WBK) and a Clean and Serving Bureaucracy Zone (WBBM). According to PermenPANRB Number 10 of 2019, the development of ZI is carried out through six areas of change, namely: change management, administrative restructuring, human resource management system restructuring, strengthening performance accountability, strengthening supervision, and improving the quality of public services.

The implementation of the Integrity Zone (ZI) involves concrete steps to transform the work culture of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) to be more integrity-based and responsive. One of the key aspects is strengthening change management, where ASN are encouraged to adopt a new mindset through intensive training programs and socialization of AKHLAK values, which include trustworthiness in carrying out duties, competence in religious services, harmony in interactions between units, loyalty to the institution, adaptability to technological developments, and collaboration in solving community problems.

Additionally, strengthening oversight and performance accountability in the ZI serves as a foundation to prevent negative practices such as nepotism or abuse of authority. These mechanisms include the formation of an internal oversight team involving ASN from various levels, as well as the integration of technology-based monitoring systems such as integrity tracking applications.

In addition, strengthening supervision and performance accountability in ZI is fundamental to preventing negative practices such as nepotism or abuse of authority. This mechanism includes the formation of an internal supervisory team involving civil servants from various levels, as well as the integration of technology-based monitoring systems such as integrity tracking applications to track daily performance.

## METHODOLOGY

This study aims to examine the implementation of strategies to strengthen the AKHLAK work culture through the development of integrity zones. The objectives of this study can be achieved by using descriptive analysis, which is a research method that uses descriptive techniques to describe or provide an overview of a research object using the research object or case study process as a sample and providing conclusions that apply generally without making comparisons or connections between the variables being studied.

The researcher believes that qualitative descriptive research will better explain the language that can be used to describe a phenomenon in a more systematic manner. These phenomena can be in the form of shapes, activities, characteristics, changes, relationships, and differences between one phenomenon and another. Qualitative research is more in-depth and accurate, and the results of the research will be more descriptive and analytical so that the questions in the research can be answered. Qualitative data collection techniques are carried out through interviews, direct observation, and documentation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### a. Changes in Work Culture in Bureaucratic Reform

Presidential Regulation No. 81 of 2010 concerning the Grand Design of Bureaucratic Reform 2010–2025 marked the beginning of bureaucratic reform in Indonesia. In its implementation, a road map for bureaucratic reform is prepared every five years with change management programs applied at the meso (national) and micro (ministries, institutions, and local governments) levels. In the 2010–2014 period, the main focus of the change management program was the establishment of a good work culture as part of efforts to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the bureaucracy. The objective of this program is to make continuous improvements to the system, organizational work mechanisms, and the attitudes and work culture of individuals or work units in line with the objectives of bureaucratic reform.

Entering the 2020-2024 Bureaucratic Reform Road Map, the focus at the micro level continues to prioritize work culture as an important part of change management. This activity emphasizes the development of a work culture and work methods that are adaptive to the challenges of the 4.0 industrial revolution. This adaptation is expected to encourage the transformation of the bureaucracy to be more responsive, productive, and innovative in facing the dynamics of technological developments and increasingly complex public service needs.

In 2023, there were significant changes to the objectives of bureaucratic reform, its implementation activities, and its refinement indicators. These changes implied adjustments to the targets and strategies of bureaucratic reform to align with the achievement of national development goals and the improvement of Indonesia's competitiveness at the international level. The strategic goal of bureaucratic reform is to create a work culture based on AKHLAK (ethics) with professional civil servants (ASN) as an important soft element in the bureaucracy.

This work culture supports ASN in providing high-quality public services through commitment, capability, motivation, behavior, performance, and superior competitiveness.

Furthermore, one of the indicators of the success of bureaucratic reform targeted for 2024 is the achievement of a AKHLAK index survey score of 67.142%. At the meso level, acceleration policies have been directed at conducting company branding value surveys and AKHLAK index surveys as benchmarks for progress. Meanwhile, at the micro level, the main focus is on implementing the core values of ASN in every public service activity. Thus, bureaucratic reform does not only focus on administrative systems and procedures, but also on forming a work culture that is integrity-based and adaptive in order to support the achievement of national development targets.

Overall, Indonesia's bureaucratic reform needs to continue to prioritize sustainable work culture renewal so that civil servants are able to face national and global development challenges. According to Putra (2015), the implementation of the Grand Design of Bureaucratic Reform with a focus on work culture based on AKHLAK will ensure an efficient, effective, and highly competitive bureaucracy in this modern era.

b. Work Culture Change in Integrity Zone Development

Integrity Zone Development is a small part of bureaucratic reform carried out in work units or units that directly provide services to the community. In the process of Integrity Zone (ZI) development, work culture is a key factor in the area of change management. To meet the demands of the times and the increasingly complex needs of the community, this area of change aims to change the mindset and work culture of individual Civil Servants (ASN) as well as the organization's work systems and mechanisms. They strive to become more flexible, innovative, responsive, professional, and have integrity.

From a reform perspective, the success of the change management area is measured through the condition of the work unit, the implementation of change agents, the work culture and mindset applied within the organization, and the involvement of organization members in the development of the ZI towards WBK/WBBM.

c. Work Culture at the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs

The President of the Republic of Indonesia established the ASN AKHLAK Core Values (Service-Oriented, Accountable, Competent, Harmonious, Loyal, Adaptive, and Collaborative) in 2021 to improve work culture and support the achievement of individual performance and organizational goals.

Based on interviews with one of the employees at the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the implementation of the integrity zone in the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs has shown significant progress to date, supporting the creation of a clean and accountable work environment. The first step taken was to develop an action plan focused on achieving a Corruption-Free Zone (WBK) and a Clean and Serving Bureaucracy Zone (WBBM). All

employees were actively involved through socialization and the implementation of routine activities that instilled values of integrity on an ongoing basis.

