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# Digital Administrative Innovation and Governance Transformation: An Evaluation of the E-Surat Program in Surabaya City

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#### **Abstract**

This study evaluates the effectiveness of the E-Surat program implemented by the Surabaya City Department of Industry and Manpower (Disperinaker) as a digital administrative innovation to enhance efficiency, accuracy, and transparency in internal correspondence. A descriptive qualitative approach was applied, combining in-depth interviews with employees, systematic observation, and document analysis. Campbell's evaluation indicators goal achievement, system stability, and user satisfaction served as the analytical framework. Findings reveal that since its introduction in 2018, E-Surat has improved administrative workflows, reduced paper consumption, and accelerated document circulation. The system is reliable, supported by adequate infrastructure, and integrated into daily organizational routines. It strengthens transparency, accountability, and interdepartmental coordination, while user satisfaction remains high due to its accessibility, security features, and responsive technical support. Despite these achievements, challenges persist in enhancing digital literacy, technical capacity, and employee involvement in system development. Overall, the program meets key success indicators but requires ongoing capacity building and participatory improvements to function as a strategic enabler of adaptive and inclusive digital governance. This study contributes to digital governance scholarship by providing empirical evidence from local government innovation in Indonesia, illustrating how administrative digitalization can drive transparency and efficiency in developing contexts.

**Keywords**: Program Evaluation; E-Surat; Digital Governance; Administrative Innovation; Public Sector Effectiveness

## 1. Introduction

Population administration services are part of mandatory public policy because they are directly related to fulfilling the basic rights of the community to legal identity (Simamora, 2022). Population documents such as Identity Cards (KTP), Family Cards (KK), birth certificates, death certificates, and other documents not only function as administrative instruments but also serve as prerequisites for accessing various other public services, including education, health, and social protection programs. Therefore, the quality of policies in the implementation of population administration is an important indicator of the effectiveness of public service implementation at the regional level (Mustofa, 2011). This is in line with the mandate of Presidential Regulation No. 95 of 2018 concerning the Electronic-



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Based Government System (SPBE), which encourages government agencies to implement digital-based services to improve the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of government administration (Rumakat, 2025).

However, the reality on the ground shows that population administration services in various regions in Indonesia still face a number of significant challenges. Limited technological infrastructure, a lack of skilled human resources, and low digital literacy among the population are the main factors hampering the effectiveness of digital services. The implementation of the Population Administration Information System (SIAK) in Sintang Regency, for example, has not been optimal due to a lack of facilities and infrastructure, insufficient socialization, and limited budget support (Haryaningsih & Hardalina, 2021). A similar situation was found in the implementation of the Digital Population Identity (IKD) in Tuban Regency, where low public understanding of technology and limited internet access in rural areas were the main obstacles (Pramesti et al., 2024).

One of the digital innovations currently being developed in several regions, including the city of Surabaya, is the E-Surat program. This program is designed to facilitate the electronic processing of administrative correspondence related to civil registration, with the aim of reducing manual queues, speeding up service processes, and improving the transparency and accountability of public services. However, the implementation of the E-Surat program in various regions has also faced obstacles. In the city of Bekasi, online services such as E-Surat still often experience technical disruptions and a lack of integration between systems, which has led to an increase in manual queues at the Population and Civil Registration Office (Kusbudiyanto et al., 2023). Meanwhile, in Tangerang City, the low technical capabilities of employees and the lack of uniform training have hindered the implementation of digital services (Dapadeda & Emanuel, 2024).

These findings indicate that the successful implementation of digital-based population services is greatly influenced by technological readiness, human resource competencies, and the level of digital literacy among employees. Technological readiness includes the availability of a stable internet network, supporting devices, and inter-agency system integration so that public services can run smoothly. The competence of human resources, both government officials and internal users, is also a crucial aspect because technology can only be utilized optimally if the actors involved have adequate understanding and skills. Meanwhile, the digital literacy of employees plays a role in ensuring the effective use of services, because the low adaptability of officials to technology can reduce the success of digital program implementation.

