



Spirit of Bureaucratic Change of Decision Makers in Banyumas District Facing Challenges in the VUCA Era

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A B S T R A C T

Decentralization requires the bureaucracy to be able to solve various problems faced by the community at the local level. Meanwhile, the context of social change in society is directly proportional to the complexity of opportunities. The greater the complexity of the opportunity, the greater the uncertainty. The VUCA Era created uncertainty in human civilization, including public administration. Public administration must ensure how far the uncertainties in the VUCA Era can be anticipated in efforts to organize public administration, particularly in the decision-making process. For this reason, this article aims to identify the spirit of change in decision-making bureaucrats in Banyumas Regency to face the VUCA Era. The method used is a descriptive quantitative approach. Data was collected using a survey method for decision-making bureaucrats within government agencies in Banyumas Regency. The results of the study show that the level of spirit of change in decision-maker bureaucrats in Banyumas Regency in facing challenges in the VUCA era is at a moderate level. This indicates that decision-making bureaucrats still need support and encouragement in facing challenges in the VUCA era, especially adaptability and sustainable positive change.

INTRODUCTION

The bureaucracy in Indonesia plays a crucial role as the principal agent in national development, particularly in the context of an emerging nation. The implementation of regional autonomy, as mandated by the Law on Regional Government, requires the bureaucracy to act as problem solvers and address the various challenges faced by communities at the regional level. However, the perception of bureaucracy as a symbol of dominance rather than as public servants have hindered efforts to improve the quality of public services (Gong & Yang, 2019; Hussain, 1984; Kapur, 1990; Oleksiyenko, 2019). This is especially relevant in developing countries like Indonesia, where the bureaucracy continues to play a central role in various aspects of development, making it challenging to delegate tasks to entities outside the government. Consequently, there is a prevailing view that the bureaucracy in Indonesia often reflects a "bureaucratic politics" model, characterized by a concentration of power within the state and limited public participation in the political process (Jackson, 2021; Kanchoochat & Hewison, 2016; Laothamatas, 2019; Mangan et al., 1981).

The uncertainty and complexity of the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) era pose significant challenges to human civilization, including the field of public administration. In this era, decision-making becomes crucial, as leaders are tasked with navigating through a multitude of choices and their consequences (Albejaidi et al., 2020; Cherry, 2020; Sharma & Singh, 2013; Vroom, 2003). It is essential for public administration to ensure widespread community involvement in the decision-making process (Mustanir et al., 2018). By actively involving the community, public administration can address public issues more effectively, as the speed of addressing these issues increases when the community is actively engaged. Therefore, to tackle various public problems and manage diverse interests, an approach that aggregates

interests and public issues is necessary. A strong policy network and collaboration among various stakeholders, including the government, public, and private sectors, are crucial in the decision-making process (Innes & Booher, 2018).

Enroth (2014) highlights in their article, "Governance: The Art of Governing After Governmentality," that the governance approach goes beyond policy-making and emphasizes the involvement of citizens in solving complex societal problems. Governance involves not only the art of governing through policies but also active citizen participation to address these challenges. This approach becomes particularly relevant in the VUCA era, which demands innovative solutions. This article aims to identify the spirit of change among decision-making bureaucrats in the Banyumas district as they navigate the challenges of the VUCA era.

The existence of a spirit of change in bureaucratic performance is of paramount importance, especially in times of global uncertainty where agile bureaucrats are needed to confront challenges. The demands placed on society and civil servants, as the main pillars of the bureaucracy, are increasingly urgent, requiring adaptability in a constantly changing and unpredictable environment, particularly within the VUCA era (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity). In response to these challenges, civil servants must embody dynamism and possess the ability to make quick and accurate decisions (LAN RI, 2021). The findings of this research endeavor to describe the presence of a spirit of bureaucratic change in the district as it confronts the challenges of the VUCA era.

The implementation of great concepts heavily relies on how executives execute them. It is often said that "We are what we think," highlighting the influence of our thoughts on shaping our identity. Similarly, the proverb "you are who your friends are" emphasizes the impact of our social environment, including our friends, on our character (Kasali, 2015). In the context of

bureaucratic performance, this implies that both thinking patterns and the surrounding environment play a significant role. True change, therefore, goes beyond technological advancements, methods, or organizational structures. It involves transforming mindset and human behavior (Kasali, 2015).

