

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The concept of red tape and efficiency among corporate and government manager: Analysis on the effects to their management performances

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ABSTRACT

Red tape, characterized by excessive bureaucracy, rigid procedures, and unnecessary administrative burdens, stifles efficiency, creates frustration, and demotivates employees. When organizations are entrenched in red tape, employees often feel constrained by outdated systems and are discouraged from taking initiative or suggesting improvements. This leads to a lack of innovation, slow decision-making, and reduced responsiveness to changing circumstances. This exploratory study analyzed culture of red tape in corporate government setting. This study also provided perspectives on developing efficient bureaucratic culture in these work settings. Corporate and government managers (n=30) were purposively sampled to be interviewed in this study. Their narratives reflected their experiences in dealing with red tape cultures, and how they responded to workplace constraints. Findings indicated that government managers view red tape as an overwhelming burden that demoralizes employees and hampers public service delivery, while corporate managers associate it with stifled adaptability and missed market opportunities. This paper linked red tape to counterproductive work behaviors, frustration, and reduced job satisfaction, further exacerbating its negative effects on employee motivation and performance. However, there was evidence that organizational red tape, under specific conditions, can spur innovation during developmental phases by compelling organizations to seek creative solutions. Managers emphasize the importance of developing efficient workplace cultures that embrace technology, streamline processes, and encourages active employee participation in decision-making. Such approaches promote transparency, collaboration, and adaptability while mitigating the adverse effects of procedural constraints. This inclusive and efficiency-focused strategy was essential for enhancing organizational performance, employee satisfaction, and overall innovation.

Keywords: work efficiency; management; public service; red tape; workplace culture

1. Introduction

The growing prevalence of red tape in public and private sectors significantly hampers productivity and profitability. Red tape has caused major inefficiencies in the public sector by upsetting organizational frameworks in different jurisdictions. Fuenzalida et al.^[1] claim that the high level of red tape integration in these institutions is mostly to blame for the government's vulnerability, which has had a negative impact on

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enterprises as well as the economy as a whole. The efficacy of public sector organizations has been increasingly undermined by this bureaucratic rigidity. In corporate environments, red tape is often characterized by bureaucratic behaviors that hinder processes, stifle decision-making, and restrict innovation. Similarly, in government, red tape manifests through complex compliance requirements that frustrate both employees and citizens, ultimately disrupting prompt service delivery^[2]. George et al.^[2] indicate that red tape can severely impede management efficiency in corporate settings, constraining organizational practices and managerial behavior, leading to decreased innovation and overall effectiveness.

Excessive procedures can diminish employee productivity, as more time is spent on compliance rather than on value-adding activities^[3]. This inefficiency can limit competitiveness and growth opportunities for companies. Likewise, in government organizations, red tape significantly affects operational efficiency. Rauf^[4] highlights how red tape represents policies and regulations that negatively impact both public and private sector organizations.

Employees are vital to achieving an organization's goals and are often likened to the wheels of a vehicle; without them, progress is impossible. Red tape comprises the conditions, rules, standards, and processes established by the government to reduce fraud and enhance organizational effectiveness^[5]. However, in many emerging nations, these regulations often lead to delays in task completion, resulting in a perception of corruption within government agencies^[6].

Theoretically, Bozeman^[7] noted that bureaucratic red tape complicates staff duties, diminishing governmental effectiveness. The complexity of procedures can lead to delays in service delivery, frustrating the public and eroding trust in public agencies. Red tape can negatively impact employee job satisfaction and morale, which in turn affects overall organizational performance^[8]. Factors such as the working environment, compensation, teamwork, and organizational structure—all influenced by red tape—can affect job satisfaction. According to Rainey et al.^[9], new hires in government agencies with high levels of red tape often experience burnout and dissatisfaction, leading to higher turnover rates and a loss of talented personnel, further harming organizational success. High levels of organizational red tape contribute to negative perceptions of management effectiveness, resulting in decreased workforce engagement and commitment. Hattke et al.^[10] identify the overabundance of regulations in public organizations as a contributing factor to economic downturns. Red-tapism not only impacts operational efficiency but also affects employee performance, organizational commitment, public service motivation, and job satisfaction^[11].