To strengthen the AKHLAK work culture, the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs has conducted regular training and guidance sessions that cover the alignment of perceptions regarding moral values in public service and the importance of integrity. Every service activity and work procedure is monitored to prevent corruption and abuse of authority. If violations are found, there are handling procedures that involve internal evaluation and investigation, as well as the imposition of sanctions in accordance with applicable regulations to ensure that discipline and accountability are maintained. However, the implementation of the integrity zone faces several obstacles, such as resistance from some employees who do not fully understand the changes in work culture, as well as limited resources for monitoring. To overcome this, the work unit establishes open communication between leaders and all employees so that obstacles can be identified and resolved together.

The role of leadership is crucial to the success of establishing integrity zones in this Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Leaders act as role models who demonstrate a high commitment to the values of integrity and the AKHLAK work culture. Leaders also initiate strategic policies, oversee program implementation, and encourage the active participation of all employees.

d. Strengthening the AKHLAK work culture through the development of integrity zones

The Pekanbaru Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs has been developing Integrity Zones since November 2019 as part of a national effort to realize WBK and WBBM. Leaders in the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs must set an example in applying AKHLAK values and integrity zones. Various programs, motivation, discipline, providing excellent service, and rewarding civil servants who demonstrate high integrity will strengthen the shared commitment to change towards a better work culture.

In strengthening the AKHLAK work culture, every service procedure at the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Pekanbaru has been updated and supplemented with relevant behavioral indicators. The service-oriented aspect is manifested in the formulation of service promises as a commitment to quality for the community, while the accountable aspect is implemented through transparency in costs, completion times, and service result reporting. The Pekanbaru Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs is optimizing various digital service applications such as Simkah (Marriage Management Information System), Sihlal (Halal Information System), and EMIS (Education Management Information System) as a form of implementing the values of adaptability and accountability of civil servants. The use of these digital systems aims to improve the efficiency of public services, strengthen information transparency, and minimize potential irregularities in administrative processes. This digital transformation not only speeds up services but also embodies the commitment to a modern, responsive bureaucracy that is oriented towards public satisfaction.

Several obstacles that have arisen are technical in nature, such as server disruptions, slow internet connections, and system maintenance that is sometimes carried out during active service hours. This condition is particularly felt in the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) located in areas with limited network infrastructure. On the other hand, each application has its own system and database, so integration between platforms has not been optimal. For example, data from the EMIS application is not yet fully connected to other information systems, so administrative processes are sometimes still carried out manually.

The Integrity Zone program at the Pekanbaru Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs is also evaluated periodically through internal and external monitoring activities by the Inspectorate General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and public satisfaction surveys. This evaluation process is carried out to identify areas that are still weak and to ensure that the implementation of AKHLAK values is consistent across all work units. Continuous supervision plays an important role in maintaining the effectiveness of the Integrity Zone implementation, as it can encourage policy improvements, strengthen accountability, and improve the quality of public services. The results of public satisfaction surveys are also an indicator of the organization's success in creating a clean, efficient bureaucracy that is responsive to public needs.

The implementation of the Integrity Zone program at the Pekanbaru Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs is also evaluated periodically through internal and external monitoring activities by the Inspectorate General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and public satisfaction surveys. This evaluation process is carried out to identify areas that are still weak and to ensure that the implementation of AKHLAK values is consistent across all work units. Continuous supervision plays an important role in maintaining the effectiveness of the Integrity Zone implementation, as it can encourage policy improvements, strengthen accountability, and improve the quality of public services.

The results of the public satisfaction survey also serve as an indicator of the organization's success in creating a clean, efficient, and responsive bureaucracy that meets public needs.

## CONCLUSION

This study aims to answer the main question of how the strategy to strengthen the AKHLAK work culture is implemented through the development of the Integrity Zone (ZI) within the Pekanbaru Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kanwil Kemenag). Based on the research results and data analysis, it can be concluded that the strategy to strengthen the AKHLAK work culture at the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Pekanbaru is carried out through a systematic approach that emphasizes changing the mindset and work culture of civil servants. Leaders play a central role as role models who instill AKHLAK values through policies, moral guidance, and intensive communication with all employees. Thus, the results of this study show that strengthening the AKHLAK work culture through the development of Integrity Zones can be optimally implemented if it is



supported by leadership with integrity, continuous guidance, and a measurable and participatory monitoring system.

Although the results of the study show the success of implementing this strategy, there are several limitations that need to be considered. This study only focused on one object, namely the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Pekanbaru, so the results cannot be generalized to all government agencies in Indonesia. In addition, this study used a qualitative descriptive method with a case study approach, which made the results contextual and in-depth, but not comparative between agencies. The limited time available for the study and access to internal organizational data also limited the scope of analysis of the long-term effectiveness of the Integrity Zone on quantitative improvements in civil servant performance.

Several practical suggestions can be made. For the Pekanbaru Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, it is necessary to strengthen the integration of digital systems such as SIMKAH, SIHALAL, and EMIS so that they can be efficiently connected and support the principle of transparency in public services. For the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, it is recommended to expand and standardize internal training on AKHLAK values throughout Indonesia to create uniformity in understanding and implementing the ASN work culture. Meanwhile, for other government agencies, the results of this study can be used as a reference in designing Integrity Zone development strategies with an emphasis on exemplary leadership, digital transformation, and performance-based evaluation systems. For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct further research involving more agencies and using mixed methods to obtain more comprehensive and measurable results regarding the relationship between work culture, Integrity Zone, and ASN performance.

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