However, most previous studies have focused only on technical aspects or implementation constraints, without comprehensively evaluating the effectiveness of the program from various dimensions. A comprehensive evaluation should not only assess the success of the system from a technical perspective, but also integrate analysis of inputs (facilities, infrastructure, and human resources), processes (program implementation mechanisms), and outcomes (results and employee satisfaction as users) of the (Mustofa & Dewi, 2017). This type of analysis is important so that the evaluation results truly reflect the overall effectiveness of the program, not just its technical performance.

The theoretical gap that arises is the lack of studies that integrate analysis between inputs (facilities and infrastructure as well as human resources), processes (program implementation), and outcomes (results and community satisfaction), especially in the context of digital population administration services such as E-Surat. In response to this gap, this study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the E-Surat program implementation at the Surabaya City Industry and Manpower Office, using Campbell's (1970) evaluative approach, which includes three main indicators, namely: (1) program success, (2) target achievement, and (3) community satisfaction. Surabaya, as a large city with a relatively high level of technology adoption, is a strategic location for conducting an in-depth evaluation of the implementation of E-Surat, especially in terms of how this innovation is accepted and utilized by agency employees.

The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach. It not only measures administrative output aspects such as the number of services successfully processed but also evaluates the interrelationship between digital system readiness and human resource capacity. Empirical

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evidence from previous studies reinforces this approach. For instance, research by Sutanto and Pratama (2023) on the evaluation of Smart City Surabaya found that the success of digital public services depends not only on infrastructure but also on the competency and adaptability of civil servants in managing technological changes. Similarly, Rahmawati et al. (2022) in their assessment of Jakarta Smart Services (JSS) revealed that weak institutional coordination and limited digital literacy often hinder the achievement of administrative efficiency despite advanced technological adoption. Comparative evidence from Putra and Nugroho (2024) in Bandung's e-Government Initiative also demonstrates that governance dimensions particularly accountability, transparency, and citizen participation are decisive factors in sustaining digital transformation.

In line with these findings, the present study integrates the principles of good governance into the assessment of E-Surat's sustainability in the population administration sector. By combining analysis of input, process, and outcome aspects, this study provides a more comprehensive picture of implementation effectiveness. Furthermore, it adopts a socio-institutional evaluation lens that considers work culture, leadership, and bureaucratic behavior factors often overlooked in purely technical studies thus yielding deeper and more contextually relevant policy insights. Therefore, this study contributes theoretically to expanding the academic discourse on digital service evaluation through an integrated governance perspective and practically by offering evidence-based policy recommendations to support sustainable and inclusive digital transformation across Indonesian local governments.

#### 2. Method

This study uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. This approach was chosen because it provides a deep understanding of social phenomena in their natural context, particularly in relation to the implementation of the E-Surat program at the Surabaya City Industry and Manpower Office. Although descriptive in nature, this study focuses on evaluation, namely assessing the extent to which the E-Surat program is effective in achieving its stated objectives. An evaluative study with a descriptive qualitative approach is considered appropriate because it allows researchers to capture experiences, perceptions, and dynamics that occur.

The research focuses on three indicators of program effectiveness according to Campbell (1970), namely: (1) program success, (2) achievement of objectives, and (3) user satisfaction. These three indicators form the main analytical framework for evaluating the implementation of the E-Surat program. Through these indicators, this study can measure the extent to which the program's is able to achieve its objectives, the appropriateness of its implementation, and the level of satisfaction felt by service users. Thus, the evaluation not only assesses the technical aspects of implementation but also provides a comprehensive picture of the program's impact on the quality of public services at the Surabaya Industry and Manpower Office (Disperinaker).

The data was obtained through in-depth interviews conducted face-to-face with employees of the Surabaya City Industry and Manpower Office who were directly involved in the implementation of the E-Surat program. Informants were selected using purpose sampling, which is a technique of selecting sources who are considered to be most knowledgeable and directly involved in the use of the program.