This paper shifted its focus on assessing the culture of work efficiency to address the effects of red tapism in workplaces. The literature suggests that work efficiency is deeply intertwined with streamlined processes^[12], adaptive decision-making^[13], and the strategic use of technology. For example, Lean Production frameworks emphasize the optimization of workflows and active employee participation, demonstrating that efficient systems can replace rigid, bureaucratic processes without compromising procedural integrity. Furthermore, efficient work environments empower employees by minimizing unnecessary administrative burdens, thereby enhancing their ability to focus on core responsibilities and fostering a sense of ownership and engagement^[14,15].

The study focused on exploring the concept of red tape as experienced by organizational managers and its impact on workplace dynamics. It examined how red tape, characterized by excessive rules, outdated procedures, and bureaucratic constraints, was perceived as a barrier to efficiency, innovation, and responsiveness in both corporate and government settings. Government managers viewed red tape as an overwhelming obstacle that hindered their ability to meet public needs effectively, while corporate managers highlighted its role in stifling innovation and adaptability in fast-paced markets.

2. Literature review

The impact of red tape on organizational effectiveness has been the subject of considerable research, with various studies examining its implications for economic performance and the ability of businesses to achieve their objectives. Zahradnik^[16] proposed strategies aimed at improving the effectiveness of public organizations by addressing the issues posed by bureaucratic red tape. They identified the introduction of red tape into bureaucratic systems as a significant barrier to organizational performance and offered cohesive solutions for its elimination. Similarly, Borst^[17] focused on recognizing and understanding red tape, highlighting its detrimental influence on organizational effectiveness and the overall performance of organizations.

A review from Van Dijck and Steen^[18] indicated that red tape imposes excessive paperwork and delays that disrupt workflow. Psychologically, it diminishes civil servants' motivation, thereby reducing innovative behavior. Additionally, in the context of change and innovation, red tape fosters a culture of risk aversion that hampers collaborative innovation efforts. From a collaborative perspective, it creates barriers by complicating the process of changing partners in collaborative arrangements. However, despite these challenges, red tape also has some positive effects. For instance, the frustrations associated with bureaucratic constraints can enhance internal communication within an organization or collaboration^[19]. Similarly, these frustrations may drive organizations to seek innovative solutions as a response to procedural inefficiencies^[11].

Further exploring the connection between management practices and organizational structure, Pandey and Kingsley^[20] gathered primary data at the National Public Management Research Conference to analyze the relationship between dysfunctional rules and management behavior among higher-level employees. Their study validated four key theories and provided recommendations for reducing red tape to enhance departmental and organizational performance. Moynihan and Pandey^[21] cautioned against centralized decision-making processes, advocating for decentralized structures to improve job satisfaction in public organizations. They emphasized the importance of implementing proper audit procedures to effectively monitor the performance of lower-level staff.

Political accountability also plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of bureaucracies. Yang and Hsieh^[22] examined bureaucracy in government and nonprofit institutions, asserting that enhancing political and institutional accountability is essential for improving organizational performance. They highlighted various challenges in the public sector resulting from a lack of accountability, noting that bureaucracies are particularly vulnerable to administrative constraints, such as personnel regulations and red tape, which can negatively affect performance and restrict key decisions regarding compensation and promotions.

Lastly, red tape's influence on employee behavior and motivation cannot be overlooked. Van Der Voet^[23] argued that red tape adversely impacts individual employee behavior, suggesting that normative considerations are as significant as self-interested decisions in shaping conduct. High levels of red tape can diminish affective motivation, leading to various behavioral issues among employees. Stazyk and Goerde^[24] concluded that there is a need for further research to evaluate how organizational experiences and policies affect public servants' motivation over time, while Pandey^[25] demonstrated that the effects of red tape extend beyond public organizations, also impacting commercial entities.

Management efficiency is essential for organizational success, encompassing the skills, techniques, and processes managers use to guide teams toward defined goals^[26]. Key components include setting clear, attainable objectives and maintaining open communication to ensure alignment among team members. Strong communication skills enable managers to articulate goals, foster collaboration, and address concerns effectively^[27]. Sound decision-making involves evaluating risks and benefits, applying critical thinking, and

taking calculated risks when necessary. A positive work environment, characterized by open communication, teamwork, recognition, and professional development, enhances productivity^[28]. Exemplary leadership inspires and motivates teams through delegation and role modeling, while a commitment to continuous improvement ensures efficiency and adaptability through regular evaluation of processes and systems^[29,30].