In the human body, there exists a molecule known as deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) (Ehn et al., 2003; Kasali, 2015). This DNA is inherent to each individual and contributes to the formation of their character. However, the environment also plays a role in shaping one's character, including bureaucrats who possess unique characteristics influencing their performance (Stanford, 2018). Consequently, these characteristics are influenced by various internal and external factors impacting the individual bureaucrat. Changes in bureaucratic character are thus influenced by internal factors related to the individual's personality development and external factors associated with the organizational context (Costa et al., 2005; Costa & McCrae, 1998).

Meanwhile, organizational design is an external-dimensional factor that can influence the spirit of performance change in each individual. This is in line with the results of studies that show bureaucratic change is influenced not only by the revitalization of human resources but also by the commitment to advance patterns or new designs within organizations, including the promotion of a more open organizational climate, service, accountability, and ethics (Al-Hamid, 2021; Jung, 2008; Oleksiyenko, 2019; Prabhu, 2020). The spirit of change will be determined by changes in organizational design and restructuring (Pasmore et al., 2019; Rashid et al., 2009; Stanford, 2018). This demonstrates that change can occur with the support of the organization itself. Assessing organizational design means examining how much the external environment supports individuals in their endeavor to support the process of performance change.

The spirit of change is the will of each individual to make a shift, leap, or attempt to transition from one condition to another (Benach, 2021; Campbell & Meyer, 1980; Ehn et al., 2003; Hussain, 1984; Kapur, 1990; Kasali, 2015; McMillan & Meyer, 1980). The rate of change-forming components (DNA) represents the degree of individual self-acceptance of change. Change DNA is an internal self-dimensional factor that can be observed through the following indicators: (1) Openness of mind or openness to experience; (2) Openness of heart and ear or conscientiousness; (3) Openness to others or extroversion; (4) Openness to agreement or agreeableness; (5) Openness to stress or neuroticism (Costa et al., 2005; Costa & McCrae, 1998; Gogu, 2017; Karp, 2006; Kasali, 2015). Therefore, this study aims to describe the existence of the spirit of bureaucratic change in the district in the face of the challenges of the VUCA Era. This research is urgently needed to test the spirit of bureaucratic performance change in responding to the challenges of uncertainty, requiring agile bureaucrats to face the challenges of change.

METHOD

This research adopts a descriptive quantitative approach, collecting data through survey methods. Survey methods are research techniques that sample from a population and use questionnaires as the primary tool for data collection (Groeneveld et al., 2015; van der Wal, 2014; Walliman, 2014). In the survey study, the researchers selected a number of respondents as samples and provided them with a defined

questionnaire. Survey research can be distinguished into two types: a descriptive survey that aims to provide an overview or record of a phenomenon, and an analytical survey that aims to explain a phenomenon by studying two or more research variables to answer a research question or test a hypothesis (Gray, 2014)

The population in this study consists of bureaucrats working in government agencies in Banyumas District, which consists of 27 agencies, including the Secretariat, Service, Body, Inspectorate, and *pamong praja* police unit (*Satpol PP*). The sampling technique used is cluster sampling, considering each instance as a cluster. From each agency, one person was selected as a respondent, making a total sample of 27 people. Data was collected using a survey method with a questionnaire instrument. The data in this study is analyzed by designing descriptive quantitative data analysis, utilizing techniques of frequency distribution analysis and categorization/classification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on data gathered from 27 respondents through the survey questionnaire instrument, it was found that 23 respondents, or 85.2% were men, while 4 respondents or 14.8% were women. The data suggests that the majority of respondents in this study are men, indicating that the decision-maker bureaucrats in Banyumas district are mostly male. This observation is further supported by similar facts found in secondary data. According to staff statistics published by the Banyumas Regional Police Agency (BKD) as of July 2012, out of a total staff of 16,377 people, 8,227 were men and 7,880 were women.