During the interview process, researchers used manual notes and recorded conversations using mobile phones, so that the data obtained was more complete and accurate. The interviews focused on exploring employees' experiences, perceptions, and assessments of the success, obstacles, and impact of the E-Surat program on improving the quality of public services. The validity of the data was strengthened through triangulation of sources so that the consistency of information could be ensured.

Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The stages of analysis included: (1) condensing data by reducing information according to the research focus, (2) presenting data in the form of a systematic narrative, and (3) drawing and verifying conclusions. This approach was repeated until a comprehensive understanding of the program's effectiveness was obtained. Thus, this study not only describes the implementation of E-Surat but also evaluates its effectiveness based on Campbell's indicators, thereby contributing both theoretically and practically to the strengthening of digital-based public services at the regional level.

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#### 3. Result

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the E-Surat program at the Surabaya City Industry and Manpower Office (Disperinaker), a digital-based internal administrative service innovation designed to improve efficiency, accuracy, and transparency in the agency's correspondence process. The evaluation was conducted using Campbell's (1970) theoretical framework, which emphasizes three main indicators: program success, program goal achievement, and internal user satisfaction. This approach was chosen because it allows for analysis not only from a technical perspective, but also from the perspective of user perception and overall organizational effectiveness (Tambunan & Dompak, 2025).

The data was obtained through in-depth interviews with directly involved employees, field observations, and internal documentation related to system implementation. Thus, the analysis will show the extent to which E-Surat has met the agency's strategic objectives and how the internal user experience reflects the quality of the agency's digital services based on e-government evaluation standards in Indonesia (Rahmatullah et al., 2025). In addition, the study "Study of Digital Innovation in Public Service Agencies of Indonesia" also confirms that internal employees' perceptions of system quality and ease of access greatly influence the overall effectiveness of the agency's digital service application (Pratama, n.d.).

# **Program Success**

The E-Surat program was implemented at Disperinaker in 2018 with the main objectives of improving administrative efficiency, reducing paper usage, and speeding up the distribution of letters between departments. Findings indicate that most of these objectives have been achieved. Employees reported that letters can be accessed more quickly, distribution is more timely, and operational costs can be reduced because they no longer rely on paper (Muliani & ELAN, 2025).

Table 1. Success of the E-Surat Program at Disperinaker

Subtheme	Representative Quote	Interpretation
Implementation	"This E-Letter program has been implemented	The program has a clear time
Year	since 2018." (Interview, September 11, 2025)	frame as a digital innovation.
Program	"The goal is efficiency, paperless, and faster	The goal is in line with the
Objectives	mail distribution." (Interview, September 11,	principle of digital bureaucratic
	2025)	efficiency.
Efficiency &	"Now it's faster to access, easier to use, and	The system enhances the
Access	letters arrive more quickly." (Interview,	effectiveness of administrative
	September 11, 2025)	work.
Infrastructure	"There is already a local network, scanners,	The infrastructure supports the
Support	and it can be accessed via mobile phone."	successful implementation.
	(Interview, September 11, 2025)	
Technical	"So far, there have been no challenges;	The program is stable and has
Challenges	everything has been smooth." (Interview,	minimal technical obstacles.
	September 11, 2025)	

Source: Interview data processed by the researcher, 2025.

# Analysis of the Success of the E-Surat Program at the Surabaya Manpower Office

The interview results show that E-Surat has been implemented since 2018 as part of digital innovation at the Surabaya Manpower Office. One informant said, "E-Surat has been implemented since 2018." (Interview, September 11, 2025). This basic clarity regarding timing is important because it shows the existence of a relatively long-term policy consistency that supports program sustainability. In the context of digital bureaucracy, a clear foundation for implementation timing is

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an important indicator of success, because programs that have been running for a long time usually have a greater opportunity to undergo gradual improvements (Maulidini, 2025).

Furthermore, the main objectives of E-Surat were also confirmed by employees. An informant stated, "The objectives are efficiency, going paperless, and speeding up the distribution of letters." (Interview, September 11, 2025). This statement shows that the E-Surat program is in line with the principles of digital bureaucracy, which emphasizes efficiency, effectiveness, and reducing paper use. This is consistent with the research (Rahmawati & Febriana, 2022), which confirms that the digitization of public administration can improve employee performance while supporting the creation of more environmentally friendly governance.