3. Methods

3.1. Research design

This study employed an exploratory qualitative approach^[31] to examine the concept of red tape and efficiency among corporate and government managers, specifically analyzing their effects on management performance. One-on-one interviews were conducted with a sample of managers from both sectors to gather in-depth insights into their experiences, perceptions, and the challenges they faced related to bureaucratic processes. The exploratory design was chosen for its capacity to uncover important concepts, connections, and narratives surrounding red tape and efficiency^[32]. An exploratory study is a research approach aimed at gaining a preliminary understanding of phenomena that are not well-studied or lack extensive prior research^[33,34]. It focuses on discovering new insights, answering foundational questions, and identifying emerging trends, often building a framework to guide more specific research in the future^[35,36]. Exploratory studies typically employ qualitative methods, such as interviews, observations, or open-ended surveys, to uncover patterns and themes within social or psychological phenomena, enhancing understanding of the topic^[31,32]. These studies are instrumental in generating hypotheses and shaping future research directions, despite being sometimes perceived as less rigorous, as they efficiently provide initial data and perspectives^[34].

3.2. Population and sampling

The study’s population comprised 30 managers—15 from government offices and 15 from corporate organizations—who had held supervisory positions for at least three years within the last six years. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, a non-probability method that allows researchers to choose individuals based on specific criteria, such as their expertise in the subject matter or their willingness to contribute to the study^[37]. This approach ensured a diverse and relevant sample, focusing on those who could provide valuable insights related to the research objectives. Purposive sampling was particularly advantageous given the limited available pool and the need for specific characteristics^[38,31]. Specifically, an online purposive sampling^[39,40] was carried out to gather the initial information of the potential participants. Online questionnaires were distributed to organizational managers gathering their experiences regarding red tape incidence in their workplaces and how it affected their management performance. Initial data were used to assess the quality of responses the participants had, including their essential demographics presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Descriptive summary of participants’ demographics.

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	18	60
	Female	12	40
Years of Experience	1–5 years	6	20
	6–10 years	10	33.3
	11–15 years	8	26.7
	16 years or more	6	20
Trainings	1–3	10	33.3

	4–6	12	40
	7 or more	8	26.7
Monthly Income (Php)	20,000–39,999	10	33.3
	40,000–59,999	12	40
	60,000 or more	8	26.7

3.3. Research instrument

Semi-structured interview guide was developed to elicit the responses from the participants. Creating a semi-structured interview guide for qualitative research requires systematic and thoughtful planning to facilitate the collection of relevant data while maintaining alignment with the study purpose. This process begins with a clear understanding of the research context, goals, and any existing literature or theoretical frameworks that inform the investigation. These prerequisites help shape the scope and focus of the questions to be included in the guide^[41]. Preliminary questions are then developed to cover essential themes and encourage participants to share detailed narratives and insights. These questions are open-ended to allow flexibility, enabling participants to express their experiences and viewpoints freely while ensuring the conversation stays on track with the purpose^[42,43]. The guide is designed to balance this flexibility with sufficient structure to explore specific topics systematically. Pilot testing the guide is an essential step to refine the questions. This process ensures that they are clear, accessible, and effective in eliciting meaningful responses. Based on feedback from the pilot test, adjustments are made to enhance the guide’s clarity, relevance, and usability. The final guide typically includes main questions, potential follow-up prompts, and a logical sequence to facilitate the flow of the conversation^[44,45].

Table 2. Final interview guide questions.

Objectives	Interview Questions
Determine the nature of red tape culture and efficiency in government and corporate organizations.	1. What do you observe about red tape and efficient cultures in corporate organizations? Elaborate through a situation. 2. What do you observe about red tape and efficient culture in government offices? Elaborate through a situation.
Determine the effects of red tape culture to the management performance of the government and corporate managers	3. What are the effects of red tape culture to the management performance of government managers? Enumerate the effects and elaborate each. 4. What are the effects of red tape culture to the management performance of corporate managers? Enumerate the effects and elaborate each.
Determine the effects of efficient culture to the management performance of the government and corporate managers	5. What are the effects of efficient culture to the management performance of government managers? Enumerate the effects and elaborate each. 6. What are the effects of efficient culture to the management performance of corporate managers? Enumerate the effects and elaborate each.

