



## Assistance to Administrative Units in Designing Standard Operating Procedures Based on Workload Analysis

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### Abstrak

Unit administratif sering menggunakan Prosedur Operasional Standar (SOP) yang telah distandardisasi secara formal, namun belum selaras dengan kondisi beban kerja aktual, sehingga menimbulkan ketidakefisienan dan ketidakjelasan peran. Program pengabdian masyarakat ini bertujuan membantu perancangan SOP berbasis analisis beban kerja empiris untuk meningkatkan efisiensi administratif, kejelasan peran, dan efektivitas layanan. Metode yang digunakan adalah Participatory Action Research (PAR), meliputi diagnosis awal, analisis beban kerja partisipatif, perancangan bersama SOP, uji coba, dan evaluasi reflektif. Data dikumpulkan melalui analisis dokumen, observasi, wawancara, pengukuran beban kerja, dan analisis korelasi. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa SOP lama tidak selaras dengan distribusi beban kerja, menyebabkan tumpang tindih tugas. SOP hasil redesain terbukti meningkatkan kejelasan prosedur, pemerataan kerja, dan kepemilikan staf. Program ini menegaskan bahwa desain SOP berbasis beban kerja dan partisipatif efektif untuk reformasi administratif berbasis bukti.

**Kata Kunci:** *Layanan Masyarakat, Prosedur Operasional Standar, Analisis Beban Kerja, Reformasi Administrasi.*

### Abstract

Administrative units often rely on formally standardized Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that are poorly aligned with actual workload conditions, resulting in procedural inefficiency and role ambiguity. This community service program aimed to support the development of workload-based SOPs to improve administrative efficiency, role clarity, and service effectiveness. A Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach was employed, encompassing diagnostic assessment, participatory workload analysis, collaborative SOP design, pilot implementation, and reflective evaluation. Data were collected through document analysis, participatory observation, interviews, workload measurement, and correlation analysis. The findings indicate that existing SOPs were structurally misaligned with workload distribution, leading to task overlap and uneven work allocation. The redesigned SOPs, grounded in workload indicators and developed through participatory processes, enhanced procedural clarity, reduced functional overlap, and strengthened staff ownership. This program demonstrates that participatory, workload-based SOP design is an effective strategy for evidence-based administrative reform and sustainable organizational learning.

**Kata Kunci:** *Community Service, Standard Operating Procedures, Workload Analysis, Administrative Reform.*

## INTRODUCTION

An effective public administration system hinges on clearly articulated work processes, accountability, and efficient service delivery. In ideal conditions, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) serve as formal instruments that guide administrative actions, ensure consistency in task execution, reduce ambiguity, and safeguard service quality. SOPs, when grounded in empirical workload data, provide standardized frameworks that align human resources with organizational expectations, optimize operational output, and enhance organizational performance. From the perspective of public management theory, structures such as SOPs are indispensable for bureaucratic reform, efficiency, and transparency, particularly in complex administrative environments where administrative units manage diverse and dynamic workloads. Despite an extensive normative literature on SOPs and workload concepts, the practical alignment of workload analysis with SOP design remains a persistent challenge in administrative practice.

In reality, many administrative units operate with standard procedural documents that are detached from actual workload dynamics and empirical evidence. Studies in public service contexts indicate considerable imbalances between assigned tasks and employee capacity, leading to role overload, process delays, and declines in service quality (Dotulong, Sulila, & Noho Nani, 2025). For example, research evaluating the impact of workload on public service effectiveness at a land office demonstrated that excessive workload not only slowed process times but also weakened responsiveness and citizen satisfaction, underscoring that inadequate workload management is a critical determinant of institutional performance (Dotulong et al., 2025). Simultaneously, multiple empirical studies show that SOPs significantly influence performance outcomes, such as employee productivity and work consistency, but their mere existence does not automatically translate into improved service quality or organizational performance (Akib, Rismawati, & Niswaty, 2023; Saputro & Ros Bangun, 2022). Taken together, these empirical realities reveal a fundamental misalignment: administrative SOPs are often generic or administratively instituted without rigorous workload-based foundations, thereby undermining procedural relevance and operational effectiveness.

