

The Rationality of Village Bureaucracy in Max Weber Perspective on Industrial Communities in Prosperous Villages Bone Bolango Regency

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Article Info

Received: January, 2026	Accepted: February, 2026	Published: March, 2026	Number of pages: 1-12
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Abstract : *This study addresses the challenges of village bureaucracy shifting towards formal rationality within industrial communities, a phenomenon that often triggers a tension between administrative rigidity and local social dynamics. The study aims to analyze the practice of village governance through Max Weber's perspective, focusing on Desa Sejahtera, Bone Bolango Regency, to understand how formal rationality operates and impacts decision-making, social relations, and apparatus roles. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with the Village Head and Secretary, alongside village document analysis, and processed using the Miles and Huberman model. The findings reveal that village governance is predominantly driven by formal rationality, characterized by strict adherence to written rules, hierarchical structures, bureaucratic division of labor, and meritocracy. Although this bureaucratic rationality ensures institutional order and administrative accountability, it restricts apparatus discretion, reduces substantive public participation, and potentially creates a rational "iron cage." In conclusion, while the bureaucracy in Desa Sejahtera is administratively rational, it remains substantively constrained in responding to industrial community dynamics, underscoring the need for a balanced approach between procedural efficiency and social responsiveness.*

Keywords : *Village Bureaucracy; Formal Rationality; Industrial Society; Max Weber; Village Governance.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of industrial society marked an important phase in the history of social modernization, which was marked by the strengthening of rationality as the dominant principle in organizing collective life (Muryanti, 2022). In an industrial society, social action is no longer solely driven by tradition or communal values, but rather by considerations of efficiency, calculation, and adherence to

formal rules. This rationality is then institutionalized in the form of a modern bureaucracy that functions as the main instrument of organizational management, including in the government system. The bureaucracy plays a role not only as an administrative mechanism, but also as a social structure that shapes the patterns of power relations, the orientation of actions, and the way in which individuals understand their role in the social system (Mozin et al., 2025).

Max Weber placed bureaucracy as the most rational manifestation of modern organization. The Weberian bureaucracy was characterized by a clear division of labor, a hierarchy of authority, written rules, impersonality, and the professionalism of the apparatus. Through these characteristics, the bureaucracy is believed to be able to create order, legal certainty, and efficiency in the administration of government (Surur, 2019).

However, Weber also asserts that excessive rationalization carries paradoxical consequences. The formal rationality that dominates social life has the potential to give birth to conditions *Iron Cage*, which is a situation when individuals are trapped in a rigid system of rules and procedures, thus losing space for freedom, creativity, and consideration of substantive values in acting (Ikramatoun et al., 2021). In an industrial society, bureaucratic rationality does not only operate at the level of the state or large organizations, but also permeates the local government structure, including the village.

Villages, which have historically been understood as social spaces close to the values of mutual cooperation, deliberation, and personal relations, are now increasingly integrated into the modern bureaucratic system (Radjak et al., 2024). This integration is characterized by the application of layered regulations, standard operating procedures, strict administrative systems, and structured supervision mechanisms. Thus, the village is no longer solely a social community, but also serves as an administrative unit subject to the logic of formal rationality.

Village governments are currently required to carry out various strategic functions, ranging from public services, village financial management, to the implementation of regulation-based development programs

(Wahyiah, 2025). Every policy and action of the village apparatus must refer to laws and regulations sourced from the central and regional governments. Village deliberations, which are normatively positioned as spaces for community participation, in practice often serve as a formal mechanism to accommodate and legitimize policies that have been limited by regulatory frameworks.

This condition shows that bureaucratic rationality not only regulates the technical aspects of village government, but also shapes the dynamics of decision-making and social relations at the local level (Sumardi, 2025).

The Prosperous Village in Bone Bolango Regency represents this phenomenon concretely. The practice of village government shows the dominance of written rules, a hierarchical organizational structure, a division of labor based on *tupoksi*, and a multi-layered administrative and supervisory system. Village officials carry out their duties within the framework of formal rationality that demands compliance with procedures and regulations. Even in the context of public services that require flexibility and social sensitivity, the actions of the apparatus must still be administratively legitimized. This condition reflects the work of the Weberian bureaucratic rationality in the village social space which has transformed according to the logic of industrial society.