3.4. Data gathering procedure

Narratives from participants were gathered through one-on-one interviews. Semi-structured interviews are particularly effective, as their flexibility allows for organic conversations guided by thematic questions and supplemented with follow-up prompts to elicit detailed insights^[46]. The process begins with clear communication of the study’s objectives, including assurances of confidentiality and ethical data usage, to establish trust and encourage participant engagement^[47]. During the interviews, researchers actively listen to participants’ narratives, recognizing how they ascribe meaning to their experiences and mitigating language barriers by encouraging responses in participants’ preferred dialects^[48,41]. Audio recording, with participants’ consent, ensures accurate data capture, while preliminary notes help highlight key themes for analysis^[49]. Establishing rapport and maintaining a conversational tone is crucial for reducing interviewer bias and enhancing the authenticity of responses, particularly in studies focused on exploring lived experiences^[50,51].

This method not only facilitates a clear understanding of participants' perspectives but also ensures that the data collected is reliable, culturally sensitive, and contextually relevant^[52].

3.5. Data analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative method that systematically identifies and interprets patterns of meaning within narrative data, making it particularly effective for analyzing one-on-one interviews^[53]. This approach is especially valuable in exploratory research, as it facilitates the discovery of shared experiences and meanings, allowing researchers to understand the significance of participants' narratives^[32]. The coding process in thematic analysis involves three stages, starting with descriptive codes and evolving into more interpretive analyses^[54,55]. Reflexive thematic analysis, in particular, requires researchers to actively engage with the data and recognize how their own experiences and assumptions may shape the interpretation^[56,57]. This process adopts an inductive approach, allowing themes to emerge directly from the data without being influenced by prior theories^[58]. The study followed the six phases of reflexive thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke^[59], ensuring flexibility while maintaining methodological rigor. This iterative process enables a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the data, with themes organized around central meanings that evolve as the analysis progresses.

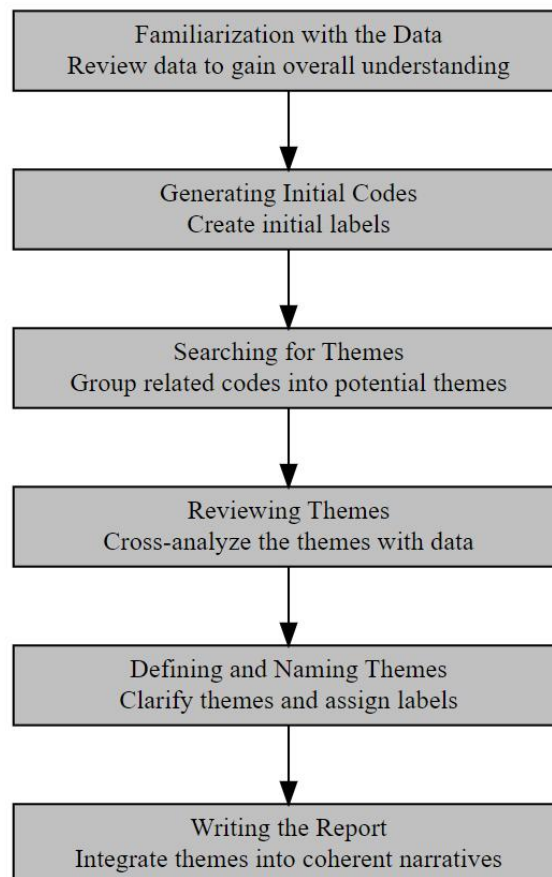


Figure 1. Six phases of reflexive thematic analysis.

4. Results

Objective 1: Determine the nature of red tape culture and efficiency in government and corporate organizations.

In both government and corporate organizations, red tape and efficiency are central to the dynamics of organizational operations, yet they often stand in stark contrast. Red tape, characterized by excessive bureaucracy and rigid procedures, can significantly hinder the ability of organizations to operate effectively, whereas an efficient organizational culture emphasizes responsiveness, empowerment, and adaptability.

“We need to be nimble and responsive to changing trends and customer needs, but the excessive bureaucracy and procedural hurdles hold us back.”

“An efficient culture empowers government managers to make a real difference in the lives of citizens.”