Efficiency and accessibility are other notable dimensions. One employee said, "Now it is faster to access, easier to use, and letters arrive faster." (Interview, September 11, 2025). These findings indicate a significant improvement in the correspondence process, which previously took longer. With the digital system, mail distribution is no longer limited to manual processes, but can be done more quickly and accurately at. This condition shows increased work effectiveness, as stated in the study (Maulidini, 2025), that the use of digital-based information systems can speed up administrative processes and reduce bureaucratic obstacles.

In terms of infrastructure support, the informant said, "There is already a local network, scanners, and it can be accessed via mobile phones." (Interview, September 11, 2025). Adequate technological facilities are a determining factor in the success of implementation. The existence of a local network and supporting devices allows employees to use the application more flexibly, including via mobile devices. This demonstrates the organization's readiness to provide facilities that meet the needs of its employees.

Finally, regarding technical obstacles, one employee mentioned, "So far, there have been no obstacles, everything has been running smoothly." (Interview, September 11, 2025). This finding shows that the E-Surat system is relatively stable and has minimal obstacles. System reliability is one of the key factors in building the trust of internal users. Maintained technical stability indicates that the program has passed the initial adaptation phase and now functions well as a sustainable digital administration system.

Overall, the success of the E-Surat program at the Surabaya Manpower Office can be seen from four main aspects: (1) a clear implementation timeline, (2) program objectives that are in line with the principles of digital efficiency, (3) increased effectiveness and accessibility of correspondence, and (4) adequate infrastructure support. Combined with maintained technical stability, this indicates that the E-Surat program has successfully met the first indicator of Campbell's evaluation, namely program success (Tiarasani, 2021).

#### **Program Target Achievement**

In addition to achieving technical objectives, E-Surat also aims to strengthen transparency and accountability, as well as support the strategic objectives of Disperinaker. From interviews, it was found that the electronic system makes all documents recorded, distributed more clearly, and easy to trace. This improves the quality of coordination between departments and reduces the potential for lost letters.

**Table 2. Achievement of E-Surat Program Objectives** 

Sub-theme	Representative Quote	Interpretation
Strategic Support	"E-Surat has greatly supported the vision and mission of Disperinaker." (Interview, September 11, 2025)	er E-Surat contributes to the agency's strategic objectives.
Transparency &	"Every incoming and outgoing letter is recorded electronically, so it is transparent." (Interview, September 11, 2025)	d The system improves administrative accountability.



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Accountability		
Coordination	"With E-Surat, coordination has become easier." (Interview, September 11, 2025)	Strengthens communication between departments.
Digital literacy	"All employees are highly capable because it is very easy to access." (Interview, September 11, 2025)	•
Consistency of Use	"Consistent, used every day." (Interview, September 11, 2025)	The program has become part of the employees' daily routine.

Source: Interview data processed by the researcher, 2025.

### **Analysis of Program Target Achievement**

The results of the study show that the E-Surat program not only functions at a technical level, but also contributes to the achievement of the organization's strategic objectives. One employee stated, "E-Surat has greatly supported the vision and mission of Disperinaker" (Interview, September 11, 2025). This statement confirms that E-Surat has been positioned as an important instrument in supporting the organization's policy direction, particularly in its efforts to create a more efficient and transparent bureaucracy. This is in line with Campbell's (1970) view that program evaluation should consider the relevance of results to the strategic objectives of the institution, not just the achievement of administrative outputs.

In terms of transparency and accountability, this system makes a real contribution. As stated by an informant, "Every incoming and outgoing letter is recorded electronically, so it is transparent" (Interview, September 11, 2025). This statement shows that E-Surat creates traceability in administration, where every document has a digital record that can be monitored. This not only strengthens internal oversight functions but also reduces the risk of document manipulation or lossFurthermore, in terms of coordination, this system has proven to facilitate communication between departments. This is confirmed by the statement, "With E-Surat, coordination has become easier" (Interview, September 11, 2025). With an integrated system, information distribution has become faster, clearer, and more documented. This more effective coordination, in turn, strengthens the synergy between units within the organization.

