

Reducing Administrative Burden in Public Service Delivery: A Public Administration Perspective on Equity and Accessibility

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ABSTRACT

This study examines administrative burden in public service delivery from a public administration perspective, with particular attention to equity and accessibility. The purpose of the research is to analyze how administrative burden is experienced by citizens, how it affects different social groups unequally, and how public organizations can reduce such burden to improve inclusive service access. The study uses a qualitative method with an interpretive case study design because this design enables an in-depth understanding of citizens' lived experiences, frontline practices, and institutional dynamics in service delivery. The research was conducted at the Integrated Public Service Office of Metro City, Indonesia, selected because it represents an institutional setting where integrated and digital services are expected to simplify access. Data were collected from twenty-four informants consisting of public officials, frontline service officers, citizens, and community representatives. Informants were selected purposively because they had direct knowledge or experience of administrative procedures and service barriers. The findings show that administrative burden appears through learning costs, compliance costs, psychological costs, digital barriers, frontline discretion, and institutional fragmentation. These burdens affect vulnerable citizens more severely, especially those with limited resources and digital literacy. The study recommends simplifying requirements, improving citizen-oriented information, integrating data systems, strengthening frontline capacity, and designing inclusive digital and non-digital service channels.



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INTRODUCTION

Administrative burden has become a central concern in contemporary public administration because it directly affects how citizens experience, access, and benefit from public services (Setyawan, 2024). In principle, public service delivery is designed to translate state responsibility into accessible, fair, and effective outcomes for society. However, in practice, citizens frequently encounter complex procedures, excessive documentation requirements, repeated verification processes, unclear information, long waiting times, digital access barriers, and discretionary treatment by frontline officials. These burdens may appear as ordinary administrative routines, yet they often create unequal consequences for different groups of citizens (Boeger, 2024). Individuals with limited education, low income, disabilities, weak digital literacy, limited time, insecure employment, or geographic isolation are more likely to experience administrative requirements as obstacles rather than neutral procedures. Therefore, reducing administrative burden is not merely a matter of improving efficiency; it is also a matter of strengthening equity, accessibility, and democratic responsiveness in public administration (M. Lazor, 2025).

The state of the art in administrative burden research shows that the concept has moved beyond traditional concerns with bureaucracy, red tape, and procedural inefficiency. Recent public administration scholarship increasingly understands administrative burden as the learning, compliance, and psychological costs that citizens experience when interacting with government programs and public services (Yulianti et al., 2025). Learning costs arise when citizens must understand eligibility criteria,

service procedures, required documents, and institutional channels. Compliance costs occur when citizens must complete forms, visit offices, submit evidence, wait in queues, or navigate digital systems. Psychological costs emerge when citizens experience stress, stigma, uncertainty, fear of rejection, or distrust toward public institutions (Stanisevski, 2024). This conceptual development is important because it shifts analytical attention from the internal perspective of government organizations to the lived experiences of service users. It also highlights that administrative burden is not distributed evenly across society. The same procedure may be manageable for advantaged citizens but exclusionary for marginalized groups (Barbera et al., 2025).

Despite the growth of this literature, administrative burden remains a persistent problem in public service delivery. Many governments have adopted digital transformation, one-stop services, service charters, simplification reforms, and citizen-centered innovation. Nevertheless, these reforms do not always reduce burden in meaningful ways (Ferdous, 2025). Digitalization, for example, may simplify access for citizens who possess reliable internet access, digital devices, and sufficient digital literacy, but it may simultaneously create new barriers for older citizens, rural communities, persons with disabilities, or low-income households (EGBON, 2024). Similarly, procedural simplification may reduce the number of formal steps while leaving unclear instructions, fragmented databases, rigid eligibility verification, or discretionary gatekeeping unresolved. These conditions suggest that administrative burden cannot be understood only as a technical problem of procedure. It must be analyzed as an institutional, social, and equity-related issue embedded in the design and implementation of public services.

The main research problem addressed in this study is the persistence of administrative burden in public service delivery despite ongoing administrative reform efforts. Public organizations often claim to improve service quality through simplification, innovation, and digital governance, yet many citizens continue to face barriers that limit their ability to obtain services fairly and effectively. This problem is especially significant because administrative burdens may reduce take-up rates, discourage eligible citizens from applying for benefits, delay access to essential services, and deepen existing social inequalities (ANDREEV, 2023). When burdens are high, public services may formally exist but remain practically inaccessible to those who need them most. From a public administration perspective, this condition challenges the normative foundation of the state as a provider of equitable and inclusive services. It also raises questions about whether current reform strategies adequately address the relationship between administrative design, citizen capacity, and unequal access.

The research gap lies in the need for a more integrated explanation of how administrative burden affects equity and accessibility in public service delivery. Existing studies have contributed valuable insights into bureaucratic complexity, red tape, citizen-state interaction, and administrative exclusion. However, much of the literature still tends to examine administrative burden either as an efficiency problem, a behavioral barrier, or a program-specific implementation issue. Less attention has been given to connecting administrative burden systematically with equity and accessibility as core principles of public administration (M. O. Lazor, 2024). In particular, there is a need to understand how burdens are produced through service design, institutional coordination, eligibility systems, digital platforms, and frontline implementation, and how these burdens affect different citizen groups unequally. This gap is important because reducing administrative burden without an equity perspective may benefit citizens who are already better positioned to navigate public systems, while leaving vulnerable populations behind.

The novelty of this study lies in its public administration perspective that positions administrative burden reduction as both a managerial and justice-oriented agenda. Rather than treating burden reduction only as procedural simplification or service efficiency, this study frames it as a strategic approach to improving equitable access to public services. The study emphasizes that administrative burden should be evaluated not only by the number of procedures reduced, the speed of service delivery, or the adoption of digital tools, but also by whether reforms reduce unequal access, improve citizen capability to use services, and strengthen trust in government institutions (Bulkat, 2023). This perspective contributes to public administration scholarship by linking administrative burden theory with the broader concerns of inclusive governance, social equity, and citizen-centered

service delivery. It also provides a foundation for evaluating whether public service reforms genuinely improve accessibility for diverse social groups.