One of the key themes that emerged from the statements regarding red tape is the constraint on innovation and agility. In government organizations, red tape is often viewed as an obstacle to progress. Managers feel powerless to make meaningful change, indicating a systemic issue where the structure of bureaucratic procedures stifles creative solutions and problem-solving capabilities. Similarly, in corporate settings, excessive bureaucracy and procedural hurdles hold organizations back, preventing them from responding swiftly to market demands. This creates a rigid environment where even simple tasks are delayed due to the need for multiple forms and approvals, a process that undermines the stated goals of efficiency. In both sectors, the need for nimbleness and responsiveness is compromised, as organizations become bogged down by outdated processes that impede swift decision-making.

“Our government offices are stuck in red tape, with too many rules and procedures.”

“Managers feel powerless to make meaningful change, and their ability to innovate is stifled.”

“Red tape culture makes it impossible for us to move quickly in today's fast-paced market.”

“It's crazy how many forms and approvals we have to go through for even the simplest tasks. We say we want to be efficient, but we're just creating more delays.”

“Our company claims to be innovative and agile, but in reality, it's bogged down by outdated processes and a fear of taking risks.”

In contrast, an efficient organizational culture focuses on empowerment, responsiveness, and innovation. Efficiency, as described in the statements, is no longer seen as optional but as essential for survival in today's fast-paced environment. An efficient culture empowers employees to make decisions quickly and to innovate without being bogged down by unnecessary bureaucracy. This empowerment fosters a culture of transparency and accountability, where decisions are made with speed and clarity. In government settings, for example, efficiency is directly linked to the ability of managers to make a real difference in citizens' lives by ensuring that public resources are used effectively, and services meet evolving community needs. This emphasis on efficiency also builds trust with the public by creating a government that is responsive and accountable.

“In today's fast-paced business environment, efficiency is no longer just a nice-to-have, it's essential for survival.”

“A truly efficient culture doesn't just focus on the bottom line; it empowers our employees and prioritizes customer satisfaction.”

“By prioritizing transparency, responsiveness, and innovation, we can ensure that public resources are used effectively and that government services meet the evolving needs of our community.”

“When government operates efficiently, it builds trust with the public and fosters a sense of shared responsibility. We can achieve this by encouraging collaboration across agencies, embracing new technologies, and making decisions with speed and clarity.”

Objective 2: Determine the effects of red tape culture to the management performance.

The effects of red tape culture on management performance reveal significant challenges, primarily revolving around slowness and stress. The presence of excessive bureaucracy leads to a toxic cycle of delay, where critical decisions are postponed, responsiveness is diminished, and missed opportunities become frequent. This results in a stifling environment that hampers innovation and slows down the organization's ability to meet its objectives effectively. Furthermore, the constant paperwork and procedural hurdles create a stressful atmosphere for managers, leading to decreased job satisfaction and a sense of being trapped in a system that prevents them from serving both their teams and the public efficiently. Consequently, the demoralizing impact of red tape undermines organizational performance and employee well-being.

Theme 1: Slowness

The theme of slowness emerged as a dominant consequence of red tape. The culture of excessive regulations created a toxic cycle of delay and frustration, which impeded the overall progress of the organization. This environment was characterized by a stifling atmosphere, where innovation was actively hindered, and progress was notably slow. These conditions made it exceedingly difficult for organizations to attract and retain top talent, as skilled individuals sought environments where efficiency and innovation were prioritized.

“Red tape culture creates a toxic cycle of delay and frustration.”

“Red tape culture creates a stifling atmosphere where innovation is hindered and progress is slow. This makes it extremely difficult for us to attract and retain the top talent we need to thrive.”

Further, the burden of red tape caused the organization's ability to provide services to slow down, reducing its responsiveness and leading to missed opportunities. In critical situations, the presence of red tape led to delayed decisions, undermining the organization's capacity to meet the urgent needs of its community. This sluggishness in decision-making and action further reinforced the disconnect between organizational goals and outcomes. Ultimately, the nature of red tape created a cycle that consistently thwarted efficiency, obstructing progress and creating frustration within the organization.

“This slows down our ability to provide services, makes us less responsive, and leads to missed opportunities and frustration for everyone.”

“Red tape delays critical decisions and hinders our ability to respond to the urgent needs of our community.”

Theme 2: Stress

The overwhelming presence of bureaucratic processes led to situations where individuals spent an excessive amount of time dealing with rules and paperwork, leaving them with little time to focus on the core responsibilities of their roles. This not only hindered productivity but also created an environment where

managers felt stuck in endless paperwork, which ultimately affected their ability to meet the needs of the public.