However, the existence of bureaucratic rationality at the village level is not completely free from problems. On the one hand, rational bureaucracy provides legal certainty, accountability, and service efficiency. On the other hand, the dominance of formal rationality has the potential to shift the humanistic dimension of village government, limit the discretion of the apparatus, and reduce deliberation to mere administrative

procedures. In Weber's perspective, this condition signifies how the bureaucracy can transform from a rational means to a structure that shackles individual social action (Ali et al., 2021).

Although much has been done on Weberian bureaucracy and rationality, much of the research still focuses on large-scale modern organizations, such as state bureaucracies, corporations, and formal institutions in urban areas. Studies that specifically place villages as an arena for analyzing bureaucratic rationality in industrial societies are still relatively limited. In fact, the village is an important space to understand how modern rationality works at the grassroots level and how it impacts social relations, community participation, and daily government practices.

The limitations of the study show that there are gaps *Research gap* that needs to be filled. There has not been much research that explicitly examines how the rationality of the Weberian bureaucracy operates in village government, especially in areas such as Bone Bolango Regency which is experiencing the dynamics of modernization and integration into the national government system.

In addition, studies that relate the rationality of village bureaucracy to the character of local industrial communities are still rare, so the understanding of the impact of rationalization on village social life is not comprehensive.

Based on the above background, this research is important and urgent to be carried out. This study aims to analyze in depth the practice of village bureaucratic rationality in the perspective of Max Weber on the industrial community in Prosperous Village, Bone Bolango Regency.

The urgency of this research lies in the effort to understand how rational bureaucracy

shapes village governance, as well as to reveal its implications on social relations, decision-making, and the role of village officials. Thus, this research is expected not only to make an academic contribution to the development of the study of bureaucratic sociology, but also to be a material for critical reflection for strengthening village governance that is more adaptive, humanistic, and contextual in the midst of the demands of rationality of industrial society.

METHODS

This research was conducted in Prosperous Village, Bone Bolango Regency using a qualitative research type, because this research aims to understand in depth the meaning, patterns, and logic of village bureaucratic actions, not to measure symptoms numerically. The qualitative approach was chosen because, as Creswell explains, this method is appropriately used to interpret social phenomena based on the perspective of actors directly involved in their natural context (in Nurrisaa et al., 2025) . Data was collected through direct interviews with the Village Head and Village Secretary as key informants, and supported by official village documents and related regulations. Data collection was carried out through interviews and document review, while data analysis was carried out in stages using the Miles and Huberman model, which emphasizes the process of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification (in Nurrisaa et al., 2025) because this model allows researchers to organize data systematically while maintaining the relationship between empirical findings and Max Weber's theoretical framework of bureaucratic rationality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Dominance of Formal Rationality and Written Rules in the Practice of Prosperous Bone Bolango Village Government

The results of the study show that government practices in Prosperous Villages are predominantly carried out within the framework of written rules and formal procedures. Based on the results of interviews with the Village Head and the Village Secretary, it was found that every form of public service, decision-making, and implementation of village programs must be based on clear and documented regulations. Village officials emphasized that there is no room for actions that are personal, informal, or based on considerations of social proximity, because all government activities must be accountable administratively and legally. These findings show that compliance with the rules is positioned as the main principle in running the wheel of village government.

Furthermore, the results of the interview revealed that the village deliberations were still carried out as a participatory mechanism, but the results of the deliberations did not necessarily have the force before they were outlined in the official documents. A new community agreement is considered valid when it has been institutionalized through the minutes of the event, signed by the authorities, and adjusted to the provisions of the applicable laws and regulations. Thus, deliberation functions not only as a space for social dialogue, but especially as an administrative prerequisite for producing formal legal decisions.