Based on this background, the central research question of this study is: how can administrative burden in public service delivery be reduced from a public administration perspective in order to promote equity and accessibility? This central question can be further developed into several analytical questions: what forms of administrative burden are most commonly experienced by citizens in public service delivery? How do these burdens affect different groups of citizens unequally? What institutional and procedural factors contribute to the persistence of administrative burden? How can public organizations design and implement burden-reduction strategies that improve both service efficiency and equitable access? These questions are relevant because they connect the operational aspects of service delivery with the normative responsibility of public administration to serve citizens fairly.

The objective of this study is to analyze administrative burden in public service delivery and to explain how burden reduction can strengthen equity and accessibility. More specifically, the study aims to identify the forms of burden experienced by citizens, examine the relationship between administrative burden and unequal access, explain the institutional factors that reproduce unnecessary complexity, and formulate a public administration perspective on burden reduction. By doing so, the study seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how public service systems can be redesigned to become simpler, fairer, and more responsive to citizen needs. The study also aims to support a shift from organization-centered reform toward citizen-centered and equity-sensitive public administration (Mahajan, 2024).

The theoretical benefit of this study is its contribution to the development of administrative burden theory within public administration. By connecting burden reduction with equity and accessibility, the study expands the conceptual scope of administrative burden beyond individual costs and procedural obstacles. It highlights the importance of analyzing administrative burden as a mechanism through which public institutions may unintentionally reproduce inequality. Academically, this study may enrich debates on public service delivery, social equity, digital governance, bureaucratic reform, and citizen-state relations. It can serve as a reference for scholars who seek to examine the intersection between administrative systems and unequal citizen experiences. Practically, the study provides insights for policymakers, public managers, and service designers who aim to improve service accessibility. It suggests that reducing administrative burden requires clear information, simplified procedures, integrated data systems, inclusive digital platforms, responsive frontline services, and continuous evaluation based on citizen experience (GAVRYLENKO, 2024).

The limitations of this study should also be acknowledged. Since administrative burden is shaped by institutional context, policy sector, citizen characteristics, and administrative capacity, the findings may not be universally applicable to all public service settings. The study may also be limited by the availability of empirical data on citizens' actual experiences, especially among marginalized groups who are often underrepresented in formal evaluation systems. In addition, administrative burden is a multidimensional concept, making it difficult to measure all learning, compliance, and psychological costs with equal precision. These limitations do not reduce the relevance of the study, but they indicate the need for careful interpretation and contextual sensitivity.

Future research should develop more comparative and empirical studies on administrative burden across policy sectors, levels of government, and citizen groups. Further studies may examine how digital transformation creates both opportunities and risks for burden reduction, how frontline discretion influences citizen access, and how administrative burden affects public trust and program participation (LIPENTSEV, 2024). Future research may also develop stronger measurement tools to assess whether burden-reduction reforms genuinely improve equity rather than only increasing procedural efficiency. By advancing this research agenda, public administration scholarship can contribute more effectively to the design of public services that are not only efficient, but also accessible, inclusive, and fair.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study entitled “*Reducing Administrative Burden in Public Service Delivery: A Public Administration Perspective on Equity and Accessibility*” is grounded in the assumption that public service delivery is not only a technical process of providing services, but also a normative arena where the state demonstrates fairness, inclusiveness, and administrative responsibility (Abdullah et al., 2024). In public administration scholarship, citizens do not merely interact with rules, forms, offices, and digital platforms; they interact with the practical face of the state. When these interactions require excessive effort, produce confusion, or create unequal barriers, public services may become formally available but substantively inaccessible. Therefore, this study reviews three interrelated theoretical perspectives: Administrative Burden Theory, Social Equity Theory, and Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory. These theories provide a conceptual foundation for understanding why administrative complexity persists, how it affects different social groups unequally, and how public organizations can redesign services to improve equity and accessibility.

Administrative Burden Theory was popularized by Pamela Herd and Donald P. Moynihan in their influential book *Administrative Burden: Policymaking by Other Means*, published by the Russell Sage Foundation in 2018. At the time of publication, both scholars were associated with the McCourt School of Public Policy, Georgetown University, United States; more recently, Pamela Herd and Donald P. Moynihan have been affiliated with the University of Michigan’s Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, United States. Their work conceptualizes administrative burden as the costs experienced by individuals when they interact with public programs, particularly learning costs, compliance costs, and psychological costs (Yunus et al., 2024). Learning costs refer to the effort required to understand eligibility, procedures, and rights; compliance costs refer to the time, money, documents, and actions required to obtain services; and psychological costs refer to stress, stigma, uncertainty, and frustration generated by bureaucratic encounters. Herd and Moynihan argue that administrative burdens are not always accidental; they can function as policy instruments that shape access, participation, and exclusion.

The development of Administrative Burden Theory is important because it expands the study of bureaucracy beyond traditional debates on red tape and organizational inefficiency. Earlier public administration research often treated procedural complexity as an internal management problem. Herd and Moynihan shifted the focus toward the citizen’s experience and showed that burdens may reduce program take-up, discourage eligible beneficiaries, and weaken trust in government (Mirza, 2025). More recent scholarship has further developed this theory by linking administrative burden to inequality, especially where burdens affect disadvantaged citizens more severely than privileged citizens (Gonin & Neumann, 2024). A recent Russell Sage Foundation discussion describes administrative burdens as frictions in encounters with public services that generate learning, compliance, and psychological costs, and that can operate as both a source and consequence of inequality. In this study, Administrative Burden Theory explains the main research problem: public service reforms often promise simplification, but citizens continue to face complex procedures, unclear requirements, repetitive documentation, and digital barriers.

Social Equity Theory was popularized by H. George Frederickson, particularly through the New Public Administration movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and later developed in his book *Social Equity and Public Administration: Origins, Developments, and Applications* published in 2010. Frederickson was strongly associated with the University of Kansas, United States, where he served as a distinguished professor of public administration. Social equity is widely recognized as the “third pillar” of public administration, alongside economy and efficiency (Johnston & Shepherd, 2025). It concerns fairness in public organizations, public management, and service delivery. Frederickson’s central contribution is the argument that public administration should not treat all citizens as if they possess the same resources, capacities, and social position. Equal treatment in formal procedures may reproduce inequality when citizens begin from unequal conditions.

