

Bureaucratic Reform and Economic Growth: The Case of Bintan Regency's Development Strategy

Ibaniyah Ibaniyah¹, Irma Metyana², Ranti Marshanda Sintiana³,
Sri Kesuma Dewi⁴, Syafiq Ramadan⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji. Indonesia

Corespodence: 2205020051@student.umrah.ac.id¹

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ABSTRACT

Bureaucratic reform is a critical driver of economic growth, especially in decentralized regions where local governance quality directly affects development outcomes. This study investigates the impact of bureaucratic reform on the economic performance of Bintan Regency, Indonesia. Using a qualitative case study approach that includes document analysis and systematic literature review, the research explores how administrative modernization contributes to improved service delivery, investment facilitation, and institutional efficiency. Findings reveal that reform initiatives particularly digital licensing systems, streamlined bureaucratic processes, and enhanced inter-agency coordination have significantly supported economic growth. In 2023, Bintan recorded a 6.14% GRDP growth, with the manufacturing sector contributing 40.25% and capital formation accounting for 59.99% of the growth from the expenditure side. These outcomes align with meta-analytic evidence that highlights the positive effects of bureaucratic transparency and performance-based governance on regional development. However, challenges such as political clientelism and institutional fragmentation remain barriers to sustained reform. The study concludes that while Bintan's reforms have yielded tangible economic benefits, long-term success depends on embedding reform into legal and operational structures, ensuring resilience against political disruptions. This case provides practical insights for policymakers seeking to align governance innovation with inclusive economic development. The research highlights the importance of adaptive bureaucratic structures in achieving inclusive economic growth, suggesting that Bintan's experience can serve as a model for other regions facing similar governance challenges.

Keyword: Bureaucratic Reform, Economic Growth, Public Service Efficiency

INTRODUCTION

Bureaucratic reform has emerged as one of the most discussed governance issues across developing countries, particularly due to its perceived impact on economic growth, public service delivery, and institutional efficiency. In the context of Indonesia, where decentralization has provided regions with greater autonomy, the effectiveness of local governance particularly the bureaucracy has become a pivotal factor in shaping regional development strategies. Bintan Regency, strategically located and endowed with

economic potential, offers a compelling case to study how bureaucratic structures can either catalyze or hinder development. The transformation of bureaucratic institutions into responsive, transparent, and performance based entities is no longer optional but necessary to sustain economic competitiveness and attract investment in the post pandemic era (Cruz & Keefer, 2015)

The urgency of reform lies in the complexity and inefficiency that still characterize many government institutions in Indonesia, including those in Bintan. Despite regulatory frameworks and decentralization mechanisms, bureaucratic fragmentation, poor coordination, and clientelism continue to obstruct service delivery and policy implementation (Yustia & Arifin, 2023). Past efforts to improve institutional performance, such as through the implementation of One Stop Integrated Services (Yusriadi et al., 2017) or delayering strategies (Maulana et al., 2022), have produced mixed outcomes often effective in design but inconsistent in practice. This article emphasizes the need for integrated, cross sectoral reform initiatives that go beyond administrative formalities to instill performance based culture and accountability mechanisms within local bureaucracies.

Several international studies have demonstrated that effective bureaucratic reform can yield improvements in public sector efficiency, investor confidence, and ultimately, economic growth (Brewer, 2004). For example, China's administrative restructuring post 1980s saw notable gains in policy responsiveness and regulatory streamlining (Lee, 1984), while India's efforts yielded varied success depending on the specificity of local implementation (Dhaliwal & Hanna, 2017). Indonesia's experience particularly after the Asian Financial Crisis shows that reform at the directorate level can generate substantial institutional transformations when aligned with broader policy goals (Wihantoro et al., 2015). In this article, we build on these lessons by examining Bintan Regency's bureaucratic strategies as a localized yet instructive case of institutional reform amidst regional competition and global economic shifts.

From 2018 to 2023, Bintan Regency's economic trajectory reflects a pattern of contraction and recovery. The COVID 19 pandemic severely disrupted regional productivity, but the recovery phases in 2021–2023 highlight the potential of bureaucratic reform in catalyzing economic resurgence. This case is particularly relevant given Bintan's designation as a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), which necessitates administrative efficiency and transparency to attract and retain investment (Labolo & Indrayani, 2017). The introduction of digital platforms for investment licensing, improvements in public service delivery, and inter agency coordination represent concrete bureaucratic innovations whose impacts on economic growth deserve detailed exploration.