“I feel like I spend more time dealing with all the rules and paperwork than actually getting my work done.”

“Managers are stuck in endless paperwork, and the public is left feeling unheard and underserved.”

The constraints imposed by red tape were reported to be demoralizing for managers, further exacerbating the stress within the organization. As a result, job satisfaction decreased, and employees experienced a pervasive sense of being trapped in a system that limited their capacity to effectively serve their stakeholders. The stress associated with these inefficiencies undermined both individual well-being and organizational performance, revealing a stark contrast between the ideal of an efficient organization and the reality of bureaucratic obstruction.

“The constraints imposed by red tape culture are demoralizing for government managers.”

“This leads to decreased job satisfaction and a sense of being trapped in a system that doesn’t allow them to serve the public effectively.”

Objective 3: Determine the effects of efficient culture to the management performance.

The results of the analysis highlighted the impact that an efficient culture can have on management performance, particularly in the areas of adaptability and citizenship. An efficient culture, characterized by streamlined processes and the empowerment of decision-making, fostered the ability to respond quickly to market changes and allocate resources strategically, thereby enabling organizations to thrive and innovate. This adaptability was seen as a key driver for organizational success and a competitive edge.

Further, an efficient culture contributed to citizenship by encouraging engagement, empowering employees to innovate, and creating an environment where individuals could make a difference and see their ideas come to life. This culture led to a positive ripple effect, enhancing both customer satisfaction and employee fulfillment. The findings indicated that fostering an efficient culture was essential for cultivating innovation and driving overall success in both government and corporate settings.

Theme 1: Adaptability

While red tape was associated with sluggishness and delayed decision-making, an efficient culture emphasized the importance of being agile and responsive. The nature of adaptability in an efficient culture was reflected in the need to embrace technology, streamline processes, and empower decision-making, all of which facilitated quicker responses to market changes and allowed for strategic resource allocation. This adaptability not only allowed organizations to drive innovation but also contributed to their long-term success by enabling them to outperform the competition. In contrast, red tape stifled this adaptability by imposing unnecessary procedures that hindered the ability to make timely decisions, ultimately limiting the organization’s capacity to innovate and respond effectively to dynamic environments. Thus, while red tape restricted an organization's ability to remain agile, an efficient culture encouraged an environment of continuous improvement and responsiveness.

“We need to prioritize a more efficient culture, one that embraces technology, streamlines processes, and empowers us to make decisions quickly.”

“This is how we can better serve the public interest and unlock the potential for innovation.”

“An efficient culture allows us to respond quickly to market changes, allocate resources strategically, and drive innovation. This is how we create a company that thrives and consistently outperforms the competition.”

Theme 2: Citizenship

An efficient culture developed a sense of engagement and empowerment, particularly for managers who were encouraged to innovate and exceed customer expectations. This empowerment led to a ripple effect throughout the organization, where not only were better products created, but happier customers and a more fulfilling work environment resulted. Furthermore, an efficient organization recognized the importance of encouraging experimentation and creating an atmosphere where failure was not feared. This allowed employees to explore new ideas without fear of repercussions, ultimately enhancing their ability to contribute meaningfully. The efficient culture promoted a more collaborative and productive environment, where individuals were motivated and supported to make impactful changes. In contrast, red tape undermined these opportunities, limiting the potential for employee growth and organizational progress.

“Talented individuals want to work in environments where they can make a difference and see their ideas come to life.”

“When our managers are engaged, empowered to innovate, and focused on exceeding customer expectations, we see a ripple effect across the entire organization. This leads to better products, happier customers, and a more fulfilling work environment for everyone.”

“We need to find a way to encourage experimentation and allow for failure without making people afraid to try new things.”

5. Discussion

Red tape was globally adopted by professionals advocating for its reduction through reforms, including the introduction of private-sector management techniques in government and the privatization of certain public goods and services^[60,61]. Pandey^[62] describes red tape as a “role-specific subjective experience of the compliance burden imposed by an organization.” This perspective suggests that red tape is present when an individual within the organization perceives a burden of compliance in a subjective manner^[63]. Similar perspectives do organizational managers hold regarding red tape in workplaces. For example, for government managers, the “government offices are stuck in red tape, with too many rules and procedures.” While corporate managers believed “...it [is] impossible for us to move quickly in today’s fast-paced market” as red tape is “...bogged down by outdated processes and a fear of taking risks.” For government managers, red tape is seen as an overwhelming obstacle, with excessive rules and procedures hindering progress. Meanwhile, corporate managers also recognize the culture of red tape, viewing it as a barrier to their responsiveness in a fast-paced market.