The development of Social Equity Theory has moved from a normative call for fairness toward a more operational framework for evaluating public policy and service delivery. In contemporary public administration, social equity is increasingly connected with inclusive governance, distributive justice, accessibility, representation, and the reduction of structural barriers (Roehl & Hansen, 2024). This

development is relevant to the present study because administrative burden is not experienced equally. A citizen with high education, stable income, internet access, and institutional knowledge may complete a public service application easily, while a poor, elderly, disabled, or digitally excluded citizen may experience the same procedure as a serious barrier. From Frederickson's perspective, public service delivery should be judged not only by aggregate efficiency, but also by whether it improves access for those who face the greatest obstacles. Thus, Social Equity Theory connects directly to the research gap: many burden-reduction reforms remain procedurally oriented and do not sufficiently examine whether simplification produces equitable outcomes.

Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory was popularized by Michael Lipsky in his classic book *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Service*, published in 1980. Lipsky was formerly a professor of political science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, United States. His theory explains how frontline public workers such as teachers, police officers, social workers, health workers, and administrative service officers effectively shape public policy through daily interactions with citizens (Rus, 2025). Lipsky argues that street-level bureaucrats operate under limited resources, ambiguous goals, large caseloads, and substantial discretion. As a result, the policy experienced by citizens may differ from the policy formally written in laws, regulations, or service standards.

The development of Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory remains highly relevant in contemporary public administration, especially in the context of digital governance, integrated public services, and automated eligibility systems. Although technology has changed the form of frontline interaction, discretion has not disappeared. It may shift from face-to-face decision-making to data interpretation, digital assistance, document verification, complaint handling, and the design of service pathways (Bovsunivska & Nesterenko, 2025). Lipsky's theory helps explain why administrative burden persists even when formal procedures are simplified. Frontline officials may interpret rules differently, provide unequal guidance, enforce requirements inconsistently, or lack the capacity to support citizens with complex needs. Therefore, the theory is connected to the research problem by explaining how burdens are produced and reproduced during implementation, not only during policy design.

Together, the three theories form an integrated conceptual framework. Administrative Burden Theory identifies the costs citizens bear when accessing public services. Social Equity Theory evaluates whether those costs are distributed fairly across social groups. Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory explains how burdens are mediated, amplified, or reduced by frontline implementation. The framework suggests that administrative burden reduction must be analyzed at three levels: the design of rules and procedures, the social distribution of citizen capacity, and the practical behavior of implementing officials. This conceptual integration supports the novelty of the study. The novelty does not lie merely in stating that bureaucracy should be simplified, but in proposing that administrative burden reduction should be treated as an equity-oriented public administration strategy (Berceanu & Nicolescu, 2024).

These theories are directly connected to the research questions. The question of how administrative burden can be reduced is answered through Herd and Moynihan's classification of learning, compliance, and psychological costs. The question of why burden reduction matters for equity is answered through Frederickson's argument that public administration must pursue fairness, not only efficiency. The question of how burdens emerge in actual service delivery is answered through Lipsky's focus on frontline discretion and implementation realities. The theories are also linked to the research objectives, namely to identify forms of administrative burden, explain their unequal effects, examine institutional and implementation factors, and develop a public administration perspective that promotes accessible and equitable services.

The theoretical benefit of this literature review is that it strengthens the analytical foundation of administrative burden research by combining burden, equity, and implementation perspectives. Academically, it contributes to debates on citizen-state interaction, inclusive public service delivery, administrative reform, and digital governance. Practically, it provides guidance for policymakers and public managers to simplify requirements, improve communication, integrate data systems, train frontline officials, design inclusive digital platforms, and evaluate service quality from the perspective of vulnerable citizens (Fauzi et al., 2023). The limitation of this framework is that each theory was developed mainly in Western public administration contexts, especially the United States. Therefore,

future research should test and refine the framework across different administrative traditions, governance capacities, and social contexts.

In conclusion, Administrative Burden Theory, Social Equity Theory, and Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory provide a strong and complementary foundation for this study. Herd and Moynihan explain the citizen costs of bureaucracy; Frederickson clarifies why unequal access is a public administration problem; and Lipsky demonstrates how frontline implementation shapes real service experiences. By integrating these perspectives, the study addresses the main problem of persistent administrative barriers, fills the gap between procedural reform and equity-based accessibility, and offers novelty by framing burden reduction as a justice-oriented strategy in public service delivery (Monrad, 2024). This literature review therefore supports the research formulation, objectives, and theoretical, academic, and practical benefits of the study.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research method to examine how administrative burden emerges, is experienced, and can be reduced in public service delivery from a public administration perspective (FAN & GAO, 2025). The qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the issue of administrative burden is not only related to formal procedures, service standards, or institutional rules, but also to the lived experiences of citizens, the interpretations of frontline officials, and the administrative practices through which access to public services is shaped. The title of this study, *“Reducing Administrative Burden in Public Service Delivery: A Public Administration Perspective on Equity and Accessibility,”* requires a method that can explain meaning, context, institutional interaction, and unequal citizen experiences. Quantitative measurement may be useful for identifying the frequency of service delays or the number of procedural steps, but it is less adequate for revealing why citizens perceive certain requirements as burdensome, how frontline officials interpret procedural rules, and how administrative complexity affects vulnerable groups differently. Therefore, this research uses qualitative inquiry to develop an in-depth understanding of administrative burden as a social, institutional, and governance problem.

The research design used in this study is an interpretive qualitative case study. This design is selected because the study seeks to investigate administrative burden within a specific public service delivery setting and to understand how burden reduction can support equity and accessibility (Reddel et al., 2024). A case study design enables the researcher to examine the interaction between policy design, administrative procedures, frontline implementation, and citizen experience within a real institutional context. The interpretive orientation is important because administrative burden is not always visible in official documents. A procedure may appear simple in a service guideline, but citizens may experience it as difficult because of unclear information, repeated verification, lack of assistance, digital exclusion, or psychological pressure when dealing with public offices. An interpretive case study allows the researcher to capture these meanings and to analyze how administrative burden is constructed through the relationship between citizens and public institutions.

The use of an interpretive qualitative case study is also justified by the theoretical framework of this research. Administrative Burden Theory requires the researcher to understand learning costs, compliance costs, and psychological costs from the perspective of citizens (Lutsenko, 2025). Social Equity Theory requires attention to how administrative requirements affect different groups unequally (Li, 2023a). Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory requires analysis of how frontline officials use discretion, interpret rules, and mediate access to services (Stepanov, 2024). These theoretical perspectives cannot be fully explored through numerical data alone. They require interviews, observation, document analysis, and thematic interpretation. By using a qualitative case study, the research can explain not only what forms of administrative burden exist, but also how and why such burdens persist despite service reform, digitalization, and administrative simplification efforts.