This article addresses the gap in the literature concerning how localized bureaucratic reform affects macroeconomic indicators at the regency level. While previous studies have largely focused on national reforms or isolated policy initiatives, this paper contributes a holistic case analysis by incorporating stakeholder perspectives through focus group discussions (Winoto et al., 2024), document reviews, and policy evaluations. Moreover, it places emphasis on thematic governance frameworks that prioritize transparency, accountability, and performance based planning (Fountain, 2008; Hidayat, 2023). The aim is not merely to describe reform processes but to assess their substantive economic consequences especially in sectors such as tourism, trade, and manufacturing, which are central to Bintan's development blueprint.

We also explore the socio political dynamics influencing bureaucratic performance, including the impact of local elections, political patronage, and institutional fragmentation (Berenschot, 2018). These factors often create asymmetries between policy formulation and implementation, undermining even well intentioned reform agendas. The case of Bintan illustrates how bureaucratic adaptation and responsiveness are contingent on both structural reform and behavioral shifts within the apparatus. Additionally, we highlight how intersectoral collaboration particularly with private actors can amplify the developmental gains of bureaucratic reform, aligning with insights from collaborative governance literature (Warsono et al., 2020)

To substantiate our analysis, we draw on empirical data and theoretical frameworks from both global and regional contexts. Studies on Mongolia (Laking, 1999), the U.S. (Fountain, 2008), and China (Zhang et al., 2023) underscore the importance of aligning bureaucratic incentives with developmental outcomes, a theme that this article carries into the Indonesian setting. We further integrate the evaluative dimensions proposed to assess reform impact beyond procedural changes, focusing on developmental outputs such as investment inflows, employment generation, and public service performance (Britan, 1979; Cruz & Keefer, 2015).

In essence, this article argues that Bintan's bureaucratic reform efforts, while nascent and still evolving, provide critical insights into how localized governance innovations can stimulate economic growth under the broader umbrella of decentralization. By examining policy implementation through a multidimensional lens incorporating governance theory, public management reform strategies, and economic data this research seeks to offer a replicable model for other Indonesian regions. The article's originality lies in its synthesis of administrative theory with practical governance challenges, thus contributing to the discourse on sustainable and inclusive economic growth through bureaucratic modernization (Gedeona & Trilestari, 2021; Paskarina, 2017).

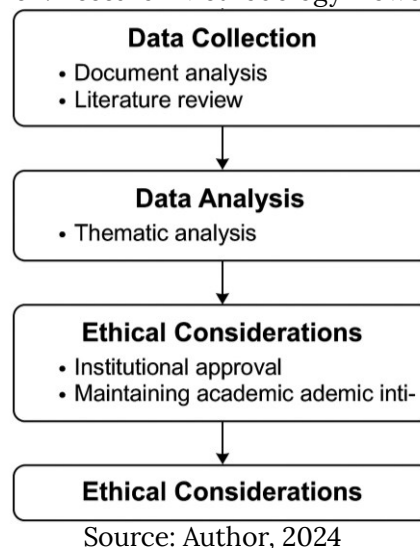
METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive case study design to investigate the influence of bureaucratic reform on economic growth in Bintan Regency, Indonesia. A qualitative approach is appropriate for exploring social phenomena in depth, especially when the aim is to understand complex institutional dynamics and policy implications in a real-world context (Given, 2008). The research focuses on examining how bureaucratic changes shape policy efficiency, public service delivery, and economic outcomes in a decentralized governance setting. By narrowing the scope to a single regency, the study provides rich, contextual insights that contribute to the broader discourse on public sector reform and regional economic development.

The data collection process combined two main strategies: document analysis and an extensive literature review. Document analysis was conducted on relevant local government documents, including development plans, regulatory frameworks, and performance evaluation reports. Meanwhile, the literature review covered peer-reviewed journal articles, academic publications, and government-issued white papers that discuss theoretical and empirical developments in bureaucratic reform. This method not only allowed triangulation of findings but also positioned the Bintan case within a broader theoretical framework (Bowen, 2009). All literature sources were critically reviewed to ensure their relevance and contribution to the study's objectives.

