

Rationalization Efforts in the Merger of Public Port Management Organizations

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to evaluate how rationalization strategies were applied in the merger of public port management organizations, focusing on KSOP Utama Belawan, to see whether they created a lean, efficient, and adaptive bureaucracy.

Methodology/approach: Qualitative descriptive–exploratory case study employed in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis with 30 purposively selected informants, data were thematically coded and analyzed using Nvivo12

Results/findings: Rationalization comprised downsizing, job-title simplification, and unit consolidation, formally supported by job and workload analyses (Anjab–ABK), competency mapping, and rotations. Implementation remained predominantly administrative and was not grounded in a systematic postmerger assessment of actual service demands and functional workloads. Consequently, administrative units were overstaffed, technical posts understaffed, competencies misaligned, regulatory updates delayed, and SOPs absent, producing structural and functional misalignment, performance stagnation, and defensive silence.

Conclusions: Post-merger rationalization efforts were more administrative than strategic, so the objectives of port bureaucratic reform have not been optimally achieved.

Limitations: The study focuses only on KSOP Utama Belawan within 2023–2025 and lacked advanced tools to assess staffing needs quantitatively.

Contributions: This study advances public-sector reform literature and guides relevant parties in crafting comprehensive, needs-based rationalization strategies.

Keywords: *Human Resource Management, Port Governance, Public Sector Reform, Rationalization, Rightsizing*

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1. Introduction

Port bureaucracy reform is directed at creating more effective, efficient, and transparent services to strengthen Indonesia's competitiveness at the global level. This effort emphasizes reducing unnecessary costs and simplifying service processes that have been hindered by weak synergy between units. Additionally, institutional strengthening is carried out through a rightsizing approach to eliminate overlapping authority, unify similar functions, and reduce positions that are no longer relevant (Subarja & Rajab, 2022). Therefore, this reform is not only administrative but also strategic in restructuring the port organization to be more responsive to global environmental demands.

At the same time, port governance reform is seen as an important step in addressing the need for efficiency, transparency, and improving the competitiveness of the national logistics sector. Ports, as the main hubs for the flow of goods and national connectivity, require modern governance that is professional to optimize human resources and the utilization of assets to the fullest (Zhang, Zheng,

[Geerlings, & El Makhoulfi, 2019](#)). To this end, the Ministry of Transportation has initiated institutional consolidation by establishing the Main Port Harbor Master and Port Authority Office (KSOP Utama) at strategic ports. This step is expected to strengthen coordination, improve operational efficiency, and make Indonesian ports more competitive internationally.

This consolidation stems from the bureaucratic reform agenda aimed at improving port governance. The goal is to enhance service effectiveness, streamline the flow of goods and passengers, and strengthen the role of port authorities in overseeing maritime safety. The restructuring is expected to simplify licensing, establish integrated system-based SOPs, and provide fast, transparent, and error-minimized services. Furthermore, the consolidation aims to build public trust, ease access to integrated services, and ensure the availability of facilities and infrastructure in line with minimum service standards. This step is crucial to address the previous dualism between safety-oriented institutions and commercially-oriented institutions, which led to overlapping authority, weak coordination, and slow decision-making.

Although the institutional merger process has been carried out, the organization's performance has not shown significant improvement. The key operational indicator, the Effective Time/Berthing Time (ET/BT) ratio, has stagnated, with a slight decline from 62.45% in 2022 to 62.18% in 2024. A similar decrease is seen in the overall performance achievement, which fell from 66.56% to 65.13% during the same period. This situation shows that service efficiency is still far from expectations, as it not only lags behind the national standard of 70%, but also widens the gap compared to the international standard of 90%. This fact emphasizes a fundamental problem in the implementation of the merger, where the goals of rationalization and increased effectiveness have not been fully achieved.

This situation is further reinforced by the results of the 2024 Container Port Performance Index (CPPI), which places one of Indonesia's major ports, which has undergone transformation through the merger of KSU and OP, in 300th place out of 405 ports worldwide, a significant drop from 261st position in 2022. This position is far behind other major ASEAN ports such as Tanjung Pelepas, Singapore, or Port Klang.

These findings indicate that institutional transformation through organizational mergers has not fully achieved the expected goals; the ongoing changes are still predominantly administrative in nature, while improvements in governance quality and organizational effectiveness have not been optimally realized. Therefore, rationalization efforts need to be restructured to go beyond procedural streamlining and toward measurable substantive improvements in processes, roles, and service outcomes. In line with [Cakranegara \(2020\)](#) perspective, the process of change requires contextual adjustments that utilize truly available resources while encouraging gradual improvements in infrastructure, capacity, and organizational competence ([Cakranegara, 2020](#)). With this adaptive approach, the organizational merger of port authorities can be redirected toward clearer and more impactful strategic goals.

Rationalization within an organization is understood as the process of restructuring the structure, functions, and resources to achieve efficiency, effectiveness, and alignment with the strategic needs of the institution ([Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015](#)). Rationalization is not merely downsizing or reducing staff, but also involves improving work processes, eliminating functional duplication, and strengthening human resource competencies to align with organizational goals.

Various international studies highlight its relevance. [Svindland, Monios, and Hjelle \(2019\)](#) show that port rationalization in Norway succeeded in improving regional efficiency and system integration. The study also mentions that mergers of port authorities present significant challenges in planning and managing concessions, which require comprehensive rationalization to avoid stopping at the administrative level ([Ferretti, Parola, Risitano, & Vitiello, 2018](#)). Legitimacy and acceptance of organizational actors are key factors in determining the success of public sector transformation, so rationalization is not sufficient if carried out in a top-down manner only.

In the context of Indonesia, research is still limited. [Maulana, Saptawan, and Semil \(2023\)](#) highlight the stagnation of institutional reform due to the lack of structural layering and weak work culture transformation, resulting in rationalization being more administrative-oriented rather than substantive. Meanwhile, recent studies in the aviation sector indicate that cost-efficiency-based rationalization strategies can lead to excessive workloads, emotional exhaustion, and increased employee turnover intentions ([Mansour & Azeem, 2024](#)). These findings are relevant to ports, where rationalization is not only about the number of employees, but also about the quality, distribution, and proportional workload.