In addition, employees' digital literacy is not an obstacle to utilizing the system. One employee stated, "All employees are very capable because it is very easy to access" (Interview, September 11, 2025). This shows that the level of employee adaptation to technology is quite high, so that the implementation of the program runs without significant obstacles. Thus, the readiness of human resources at Disperinaker is a major supporting factor in the success of E- Surat.

Finally, consistency in use is also evident in the statement, "Consistent, used every day" (Interview, September 11, 2025). This quote shows that E-Surat has been internalized into the work routine of employees and is no longer considered a new system. This consistency is important because it reflects the sustainability of the program while strengthening the digital work culture within the agency.

Overall, the achievement of the E-Surat program targets shows positive results. This program not only supports technical efficiency but also strengthens strategic aspects such as transparency, accountability, coordination, and consistency of work. This condition indicates that E-Surat has met the second indicator of Campbell's (1970) evaluation, while also contributing to the transformation of digital bureaucracy at the Surabaya City Manpower Office (Ramadhan, n.d.).

#### **Internal User Satisfaction**

The majority of employees expressed satisfaction with the use of E-Surat. The application is considered simple, easily accessible from computers and mobile phones, and secure because it uses

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personal authentication. In addition, if there is a network disruption, the IT team immediately follows up by coordinating with Diskominfo

**Table 3. Internal User Satisfaction with E-Surat** 

<b>Sub-Theme</b>	Representative Quote	Interpretation
Ease of Use	"This e-mail is easy to understand, easy to use, and easy to access." (Interview, September 11, 2025)	User friendly for employees.
Work Efficiency	"Yes, because the application can be accessed anywhere." (Interview, September 11, 2025)	Supports work flexibility.
IT Support	"If there are any obstacles, the IT team will contact the Communication and Information Agency." (Interview, September 11, 2025)	Responsive technical mechanism.
Data Security	"Security is well maintained, as there are user IDs and passwords." (Interview, September 11, 2025)	The system is considered secure and reliable.
Improvement Suggestions	"It would be better to add more variety to the menu"	Input for feature development

Internal User Satisfaction Analysis

Employee satisfaction with the use of E-Surat shows positive results. In terms of ease of use, employees rate the application as user friendly. One employee said, "E-Surat is easy to understand, easy to use, and easy to access" (Interview, September 11, 2025). This confirms that the application can be used without significant obstacles and supports work flexibility.

Work efficiency has also improved because E-Surat can be accessed anytime and anywhere. An informant stated, "Yes, because the application can be accessed anywhere" (Interview, September 11, 2025). This statement indicates an acceleration in the completion of administrative tasks and a reduction in time and place constraints, which previously limited manual processes.

From a technical support perspective, the mechanism for handling obstacles is considered responsive. An employee explained, "If there are obstacles, the IT Team contacts Diskominfo" (Interview, September 11, 2025). This shows that there is coordination between units to ensure the smooth running of the system, even though major obstacles rarely occur.

Data security is also a major concern in user satisfaction. Employees stated, "Security is very well maintained, because there are users and passwords" (Interview, September 11, 2025). This condition shows that employees feel safe using the system because of user authentication and data confidentiality protection. This finding is in line with studies that emphasize the importance of information security as a crucial element in building trust in e- government services, especially regarding sensitive data and access to the system (Novianto, 2023). In addition, Iswandari emphasizes that legal protection of personal data in e- government is an important requirement for digital systems to be trusted and accepted as instruments of transparent and accountable governance (Iswandari, 2021).

Finally, several employees provided suggestions for developing the application to better suit the organization's needs, such as adding more letter variations. One employee said, "It would be better to add more letter variations to the menu" (Interview, September 11, 2025). This feedback indicates

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that despite high satisfaction levels, users still expect continuous innovation to adapt the system to the operational needs of the agency (Sani, 2025).