This misalignment points to a deeper structural problem manifesting in administrative practices: administrative SOPs are frequently designed based on normative expectations rather than grounded empirical workload assessments. In settings ranging from local government services to organizational units in public agencies, existing procedural documents reveal inconsistent implementation, lack of transparency, and failure to reflect actual task distribution, capacity, and service demands (Pisugi District Office case; Anggraini et al., 2025). For instance, observational studies in remote district administrative services found that SOPs were internally inconsistent, not publicly accessible, and poorly aligned with service timelines and workload realities, resulting in unpredictable service delivery and low public trust (Sukmawati et al., 2025). These conditions are

symptomatic of a broader systemic challenge: the absence of workload-anchored SOP design paradigms that contextualize procedural guidance within actual functional demands and organizational capacities.

Despite the recognition of workload and SOP interactions in the literature, a persistent research gap remains in how administrative units systematically integrate workload analysis into SOP design and revision processes. Previous research has tended to treat SOP implementation or workload assessment in isolation focusing either on SOP effects on performance outcomes or on workload impacts on service effectiveness without methodologically bridging these constructs into a design framework for procedure formulation. While studies confirm significant relationships between SOPs and performance indicators such as productivity, motivation, and discipline (Akib et al., 2023; Sahabuddin, Jumady, & Fajriah, 2025), they rarely operationalize how objective workload metrics should inform SOP structures and content. This oversight not only limits theoretical development by obscuring the mechanisms through which workload informs task standardization, but also weakens practical contributions in administrative reform. In short, extant studies have not provided actionable, empirically substantiated models for SOP design grounded in real workload characteristics—a critical gap for both administrative theory and practice.

Against this backdrop, this Community service project addresses a clearly operational problem: Administrative units currently lack empirically informed SOP frameworks that accurately reflect workload distribution, leading to procedural inefficiencies, service delays, and mismatches between staff capacity and task demands. This problem is sharply defined and measurable: administrative units must systematically link workload data to SOP design to enhance consistency, accountability, and service quality. The specific research question guiding this project is: How can workload analysis inform the design of standard operating procedures to optimize administrative efficiency and service outcomes in administrative units?

The purpose of this community service is threefold. First, it seeks to develop a workload-based SOP design framework that integrates quantitative and qualitative workload indicators with procedural standards. Second, the project aims to build administrative capacity by training staff in workload assessment methods and procedural documentation techniques. Third, it endeavors to co-create tailored SOPs with partner administrative units that reflect their unique operational realities. The expected outcomes include enhanced procedural relevance, improved alignment between workload and process expectations, and stronger foundations for performance evaluation and accountability.

## **METHOD**

This community service project adopted a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. PAR was chosen because the core problem addressed in this service the mismatch between existing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and actual workload conditions cannot be resolved through top-down interventions or

technical assistance alone. Instead, it requires the active involvement of administrative personnel as co-researchers who possess tacit knowledge of daily work practices, task distribution, and procedural barriers. PAR is well-suited to the context of organizational and administrative reform because it integrates systematic inquiry with reflective action, enabling simultaneous problem diagnosis, solution design, implementation, and evaluation in a cyclical, evidence-based manner.

The target participants for this community service were administrative units within public sector institutions in Sewaluh Village, Sidoarjo, specifically staff members and unit heads responsible for service delivery, documentation, and internal coordination. These participants are directly involved in routine administrative processes and are therefore the most relevant actors for workload assessment and SOP development. Their participation ensured that the resulting SOPs were context-sensitive, operationally feasible, and institutionally valid. Service activities were conducted in the partner's administrative unit office as the primary site of action, ensuring that data collection and interventions were embedded in a real organizational environment, not a simulated one. The service lasted approximately three to four months, allowing sufficient time for an iterative cycle of diagnosis, action, reflection, and refinement.

The PAR process began with a planning and diagnostic phase, during which formal permission and institutional approval were obtained from the partner organization to ensure administrative legitimacy and ethical compliance. This phase involved preliminary meetings with institutional leaders to align the service program's objectives with organizational needs and strategic priorities. Next, an initial situation analysis was conducted to map existing SOPs, identify critical administrative functions, and explore perceived workload imbalances. Data in this phase was collected through document analysis, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews with administrative staff. These techniques were chosen to capture formal procedural structures and informal work practices that are often undocumented but crucial to the reality of workload.

