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PREFACE

The evolution of public administration studies over the past decade demonstrates a significant shift from procedural and technocratic approaches toward a more critical, reflexive, and contextual analysis. Global discourse no longer merely emphasizes bureaucratic efficiency and effectiveness; instead, it increasingly interrogates power relations, the complexities of governance, the paradoxes of accountability, and the tensions between policy design and field implementation (Burris, Kempa, & Shearing, 2008; Haus, 2018; Triantafillou, 2017). Within this landscape, contemporary public administration operates amidst the competing demands of managerial rationality, public legitimacy, and increasingly fluid socio-political dynamics.

Volume 17, Number 1 (2026) of *Administratio* serves as a reflection on these debates, presenting seven articles that thematically enrich global discourse while remaining deeply rooted in the Indonesian context. Broadly, the articles in this issue can be categorized into three major thematic streams: (1) governance challenges and power relations, (2) digital transformation and implementation gaps, and (3) public service performance and sustainability-based approaches.

The first article, by Haridinuto and Surachman Surjaatmadja, addresses a strategic issue in defense governance by framing defense spending not merely as a fiscal matter, but as a long-term strategic investment. Their study reveals that the primary challenge lies in governance fragmentation, which leads to a "capability leak" resulting from unintegrated fiscal planning, procurement, and sustainment. These findings enrich global debates on public value and long-term governance capacity, particularly within a sector that has traditionally been closed to public scrutiny.

The second article, by Maria Lusiana Florentin Werang et al., critiques the classical assumptions of decentralization by uncovering the phenomenon of "recentralization within decentralization." The study asserts that regional autonomy in Indonesia remains overshadowed by central government control through regulatory and fiscal instruments, thereby generating overlapping authority and fragmented accountability. This finding is highly relevant to global discourses on multi-level governance and the challenges of authority distribution in developing countries.

The third article, authored by Savira Nur Aini, Sudarmo, and Faizatul Ansoriyah, examines the paradox of accountability within faith-based hybrid organizations. Although these institutions exhibit high levels of formal compliance, substantive accountability—particularly regarding stakeholder participation and impact evaluation—remains limited. This study expands the understanding of public accountability as an arena of value contestation rather than a mere technocratic mechanism, aligning with global critiques of audit culture.

The fourth article, written by Sutarjo et al., focuses on public service performance—specifically licensing services—by positioning service quality as a mediating variable between work culture, employee competence, and public satisfaction. The results indicate that organizational culture exerts a stronger influence than technical competence alone. This finding underscores the importance of a holistic approach to bureaucratic reform, one that targets not only individual capacity but also organizational values and norms.

The fifth and sixth articles concurrently address the issue of digital transformation in the public sector. The study on the implementation of the Foreigner Reporting Application (APOA) by Fitriana Riscadewi Warisno, Sudarmo, and Sri Yuliani identifies a systemic decoupling between digital policy design and implementation realities, marked by low adoption rates. Conversely, the study on the election logistics system (SILOG) by Matheus Gratiano Mali, Faisal Yudi Anugerah, and Eko Ari Wibowo demonstrates that digitalization can enhance integration and efficiency, yet remains contingent upon institutional support, resource capacity, and local context. Together, both articles reaffirm that digital governance is not deterministic; rather, it is heavily shaped by socio-organizational factors.

The seventh article, by Asti Amelia Novita and Gita Zulfie Ramadhani, integrates bibliometric approaches and risk analysis within the context of conservation-based sustainable tourism. Their research highlights a shifting global trend toward integrating governance, ecosystems, and sustainable development, while identifying key risks such as tourism overcapacity and habitat disruption. This study provides a vital contribution by linking global discourse to local imperatives through a risk-based approach.

Collectively, the seven articles in this issue share a common thread: the prominent existence of a policy-practice gap and the necessity of viewing public administration as a dynamic, contextual process imbued with political and social dimensions. Furthermore, a strong overarching theme emerges regarding the need for integration—whether in resource governance, intergovernmental relations, or digital transformation—as a prerequisite for generating sustainable public value.

Ultimately, we hope this edition serves not only as an academic contribution but also as a catalyst for critical reflection among practitioners, policymakers, and the wider public in understanding and responding to the challenges of contemporary public administration. May the discourse presented herein enrich perspectives and foster innovation toward public governance that is more adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable.

Editor

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