Both international and national literature reveal a clear research gap in public sector organizational change studies. Research on public institution mergers is still dominated by legal-formal and fiscal perspectives, so discussions often stop at administrative rationalization structural reorganization, nomenclature standardization, and hierarchical streamlining. However, substantive rationalization aspects comprehensive process redesign, redistribution of human resources based on workload and competencies, orchestration of data and cross-actor systems, and performance accountability linking input–process–output–outcome is still rarely discussed in depth.

The novelty of this study lies in placing rationalization in the context of public port mergers in Indonesia, a theme that has been sparsely explored, with empirical testing on how much the shift from an administrative to a substantive approach has truly occurred and correlates with the achievement of organizational merger goals.

The urgency of this research lies in the pressing need to ensure that port organization mergers do not merely result in administrative changes, but can lead to governance that is more effective, efficient, and adaptive to global dynamics. Thus, this study is expected to not only enrich the literature on public bureaucratic rationalization by placing it within the context of port organizational mergers but also provide practical contributions to the Ministry of Transportation and stakeholders in formulating more comprehensive rationalization strategies to accelerate the achievement of port sector bureaucratic reform goals.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of Rationalization

Rationalization is understood as an effort to reorganize an organization to make it more efficient, effective, and aligned with the institution's strategic needs. In public administration, rationalization involves optimizing the structure, functions, and work processes of the organization to avoid role duplication, reduce waste, and increase accountability ([Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015](#)). Rationalization does not solely mean downsizing or reducing staff, but also involves simplifying procedures and enhancing human resource competencies.

In Indonesia, rightsizing has become the main instrument for bureaucratic reform, as regulated in *PermenPANRB No. 14/2014* and *PermenPANRB No. 25/2021*, which emphasize the alignment of the number, distribution, and quality of civil servants with the needs of the organization. In line with this agenda, to avoid being trapped in an administrative approach, rationalization must be based on the principles of good corporate governance (transparency, accountability, responsibility, independence, and fairness) as a compass to integrate processes, regulations, institutional structures, human resource management, and service quality. This ensures that the changes do not remain purely administrative ([Apriliani, 2021](#)).

The "Working Towards Policy" theory developed by ([Patty, 2024](#)) emphasizes the importance of dynamic prioritization mechanisms within hierarchical organizations, specifically the ability of bureaucratic organizations to flexibly align their mission, tasks, structure, and preferences to achieve optimal performance. In this framework, rationalization is no longer seen as a static step of reducing staff or simplifying the structure alone, but as a process of adjusting priorities and redistributing resources to align with the organization's mission.

2.2 Organizational Theory

Organizational theory explains the order of behavior within organizations through three main streams: classical, neo-classical, and modern ([Cummings & Kiesler, 2011](#); [Jones & Munro, 2005](#)). Classical theory emphasizes the importance of formal structure with rigid divisions of labor ([Onday, 2016](#)). Neo-classical theory highlights the socio-psychological aspects of employees and their involvement in decision-making processes. Meanwhile, modern theory views organizations as open systems that are adaptive to their environment ([Hatch & Cunliffe, 2012](#)). Bureaucracy as the most rational and efficient form of organization, characterized by a clear hierarchy, standardized rules, and merit-based selection. This model has become a reference for public bureaucratic reform to achieve rational, accountable, and performance-oriented organizations. In the context of ports, Weberian principles are relevant because they ensure legal certainty, uniform procedures, and hierarchical control in maintaining safety and public service quality.

Contingency theory states that there is no one-size-fits-all organizational structure; effectiveness depends on the alignment of the structure with the environment, technology, and organizational goals ([Daft, 2008](#)). Modern organizational design, such as the Star Model [Galbraith \(2002\)](#), emphasizes the integration of strategy, structure, processes, reward systems, and human resources. This shows that rationalization should be viewed as a comprehensive process, not just structural streamlining.

New Public Management (NPM) adopts private sector management principles in public bureaucracy, focusing on efficiency, user-orientation, and performance measurement ([Fornasier & Franklin, 2019](#)). This principle is complemented by good governance, which emphasizes accountability, transparency, participation, and responsiveness, enabling public governance to operate effectively while being adaptive to societal demands.

2.3 Organizational Restructuring and Mergers

Restructuring is a concrete form of rationalization, involving the reorganization of structures and processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness ([Galbraith, 2002](#)). In the public sector, mergers or organizational consolidations are intended to reduce functional duplication, strengthen coordination, and enhance service quality through an integration approach. This can be achieved by aligning structure, processes, resources, and strategies ([Merkel & Sløk-Madsen, 2019](#)).

2.4 Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM)

Strategic Human Resource Management emphasizes aligning HR practices with organizational strategy so that employees are positioned as strategic assets that contribute significantly to the vision, mission, and long-term goals of the organization ([Armstrong, 2024](#)). Its three main pillars are job analysis to identify tasks, responsibilities, and competency requirements to ensure that the work structure is aligned and free from overlap; competency mapping to ensure proper placement while serving as the basis for recruitment, training, and career development; and performance planning and management with SMART goals, accompanied by continuous evaluation and feedback. The integration of these three pillars unites HR practices with business strategy and strengthens the organization's competitive advantage ([Armstrong & Taylor, 2020](#)).

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The merger of KSU and OPU into KSOP Utama Belawan is positioned as an institutional rationalization aimed at structuring, processes, and roles to achieve efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability. Rightsizing aligns the number, distribution, and quality of employees with service needs, while merger regulations unify authority and reduce duplication. Dynamic prioritization focuses resources on high-value functions during the transition. The framework integrates rational bureaucracy, contingency theory, the Star Model, and New Public Management principles that are user-oriented and results-driven. Implementation relies on Strategic HRM and process engineering through SOP standardization, single window services, and data interoperability.