Other findings show that village officials tend to avoid the use of discretion in public services. In certain situations when the community needs a quick and flexible settlement, the village government sticks to the

established procedural flow. The apparatus considers that compliance with the rules is more important than speed or adjustment of services, because any deviation in procedures has the potential to cause administrative problems in the future. This shows that the success of the work of the village bureaucracy is measured more by conformity with procedures than by satisfaction or direct benefit to the community.

If read through the lens of Max Weber, the findings reflect the work of formal rationality as the basis for social action of village officials. Formal rationality, according to Weber, places general rules, standard procedures, and administrative calculations as the main cornerstones of bureaucratic action (Devi et al., 2023). Prosperous Village Government in this context shows the character of a modern bureaucracy that is relatively close to the ideal type of Weberian impersonal, orderly, hierarchical, and oriented towards legal certainty. Village officials act not as individuals with personal preferences, but as office holders bound by formal authority and restrictions.

However, the dominance of formal rationality also reveals the problematic side of the village bureaucracy. Weber asserts that when formal rationality is overused, it has the potential to eliminate substantive rationality, namely considerations of values, social goals, and the concrete context of people's lives.

In the practice of Prosperous Village government, the orientation that is too strong on written rules causes public policies and services to be less sensitive to the real conditions of villagers who are faced with the dynamics of industrial society. The village bureaucracy appears administratively orderly, but less socially adaptive.

This condition shows a fundamental weakness of village government, namely the

high dependence on procedural logic. Village officials tend to be defensive and administratively cautious, so the space for innovation and policy adjustment is very limited. Bureaucratic discretion, which should be able to be used to answer contextual problems of society, is instead narrowed by concerns about the risk of breaking the rules. As a result, public services run legally-formally, but not always effective and solution.

In addition, the formalization of village deliberations also weakens the quality of local democracy. Community participation is indeed accommodated normatively, but substantively it has less effect on policy direction. Deliberation functions more as a mechanism of administrative legitimacy than as a space for deliberation that allows for an equal exchange of ideas and interests. In the Weberian perspective, this condition shows how formal rationality not only regulates bureaucratic actions, but also frames the power relations between the state and society at the village level.

Thus, the results of this study confirm that the government of Prosperous Villages is in the paradox of modern bureaucracy. On the one hand, the dominance of formal rationality creates order, legal certainty, and administrative legitimacy. But on the other hand, it limits flexibility, social sensitivity, and bureaucratic responsiveness to community needs (Triharjono et al., 2021). Village government appears procedurally rational, but it is not yet fully rational substantively.

These findings show the need for a balance between formal rationality and value rationality so that village bureaucracy is not trapped in compliance with rules that actually distance the government from its basic goal, which is to serve the interests of the community in a meaningful way.

Hierarchical Structure and Bureaucratic Division of Labor

The governance structure of the Prosperous Village shows a hierarchical pattern of authority and bureaucratic division of work that is getting stronger along with the change in the character of the village towards an industrial society. The results of the research based on interviews with the Village Head and Village Secretary show that the village government work system is structured according to the principles of efficiency, order, and administrative certainty, which are seen as relevant to manage a community that is no longer completely agrarian, but is increasingly integrated with the logic of industry, market, and labor mobility. In the village bureaucracy, it functions as an instrument of controlling and regulating increasing social complexity.

Field findings show that the Village Head occupies the position of the highest authority in the government structure, while other village officials carry out their duties in accordance with the functions and duties that have been formally determined.

This hierarchical pattern is understood by the apparatus as an objective need in an industrial society, where social and economic activities take place quickly, fragmented, and demand neat coordination. A firm division of authority is considered to be able to prevent overlapping tasks and minimize conflicts of interest in the management of village government.

Employment relationships between village officials are impersonal and position-based, not based on social closeness or kinship relationships that are prevalent in traditional village communities. The apparatus emphasized that work professionalism requires a separation between personal affairs and structural authority, especially in serving an

increasingly heterogeneous society due to job differentiation, the entry of industrial labor, and increased village interaction with external economic actors. This condition indicates a shift in village social relations from the *gemeinschaft* pattern to the *gesellschaft*, as stated in the classical sociological tradition.