#### 4. Discussion

Research findings show that the implementation of E-Surat at the Surabaya Manpower Office has made a real contribution to administrative efficiency and internal correspondence management. This system facilitates mail distribution, speeds up the recording process, and reduces the potential for document loss that previously often occurred with manual methods. However, the use of E-Surat still tends to be instructional in nature, where employees follow existing procedures without much room for participation in decision-making regarding system development. This condition illustrates that digital innovation is already functioning operationally, but the substantive participation of employees in the development process is still limited (Hendri et al., 2024). A similar point is also emphasized (Nanda, 2021), which states that technology adoption needs to be supported by an open organizational culture in order for the system to be truly effective.

Furthermore, from the perspective of program effectiveness evaluation, E-Surat not only functions as an administrative instrument, but also as a tool for improving accountability and transparency within the Disperinaker environment. All incoming and outgoing letters are recorded electronically, making the distribution process easier to trace and accountable. This reinforces the principles of transparency and accountability, which are important indicators in the evaluation of public policy (Permatasari et al., 2024). However, there are still challenges in terms of strengthening human resource capacity, particularly digital literacy and technical skills in utilizing the system. If human resource capacity is not improved, the success of the program may be limited to technical effectiveness without touching on the strategic dimensions of the organization (Riesta et al., 2023).

In addition, the findings of this study also emphasize the importance of infrastructure support and responsive mechanisms from the IT team to maintain system smoothness. E-Surat has relatively few technical obstacles, but coordination with the Communication and Information Agency is still necessary when network disruptions occur. This shows that the success of the program is not solely determined by the sophistication of the application, but also by the supporting ecosystem that ensures the sustainability of the service (Hendri et al., 2024). Data security is one of the added values appreciated by employees, as the system is equipped with user accounts and passwords that maintain the confidentiality of letters (Permatasari et al., 2024).

Thus, the results of this study indicate that E-Surat has helped improve employee work effectiveness, strengthened accountability, and supported the organization's strategic objectives. However, continuous evaluation is still needed so that this digital innovation does not stop at the technical aspects alone. Campbell (1970) emphasizes that program effectiveness must be viewed through three dimensions: input, process, and outcome. In this context, inputs include human resource readiness and infrastructure, processes encompass coordination and consistent system usage, while outcomes can be seen in increased employee satisfaction and achieved work efficiency (Riesta et al., 2023). This is also in line with the findings of (Nanda, 2021), which emphasizes that e-government must continue to adapt in order to support modern, accountable governance.

# 5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the implementation of the E-Surat program at the Surabaya City Department of Industry and Manpower holds significant strategic value as a driver of digital administrative transformation. Since its introduction in 2018, the program has effectively enhanced organizational efficiency by streamlining internal correspondence, accelerating document distribution, and reducing paper consumption through a stable and reliable system. It has successfully aligned with institutional goals by strengthening transparency, improving accountability, and facilitating interdepartmental coordination. The program's consistent daily use also reflects its deep integration into employees' work routines, while high levels of user satisfaction highlight its accessibility, flexibility, and security features. Despite these achievements, several challenges remain, particularly related to

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limited employee participation in system development, gaps in digital literacy and technical skills, and the need for more adaptive menu options to address organizational needs. From the perspective of Campbell's program evaluation framework, E-Surat has achieved notable success in terms of effectiveness, goal attainment, and user satisfaction. However, sustained efforts in capacity building, participatory development, and system refinement are essential to strengthen its role as a strategic instrument for building adaptive, transparent, and inclusive digital governance in the public sector. From a theoretical standpoint, the findings contribute to the advancement of public administration scholarship in three ways. First, they extend Campbell's evaluation framework by applying it to a digital governance context within a developing country, demonstrating its analytical relevance for assessing administrative innovation. Second, the study enriches the discourse on digital transformation in bureaucratic settings by illustrating how routine integration and user satisfaction function as mediating mechanisms between technological adoption and governance outcomes. Third, it highlights the importance of participatory design and capacity building as theoretical constructs that bridge administrative modernization and adaptive governance. These insights provide a foundation for refining existing models of digital public administration to better capture the dynamics of innovation implementation in emerging governance systems.

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