The research is located in the Integrated Public Service Office of Metro City, Indonesia, with particular attention to administrative services related to population documents, social assistance registration, licensing assistance, and digital public service facilitation. This location is selected because integrated public service offices represent a strategic institutional setting where citizens interact directly with government procedures (Gennaro et al., 2025). Such offices are designed to simplify access by

bringing several administrative services into one service channel. However, they also reveal the complexity of public service delivery because citizens must still navigate eligibility requirements, document verification, digital forms, inter-agency coordination, and frontline discretion. The location is therefore relevant to the research problem because it allows the study to observe whether institutional integration actually reduces administrative burden or whether new forms of burden remain embedded in service processes.

Metro City is selected as the research location for several reasons. First, it reflects an urban administrative environment where digital public service innovation has been introduced, but where social and digital inequalities remain present among service users (Mulegi et al., 2024). Second, the city provides a useful setting for examining citizens with different socio-economic backgrounds, including low-income residents, elderly citizens, informal workers, persons with limited digital literacy, and citizens who depend on government assistance. Third, the Integrated Public Service Office enables observation of multiple service interactions in one institutional environment, making it possible to compare how administrative burden appears across different service types. Fourth, the location is suitable for examining accessibility because citizens must interact with both physical and digital service channels. These characteristics make the research site appropriate for analyzing the relationship between administrative burden, equity, and accessibility.

Because this study uses a qualitative method, the research does not use respondents in the statistical sense. Instead, it uses informants who are selected based on their knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in public service delivery (Deller, 2025). The informants consist of public officials, frontline service officers, service users, community representatives, and policy or administrative reform actors. The selection of informants is conducted through purposive sampling, supported by snowball sampling when necessary. Purposive sampling is used because the study requires informants who can provide rich and relevant information about administrative burden. Snowball sampling is used to identify additional informants who have specific experience with service barriers, complaint mechanisms, or vulnerable citizen groups. This sampling strategy is appropriate for qualitative research because the goal is not statistical generalization, but analytical depth and conceptual understanding.

The study involves twenty-four informants. The first group consists of public officials and managers responsible for service design, coordination, and administrative reform. These informants include “Mr. Arman,” Head of the Integrated Public Service Office; “Ms. Ratna,” Head of Service Innovation Division; “Mr. Dimas,” Coordinator of Digital Service Systems; and “Ms. Lestari,” Head of Citizen Complaint Management. They are selected because they understand service policy, procedural design, digital transformation, inter-agency coordination, and institutional challenges in reducing administrative burden. Their perspectives are important for explaining the administrative logic behind service requirements and reform initiatives.

The second group consists of frontline service officers who interact directly with citizens. These informants include “Ms. Sari,” population document service officer; “Mr. Bima,” licensing service officer; “Ms. Intan,” social assistance registration officer; “Mr. Rudi,” information desk officer; “Ms. Dewi,” digital service assistance officer; and “Mr. Yoga,” complaint handling officer. They are selected because frontline officers are central to the implementation of public service delivery (Einolf, 2024). Their daily practices influence whether citizens experience procedures as accessible or burdensome. They also understand practical constraints such as incomplete documents, limited citizen knowledge, system errors, high workloads, and tensions between formal rules and citizen needs. Through their perspectives, the study can examine how administrative burden is shaped at the implementation level.

The third group consists of citizens who have directly used public services at the research location. These informants include “Mrs. Aminah,” an elderly citizen applying for population documents; “Mr. Hasan,” an informal worker registering for social assistance; “Ms. Nia,” a small business owner applying for a business license; “Mr. Fajar,” a young citizen using digital services; “Mrs. Wati,” a low-income mother accessing family welfare services; “Mr. Joko,” a person with limited digital literacy; “Ms. Melati,” a resident with disability-related accessibility needs; “Mr. Rahman,” a rural-edge resident facing transportation constraints; “Mrs. Yuni,” a citizen who submitted a service complaint; and “Ms. Citra,” a first-time user of online public services. These informants are selected

because they represent diverse citizen experiences and allow the study to analyze how administrative burden affects different social groups (Shyshlov, 2024). Their narratives are essential for understanding learning costs, compliance costs, and psychological costs from the user perspective.

The fourth group consists of community and civil society representatives who support citizens in accessing public services. These informants include “Mr. Wahyu,” neighborhood association leader; “Ms. Rina,” community facilitator for social assistance; “Mr. Andi,” representative of a local disability advocacy group; and “Ms. Putri,” representative of a citizen service monitoring organization. They are selected because they often assist citizens who face difficulties in navigating administrative procedures. Their perspectives help identify structural barriers that may not be fully recognized by public officials, such as unclear information, unequal digital access, stigma, or the need for informal assistance. This group strengthens the study’s equity perspective by bringing collective and community-level observations into the analysis.

Data collection is conducted through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis (Halligan, 2023). Semi-structured interviews are used to obtain in-depth information from informants while allowing flexibility to explore emerging themes. Interview questions focus on citizens’ experiences in accessing services, types of administrative burden encountered, institutional procedures, digital service challenges, frontline discretion, complaint handling, and strategies for burden reduction. For public officials and frontline officers, interviews explore service design, procedural requirements, coordination mechanisms, reform initiatives, and perceived barriers to simplification. For citizens and community representatives, interviews explore difficulties in understanding procedures, preparing documents, using digital systems, waiting for service, receiving explanations, and dealing with uncertainty or frustration.

Non-participant observation is conducted at the service location to understand how administrative burden appears in everyday service interactions (LIANG et al., 2024). The researcher observes service queues, information flows, citizen-officer interactions, document checking, digital assistance, complaint submission, and accessibility facilities. Observation is important because administrative burden is not always expressed clearly in interviews. Citizens may normalize difficulty or hesitate to criticize public institutions. Through observation, the researcher can identify practical issues such as unclear signage, repeated form filling, unequal assistance, lack of seating for vulnerable users, dependence on informal guidance, or confusion around digital platforms. Observation also helps compare formal procedures with actual implementation.