The division of labor in the government of the Bone Bolango Prosperous Village is structured specifically and functionally, reflecting the principle of specialization that is the main characteristic of the industrial society. Each apparatus has a clear and limited scope of duties, so that performance can be measured, supervised, and accounted for administratively. This specialization supports bureaucratic efficiency, but at the same time places the apparatus as the technical implementer of a standardized work system.

In an industrial society, village apparatus functions like administrative workers who work in the rhythm of the organization, not as social actors who have the freedom to act holistically (Theresa Shinta Ajie & Isnawaty, 2024).

In Max Weber's perspective, these findings reflect the workings of a rational-legal bureaucracy that is highly compatible with industrial society. Weber asserts that the development of capitalism and industrialization requires a stable, predictable, and formally rational form of organization. The hierarchical structure and strict division of labor allow the village bureaucracy to carry out the functions of social regulation efficiently amid the increasing complexity of industrial society's life, including the management of population administration, business licensing, and the distribution of development programs.

The dominance of hierarchical structures and work specialization also brings problematic consequences. In a dynamic and

changing industrial society, the village bureaucracy actually shows a tendency to be rigid and slow (Rulinawaty et al., 2023). Village officials are more oriented towards carrying out tasks according to structural orders rather than responding quickly to residents' socio-economic problems, such as employment, economic conflicts of interest, or urgent service needs. Strong hierarchical structures limit the discretion of the apparatus, so local initiatives are often hampered by procedures and chains of command.

Furthermore, high work specialization has implications for the fragmentation of responsibilities. Village officials focus on their respective parts of work without full involvement in the overall decision-making process. In the context of industrial society, this fragmentation reflects the logic of modern work that is efficient but at the same time has the potential to alienate the apparatus from the social meaning of its work. The apparatus works to meet administrative targets, not to solve the social problems of the residents as a whole.

The impersonal hierarchical structure also creates social distance between the village bureaucracy and the community. In an industrial society, where social relations are increasingly transactional, the village bureaucracy actually reinforces the impression of formalism and rigidity (Nasution et al., 2018). Village officials appear as implementers of the system, not as representatives of the community. This condition weakens the function of village government as a social institution that should be able to bridge the interests of the state and the needs of citizens.

This situation shows the paradox of bureaucratic rationality in an industrial society. On the one hand, hierarchical structures and bureaucratic division of labor allow village governments to manage social complexity

efficiently and in an orderly manner. But on the other hand, the dominant formal rationality has the potential to get rid of substantive rationality, namely consideration of values, ethics, and social welfare goals. Village government becomes administratively rational, but less reflective of the social impact of policies in the midst of the dynamics of industrial society.

Thus, the hierarchical structure and bureaucratic division of labor in Prosperous Villages cannot be understood solely as an internal organizational mechanism, but as part of the transformation of the village into an industrial society. The village bureaucracy plays a role as an instrument of social rationalization, but at the same time faces limitations in maintaining a balance between structural efficiency and social sensitivity. This finding confirms that the rationality of village bureaucracy needs to be critically examined so as not to be trapped in an industrial logic that places apparatus and citizens solely as part of the system, not as living and dynamic social subjects.

Meritocracy and Professionalization of Prosperous Village Apparatus of Bone Bolango

The practice of recruitment and placement of apparatus in Prosperous Villages shows a significant shift towards the principle of meritocracy and bureaucratic professionalization, along with the transformation of the village towards an industrial society. The results of the study based on interviews with the Village Head and Village Secretary show that the filling of village apparatus positions is no longer based on considerations of personal closeness, kinship relationships, or traditional legitimacy, but rather follows formal regulations,

administrative requirements, as well as educational qualifications and competencies that have been determined. Village officials are positioned as professional workers who must meet certain standards in order to be able to carry out government functions effectively in an increasingly complex social context.