This study is aimed at (1) exploring why the goals of the merger have not been achieved when viewed from the design and implementation of rationalization, and (2) analyzing how the rationalization

strategy is designed and implemented from the perspective of civil servants (ASN) directly involved. The thought flow is as follows: if rationalization is clearly designed, including role and authority mapping, service process engineering, redistribution of HR based on workload and competencies, orchestration of data and cross-functional SOPs, and accountability for input, process, output, and outcome, integration should drive improved service performance and governance. Conversely, unclear roles, capacity imbalances, fragmented processes and data, and weak Strategic HRM practices become major obstacles. Therefore, this framework guides the examination of the cause-and-effect relationships from the design stage to implementation and results achievement, identifying prerequisites, barriers, and leverage points for the success of the merger.

3. Research Methodology

This study uses a descriptive-exploratory qualitative approach within the constructivist paradigm, with a single case study design to understand the dynamics of rationalization in public organization mergers from the perspective of the experiences and meanings of the actors of change. The merger of KSU and OPU into KSOP Utama Belawan is selected as a critical and unique case that allows an examination of the mechanisms of how and why, through deep contextual description and tracking of processes during the pre-merger, transition, and post-merger phases.

Given the heterogeneity among ports, which may obscure the signals of the process in the design of many cases, focusing on a single case increases the precision of the analysis, facilitates the construction of a thick description that captures the meaning of actions, interactions among actors, and institutional context, and produces relevant analytical generalizations for similar public organizations, rather than just statistical generalizations.

The research will be conducted from March to September 2025, aligned with the availability of informants, data access, and critical phases of transformation, ensuring sufficient data coverage to assess the processes and strategies applied. Figure 1 below illustrates the data collection flow, coding, and validation process, along with intermediate outputs and control points at each stage.

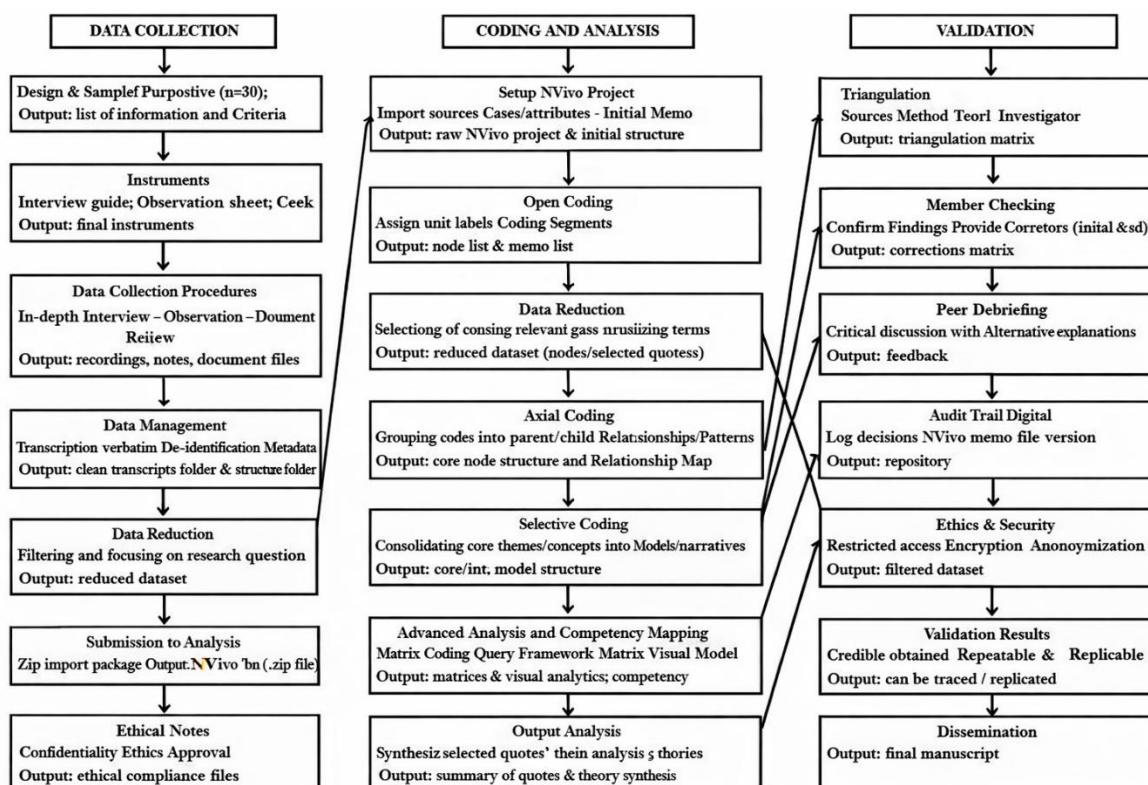


Figure 1. Methodology flowchart (data collection → coding → validation)

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and document review. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, including policymakers, technical implementers, and employees affected by the changes, with a total of thirty participants. A semi-structured interview guide was used to maintain comparability across informants while allowing flexibility for further probing; this format enables the researcher to clarify technical terms, capture the meanings constructed by the informants, maintain consistency of topics across sessions, minimize interviewer bias, and generate a clear question trail for triangulation and follow-up purposes. The documents analyzed included regulations, academic papers, performance reports, meeting minutes, and standard operating procedures.

Data analysis was assisted by NVivo 12, following the cyclical framework of Miles and colleagues, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The coding process was carried out in stages: open, axial, and selective coding, to extract patterns, relationships, and integration strategies. The results of the coding were then integrated with theoretical frameworks, including bureaucracy theory, contingency theory, strategic human resource management, the Ability Motivation Opportunity framework, and Lewin and Kotter's change models. This stage produced intermediate outputs in the form of a reduced dataset, node relation maps, matrices, analytical visuals, and summary findings.