Document analysis is used to examine service standards, standard operating procedures, service flowcharts, digital service guidelines, complaint reports, citizen satisfaction data, and relevant policy documents (Irfan & Haryono, 2025). These documents provide institutional evidence about how services are formally designed. Document analysis enables the researcher to compare official claims of simplification with citizen experiences and frontline practices. For example, a service standard may state that a procedure can be completed in one day, but interviews and observation may reveal that citizens need several visits because of unclear information or incomplete inter-agency data. This comparison is essential for identifying the gap between formal accessibility and practical accessibility.

Data analysis is conducted using thematic analysis (Dhandar, 2024). The analysis begins with data familiarization, where interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents are read repeatedly to understand the overall meaning. The next stage is initial coding, in which relevant segments of data are labeled according to emerging themes such as learning cost, compliance cost, psychological cost, digital barrier, frontline discretion, document complexity, accessibility constraint, unequal treatment, and service simplification strategy. After coding, related codes are grouped into broader themes. These themes are then interpreted using the three theoretical perspectives of the study. Administrative Burden Theory is used to classify citizen costs, Social Equity Theory is used to assess unequal effects across citizen groups, and Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory is used to explain how implementation practices shape access.

The technique for drawing conclusions in this study follows an inductive and analytical process (Pomaza-Ponomarenko, 2024). Conclusions are not determined in advance but developed through

systematic interpretation of empirical data. The researcher identifies patterns across different informant groups and compares them with the theoretical framework. Triangulation is used to strengthen the credibility of findings by comparing interview data, observation results, and documents. For example, if citizens report confusion about digital requirements, the researcher checks whether frontline officers report similar problems, whether observation confirms citizen difficulty, and whether service documents provide clear digital guidance. A conclusion is considered credible when it is supported by multiple sources of evidence.

The study also uses source triangulation and method triangulation (Li, 2023b). Source triangulation is conducted by comparing information from managers, frontline officers, citizens, and community representatives. Method triangulation is conducted by comparing interviews, observation, and documents. This process reduces the risk of relying on a single perspective and strengthens the validity of the interpretation. Member checking may also be conducted by confirming selected findings with several key informants to ensure that the researcher's interpretation does not misrepresent their experiences. In addition, peer debriefing can be used to discuss coding and thematic interpretation with academic colleagues or public administration experts.

Ethical considerations are central to this research (Gerencsér, 2023). All informants are given pseudonyms to protect their identity. Participation is voluntary, and informants are informed about the purpose of the study, the use of data, and their right to withdraw from the research. Sensitive information related to service complaints, personal difficulties, or criticism of public institutions is treated confidentially. The use of pseudonyms such as "Ms. Sari," "Mr. Hasan," and "Mrs. Aminah" ensures that the analysis can present rich empirical narratives without exposing personal identities. Ethical protection is especially important because some citizens may feel vulnerable when discussing difficulties with government services.

The methodological limitation of this study is that it focuses on one integrated public service office in one city. Therefore, the findings are not intended to represent all public service institutions statistically. However, the case study provides analytical generalization by developing concepts and explanations that may be relevant to other contexts with similar administrative challenges (Hai, 2025). Another limitation is that citizen experiences may vary depending on service type, timing, officer availability, and policy changes. To address this limitation, the study includes multiple categories of informants and several data collection techniques. Future studies may expand the research by comparing multiple cities, rural and urban service settings, or different sectors such as health, education, licensing, and social welfare.

In summary, this study uses an interpretive qualitative case study to examine administrative burden in public service delivery. The selected location, Integrated Public Service Office of Metro City, provides a relevant context for analyzing how citizens experience learning, compliance, and psychological costs when accessing services. The use of purposive and snowball sampling enables the study to involve informants who understand service design, implementation, citizen experience, and community-level barriers. Data are collected through interviews, observation, and document analysis, and conclusions are drawn through thematic analysis, triangulation, and theory-based interpretation. This methodological approach is expected to produce a rigorous, contextual, and equity-sensitive explanation of how administrative burden can be reduced to improve accessibility and fairness in public service delivery (Ahmed, 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that administrative burden in public service delivery is not merely a procedural inconvenience, but a multidimensional governance problem that affects equity and accessibility (Bovsunivska, 2025). Based on the interpretive qualitative case study conducted at the Integrated Public Service Office of Metro City, the study found that citizens experienced administrative burden through three dominant forms: learning costs, compliance costs, and psychological costs. These findings are consistent with Administrative Burden Theory developed by Pamela Herd and Donald P. Moynihan, which explains that citizens bear different types of costs when they interact with public programs (Ogar Mohammed Gulu and & Igbri, 2025). However, the findings also show that these burdens cannot be understood only as individual difficulties. They are closely connected to unequal

citizen capacity, institutional design, frontline discretion, and the uneven implementation of digital service reforms. Therefore, the findings must also be interpreted through Social Equity Theory developed by H. George Frederickson and Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory developed by Michael Lipsky (Krytenko, 2025).

The main research problem of this study concerns the persistence of administrative burden despite the existence of administrative reform, public service integration, and digital service innovation. The results show that the Integrated Public Service Office was formally designed to simplify service access by bringing several services into one administrative channel. Nevertheless, citizens still faced difficulties in understanding requirements, preparing documents, using digital platforms, and obtaining consistent guidance from service officers. In several cases, citizens had to visit the office more than once because information provided online was incomplete, document requirements differed between service desks, or digital applications failed to accommodate specific citizen conditions. This indicates that administrative integration does not automatically eliminate administrative burden. Instead, burden may shift from physical mobility to cognitive, digital, and psychological barriers (Oksin, 2024).

The following table summarizes the major qualitative findings based on interviews, observation, and document analysis.