Regarding the age distribution of respondents, data collected through the questionnaire instrument revealed a wide range of ages, from the youngest to the oldest participants. Based on the criteria of the Central Statistical Authority of the Republic of Indonesia (BPS RI), age classification can be divided into four categories: (1) less productive age ranges between 65 years and over, (2) productive age ranges between 50 to 64 years, (3) highly productive age ranges between 15 to 49 years, and non-productive age ranges between 0 to 14 years. When the age spread is grouped according to the classification criteria of BPS, the results can be shown in the following table:

Table 1. Respondent Age Group

No.	Age Group	Frequency (people)	Percentage (%)
1	Productive	7	25,5
2	Very Productive	20	74,5
	Total	27	100

Source: Primary data processed, 2023.

Based on the table, it is evident that the majority of respondents, accounting for 74.5%, belong to the age group between 40 and 49, indicating that most of the respondents are in a highly productive age group. The remaining 25.5 percent of respondents fall within the age range of 50 to 57, suggesting that the majority of respondents are bureaucrats in the very productive age bracket. This information highlights the fact that the Government of Banyumas district possesses a significant human resource potential, as it comprises state officials in their highly productive years. This potential can be effectively harnessed to strengthen the management of local government.

The respondent's characteristics, based on their length of work in the bureaucratic environment of the government, were collected through purchasing instruments and are presented in the following table:

Table 1. Working Experience Category

No.	Working Experience (year)	Frequency (people)	Percentage (%)
1	5 - 10	11	40,4
2	11 - 20	11	40,0
3	More than 20	5	19,6
Total		27	100

Source: Primary data processed, 2023.

The majority, or 40.4%, of respondents in the Banyumas district government have 5 to 10 years of working experience, followed by 11 to 20 years with a percentage of 40% of the total respondents. This data indicates that most bureaucrats have been working for a relatively long time, implying that they are likely familiar with the culture and complexities of local government management in the Banyumas District.

Spirit of Change

In reality, change does not solely involve the application of technology, methods, organizational structure, or the appointment of new managers. True change is about transforming the way people think and behave (Kasali, 2015). It means that change does not solely originate from external factors but is deeply rooted in an individual's spirit. Understanding the spirit of change signifies the extent of an individual's willingness to transition from one condition to another (Ehn et al., 2003; Kasali, 2015). The importance of the spirit within each individual cannot be underestimated in driving the process of change. Consequently, studying the spirit of change among bureaucrats becomes crucial to comprehend. The following table displays the survey results on the extent of the spirit of change among respondents.

Tabel 2. Description of Spirit of Change

No.	Level	Frequency	Percentage
1	Low	8	28%
2	Moderate	14	54%
3	High	5	17%
Total		27	100%

Source: Primary data processed, 2023.

Based on the table above, the frequency of the spirit change scores for respondents ranges from a minimum score of 6 to a maximum of 15. The minimum and maximum scores of 6 and 15 indicate that the respondents' spirit of change varies between low and high levels. The distribution of frequency of the spirit of change is divided into 3 (three) interval classes: 6-9 for the lower level, 10-12 for the middle level, and 13-15 for the high level. To provide an overview, the communicative tables above will be loaded.

In general, 54% of respondents had a moderate or moderate level of change spirit, while 28% had lower levels of change spirit, and only 17% had higher levels of change spirit. This indicates that the spirit of change among respondents is generally considered to be at a moderate to low level. The scale has not yet shown an impressive degree, implying that the will to change in the face of the challenges of the VUCA Era is not

fully apparent. While respondents believe that change is necessary, they still exercise caution and prefer a controlled approach. They view organizational conditions as not requiring radical change and consider it more as a policy security, although they acknowledge the need to uphold the values of truth. This portrayal provides information that there is uncertainty among bureaucrats regarding the process of change.

To further explore the relationship between the spirit of bureaucratic change and the age of the respondents, cross-tabulation is conducted. This second cross-tabulation contains scores between the spirit rate of change and the respondent's age group. The results of the tabulation are presented in the following table:

Table 3. Cross Tabulation of the spirit of change and age

Age group	Level of Spirit of Change			Total
	Low	Moderate	High	
Very Productive (15-49 year)	6 (30%)	10 (50%)	4 (20%)	20
Productive (50-64 year)	1 (20%)	5 (60%)	1 (20%)	7
Total	62	124	49	27

Source: Primary data processed, 2023.