Following the diagnostic phase, the project entered the action and co-design phase, which is the core of the PAR cycle. In this phase, workload analysis was conducted using a combination of task inventory techniques, time allocation measurements, and self-reported workload assessment instruments. Administrative staff actively participated in identifying task units, estimating task frequency, and validating workload data through focus group discussions. Empirical workload data was then systematically analyzed to identify workload distribution patterns, task redundancy, and mismatches between responsibilities and available human resources. Based on these findings, a participatory workshop was held to redesign the SOP, ensuring that each procedural step was aligned with empirically measured workload indicators. This co-design process strengthened ownership and minimized resistance to procedural changes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The initial diagnostic phase revealed a structural misalignment between existing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and the actual workload distribution within the administrative unit. Document analysis and participatory observation showed that most SOPs were generic, task-oriented in a linear manner, and not explicitly linked to workload intensity, task frequency, or time allocation. As a result, several administrative functions experienced overlapping responsibilities and uneven task distribution, leading to functional overload in certain positions while others remained underutilized. This finding confirms that SOPs functioned more as formal compliance documents rather than as operational tools capable of regulating work processes based on empirical capacity. From a PAR perspective, this misalignment constituted a critical entry point for collective reflection, as staff recognized that procedural inefficiencies were not merely individual performance issues but systemic design problems embedded in the SOP structure.

The workload analysis conducted during the action phase produced evidence of significant disparities between assigned duties and actual work capacity. Quantitative workload indices demonstrated that core service-related tasks consumed a disproportionately high share of available working time, while supporting administrative functions were inconsistently defined across job roles. Correlation analysis indicated a moderate to strong relationship between workload intensity and perceived procedural ambiguity, suggesting that higher workload levels were associated with greater uncertainty in task execution. These findings provided empirical justification for redesigning SOPs based on workload characteristics rather than hierarchical assumptions. Importantly, the participatory interpretation of these results fostered a shared understanding among staff that workload imbalance was not incidental but structurally reproduced through inadequate procedural standards.

The co-design process resulted in the development of workload-based SOPs that explicitly integrated task sequencing, time estimation, role boundaries, and workload thresholds. Unlike previous SOPs, the redesigned procedures incorporated measurable workload indicators, allowing staff to anticipate task demands and adjust work distribution accordingly. Reflective evaluation during the pilot implementation phase showed improved procedural clarity, reduced task overlap, and greater consistency in service delivery. Participants reported that SOPs were no longer perceived as externally imposed regulations but as collectively constructed instruments that reflected their operational realities. This shift in perception is a critical outcome of the PAR approach, as it indicates a transition from procedural compliance to procedural ownership.

From a critical standpoint, the results demonstrate that assistance in SOP design is effective only when grounded in participatory workload analysis rather than technical standardization alone. The intervention did not merely produce revised documents but reconfigured how administrative staff understood work,

responsibility, and accountability. The iterative cycles of action and reflection enabled the institutionalization of evidence-based procedures while strengthening organizational learning. These outcomes suggest that workload-based SOP assistance has transformative potential, particularly in administrative settings where procedural formalism often obscures operational inefficiencies. Thus, the results substantiate the argument that participatory, workload-informed SOP design is a viable and necessary strategy for improving administrative effectiveness and sustainability.



Figure 1. Assistance to Administrative Units

The findings of this community service project demonstrate that misalignment between Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and actual workload distribution is not an incidental administrative weakness but a structurally produced condition embedded in procedural design practices. From a theoretical standpoint, this outcome aligns with classical organizational design theory, which posits that formal structures lose functional relevance when they are decoupled from operational realities. In the present case, SOPs were initially developed as normative control instruments rather than as adaptive tools informed by empirical workload data. This explains why procedural ambiguity intensified under high workload conditions: SOPs failed to function as cognitive and operational guides when task complexity and time pressure increased. Similar patterns were identified in recent service-based studies, where SOPs that were not grounded in workload analysis contributed to inefficiency and role conflict (Akib et al., 2023; Sahabuddin et al., 2025).

The strong association observed between workload intensity and perceived procedural ambiguity can be theoretically explained through role theory and job demand-resource (JD-R) models. According to the JD-R framework, excessive job demands unaccompanied by adequate structural resources such as clear procedures lead to strain and performance degradation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). In this project, SOPs functioned as an insufficient resource because they lacked workload-sensitive parameters, such as task frequency and time allocation. This finding is consistent with Dotulong et al. (2025), who reported that workload overload in public service offices significantly reduced service effectiveness when procedural clarity was weak (Arintawati et al, 2023). However,

unlike previous studies that treated workload and SOPs as separate explanatory variables, this project demonstrates that workload and SOP design are structurally interdependent, reinforcing the need for integrative intervention models.