From managers’ perspectives, red tape can be described as a bureaucratic system characterized by excessive rules, procedures, and outdated processes that create significant obstacles to organizational efficiency and decision-making. In government settings, it is perceived as a major hindrance to progress due to its overwhelming nature, with too many regulations slowing down operations. In corporate environments, red tape is seen as a barrier to responsiveness, impeding the ability to respond quickly to market demands

and stifling innovation due to a culture of risk aversion. In both contexts, red tape is viewed as a challenge to the organization's responsiveness and overall effectiveness.

Studies on red tape in organizations highlighted its impact on human resources. In this context, red tape is linked to counterproductive work behavior, as employees may respond to the inefficiencies and constraints created by administrative tasks with negative actions or retaliation^[64]. This was mostly evident among corporate managers, especially in innovativeness and adaptability. For example, one corporate manager argued that red tape culture in business setting "...creates a stifling atmosphere where innovation is hindered, and progress is slow." This culture of excessive bureaucracy and rigid procedures not only limits the ability to implement new ideas but also discourages employees from taking initiative. Further, employees frequently view administrative duties as excessive, especially when these tasks are not directly linked to their primary job responsibilities^[65]. As a result, a heavy administrative workload can lead to feelings of frustration^[63]. For corporate managers, red tape "...creates a toxic cycle of delay and frustration" which in turn "slows down [their] ability to provide services, makes [them] less responsive, and leads to missed opportunities and frustration for everyone." When employees experience such frustration, they are more inclined to engage in behaviors that hinder the organization's goals^[66,67]. As business needs intensive innovativeness^[68], red tape can have a detrimental effect on business performance, as it diminishes the flexibility needed for quick decision-making and innovation. The negative cycle of delay, frustration, and missed opportunities exacerbates the challenges of staying competitive in dynamic industries.

While red tape can hinder innovativeness and responsiveness in businesses, it typically leads to increased stress among government employees. One government manager expressed frustration regarding red tape explaining that it is "...demoralizing for government managers." Red tape caused stress among government managers as they feel that the "...public is left feeling unheard and underserved." In the study of Fuenzalida et al.^[1], they argued that the school principals' sense of low personal accomplishment can be seen as a long-term consequence of red tape, reflecting the gradual impact of prolonged bureaucratic constraints on their sense of effectiveness. Government managers also expressed similar concern that with red tape, they "...spend more time dealing with all the rules and paperwork than actually getting [their] work done." This significantly impacts employees' job satisfaction^[69] and public service motivation^[70]. This paper explained that government managers may experience prolonged frustration as red tape continues to stifle creativity, decision-making autonomy, and the ability to meet public needs effectively. This paper support Kaufmann and Tummers^[71] contention that red tape is associated with high procedural dissatisfaction. With extensive red tape in government, there is "a sense of being trapped in a system that doesn't allow them to serve the public effectively." These patterns revealed how red tape not only hampers organizational performance but also deteriorates the well-being and motivation of individuals tasked with navigating its constraints.

Nevertheless, this paper provided clarifications to several early studies on red tape and developing efficient workplace procedures. Van Dijk^[72] reported contradiction in the effects of organizational and project red tape on innovation. While project red tape negatively impacted the development of innovations, organizational red tape unexpectedly had a positive effect, leading to the creation of more innovations. This surprising result aligns with the explanation by Moon and Bretschneider^[11], who argue that frustration with red tape can drive organizations to seek innovative solutions. However, this paper observed that red tape often compels employees to adhere to rigid work procedures, which may give the impression of efficiency despite being ineffective. Furthermore, while work frustration may seem manageable under initial working conditions, it is likely to have adverse effects on employees' competence and productivity over time as it was linked to stress, particularly in an organizational culture dominated by red tape. The positive influence of

organizational red tape was limited to the development phase, as it was negatively associated with the implementation of innovations^[72].