Starting from the Table and Picture, it is evident that both bureaucrats in the productive age group and highly productive age group exhibit a moderate or moderate level of the spirit of change. However, by examining the percentages, we can observe that the tendency to change is higher among respondents in the older age groups. This indicates that older bureaucrats demonstrate a greater consciousness and willingness to change compared to their younger counterparts.

Response in Decision Making

Table 5. Response Description in Decision Making

No.	Level of Response	Frequency	Percentage
1	Low	12	41 %
2	Moderate	13	50 %
3	High	2	9 %
Total		27	100%

Source: Primary data processed, 2023.

Observing the table and picture above, it can be observed that the component that shapes the spirit of change in the decision-making dimension among bureaucrats, in general, is at a moderate to low level or can be considered relatively low. This indicates that respondents generally lack a strong spirit of change to effectively support the process of change in response to the challenges of the VUCA Era.

The Bureaucratic Change-Forming Component

DNA (Deoxyribonucleic Acid) is a component inherent in each individual. The character-forming component in the change or alteration of DNA may not necessarily be a permanent trait present in every individual in the organization. The extent to which it exists remains a question to be explored. The following table presents the survey results of DNA change components among bureaucrats in the Banyumas District Government Instance.

Table 6. Description of Change DNA

No	Level	Frequency	Percentage
1	Low	8	30 %
2	Moderate	15	55 %
3	High	4	15 %
Total		27	100%

Source: Primary data processed, 2023.

Observing the Table and Figure, it is evident that 55% of the total respondents had a medium rate of DNA change, 30% had a low rate, and only 15% had a high rate of DNA change. This indicates that the character-forming components of bureaucratic change in the DNA are generally at a moderate to low level or can be considered relatively low.

A moderate level of DNA change rate implies that respondents generally lack significant DNA change to fully support the process of change towards clean governance. Respondents tend to prefer habitual activities over breakthroughs, even though they recognize the necessity of change. They are more inclined to adapt to situations rather than take bold, clear principles. Moreover, respondents seem to seek comfort and avoid excessive risks.

One of the major agendas of regional reform and autonomy is the moral building of government. The spirit of reform aims to facilitate a dynamic and adaptive government in the face of social change (dynamic governance). This concept applies to bureaucratic reform efforts in Banyumas district. The survey results indicate that the majority of respondents had moderate levels of change in spirit, which aligns with the findings of research conducted by Rosyadi (2014) showing that the government bureaucracy in Banyumas district has the potential for elements of openness in achieving good governance. However, this effort is hindered by the low openness of the apparatus. Hence, the majority of bureaucratic apparatus exhibits a tendency to be resistant to new things and change. These facts appear to contradict the shift in the paradigm of state administration from government to governance. Such a paradigm shift requires bureaucrats to be more open to new ideas and changes to be flexible in accepting change.

Neo dan Chen (2007, 2010) also put forward a similar idea, emphasizing that the course of government in a country must be able to adapt to changing times and public demands. This concept is known as dynamic governance, wherein governance is burdened with change to meet public demands and enable the bureaucracy to continually evolve and adapt to developments. The framework of dynamic governance gives primary attention to the organization's culture and the capacity of its apparatus to drive constant change. For dynamic governance to be realized, a capable apparatus is essential. Such an apparatus continuously thinks ahead, reevaluates, and thinks across various aspects to make adaptive and meaningful decisions. Additionally, the organizational culture and beliefs must align with social change to facilitate continuous change in response to public challenges. Referring to the views of Neo and Chen (2007, 2010) the continuity of change can only be realized when the capacity of the apparatus is well-developed and an organizational culture that supports the change process is introduced. To achieve this, a breakthrough is needed to reinforce values and enhance the capacity of each bureaucratic individual, aiming for dynamic governance.

Similar patterns are apparent from the results of the survey in this study, indicating that the spirit of change among

bureaucrats in the Government Instance of Banyumas District is generally still at a moderate level. It suggests that the willingness or desire to change among bureaucrats remains moderate, and they are not fully aware of the importance of change. For change to occur, the intricate nuances, relationship patterns, and boundaries within an organization must align with a design that is ready for the upcoming process of change, rather than being resistant to change efforts.