As shown in Figure 1, the validity of the findings was ensured through source and method triangulation, confirmation with informants, peer discussions for critical feedback, and a digital audit trail that records analytical decisions. This validation process ensures that the research is transparent, traceable, and potentially replicable in public organizations with similar characteristics.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Efforts in Rationalization through Simplification of Structural Positions

The research findings from official documents indicate that the rationalization strategy in the merger of KSU and OPU into KSOP Utama Belawan was marked by the efficiency of structural positions. This change is reflected in the comparison of the number of structural officials before and after the merger, as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Comparison of the Number of Structural Positions Before and After the Merger of KSU and OPU into KSOP Utama Belawan

Position	Echelon	Before Total	Subtotal Before	After Total	Subtotal After
Head of Office	II.a / II.b	2	4	1	4
Head of Division and Head of Department	III.a / III.b	7	28	5	20
Head of Sub-Section and Head of Section	IV.a / IV.b	20	84	15	60
Total	–	29	116	21	84

The data in the table show a reduction in the number of structural positions from 29 positions before the merger to 21 positions after the merger, a decrease of 8 positions. In terms of the number of officials, there was a reduction from 116 individuals to 84, resulting in a difference of 32 people. This efficiency was followed by the policy of redistributing structural officials to other Technical Implementation Units (UPT), especially to units that are in the process of strengthening and development, as outlined in the organizational merger implementation documents.

The simplification of structural positions is the initial step in rationalizing human resources at KSOP Utama Belawan. This policy aligns with the national agenda for bureaucratic simplification through *PermenPANRB No. 25/2021*, which emphasizes the transformation of structural positions into functional ones to reduce the hierarchy and expedite decision-making processes.

However, the research findings show that although the number of structural positions was successfully reduced, the implementation on the ground still leaves issues unresolved. Many functional positions have not been equipped with job descriptions and new work mechanisms, leading to confusion among employees in performing their roles. This situation confirms Weberian bureaucracy's framework, which posits that the effectiveness of bureaucracy can only be realized if the rational structure is supported by clear standard rules (Kadir, 2010). Without updated SOPs, the reduction of positions risks creating uncertainty and overlapping authority.

In line with these findings, (Iswanto, 2024) emphasizes that rightsizing bureaucracy is not enough merely by reducing the number of positions; it must be accompanied by the redesign of functions to improve performance. A similar point is raised by Wandera (2013) in his study in Kenya, stating that structural reforms without proper planning actually lower employee motivation and productivity. Therefore, the simplification of structural positions at KSOP Belawan appears more as an administrative step rather than a substantive change, making its impact on organizational performance improvements still very limited.

4.2 Rationalization through Simplification of Position Nomenclature

The document review results show that organizational rationalization was carried out through changes and simplification of position nomenclature. The aim was to unify the roles of KSU and OPU so that the structure would be simpler, more efficient, and free from overlapping authority.

Table 2. Comparison of the number of structural positions before and after the merger

Unit	Number of Positions (Before)	Employees Filling Positions (Before)	Number of Positions (After)	Employees Filling Positions (After)
KSU	158	164	-	-
OPU	120	102	-	-
KSOP (post-merger)	-	-	117	265

Table 2 shows that before the merger, KSU had 158 positions with 164 employees, while OPU had 120 positions with 102 employees. After merging into KSOP Utama, the number of positions was reduced to 117, but the number of employees sharply increased to 265. This situation creates an imbalance between the number of positions and the available employees, posing a challenge for the distribution of labor according to needs.

Document analysis confirms that institutional reform is supported by normative regulations: *PermenPANRB No. 14/2014* on rightsizing, the 2022 Academic Manuscript on organizational mergers based on workload analysis, and KM No. 140/2024, which sets the ASN position map post-merger. However, there are two main implementation gaps. First, the substance of KM No. 140/2024 is still generic, as it does not consider the variation in workload between units, which creates the risk of overstaffing in administrative units and understaffing in critical technical functions. Second, new derivative regulations were issued a year after the merger, meaning the early phase of integration took place without official guidelines. As a result, employee redistribution and position determination relied more on internal leadership policies, leading to variations in practices across units.

The research findings show that the simplification of nomenclature was not accompanied by the harmonization of workload. Overstaffing occurred in administrative units, while technical units experienced understaffing. This indicates that the simplification of nomenclature only addressed the structural aspect, without considering competency analysis and real needs. This finding aligns with the literature, which states that mergers without process redesign only result in formal integration, not performance improvement (Bodner & Capron, 2018). In the public context, Tavares (2018) also notes that local government amalgamation often only reduces administrative costs without improving service quality.

Theoretically, this phenomenon can be explained by contingency theory, which emphasizes that organizational effectiveness is determined by the alignment between structure, environment, and needs. The simplification of nomenclature as an effort in rationalization during the merger of port management organizations failed to ensure this alignment, resulting in a streamlined structure on paper but one that is not adaptive to the demands of the field.

4.3 Rationalization through the Unification of Work Units

Rationalization in the merger of organizations at KSOP Utama Belawan is realized through the unification of several departments and sections with similar functions and responsibilities. The administration, planning, and finance units were merged to strengthen administrative functions, while similar technical units were consolidated to improve operational coordination. Normatively, this step aims to reduce the duplication of authority, clarify workflows, and enhance cross-unit coordination.

However, the absence of new SOPs has caused several functions to continue operating in parallel, leading to confusion about roles on the ground. One administrative official stated:

"Although the planning and finance functions have been merged, we still don't have the new SOP, so we are still using the old rules." (Administrative Informant)

A similar point was made by a technical employee:

"Structurally, it has been merged, but on the ground, many tasks overlap because there are no clear work guidelines." (Technical Informant)

This condition aligns with the findings of (Bodner & Capron, 2018) on post-merger integration, which emphasize that organizational mergers without process and workflow redesign only result in formal integration, not substantive performance improvement. Thus, although the institutional structure has been simplified, operational effectiveness has not been optimally achieved because procedures and work standards were not immediately updated and aligned.

4.4 Instrument of Rationalization Strategy in Organizational Mergers

As part of understanding the dynamics of organizational mergers, the rationalization strategy serves as a critical instrument to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of the new governance at KSOP Utama Belawan. Rationalization does not only address structural aspects but also encompasses dimensions of competencies, employee distribution, and the alignment of core tasks with organizational needs. To provide a more systematic overview, the following table summarizes the rationalization strategies found in this study.