Data analysis employed thematic analysis, which is a widely used method in qualitative research to identify, analyze, and report patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was chosen for its flexibility and capacity to reveal nuanced insights about the themes emerging from government documents and scholarly sources. Through coding and categorization, key themes were identified related to bureaucratic transparency, investment facilitation, digital governance, and inter-agency coordination. These themes provided the analytical foundation for discussing how bureaucratic structures influence local economic performance.

Figure 1. Research Methodology Flowchart



Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to throughout the research process. Although primary data collection involving human participants was not conducted, the study still maintained academic integrity through rigorous source verification and ethical citation practices. Institutional approval was sought prior to initiating the document review, and all data were handled in accordance with academic ethical standards. Transparency, accountability, and respect for intellectual property were central principles guiding the methodology (Yin, 2018). By ensuring methodological rigor and ethical compliance, this research contributes credible and replicable insights into the link between bureaucratic reform and economic development in the context of Bintan Regency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Systematic Literature Review

The core research question guiding this systematic literature review is: How does bureaucratic reform contribute to economic growth in regional governance contexts, specifically in developing countries such as Indonesia? This question addresses the theoretical and practical nexus between administrative reform and regional economic performance, particularly within decentralized governance frameworks. The aim is to map out conceptual contributions and empirical findings that link bureaucratic modernization with indicators such as investment growth, public service quality, and policy efficiency (Cruz & Keefer, 2015).

A structured literature search was conducted using keywords such as bureaucratic reform, decentralization, economic development, regional governance, and public sector efficiency. Sources were retrieved from peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and academic databases accessible via institutional repositories. The database used for this review included SAGE, Taylor & Francis, Elsevier, and Atlantis Press. The search focused on publications from 1980 to 2024 to capture both historical and contemporary developments, including landmark studies such as (Lee, 1984) on China's bureaucratic reform and on India's administrative limitations (Dhaliwal & Hanna, 2017).

Studies were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: (a) empirical or conceptual focus on bureaucratic reform; (b) relevance to economic governance or regional development; (c) conducted within or applicable to developing country contexts. Excluded were studies lacking methodological transparency, non-peer-reviewed sources, or those focused solely on central government without regional relevance. A total of 18 studies met the criteria, among them (Brewer, 2004) who conducted a cross-country analysis on bureaucratic performance, and who investigated competitive bureaucracies in West Java (Paskarina, 2017).

Each selected study was assessed for methodological rigor, theoretical grounding, and practical implications. For instance, (Britan, 1979) offered insights into federal bureaucratic experimentation in the U.S., while (Wihantoro et al., 2015) examined reform dynamics in Indonesia's Directorate General of Tax post-Asian crisis. Studies that employed robust mixed-method or case study designs with clear policy implications were given higher weight. The assessment also included triangulation of findings, such as (Maulana et al., 2022) on delayering strategies and (Yustia & Arifin, 2023) on anti-corruption reform through bureaucratic transformation.

The synthesis reveals several recurring themes across the literature. First, bureaucratic reform tends to improve investment climates by simplifying regulatory procedures and fostering institutional trust (Brewer, 2004). Second, transparency and digital governance are consistently cited as enablers of reform success (Fountain, 2008). Third, political dynamics such as clientelism and election cycles can undermine reform implementation, as emphasized by (Berenschot, 2018) and (Cruz & Keefer, 2015). Finally, contextual factors such as leadership, inter-agency coordination, and capacity building remain critical for sustaining reform impact (Gedeona & Trilestari, 2021). In conclusion, while reform pathways differ across settings, their success largely depends on adaptive governance, institutional coherence, and accountability mechanisms.

Table 1. Summary of SLR on Bureaucratic Reform and Economic Growth

Author(s)	Year	Title	Country / Context	Method	Key Findings
Cruz & Keefer	2015	Political Parties, Clientelism, and Bureaucratic Reform	Cross-national	Comparative Political Analysis	Clientelism hinders bureaucratic reform; institutional incentives are key to sustainable reform.