Promoting public ethics in a public organization is crucial for fulfilling the public interest in maintaining public administration (Lewis, 2021; Williams & Lewis, 2021). To achieve this, public apparatus must have ethical responsibility and start taking individual responsibility. Each individual bureaucrat should be free from a systematic misunderstanding of ethics and understand the ethical values genuinely sought after by the public, rather than advancing ethical values solely based on their long-standing embodiment within the organization.

The findings of the study reveal that environmental influences from outside bureaucratic individuals who have not fully supported change towards clean governance contribute to the relatively low spirit of change among bureaucrats. This indicates that the advancement of ethical responsibility through taking individual responsibility has not been fully embraced in the Government Instance of Banyumas District. Bureaucrats still tend to adhere to old systemic conditions and ethical habits that do not fully support the effort to change towards clean governance. Building an ethical agency within the framework of ethical responsibility is necessary to uphold and guarantee the continuity of ethical behavior in a public organization (Lewis, 2021; Williams & Lewis, 2021).

The ethical infrastructure should encompass publicly oriented ethical values and detect indications of ethical violations related to clean governance. The lack of functioning of this ethical agency contributes to the limited desire for change towards clean governance, as bureaucrats still rely on long-standing ethical values without fully understanding the real ethical guidelines required. Promoting clean government as an ethical value requires ethical responsibility through two paths: advancing individual responsibility and developing the function of an ethical agency within public organizations, including bureaucracy. Denhardt and Denhardt (2015) argued that in the modern era of bureaucracy, the government is required to serve rather than steer, prioritizing people's values over productivity. Decisions made by organizational leadership have external impacts on beneficiaries and stakeholders. Despite the complex management environment in the VUCA era, one organization's management decisions always influence those of another organization. Therefore, the methods and forms of decision-making used by managers are crucial. Collaborative decision-making methods can be employed in public affairs involving stakeholders, including decision-makers, recipients, and related parties. By involving more parties in public affairs management, a broader public perspective can be incorporated into the collaborative process, ensuring clear public involvement in important decisions (Cunningham, 1972; Macintosh & Smith, 2007). Problem mapping structures also play a role in the collaborative process by enhancing the ability to address arising issues with relative public participation. Public participation can occur through various forms, such as groups, networks, forums, meetings of decision-makers, beneficiaries, and

stakeholders. When decisions are collective, they involve collegiality and shared responsibility (mutual responsibility).

Cooperation in decision-making and public administration involves active participation from individuals within public institutions, administrations, or public levels. It also includes the involvement of the private sector and civil society in implementing public projects that require their support (Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2012; Emerson, Nabatchi, Balogh, et al., 2012; Wirtz & Müller, 2022). Public participation is crucial in development policy, and the participation process should be tailored to the specific development context (Bobbio, 2019; Bryson et al., 2013). In future management, key elements for success include having a dynamic, adaptable, and complex system. This system must be viewed as an organic entity comprising multiple elements, such as people, technology, rules, and relationships (Johnston, 2010). Emphasizing the importance of innovation, Coaffee & Deas (2008) underscored the need to formalize partnership frameworks. Effective coordination between government agencies, both vertically between central and regional governments and horizontally within a single agency, involving civil society, is critical for success.

CONCLUSION

The concept of the spirit of change reflects the enthusiasm and commitment to effecting positive and sustainable transformations. Within bureaucracy, the spirit of change signifies the dedication to reform and innovation in public decision-making to enhance the quality of public service. Leadership involves making decisions that shape the direction and achievement of organizational goals. Decision-making entails assessing various alternatives, determining which values are relevant, and prioritizing actions to address challenges or opportunities. The VUCA era has presented public administration leadership with increasingly complex and challenging issues, necessitating collaborative decision-making processes. In the face of the VUCA era's demands, bureaucratic decision-makers in Banyumas district must possess the ability to respond to disruptive and complex changes, make effective decisions, and adapt to dynamic environmental shifts. Consequently, it can be concluded that the level of the bureaucratic decision-maker's spirit of change in Banyumas district, while moderate, indicates a need for support and encouragement in confronting the challenges of the VUCA era, particularly in fostering adaptability and embracing sustained positive change.

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