Table 3. Rationalization Strategies in the Merger of KSOP Utama Belawan

No	Rationalization Strategy	Research Findings Description
1	Anjab & ABK	Main instrument for determining position formations, ideal number, and workload distribution.
2	Mutasi & Rotasi	Employee redistribution; addresses overstaffing/understaffing while facilitating post-merger integration.
3	Pemetaan Kompetensi	Placement according to education, experience, performance, and expertise.
4	Rekrutmen Eksternal	Limited option for specific technical competencies.
5	Penyelarasan SKJ	Ensures alignment of employee profiles with positions.
6	Mapping Tugas Pokok	Prevents overlapping functions between units.
7	Keseimbangan Beban Kerja & Kompetensi	Ensures balanced distribution of employees in accordance with unit capacity.
8	Prinsip Efektif, Efisien, Proporsional	General foundation of the rationalization strategy.
9	Kelemahan – Advanced Assessment	No standard formula for real technical and administrative needs.

The core findings indicate that the development of Job Analysis and Workload Analysis serves as the main driver for determining staffing formations, ideal numbers, and workload distribution. Post-merger human resource management relies on transfers and rotations supported by competency mapping to address overstaffing and understaffing while accelerating integration. The alignment of Job Profile ensures the compatibility of employee profiles with positions, while the mapping of core tasks eliminates overlapping functions between units. This effort is balanced with workload and competency alignment to ensure that the unit's capacity aligns with assigned tasks. External recruitment is positioned as a limited option for specific technical needs. All strategies are based on the principles of effectiveness, efficiency, and proportionality. The main weakness that remains is the absence of a standardized advanced assessment to precisely calculate technical and administrative needs. The following sunburst chart node hierarchy visualization illustrates the relative weight of human resource rationalization instruments in the merger of KSU and OPU into KSOP Utama Belawan.

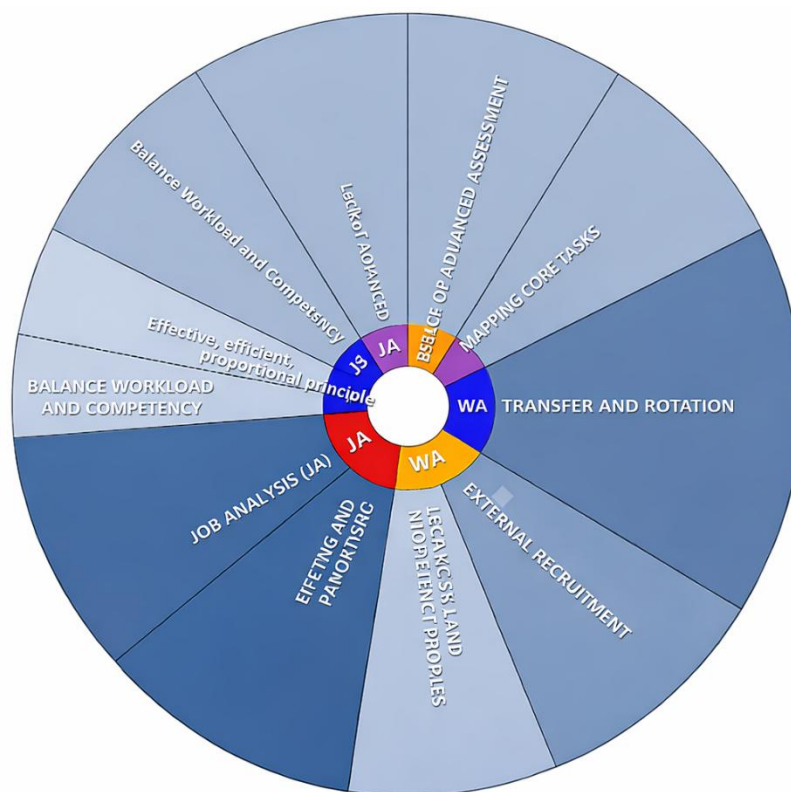


Figure 2. Hierarchy Chart Node of Rationalization Strategy

The larger segments represent the more dominant instruments based on the data. From the center outward, the foundational layer is supported by the development of Job Analysis (Anjab) and Workload Analysis (ABK); the process layer includes mapping core tasks, competency mapping and assessments, as well as transfers and rotations; while the result layer showcases the alignment of Job Profiles and competencies, workload and competency balance, competency matching, and the establishment of effective, efficient, and proportional formations.

A policymaker from the central government stated:
"Rightsizing is not just about reducing employees, but about reorganizing the organization to make it leaner, more agile, and proportional. The principle is that the number of employees should be balanced with the workload, and the position formations must be established to avoid duplication." (Policy Formulator Informant)

This statement is reinforced by a representative from the SDMO Bureau, emphasizing the MenPANRB regulatory framework in using Anjab and ABK instruments:

"The main instruments are Anjab & ABK, in accordance with MenPANRB guidelines. We consider three dimensions: service standards, work objects, and the volume and complexity of functions. From there, the staffing requirements are more objective." (Central Informant, SDMO Bureau).

Both of these quotes emphasize that the rationalization strategy is designed based on an analytical approach, although in practice, there are still implementation challenges on the ground. Additionally, transfers and rotations are identified as important instruments to balance workload and strengthen organizational integration post-merger. This is reflected in the statement of the head of the personnel section, who said:

"Many employees, whose competencies are actually more suited for technical roles, are still stuck in administrative positions. Rotation is necessary so that our workforce becomes truly productive." (Head of Personnel Section)

A similar view was also shared by an official from the HR sub-section, who highlighted the role of transfers as a mechanism for integration:

"Our main strategy is to carry out refreshing transfers, both through internal rotations between sections and external transfers. This step is important to break down the historical barriers between the former KSU and former OPU, as well as to foster a new spirit." (HR Sub-section Informant)

This explanation suggests that transfers and rotations are not merely seen as labor distribution, but also as a strategic tool to build institutional cohesion and a new organizational culture. On the other hand, competency mapping becomes a crucial factor in preventing mismatch between employees and the positions they hold. An HR official emphasized that:

"We are starting to develop competency mapping and screening for civil servants based on the real needs in each section. This is to prevent employee accumulation in one part, while other sections are lacking personnel with specific skills." (HR Section Informant)

This aligns with the perspective of the central policymaker who emphasized the importance of competency alignment in reassignment:

"The main consideration in reassignment is the alignment between the position and the individual's competencies. It's not just about formal education, but also non-formal experience, integrity, and adaptability." (Central Informant, Policy Formulator)

Thus, the findings confirm that the post-merger rationalization strategy is not solely focused on the number of employees, but rather on optimizing placement based on competencies, balancing the workload, and strengthening organizational integration through directed transfer and rotation instruments.