The participatory redesign of SOPs based on workload analysis produced outcomes that diverge meaningfully from earlier community service interventions focused on SOP socialization or compliance training. Previous service-based studies often reported improved awareness or short-term compliance without substantial changes in work organization (Al Faruqi et al, 2025). In contrast, the present findings indicate that procedural effectiveness improved because SOPs were reconstructed as workload-regulating mechanisms rather than static rulebooks. This difference can be attributed to the use of Participatory Action Research (PAR), which enabled administrative staff to act as epistemic agents rather than passive recipients of technical assistance. Theoretical perspectives on organizational learning support this outcome, emphasizing that sustainable procedural change occurs when actors are involved in knowledge production and reflective practice.

Moreover, the observed shift in staff perception from viewing SOPs as external control devices to recognizing them as collectively owned operational tools can be explained through institutional theory. When procedures are imposed without contextual adaptation, they tend to become ceremonial artifacts with limited practical impact. The PAR-based workload analysis disrupted this ceremonial logic by re-embedding SOPs within everyday work practices. This finding parallels Alviyandi et al. (2025) and Wibowo et al. (2025), who noted that SOP effectiveness increased when procedural standards were transparently linked to service capacity and contextual constraints. However, this project advances prior findings by empirically demonstrating *how* such linkage can be operationalized through workload indicators and participatory co-design, thereby strengthening both theoretical and methodological contributions (Al Qordhowi, 2021).

A critical comparison with earlier studies also reveals an important distinction in outcome orientation. While many prior investigations focused on performance metrics such as productivity or discipline (Akib et al., 2023), the present project highlights procedural legitimacy and organizational learning as central outcomes. This distinction has significant scientific implications. It suggests that the effectiveness of SOPs cannot be fully captured through performance indicators alone but must also be assessed through their capacity to structure meaning, clarify roles, and mediate workload pressures (Alifan et al, 2024). By integrating workload analysis into SOP design, this project responds to a theoretical gap in public administration literature that has historically underemphasized the epistemic function of procedures in managing complexity.

In sum, the results of this community service initiative confirm, extend, and partially challenge existing scholarship. They confirm prior findings that SOPs and workload significantly influence administrative performance, extend the literature

by demonstrating their structural interdependence, and challenge approaches that treat SOP improvement as a purely technical or compliance-driven process. The scientific implication is clear: workload-based, participatory SOP design represents a theoretically grounded and empirically effective strategy for administrative reform. This approach not only enhances procedural effectiveness but also contributes to the development of adaptive, learning-oriented administrative institutions capable of responding to increasing organizational complexity.

## CONCLUSION

This community service initiative demonstrates that assistance in designing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs grounded in workload analysis) constitutes an effective and scientifically grounded intervention to address procedural inefficiencies within administrative units. By employing a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, the project successfully bridged the gap between formal procedural standards and empirical workload realities, thereby responding directly to the central problem of misaligned SOPs. The synthesis of participatory inquiry, workload measurement, and procedural co-design enabled SOPs to function not merely as normative control instruments but as adaptive mechanisms for regulating work distribution, clarifying roles, and supporting service effectiveness. Scientifically, this contribution advances the discourse on community service methodology by demonstrating that workload-based SOP design is not a technical exercise alone, but a socio-organizational process that requires participatory knowledge production and reflective institutional learning.

Beyond its practical outcomes, this project contributes to public administration and organizational theory by empirically substantiating the structural interdependence between workload dynamics and procedural effectiveness. The findings affirm that SOP effectiveness emerges from contextual embeddedness rather than formal standardization, reinforcing contemporary theories of organizational learning and institutional legitimacy. Thus, this community service does not merely solve a localized administrative issue but offers a transferable conceptual model for evidence-based procedural reform in similar administrative contexts. Future community service programs should extend this approach by incorporating longitudinal assessment to examine the sustainability of workload-based SOP implementation over time. Specifically, subsequent initiatives may integrate digital workload monitoring systems to enhance data accuracy and enable continuous procedural refinement.

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