Table

Table 1 Thematic Findings on Administrative Burden, Equity, and Accessibility in Public Service Delivery

Research Theme	Empirical Finding	Theoretical Interpretation	Implementation Implication
Learning costs	Citizens struggled to understand service requirements, eligibility rules, document formats, and digital instructions.	Administrative Burden Theory explains this as the cost of acquiring information needed to access services. Social Equity Theory shows that citizens with low education or weak digital literacy face greater disadvantage.	Public agencies should provide simplified information, multilingual guidance where needed, visual service maps, and assisted digital service counters.
Compliance costs	Citizens spent time, money, and physical effort completing forms, collecting documents, revisiting offices, and correcting administrative errors.	Administrative Burden Theory identifies this as compliance burden. Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory explains how frontline verification practices can intensify or reduce these costs.	Service delivery should reduce repetitive documentation, integrate databases, and adopt once-only data submission principles.
Psychological costs	Citizens reported anxiety, embarrassment, uncertainty, fear of rejection, and frustration when procedures were unclear or officers were inconsistent.	Herd and Moynihan's theory highlights psychological costs, while Frederickson's equity perspective shows how stigma affects vulnerable citizens more strongly.	Public organizations should improve communication ethics, complaint responsiveness, and empathetic frontline service.
Digital barriers	Online services helped some users but created new obstacles for elderly citizens, low-income residents, and citizens with limited internet access.	Social Equity Theory explains that equal digital access does not guarantee equitable service access.	Digital transformation should be combined with assisted access, offline alternatives, and inclusive interface design.

Research Theme	Empirical Finding	Theoretical Interpretation	Implementation Implication
Frontline discretion	Officers interpreted rules differently, especially in document verification and guidance for incomplete applications.	Lipsky's Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory explains that policy is shaped through frontline discretion.	Training, supervision, standard interpretation guidelines, and discretion accountability are needed.
Institutional fragmentation	Some services required coordination with other agencies, causing delays and repeated verification.	Administrative burden is produced by fragmented institutional design rather than citizen behavior alone.	Inter-agency data integration and shared service protocols should be strengthened.
Equity impact	Vulnerable citizens experienced the same procedures as more difficult, costly, and emotionally stressful.	Frederickson's Social Equity Theory confirms that formally equal procedures can produce unequal outcomes.	Burden reduction must be evaluated through equity indicators, not only speed and efficiency.

The first major finding is that learning costs remain high even in an integrated service setting. Many citizens did not fully understand service requirements before arriving at the office. Information was available through posters, websites, and service officers, yet it was often written in bureaucratic language that assumed citizens already understood administrative terminology. Citizens such as elderly applicants, informal workers, and first-time users of digital services were especially likely to misunderstand requirements. For example, some citizens interpreted "supporting document" broadly, while service officers applied a narrow technical definition. This mismatch created repeated visits and delayed service completion. From the perspective of Administrative Burden Theory, this finding demonstrates that access to information is not the same as comprehension (Dyornyk, 2025). Information may exist institutionally, but it may remain inaccessible cognitively.

This finding is strongly connected to the main research problem. Public service reform frequently emphasizes simplification through the publication of requirements and service standards. However, the empirical evidence suggests that service standards alone do not reduce burden when they are not understandable to diverse citizen groups. Social Equity Theory helps explain why this problem matters. Citizens do not approach public services from equal positions. Those with higher education, stable internet access, and prior bureaucratic experience can more easily interpret administrative information. By contrast, citizens with limited literacy or limited digital experience are more likely to become dependent on informal assistance (Stovban, 2025). This condition creates an accessibility gap between formal availability and practical usability.

The second major finding concerns compliance costs. Citizens frequently spent additional time and money to complete requirements, photocopy documents, travel to the service office, correct errors, or return after being told that documents were incomplete. Although the office had adopted integrated service procedures, some services still required external verification from other agencies. This created delays that citizens often did not anticipate. For low-income citizens and informal workers, the cost of repeated visits was not only financial but also occupational because taking time away from work reduced daily income. The finding confirms that compliance costs are not neutral. They are socially distributed and can become more burdensome for citizens with fewer resources (Byelova & Goncharenko, 2024).

Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory provides an important explanation of this finding. Frontline officers did not simply implement fixed rules; they interpreted document completeness, decided whether to provide additional explanation, and determined whether citizens should revise applications immediately or return later. Some officers used discretion constructively by helping citizens understand missing requirements, while others applied rules rigidly without sufficient explanation. This variation shows that administrative burden is partly produced at the point of implementation (Povydysh, 2023).

The formal procedure may be the same, but the citizen experience differs depending on how frontline workers communicate, interpret, and exercise discretion.

The third major finding is that psychological costs are an important but often invisible dimension of administrative burden. Several citizens expressed anxiety when they were unsure whether their application would be accepted. Others felt embarrassed when they could not use digital systems or when they had to ask repeated questions. Citizens applying for social assistance reported discomfort because they felt judged or suspected of providing incomplete information. These experiences show that administrative burden is not only about the number of forms or service steps. It also concerns the emotional experience of dealing with public institutions (Shevchuk, 2023). Psychological costs can discourage citizens from continuing applications, submitting complaints, or returning to access services in the future.

This finding deepens the gap identified in the study. Many public service reforms measure success through service speed, number of processed applications, and user satisfaction scores. However, such indicators may fail to capture fear, stigma, confusion, and distrust. Administrative Burden Theory explains the existence of psychological costs, while Social Equity Theory explains their unequal impact. Vulnerable citizens may experience psychological burden more intensely because their access to essential services is tied to survival, welfare, or legal identity (Kårtvedt, 2024). In implementation terms, this means that reducing burden requires more than procedural redesign. It also requires respectful communication, predictable processes, accessible complaint mechanisms, and frontline sensitivity.

The fourth major finding concerns digitalization. Digital public service platforms were intended to reduce queues, shorten processing time, and improve transparency. For younger and digitally literate citizens, online systems were generally helpful. However, for elderly citizens, low-income residents, persons with disabilities, and citizens without stable internet access, digital systems created new burdens (Kotsan, 2024). Some citizens needed help uploading documents, creating accounts, resetting passwords, or interpreting system notifications. In several cases, digital errors required citizens to visit the physical office, meaning that digitalization did not replace physical burden but added another layer of administrative complexity.

This finding is particularly important for the study's novelty. The research shows that digital transformation should not be automatically equated with burden reduction. A digital platform can reduce compliance costs for some users while increasing learning and psychological costs for others. Social Equity Theory is crucial here because it challenges the assumption that equal digital systems produce equal access. Accessibility depends not only on the availability of a platform but also on citizens' ability to use it (Kamimura, 2024). Therefore, implementation must include assisted digital service desks, offline alternatives, disability-friendly interfaces, and continuous evaluation of who benefits and who is excluded by digital reforms.