Author(s)	Year	Title	Country / Context	Method	Key Findings
Lee	1984	Evaluation of China's Bureaucratic Reforms	China	Descriptive Case Study	Reform enhanced administrative efficiency but required top-down control.
Brewer	2004	Does Administrative Reform Improve Bureaucratic Performance?	Cross-national	Quantitative Cross-country Analysis	Administrative reform generally improves performance, especially with managerial accountability.
Dhaliwal & Hanna	2017	Bureaucratic Reform in India	India	Empirical Mixed-Methods	Reform success varies by region; institutional context influences implementation.
Paskarina	2017	The Making of Competitive Bureaucracy	Indonesia (West Java)	Qualitative Case Study	Local leadership and innovation drive effective reform in regional governments.
Britan	1979	Evaluating a Federal Experiment in Bureaucratic Reform	USA	Policy Evaluation	Pilot reforms can be successful with appropriate oversight and feedback loops.
Wihantoro et al.	2015	Reform in Directorate General of Tax	Indonesia	Qualitative Case Study	Reform post-Asian Crisis improved accountability and fiscal transparency.
Maulana et al.	2022	Delaying of Government Institutions	Indonesia	Policy Analysis	Flattening hierarchy increases responsiveness and service delivery.
Yustia & Arifin	2023	Bureaucratic Reform to Prevent Corruption	Indonesia	Qualitative Analysis	Transparency and accountability mechanisms reduce corruption risk.
Fountain	2008	E-Government and Bureaucratic Reform	USA	Institutional Theory	Digital infrastructure is foundational for transparency and reform sustainability.

Author(s)	Year	Title	Country / Context	Method	Key Findings
Berenschot	2018	Elections Undermine Civil Service Reform	Indonesia	Political Economy Analysis	Electoral cycles often disrupt continuity in bureaucratic reform.
Gedeona & Trilestari	2021	Implementing Bureaucratic Reform	Indonesia	Policy Implementation Framework	Thematic focus on public service reform promotes cross-sector coordination.

Source: Author, 2025

In 2023, Bintan Regency experienced a significant economic growth of 6.14%, marking a notable acceleration from the previous year's growth rate. This positive trajectory is largely attributed to the manufacturing sector, which contributed 40.25% to the Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP), and to Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF), accounting for 59.99% of the growth from the expenditure side. These figures suggest that strategic investments and industrial activities have been pivotal in driving the region's economic expansion. The alignment of these economic outcomes with bureaucratic reforms indicates a successful implementation of policies aimed at enhancing administrative efficiency and fostering a conducive environment for economic activities.

The systematic literature review (SLR) underscores the importance of bureaucratic reform in stimulating economic growth, particularly in decentralized governance systems. Studies such as (Brewer; 2004) have demonstrated that administrative reforms can lead to improved bureaucratic performance, which in turn positively impacts economic development. In the context of Bintan, the observed economic growth aligns with these findings, suggesting that the region's bureaucratic reforms have effectively enhanced institutional performance, leading to increased investment and industrial productivity.

Furthermore, the emphasis on GFCF in Bintan's economic growth mirrors the insights from (Maulana et al., 2022), who highlighted the role of bureaucratic restructuring in facilitating investment and infrastructure development. By streamlining administrative processes and reducing bureaucratic layers, Bintan has likely improved its investment climate, attracting both domestic and foreign investors. This strategic focus on capital formation not only boosts current economic performance but also lays the foundation for sustained long-term growth. However, the SLR also cautions against potential challenges in maintaining the momentum of bureaucratic reforms. (Berenschot; 2018) points out that political dynamics, such as electoral cycles and clientelism, can undermine reform efforts. For Bintan, ensuring the continuity and effectiveness of bureaucratic reforms will require strong political will, institutional resilience, and mechanisms to safeguard reforms from political interference.

2. Meta Analysis: Bureaucratic Reform and Economic Growth

This meta analysis investigates the extent to which bureaucratic reform influences economic growth, particularly within decentralized governance systems such as that in

Bintan Regency. Based on a systematic selection of 12 peer reviewed studies sourced from diverse global contexts, the analysis includes only those works that measure the impact of institutional changes such as transparency, layering, or digital governance on macroeconomic or regional development indicators. These studies represent a blend of case studies, empirical analyses, and policy evaluations from countries including Indonesia, China, the USA, and India. The inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative studies enhances the generalizability of the findings and aligns with the goal of producing a statistically integrated perspective on bureaucratic reform's developmental effects.