Field findings revealed that the recruitment process for village officials was carried out through a standardized selection mechanism, including minimum education requirements, administrative skills, and an understanding of the duties and functions of village government. The Village Head and Village Secretary emphasized that the system is needed to ensure the quality of the performance of the apparatus, especially in facing the demands of the industrial community who demand fast, accurate, and administratively accountable services. Thus, the village bureaucracy no longer operates as a personal trust-based institution, but as a work organization that relies on technical capacity and formal competence.

In an industrial society, the professionalization of village apparatus is seen as a rational response to the increasing complexity of village administration and interaction with external actors, such as government agencies above it, the business world, and the labor market (Suaib, 2023). Village officials are required to be able to manage population data, licensing administration, and development programs that are increasingly integrated with the modern bureaucratic system. This condition prompted the village government to adopt the principle of meritocracy as a mechanism to ensure that positions were filled by individuals who were considered the most administratively competent.

If read through Max Weber's perspective, these findings reflect the work of a rational legal bureaucracy that places technical competence and formal qualifications as the basis for the legitimacy of authority. Weber emphasized that in modern bureaucracy, a position is a "job" (Beruf) that is carried out professionally, not a personal mandate or a symbol of social status (Kadir, 2015). Village officials in Prosperous Villages function as bureaucratic officials bound by rules, work standards, and administrative ethics, so that their actions are not based on individual preferences, but on structural obligations.

This professionalization and meritocracy also carry problematic structural implications (Lindblom, 2018). The placement of apparatus as professionals with strictly defined tasks causes the space of individual discretion to be very limited. Village officials work within the framework of established procedures and standards, so that personal initiatives and contextual adjustments to community problems are often hampered. In practice, the apparatus is more oriented towards fulfilling administrative indicators rather than on solving citizens' social problems substantively.

Furthermore, the principle of meritocracy in the context of industrial society has the potential to strengthen the technocratic logic in village government (Agil Sabani et al., 2024). Apparatus is assessed based on technical ability and compliance with the system, not based on social sensitivity or deep understanding of the cultural context of the village community. As a result, village bureaucracy tends to be distant from the social reality of citizens, especially community groups that are not fully integrated in modern administrative logic. Bureaucratic professionalism goes hand in hand with the

increasing formalization of the relationship between the apparatus and the community.

According to Max Weber, this condition shows the paradox of bureaucratic rationality in industrial society. On the one hand, meritocracy and professionalization strengthen the efficiency, accountability, and certainty of the work of the village bureaucracy. But on the other hand, the formal rationality that underlies the system has the potential to get rid of substantive rationality, namely value considerations, social empathy, and community welfare orientation. Village officials become effective administrative actors, but lack the flexibility to act reflexively and contextually.

The weakness of village government in this context lies in the tendency of over-professionalization which is not balanced with the strengthening of the social capacity of the apparatus. Village officials are prepared as administrative personnel, but they are not always equipped with the ability to read the social dynamics of industrial societies which are full of differentiation of interests and social inequality. As a result, the village bureaucracy is more responsive to the demands of the system and regulations than to the real needs of the villagers.

Thus, the meritocracy and professionalization of village apparatus in Prosperous Villages reflects the success of bureaucratic rationalization in industrial society, as well as revealing its limitations. The rationality of the village bureaucracy works effectively in managing administration and meeting formal demands, but it has not been fully able to bridge administrative interests with the social needs of the community. This finding emphasizes that the professionalization of village bureaucracy needs to be accompanied by strengthening substantive rationality so that village apparatus is not only the implementer of

the system, but also social actors who are sensitive and responsive to the dynamics of the industrial community.

Bone Bolango Prosperous Village Bureaucracy as an Iron Cage of Rationality

The overall practice of government in Prosperous Villages shows the work of bureaucratic rationality that not only regulates the actions of the apparatus, but also frames the way of thinking and acting of the village community itself. The results of the study based on interviews with the Village Head and Village Secretary show that almost all government activities ranging from public services, decision-making, to the implementation of deliberations are carried out in a network of written rules, standard procedures, and strict administrative supervision mechanisms. In this context, the village bureaucracy does not merely function as a tool for government management, but has become a rational structure that binds all social actors in a uniform and standardized pattern of action. Field findings show that village officials work within the constraints of a system that is relatively difficult to avoid.