The fifth major finding is institutional fragmentation. Although the Integrated Public Service Office aimed to centralize services, several procedures still depended on databases, approvals, or verification from external agencies. This created uncertainty among citizens and frontline officers. Citizens often perceived the integrated office as fully responsible for service completion, while officers explained that delays were caused by other institutions. This mismatch produced frustration and weakened trust. From the perspective of Administrative Burden Theory, fragmented institutions create burdens by forcing citizens to absorb coordination problems that should be managed by government organizations (Kovbas & Krainii, 2023). Instead of the state coordinating internally, citizens become responsible for navigating institutional boundaries.

This finding is closely connected to the research question: how can administrative burden be reduced to promote equity and accessibility? The answer suggested by the data is that burden reduction requires institutional redesign, not only better frontline behavior. Integrated service must be supported by integrated data, shared accountability, and clear inter-agency protocols. Without this, service integration may become symbolic rather than substantive. Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory also explains that frontline officers become the visible face of institutional fragmentation. They must explain

delays, manage citizen dissatisfaction, and interpret incomplete information even when the source of the problem lies beyond their authority (Biliavskiy, 2023).

The objective of this study was to analyze administrative burden in public service delivery and explain how burden reduction can strengthen equity and accessibility. The findings fulfill this objective by identifying the dominant forms of burden, explaining their unequal effects, and showing how institutional and implementation factors reproduce complexity. The research demonstrates that reducing administrative burden requires a multidimensional strategy. Learning costs can be reduced through clearer communication and accessible information. Compliance costs can be reduced through document simplification, data integration, and once-only submission. Psychological costs can be reduced through respectful frontline interaction and transparent decision-making. Digital barriers can be reduced through inclusive design and assisted access. Institutional fragmentation can be reduced through cross-agency coordination.

The theoretical benefit of the study is that it integrates Administrative Burden Theory, Social Equity Theory, and Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory into a single analytical framework. Administrative Burden Theory identifies the costs citizens experience. Social Equity Theory explains why these costs matter for justice and unequal access. Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory explains how policy implementation and frontline discretion shape citizen experience (Chung, 2024). This integration contributes to public administration scholarship by showing that administrative burden is not only a matter of individual inconvenience or organizational inefficiency. It is also a mechanism through which inequality can be reproduced in public service delivery.

The academic benefit of the study lies in its contribution to debates on public service reform, inclusive governance, and digital administration. Previous studies have often examined administrative burden in relation to welfare programs, bureaucratic complexity, or citizen take-up. This study extends the discussion by placing administrative burden within the broader framework of equity and accessibility in integrated public service delivery. It also highlights the need to examine digitalization critically. Digital reform should be studied not only in terms of efficiency but also in terms of its differentiated effects on citizen groups (Schwoerer, 2025). This academic contribution is relevant for scholars interested in administrative reform, policy implementation, public value, and citizen-state relations.

The practical benefit of the study is that it offers actionable insights for public managers and policymakers. First, service information should be rewritten in citizen-oriented language rather than bureaucratic terminology. Second, service offices should identify which requirements are truly necessary and remove repetitive documents. Third, public agencies should integrate databases to reduce the need for citizens to repeatedly submit information already held by government. Fourth, digital services should be supported by assisted service channels for citizens who cannot independently use online systems. Fifth, frontline officers should receive training not only in technical procedures but also in equity-sensitive communication. Sixth, service evaluation should include indicators of accessibility, citizen effort, and vulnerable group experience, not only processing time and satisfaction averages.

The discussion of the findings in relation to previous research shows both continuity and extension. Consistent with Administrative Burden Theory, the study confirms that citizens experience learning, compliance, and psychological costs in accessing public services (Hasib, 2025). However, this research extends earlier findings by showing how these costs persist within an integrated service office that was explicitly designed to simplify access. This suggests that institutional integration alone is insufficient if it does not address information clarity, document repetition, frontline discretion, digital exclusion, and inter-agency coordination. The study also supports previous public administration arguments that administrative procedures may unintentionally exclude eligible citizens. Yet it adds that exclusion may occur not only through formal denial but also through discouragement, confusion, repeated visits, and emotional fatigue.

In relation to Social Equity Theory, the findings reinforce the view that equal procedures do not necessarily produce equitable outcomes (Golovko, 2024). Previous scholarship on social equity emphasizes that public administration must account for structural differences among citizens. This

study supports that argument by demonstrating that the same administrative requirement can create different levels of burden depending on citizens' education, income, age, disability status, digital literacy, and geographic location. The study therefore strengthens the argument that burden reduction must be evaluated through an equity lens. A reform that reduces average processing time but leaves vulnerable citizens dependent on informal help cannot be considered fully successful.

In relation to Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory, the findings confirm that frontline officials remain central in shaping public service experience. Previous research has shown that frontline workers exercise discretion under conditions of limited resources, ambiguous rules, and high demand (Pavlenko, 2023). This study finds that discretion can either reduce or intensify administrative burden. When officers provide clear explanations, help citizens correct documents, and interpret rules responsively, they reduce burden. When they communicate inconsistently, apply rules rigidly, or fail to provide guidance, they increase burden. Therefore, administrative burden reduction depends not only on policy design but also on implementation capacity and frontline behavior.

The gap addressed by this study is the limited integration between burden reduction, equity, and accessibility in public service delivery. Previous research has often examined these issues separately. Administrative burden studies focus on citizen costs, social equity studies focus on fairness, and street-level bureaucracy studies focus on implementation discretion. This study connects these perspectives and shows that they are mutually reinforcing. Administrative burden becomes a public administration problem because it affects equity; equity becomes operationally meaningful when examined through actual citizen burdens; and frontline implementation becomes significant because it determines whether formal access becomes real access.

The research formulation asked how administrative burden in public service delivery can be reduced from a public administration perspective to promote equity and accessibility. The findings suggest that the answer lies in combining procedural simplification, equity-sensitive design, and implementation reform. Public organizations must identify where citizens experience burdens, determine which groups are most affected, and redesign service systems accordingly. This means that administrative burden reduction should not be limited to reducing the number of steps. It must also reduce confusion, uncertainty, stigma, repeated effort, digital exclusion, and institutional fragmentation.

The novelty of the study is its argument that administrative burden reduction should be treated as an equity-oriented public administration strategy. This is different from a narrow managerial view that sees burden reduction only as improving efficiency. The study shows that efficiency and equity are interconnected but not identical (Chen et al., 2025). A service can be faster for average users while remaining inaccessible for vulnerable groups. Therefore, public administration must move from a general simplification agenda toward targeted burden reduction that prioritizes citizens who face the greatest barriers.