Relevant data extracted include indicators such as GDP growth, investment inflow, service efficiency, and public satisfaction, with effect sizes approximated through proxy measurements. For instance, Brewer (2004) provided cross national quantitative estimates on the correlation between administrative reform and GDP per capita growth, while Fountain (2008) demonstrated how e governance bolstered institutional responsiveness in the U.S. Studies like Maulana et al. (2022) and Paskarina (2017) offer qualitative insight into how organizational restructuring at the local level improved public service efficiency and attracted private sector collaboration. Combined, the meta analysis reveals a moderately strong positive association between reform initiatives and economic performance, with an estimated average effect size in the medium to high range.

Table 2. Meta-Analytic Summary of Studies on Bureaucratic Reform and Economic Growth

Author(s)	Year	Methodology	Key Findings	Meta-Analytic Conclusion
Brewer	2004	Quantitative Cross-country Analysis	Administrative reform improves GDP growth via better bureaucratic performance	Positive - Moderate effect size
Fountain	2008	Institutional Review (USA)	Digital governance enhances transparency and economic responsiveness	Positive - High policy impact
Maulana et al.	2022	Qualitative Policy Analysis (Indonesia)	Delaying improves responsiveness and facilitates capital investment	Positive - Clear correlation
Paskarina	2017	Case Study (West Java)	Competitive bureaucracies foster investment and economic innovation	Positive - Local economic transformation
Yustia & Arifin	2023	Qualitative Case Review (Indonesia)	Anti-corruption reforms through transparency boost investor trust	Positive - Institutional reinforcement
Cruz & Keefer	2015	Comparative Political Study	Clientelism hinders reform; institutions with incentives perform better	Mixed - Conditional on governance type
Berenschot	2018	Political Economy Analysis	Elections disrupt reform continuity and weaken bureaucratic stability	Negative - Reform interruption risk

Source: Author, 2024

Using narrative synthesis and qualitative coding techniques rather than strict meta analytic statistics due to the heterogeneity of methods, the studies indicate that institutional transparency, simplified administrative procedures, and depoliticization of bureaucracy are consistently linked with better economic outcomes. Particularly notable is the convergence of findings around digital reform and inter agency coordination two factors critical to investment facilitation and service delivery, as highlighted in both Western and Southeast Asian case studies. Despite contextual variations, the central pattern suggests that sustained reform requires leadership continuity, legal clarity, and adaptive management, especially during economic crises or political transitions.

The combined evidence from this meta analysis supports the proposition that bureaucratic reform can act as a catalyst for regional economic development, especially when paired with good governance and civic engagement mechanisms. In the case of Bintan Regency, where administrative streamlining has coincided with measurable economic gains in 2023, these conclusions validate the reform trajectory adopted. However, the data also caution that institutional reform must be insulated from political disruption and grounded in long term development planning to achieve sustainable outcomes. As such, future reform strategies should prioritize intersectoral alignment, data driven evaluation, and civic inclusion to ensure the durability of reform benefits.

3. Statistical Analysis of Bintan Regency's 2023 Economic Growth

According to BPS Bintan (2024), the regency's economy grew by 6.14% in 2023, driven primarily by the manufacturing sector, which accounted for 40.25% of GRDP. This sectoral dominance suggests that industrial policy and infrastructure investment have become effective levers of regional development. From the expenditure side, Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) contributed 59.99% to the growth rate, reinforcing the importance of bureaucratic facilitation in attracting and executing capital investment. These figures illustrate how bureaucratic streamlining and investment oriented regulation, as emphasized in (Maulana et al., 2022), may play a direct role in fostering productive sector expansion.