Organizational managers believed that work efficiency can delimit the impacts of red tape in their organization. For them, instead of having strict rules and procedures, an efficient work setting allows them "...to respond quickly to market changes, allocate resources strategically, and drive innovation. This is how [they] create a company that thrives and consistently outperforms the competition." Managers highlighted that efficiency not only enhances resource allocation and decision-making but also promotes a culture of innovation and adaptability. This appeared in several aspects of workplace dynamics. Human resource management, as a key driver in establishing an organization's competitive advantage, is focusing on enhancing employee motivation, actively involving them in decision-making processes, encouraging the development of professional competencies, and strengthening their loyalty to organizational leadership^[73,74]. For example, Liker and Convis^[75] described Lean Production as a framework, strategy, and foundation that requires the active participation of all personnel in implementing optimization processes aimed at driving continuous improvement and enhancing efficiency. Similarly, managers in this study suggested that: to cut down the negative effects of red tape within their organization, there should be "...a more efficient culture, one that embraces technology, streamlines processes, and empowers us to make decisions quickly" and "[this] is how [they] can better serve the public interest and unlock the potential for innovation." This improvement is attainable through the effective development and utilization of human resource potential, grounded in mutual respect among all stakeholders, including the organization, its management, and employees^[76]. Managers mentioned having an empowering workplace that encourages them to collaborate, innovate, and try ideas that enable them to deliver the needs of the stakeholders without procedural constraints. They also emphasized the importance of granting employees and managers the opportunity to provide input on the procedures and processes implemented within their workplace. Encouraging active participation in decision-making not only encourages a sense of ownership among employees but also enhances transparency and collaboration. Managers can alleviate external bureaucratic constraints by cultivating effective contact with regulatory bodies within their workplace context^[77]. Excessive control frequently results in the misapplication of rules, miscommunication, and a diminished sense of rule ownership; nevertheless, input from rule-setting groups can mitigate managers' perceptions of external bureaucratic constraints^[78]. When the connections between the rule-setting and rule-implementing organizations are strong, rules tend to be better understood and less arbitrary^[77]. When employees and managers are allowed to contribute their perspectives, it can lead to the identification of inefficiencies, the development of innovative solutions, and the alignment of organizational practices with the actual needs of the workforce. This inclusive approach helps create a more adaptive and responsive work environment, which improves overall organizational performance and employee procedural satisfaction.

6. Conclusion

This study provided a narrative examination of the impacts of red tape on organizational efficiency, employee satisfaction, and innovation from the perspectives of both government and corporate managers. Red tape was found to be a significant barrier in both sectors, although its effects differed in terms of organizational outcomes. In government organizations, red tape was perceived as a source of stress and frustration, hindering employees' ability to effectively meet public needs and demoralizing managers who struggled with excessive rules and procedures. This bureaucracy contributed to low job satisfaction and diminished public service motivation, reflecting a broader challenge for government institutions in balancing regulation with responsiveness. In contrast, corporate manager identified red tape as an obstacle to

adaptability and innovation, particularly in fast-paced markets where responsiveness is crucial. The culture of excessive bureaucracy in business settings often stifled creativity and led to delays, missed opportunities, and decreased employee motivation, which, in turn, hampered business performance.

Despite this, the overall negative impact of red tape on employee morale, innovation, and organizational efficiency was evident in both contexts. In response, managers emphasized the importance of fostering a more efficient organizational culture that embraces technology, streamlines processes, and empowers employees to make decisions quickly. Such strategies not only mitigate the negative effects of red tape but also create a more adaptive and innovative work environment. By promoting active employee participation in decision-making and developing stronger connections between regulatory bodies and employees, organizations can better address bureaucratic constraints, leading to improved performance and job satisfaction. While red tape remains a challenge, this study highlighted strategies for reducing its adverse effects, reflecting on the importance of organizational efficiency, employee engagement, and innovation in overcoming bureaucratic obstacles.

Several limitations were observed in this study. The sample primarily focused on government and corporate managers, which may not fully represent the perspectives of employees or other organizational stakeholders. Further research could expand the scope to include the views of frontline employees, whose experiences with red tape may differ from those of managers. This study was based on qualitative data from interviews, which, while rich in detail, may be influenced by personal biases and subjectivity. Future studies could employ quantitative methods to provide a broader and more generalizable understanding of red tape's impact on organizational performance across different sectors. Lastly, while the study highlighted the effects of organizational red tape, it did not fully explore the potential long-term effects on employee well-being and organizational culture, an area that warrants further investigation.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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