However, the research also reveals a fundamental weakness, namely the lack of advanced assessment tools capable of measuring the effectiveness, efficiency, and proportionality of the rationalization in line with the rightsizing principles that have been implemented. This has become the biggest obstacle in the rationalization strategy, leading to the redistribution of employees not being fully based on the real needs analysis of the organization. Several informants provided explanations:

"The problem is, we don't yet have advanced assessments to ensure the quantity and quality of HR match the needs. In terms of numbers, it's sufficient, but the quality may not necessarily align." (HR Informant, Central Government)

A similar challenge was also expressed by another informant:

"Until now, we haven't had a clear formula to calculate the real staffing needs at the port. For example, how many marine inspectors are ideal based on the frequency of ship visits, or how many ship surveyors are needed based on the class of the port, and even for administrative staff, there is no standard comparison with the number of employees. As a result, employee redistribution is often not based on measurable needs analysis, but rather on administrative considerations or old habits. The impact is that some units are overstaffed, while technical functions are lacking, meaning the rightsizing principle has not been fully effective." (HR Informant, Central Government)

4.5 Dynamics of HR Rationalization at KSOP Utama Belawan

The field findings on the dynamics of HR rationalization post-merger focus on how staffing formations, roles, and work processes were restructured; the challenges that emerged; as well as the impacts experienced by civil servants as implementers of change and beneficiaries of the merger. The results of the pattern mapping are visualized through a hierarchy coding chart in NVivo, which displays the dominant themes and their interconnections, as shown in Figure 3 below

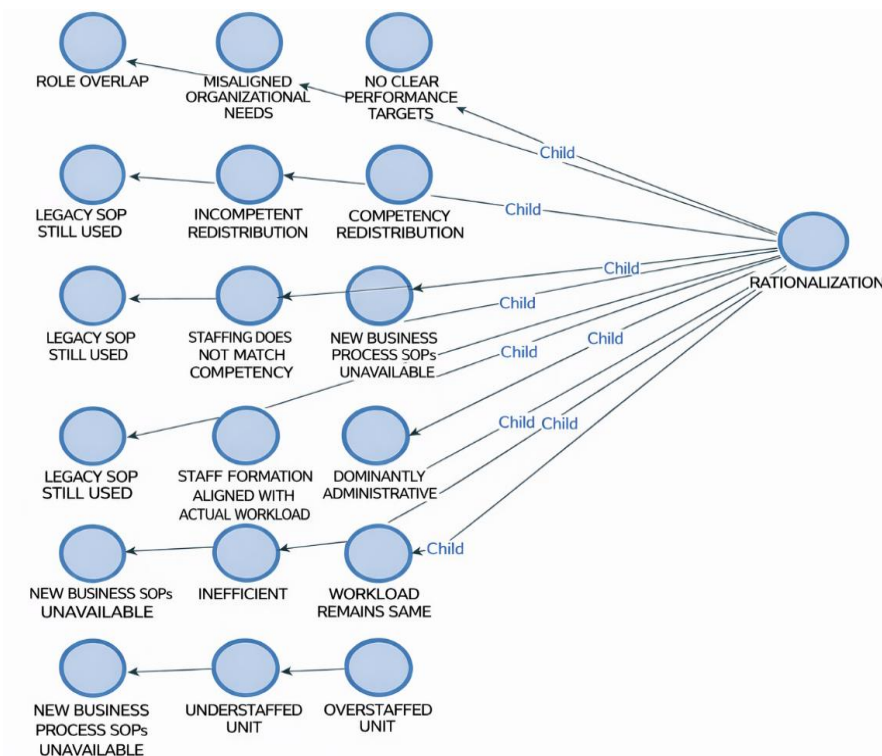


Figure 3. ASN Rationalization Coding Mapping at KSOP Utama Belawan

The mapping of the research results identifies seven key issues in the implementation of HR rationalization, including workload imbalance, overstaffing–understaffing conditions, competency mismatches, and overlapping functions that arose due to the absence of new SOPs. These findings indicate that post-merger rationalization efforts have still not fully achieved effective, efficient, and needs-aligned employee distribution. A summary of these issues is presented in Table 4, which displays the rationalization parameters, assessment indicators, and the level of issue dominance based on the NVivo Summary Code Coverage results.

Table 4. Synthesis of Rationalization Parameters, Field Indicators, and Level of Issue Dominance

Findings	Field Indicators	% Coverage
Workload	Uneven distribution; some units are short-staffed, while others are overstaffed	25.03%
Overstaffing	Excessive staff in administration & planning; simple tasks handled redundantly	21.78%
Understaffing	Shortage of technical staff (maritime patrol, facility inspection)	17.34%
Competency Mismatch	Placement not aligned with education/skills	15.27%
Employee Redistribution	Placement is more administrative than based on real workload analysis	18.35%
Role Overlap	Task duplication due to the lack of new SOPs	4.31%

Distribution Control	Administrative evaluation, not based on actual conditions	5.62%
Work Instruments (SOP)	New SOPs are not available; still using old rules	13.53%
Rationalization Orientation	More administrative than technical/substantive	4.13%

The field findings confirm the main issue regarding uneven workload distribution (25.03%): there is an overstaffing in administrative and planning functions (21.78%) alongside a shortage of technical staff in core operations such as maritime patrol and inspection (17.34%). Employee redistribution has been carried out, but it is still administrative in nature and not based on actual workload measurements (18.35%), while control over the distribution tends to be based solely on administrative assessments (5.62%). At the same time, there is a misalignment of competencies with placements (15.27%). This situation is exacerbated by the lack of integrated SOPs post-merger, causing units to still follow old regulations (13.53%), which leads to overlapping roles (4.31%). Overall, the rationalization orientation is more administrative than substantive technical.