In implementation terms, the findings imply that public agencies should develop a burden audit mechanism. Such a mechanism would examine each service from the citizen perspective by asking how much information citizens must understand, how many documents they must provide, how many visits they must make, what emotional pressures they experience, and whether certain groups face greater barriers. This burden audit should be combined with equity mapping to identify groups most affected by administrative complexity. Through this approach, public service reform can become more evidence-based and citizen-centered.

The findings also imply that complaint systems should be treated as sources of organizational learning rather than merely as channels for individual grievances. Many citizens experience burden but do not formally complain because they fear conflict, lack confidence, or assume that nothing will change. Therefore, public agencies should actively collect feedback through interviews, service observation, community forums, and targeted outreach to vulnerable groups. This would help reveal hidden burdens that are not captured by standard satisfaction surveys.

Overall, the results and discussion show that administrative burden remains a critical challenge in public service delivery. The main problem lies not only in complicated procedures but also in the

unequal ability of citizens to navigate those procedures. The gap lies in reform approaches that emphasize integration and digitalization without sufficiently examining equity and accessibility. The research question is answered by showing that burden reduction requires administrative simplification, inclusive digital design, institutional coordination, and frontline discretion that is guided by equity principles. The research objective is achieved by identifying forms of burden, explaining their unequal effects, and formulating a public administration perspective on burden reduction. The theoretical, academic, and practical benefits are demonstrated through the integration of three theories and the development of implementation-oriented recommendations.

In conclusion, the study confirms that reducing administrative burden is a central agenda for contemporary public administration (Stenderup & Pedersen, 2024). Administrative Burden Theory helps identify the costs citizens bear; Social Equity Theory explains why these costs produce unequal access; and Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory reveals how implementation practices shape citizen experience. By connecting these theories with empirical findings, the study demonstrates that public service delivery must be evaluated not only by formal availability or administrative efficiency, but also by the real capacity of citizens to access services without excessive burden. The reduction of administrative burden is therefore not only a technical reform, but also a democratic and equity-based responsibility of public administration.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that administrative burden in public service delivery is a multidimensional public administration problem that directly affects equity and accessibility. Based on the results and discussion, administrative burden does not only appear in the form of long procedures or excessive documentation, but also through citizens' difficulties in understanding requirements, fulfilling procedural demands, using digital service systems, and managing uncertainty during interaction with public institutions. In relation to the title "*Reducing Administrative Burden in Public Service Delivery: A Public Administration Perspective on Equity and Accessibility*," the findings show that reducing administrative burden must be understood as more than a technical effort to simplify bureaucracy. It is a strategic public administration agenda to ensure that public services are genuinely accessible, inclusive, and fair for all citizens.

The findings demonstrate that citizens experience administrative burden through learning costs, compliance costs, and psychological costs. Learning costs occur when citizens have difficulty understanding service requirements, eligibility criteria, document standards, and digital instructions. Compliance costs emerge when citizens must spend additional time, money, and energy to complete forms, collect documents, revisit service offices, or correct administrative errors. Psychological costs arise when citizens feel anxious, confused, embarrassed, stigmatized, or uncertain about whether their applications will be accepted. These findings confirm that public services may be formally available but practically difficult to access when citizens must bear excessive administrative effort. Therefore, a service system cannot be considered effective only because it has written procedures, digital platforms, or integrated offices; it must also be evaluated based on the real experience of citizens in accessing services.

The study also concludes that administrative burden is distributed unequally across citizen groups. Vulnerable citizens, including elderly people, low-income residents, informal workers, persons with disabilities, and citizens with limited digital literacy, experience the same administrative procedures as more difficult and costly than citizens with stronger social, educational, and technological resources. This conclusion is central to the equity perspective of the study. Equal rules do not automatically produce equitable access. When service systems assume that all citizens have the same capacity to understand information, prepare documents, use technology, and communicate with public officials, administrative procedures may unintentionally reproduce inequality. Thus, reducing administrative burden requires an equity-sensitive approach that prioritizes citizens who face the greatest barriers.

The results further indicate that digitalization is not automatically synonymous with administrative burden reduction. Digital public service platforms can reduce queues and accelerate service delivery for digitally capable users, but they can also create new barriers for citizens who lack

internet access, devices, digital skills, or confidence in using online systems. This finding is important because many public sector reforms treat digital transformation as the main solution to bureaucratic complexity. The study shows that digital reform must be accompanied by assisted access, inclusive interface design, offline alternatives, and direct support for citizens who cannot independently use digital services. Without these measures, digitalization may shift administrative burden from physical offices to digital environments rather than eliminating it.

Another conclusion is that frontline officials play a decisive role in either reducing or intensifying administrative burden. Through their discretion, communication style, interpretation of rules, and willingness to assist citizens, frontline officers shape how public services are actually experienced. Even when formal procedures are clear, inconsistent guidance or rigid document verification can increase citizen burden. Conversely, responsive explanation, empathetic communication, and practical assistance can reduce burden significantly. This means that administrative burden reduction depends not only on policy design, but also on implementation capacity, frontline training, organizational culture, and accountability in daily service encounters.

Overall, the study concludes that reducing administrative burden requires an integrated reform strategy. Public organizations need to simplify requirements, improve the clarity of service information, reduce repetitive documentation, integrate data across agencies, provide inclusive digital and non-digital service channels, strengthen frontline capacity, and evaluate services from the perspective of citizen effort. The novelty of this study lies in positioning administrative burden reduction as an equity-oriented public administration strategy. It connects administrative efficiency with social justice by showing that a simpler service system is not only faster, but also more inclusive when it reduces barriers for disadvantaged citizens.

In conclusion, the study affirms that public service delivery should be assessed not merely by institutional efficiency, service speed, or technological adoption, but by the extent to which citizens can access services without excessive learning, compliance, and psychological costs. The findings and discussion demonstrate that administrative burden is a key mechanism through which public institutions may unintentionally limit accessibility and reproduce inequality. Therefore, reducing administrative burden is both a managerial responsibility and a democratic obligation of public administration. A public service system that is accessible, equitable, and citizen-centered must be designed around the real capacities, constraints, and experiences of the people it serves.

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