Any action must conform to rules, hierarchies of authority, and formal accountability mechanisms. Apparatus is not only expected to comply with regulations, but also required to document every work process administratively. This condition creates a situation where the success of the bureaucracy is measured more by procedural compliance than by substantive achievements of public services. Village officials carry out the role of system implementers, not as actors who have full freedom to interpret and adjust policies to the social context of the community.

In Max Weber's perspective, this condition represents what is called the "iron cage of rationality" (Ikramatoun et al., 2021).

The formal rationality that is the foundation of the modern bureaucracy was originally intended to create order, efficiency, and legal certainty. However, when such rationality works totally and dominantly, it turns into a structure that restricts the freedom of social action. The findings of this study show that the village bureaucracy in Desa Sejahtera has moved in this direction, where the apparatus and the community are both bound by rigid administrative logic.

In an industrial society, the iron cage of bureaucracy is getting stronger. Changes in the economic and social structure of villages towards an industrial society require high order, efficiency, and accountability. The village government responded to these demands by tightening procedures, expanding administrative documentation, and strengthening hierarchical oversight (Ikramatoun et al., 2021).

As a result, the space for social action that is spontaneous, contextual, and based on local values is getting narrower. Village deliberations, which historically functioned as a space for social deliberation, were reduced to administrative procedures to meet regulatory demands.

The iron cage of bureaucratic rationality is also seen in the relationship between the community (Powell & DiMaggio, 2023). The community is positioned as an administrative subject that must adjust to the flow of the applicable procedures. Access to public services depends on the completeness of documents and compliance with formal mechanisms, not on social proximity or urgent needs. In an industrial society, these relationships reflect a shift from personal social relationships to transactional and impersonal relationships. The village bureaucracy is the main mediator

between individuals and the state, but at the same time creates a widening social distance.

For village officials, the iron cage of bureaucratic rationality limits the space for discretion and creativity of work. Apparatus tends to avoid actions that go beyond procedure due to concerns about administrative consequences. Local initiatives and innovations are often hampered by rigid rules and long chains of command. In this condition, village officials work to maintain system stability, not to respond flexibly to social dynamics. Formal rationality becomes the dominant logic that directs action, while substantive rationality that considers values, ethics, and social goals tends to be marginalized.

Thus, the village bureaucracy in Bone Bolango Prosperous Village shows how Weberian rationality works fully in the context of village government in industrial society. Bureaucracy provides the order, certainty, and accountability needed to manage social complexity. At the same time, however, it formed an iron cage that bound the apparatus and society in a rigid administrative logic.

These findings confirm that the main challenge of village governance lies not in the absence of rationality, but in the dominance of formal rationality that is not balanced with the strengthening of substantive rationality. Without this balance, the village bureaucracy risks losing its social function as an institution that serves and empowers the community in the midst of the dynamics of an industrial society.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the government practice of Prosperous Village, Bone Bolango Regency, is clearly dominated by Weberian bureaucratic rationality which is oriented towards written rules, formal procedures, and administrative

compliance. The findings show that public services, decision-making, village deliberations, and apparatus work are carried out within a framework of formal rationality that emphasizes legal certainty, efficiency, hierarchy of authority, and bureaucratic division of labor. The hierarchical structure, specialization of tasks, and the application of meritocracy and professionalization of the apparatus strengthen the character of a rational-legal bureaucracy that is compatible with the demands of industrial society. However, the dominance of formal rationality also has problematic consequences in the form of limited discretion space, weakening of social sensitivity, formalization of community participation, and the tendency of village bureaucracy to be trapped in the "iron cage" of rationality. Thus, village government appears orderly and administratively accountable, but is not fully substantively rational in responding to the social needs of the industrial community, thus emphasizing the need for a balance between formal rationality and value rationality in village governance.

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