Documentary data further supports the field findings regarding the imbalance of HR. The 2022 performance report highlighted the shortage of technical staff on one hand and the overstaffing of administrative personnel on the other, which continued into the period after the restructuring. The 2024 annual report even recorded an increase in the number of employees from 244 to 265 ASN and PPPK, with a total of 299 including PPNPN. However, the distribution imbalance persists because the new regulation (*PM Kemenhub No. 15/2023*) tends to add positions to the administrative units rather than strengthen technical units.

A Structural Officer from the Technical Department stated:

"On the ground, maritime traffic control is very broad, but there are only two active staff members. Meanwhile, in the office, the administrative department has an abundance of people. This is unbalanced." (Informant, Structural Officer Post-Organization Merger)

A technical staff member also shared:

"We were simply transferred to new positions, but our educational backgrounds didn't match. In the end, we had to start learning from scratch, and the work became slow." (Informant, Maritime Department Staff)

Thus, the dynamics of rationalization at KSOP Utama Belawan reflect a process of structural reorganization and employee distribution that still faces several challenges. This process takes place within the framework of national regulations, but the implementation at the unit level remains administrative and not fully based on the analysis of real needs. As a result, the rightsizing principle has not been optimized, and the goals of the organizational merger have not been fully achieved.

These findings align with [Tavares \(2018\)](#) analysis, which shows that amalgamation often merely reduces administrative costs without resulting in service improvements. In KSOP Belawan, rationalization has focused more on administrative aspects rather than technical substance, so the quality of services has not significantly changed.

4.6 Fundamental Issues in Rationalization in Organizational Mergers

The efforts in HR rationalization within the context of institutional restructuring have been carried out through structural simplification, position reduction, and the adjustment of nomenclature. These policies align with the national agenda as outlined in *PermenPANRB No. 25/2021* on organizational simplification and the rightsizing principles in *PermenPANRB No. 14/2014*, with the aim of creating a lean, efficient, and adaptive organization. However, the research findings indicate that the rationalization strategy still leaves fundamental issues unresolved, as it has not been fully based on real needs analysis.

One crucial issue is the imbalance between structural and functional positions, where administrative units face overstaffing while technical units suffer from a lack of skilled personnel (understaffing). This imbalance not only reduces work effectiveness but also reflects the weakness in the employee distribution standards, as noted in the annual performance reports of the relevant agencies. Another problem is caused by the delay in the regulation on job descriptions (KM 140/2024), which hinders the redistribution of employee's post-merger and creates role confusion. Overall, this situation shows that rationalization has focused more on administrative aspects rather than being based on a comprehensive strategic plan.

Additionally, competency mapping and workload analysis have not been optimally implemented. In fact, an effective HR strategy should begin with job analysis, competency mapping, and the calculation of needs based on real workload; without this, simplification easily ends up as a "lean" structure on paper with no real impact on field performance ([Armstrong & Taylor, 2020](#)). Recent evidence shows that the alignment of competencies and placements has a more consistent impact on performance compared to workload alone, so policy priorities should focus on job-person fit and appropriate task design ([Friadi, Satriawan, & Dewi, 2025](#)). To ensure proportional employee distribution across units, Anjab-ABK should be carried out periodically and serve as the basis for formations, not merely an administrative formality ([Pongsituru, Adam, & Sanuddin, 2024](#)). At the same time, work discipline and reasonable workload management are essential in determining productivity, so workload evaluation must be followed by task reorganization and strengthening organizational discipline ([Fariz, Setiadi, & Rahayu, 2025](#)).

The simplification of echelon positions and nomenclature changes at KSOP Belawan are indeed aligned with the rightsizing agenda, but the lack of SOP updates and process redesign has allowed functional overlaps and role confusion to persist. This pattern is consistent with findings that post-merger integration without process redesign only leads to formal integration, not performance improvement ([Bodner & Capron, 2018](#); [Iswanto, 2024](#)). On the operational side, workload analysis as the basis for task distribution, along with strengthening discipline as a behavioral standard, is essential to closing implementation gaps and ensuring improved service throughput ([Fariz et al., 2025](#); [Pongsituru et al., 2024](#)).

The findings also align with studies on port authorities in Italy, which indicate that mergers can create new complexities if governance and SOPs are not updated promptly; the structure may appear streamlined, but practices remain "overweight" because role distribution and work mechanisms are not aligned ([Ferretti et al., 2018](#)). In this context, the accuracy of placement and improvements in governance need to be supported by a systematic, transparent, and accountable financial plan from the outset including identifying needs, preparing budgets, involving stakeholders, as well as monitoring and periodic evaluations so that rationalization is sustainable and does not stop at the administrative stage ([Syamsiyah, Tsabita, & Mardiyah, 2025](#)).

Theoretically, the contingency approach demands alignment between structure, processes, and HR capabilities with environmental demands. The failure of competency-based transfers and rotations indicates a weakness in applying this principle, while the lack of occupational identification post-merger can lead to resistance ([Kroon & Noorderhaven, 2018](#)). The misalignment of culture and competencies also slows down the integration of public organizations ([Ovseiko, Melham, Fowler, and Buchan \(2015\)](#)), and unclear change direction often leads to defensive silence, which weakens improvement initiatives ([Wynen, Kleizen, Verhoest, Lægheid, & Rolland, 2020](#)). Therefore, the problem of rationalization is not merely technical, such as imbalanced employee distribution or delayed regulations, but also involves the absence of managerial foundations and strategic planning that link job-person fit, credible workload evaluation, work discipline in a transparent, proportional, and accountable manner.

To illustrate the gap between normative frameworks and the realities of field implementation, the table below is presented as an analytical comparison. This table summarizes key aspects of HR rationalization, ranging from the proportion of positions, the Anjab-ABK instrument, job description regulations, to employee responses. Each aspect is compared based on regulatory foundations and

theory against empirical findings, clearly showing how rationalization that is normatively designed often does not align with the actual post-merger practices.