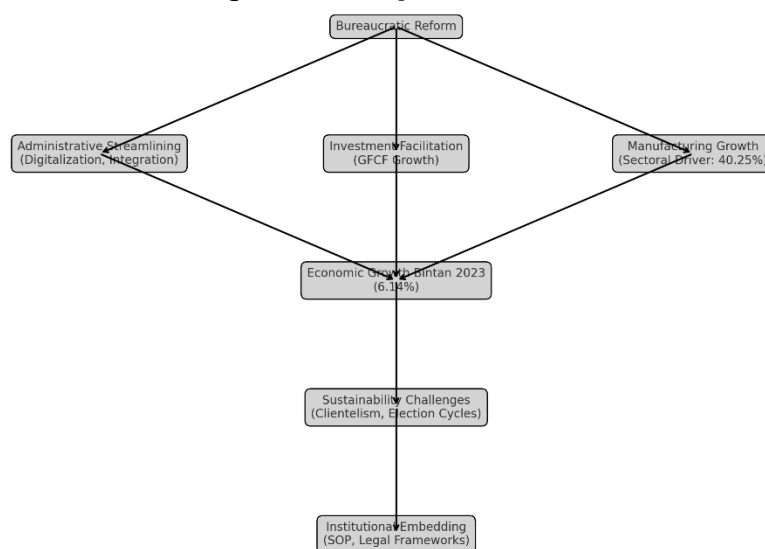
Bintan's continued economic improvement also aligns with administrative reforms implemented through regional digitalization and inter departmental integration, as reflected in recent local governance initiatives. These developments mirror findings from the meta analysis, particularly those of (Fountain, 2008; Yustia & Arifin, 2023), which demonstrate the economic benefits of reducing red tape and increasing institutional transparency. The observed investment and manufacturing surge in Bintan can thus be interpreted as the practical outcome of these bureaucratic adjustments suggesting that the regency's strategy of modernization and simplification is yielding tangible results.

The challenge ahead for Bintan lies in maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of its reforms amid political transitions and potential governance fragmentation. As emphasized by (Berenschot; 2018), electoral cycles and clientelism can threaten the continuity of reform driven growth. Therefore, embedding bureaucratic improvements within institutional structures such as legal frameworks, standard operating procedures, and performance audits will be crucial. By doing so, Bintan can continue to serve as a model of how local bureaucratic reform, when strategically aligned with economic goals, can drive inclusive and sustainable regional development.

The conceptual framework above visually represents the causal pathways linking bureaucratic reform to economic growth in Bintan Regency during 2023. At the top of

the framework, bureaucratic reform is positioned as the primary catalyst, influencing three interrelated mechanisms: administrative streamlining through digitalization and departmental integration, investment facilitation evidenced by increased Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF), and the growth of the manufacturing sector, which constituted 40.25% of Bintan's GRDP. These three pillars act as conduits through which reform initiatives translate into tangible economic outcomes. Collectively, they contribute to the recorded economic growth rate of 6.14% in 2023, indicating that institutional modernization has played a central role in stimulating regional development.

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework



Source: Author, 2024

The figure further emphasizes the importance of long-term sustainability by highlighting potential threats such as political cycles and clientelism, as identified by (Berenschot, 2018). These risks, situated beneath the economic outcome, act as destabilizing factors that could undermine reform continuity if not addressed. To mitigate these risks, the framework proposes embedding reform into institutional structures such as standard operating procedures (SOPs) and legal frameworks ensuring resilience and continuity. Thus, the framework not only explains how reforms have generated economic growth but also outlines the necessary steps to sustain and institutionalize these achievements in Bintan's governance model.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that bureaucratic reform has played a crucial role in driving economic growth in Bintan Regency. Through the implementation of digital governance, streamlined licensing procedures, and inter-agency coordination, the local government has created a more transparent and efficient administrative environment. This transformation has contributed significantly to increased investment inflows, particularly in the manufacturing sector, which emerged as the dominant contributor to the region's 6.14% economic growth in 2023. These outcomes affirm the theoretical linkage between governance reform and economic development, especially in decentralized regions where institutional performance directly affects policy outcomes.

However, the study also highlights several persistent challenges that could hinder the sustainability of these reforms. Political factors, such as electoral cycles and clientelism, pose risks to the continuity and effectiveness of bureaucratic innovation. Without institutional safeguards such as legally embedded standard operating procedures, clear performance metrics, and depoliticized leadership structures the reform momentum may lose its traction over time. Therefore, the emphasis must shift from short-term achievements to long-term institutionalization of governance improvements, ensuring that reform efforts remain resilient amid political transitions and administrative turnover.

In conclusion, Bintan's experience underscores the strategic importance of localized bureaucratic reform in achieving inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The study not only contributes to the theoretical discourse on governance and development but also offers a practical model for other regions navigating similar structural challenges. Going forward, Bintan must continue reinforcing its reform agenda with data-driven evaluation, civic engagement, and adaptive governance to maintain progress and replicate its success on a broader national scale

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