Table 5. Comparison of Normative vs. Realities of HR Rationalization Implementation

Rationalization Aspect	Normative (Regulation & Theory)	Implementation Reality
Position Proportion	<i>PermenPANRB No. 14/2014</i> emphasizes rightsizing with a balanced structural-functional proportion.	No standard in place; administrative units are overstaffed, while technical units are short of skilled personnel.
Anjab-ABK Instrument	Serves as an objective basis for determining formations, employee distribution, and reducing duplication (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).	Implemented administratively; not yet based on real performance evaluation. Employee distribution remains disproportionate.
Job Description Regulation	Should serve as technical guidance post-merger.	Issued late; initial employee placements occurred without clear reference, causing confusion and stagnation.
Competency Mapping	SHRM theory: must align employees with competencies, experience, and real workload.	Mismatch is still dominant: technical staff placed in administration, and vice versa. Merit system is inconsistent.
Mutations & Rotations	Should be based on competency analysis for organizational culture integration (Kroon & Noorderhaven, 2018).	Mutations and rotations tend to be administrative; passive resistance arises.
Nomenclature Change	According to <i>PermenPANRB No. 25/2021</i> : structure simplification must be followed by function strengthening and new SOPs.	Nomenclature change was not accompanied by new SOPs; overlapping functions, employees are confused in their roles.
Rightsizing Effectiveness	Ideally results in a lean, efficient, adaptive organization (Weberian bureaucracy).	Lean structure only "on paper"; reality on the ground remains "overweight" and inefficient.
Implications for Performance	Structural efficiency should lead to improved public service (Ferretti et al., 2018).	Public services have not improved; rationalization only had an administrative impact, not substantive.
Employee Response	Strategic rationalization should increase participation and motivation (Wynen et al., 2020).	ASN demonstrates defensive silence due to unclear direction of change; sense of belonging weakens.

Table 5 shows the comparison, which reveals a significant gap between the normative design of rationalization and the realities of its implementation. From a regulatory standpoint, rationalization is designed to create a lean, efficient, and adaptive organization, with a balanced employee distribution based on competencies, ultimately improving the quality of port services. However, in practice, the approach remains largely administrative: the proportion of positions is unbalanced, Anjab-ABK has not been used as an evaluative instrument, regulations were issued late, and competency mapping is inconsistent. As a result, the changes in nomenclature and rightsizing only lead to a streamlined structure on paper without delivering substantive impacts on performance. This condition leaves port services stagnant, while employees demonstrate defensive silence due to the lack of clarity regarding the direction of change. Therefore, rationalization, which should be a strategic instrument to strengthen the efficiency of port services, has not yet achieved its goals, leaving the objectives of the organizational merger far from being realized.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Conclusion

This study's findings confirm that administrative rationalization without function redesign is inadequate for creating a lean, efficient, and adaptive organization. Evidence shows a structural-function imbalance: administrative units are overstaffed, while technical units lack skilled personnel (understaffing); delays in job description regulations and the lack of new SOPs cause role ambiguity and stagnation in services; and the implementation of Anjab-ABK remains procedural, so employee allocation is not based on real workload needs. These findings align with the Weberian bureaucracy framework, where effectiveness requires a rational structure supported by clear rules, and suggest that mergers without functional/process redesign only result in formal integration, not substantive performance improvement.

Empirically, port service performance indicators remain stagnant, and defensive silence emerges, weakening ASN participation. Therefore, post-merger rationalization has been more administrative than strategic, meaning the goal of port bureaucratic reform has not been fully achieved. The theoretical contribution of this study clarifies the connection between structural rationalization, clear rules (SOP/job descriptions), and function design as prerequisites for post-merger performance in the public sector. Practically, this research directs policy priorities toward functional redesign, process mapping, accelerating job description and SOP regulations, restructuring structural-functional composition based on workload, and participatory mechanisms to address defensive silence.

5.2. Research Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, it focuses on a single case, so the findings cannot be generalized to all ports in Indonesia. Second, the research period is limited to 2023–2025, meaning it does not capture the medium- and long-term impacts of rationalization policies. Third, the data from interviews may contain perception biases, even though triangulation with official documents was performed. Fourth, the lack of an advanced assessment instrument limits quantitative analysis of the real needs for technical positions.

For future research, it is recommended to conduct a comparative study across several ports to test the generalizability of the findings. A longitudinal study is also necessary to assess the long-term impacts of rationalization. A mixed-methods approach combining quantitative surveys, interviews, and organizational ethnography would enrich the perspective. Additionally, the development of advanced assessments based on time-motion studies and formulas for technical position needs could be used to assess the effectiveness of rightsizing more objectively. A quasi-experimental study on the impact of new regulations and the implementation of SOPs would also be relevant.

5.3. Suggestions and Directions for Future Research

Theoretically, this study strengthens but also extends Weberian rationalization: the effectiveness of post-merger bureaucracy cannot be achieved through structural simplification and standardized rules alone; it requires competency mapping and process/functional redesign to prevent role ambiguity and passive resistance. Another contribution is enriching the literature on rightsizing commonly focused on the quantity of formations by emphasizing competency-based planning, proportional distribution, and strengthening ASN professional identity. Within the contingency theory framework, this study reinforces that structural alignment with the environment needs to be accompanied by integration of work culture and professional identity across origin entities (former KSU/former OPU) to ensure smooth consolidation.

Practically and policy-wise, this research encourages a shift from administrative compliance to evidence-based HR planning. Anjab-ABK should be operationalized based on real workload data (e.g., ship traffic/visit complexity and service time standards) to align rotation and transfers with competencies, capacity building for critical positions, and meritocratic career paths. At the ministry level, advanced assessments based on work ratios per function (e.g., ideal marine inspector ratio to ship visits and types of inspections) should become tools for planning, monitoring, and legitimizing fair ASN redistribution. The implementation of the performance input → needs mapping → workforce planning

→ execution → evaluation → feedback loop cycle ensures that post-merger rationalization is strategic, reduces mismatches, strengthens ASN readiness, and ultimately improves port service performance.

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Author Contributions

RS Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – Original Draft, Supervision. HN Data Collection, Data Analysis, Writing – Review & Editing. YA Literature Review, Data Interpretation, Writing – Review & Editing.

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