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https://doi.org/10.57239/PJLSS-2024-22.2.00407

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Enhancing Good Governance through the Implementation of the Merit System in the Placement of State Civil Apparatus

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ARTICLE INFO ABSTRACT

Accepted: Sep 20, 2024

Received: Jul 17, 2024

Keywords

Good Governance
Merit System
State Civil Apparatus
Public Administration

Good governance is essential in creating transparent, accountable, and efficient public services. One of the main challenges in achieving good governance in Indonesia is the practice of nepotism, corruption, and abuse of authority in managing the State Civil Apparatus (ASN). To overcome this problem, implementing a merit system in ASN management is a strategic solution. This research analyzes how applying the merit system can improve good governance in Indonesia. The research method used is a descriptive qualitative method with a literature study approach and policy analysis. Secondary data is obtained from legal documents and literature related to the research theme in books, articles, or other scientific works. The results showed that implementing the merit system improved ASN management by creating a more professional, transparent, and accountable bureaucracy. In addition, the merit system plays a vital role in improving the quality of public services and strengthening public trust in government. Implementing this system also helps suppress destructive practices, such as nepotism and corruption, thereby increasing efficiency and effectiveness in public services. The merit system in ASN placement is critical in strengthening good governance. With implementation, this system has the potential to create a bureaucracy that is more responsive and fair, meeting the community's needs and realizing a cleaner and fairer government.

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INTRODUCTION

Good governance is a crucial element in running a democratic state (Momen et al., 2020). It emphasizes the importance of efficiency and effectiveness, transparency, accountability, public participation, and the fair enforcement of the law. Good governance focuses on the optimal use of resources to achieve desired goals and ensuring those goals are achieved appropriately and expeditiously (Rodić & Wilson, 2017). Transparency is a key factor that allows the public to access information about government policies and decisions, which is essential for understanding and monitoring government actions, making the audience feel informed and aware. With this openness, public participation in the decision-making process and oversight of public policies becomes more active and productive.

Accountability in good governance means the government is responsible for explaining and justifying its actions and decisions to the public (Rose-Ackerman, 2017). It creates an environment where public officials act honestly and are willing to face criticism or penalties if they do not meet their obligations. Public participation is also crucial, allowing citizens to voice their opinions, participate

in decision-making, and contribute to oversight (Ahmadi et al., 2019). Fair law enforcement, a fundamental part of good governance, ensures that everyone is treated equally under the law, enhancing people's perception of justice and their trust in the governance system. By incorporating these principles, good governance can enhance the quality of public services, fulfill the public's expectations, and participate in oversight. Fair law enforcement, a key aspect of good governance, guarantees that all individuals are treated equally before the law, which not only enhances people's sense of justice but also their trust in the governance system (Noor et al., 2023). By integrating these principles, good governance can improve the quality of public services and meet people's expectations.

To overcome these problems, the merit system is one approach that is considered to improve bureaucratic governance. The merit system is a mechanism for ASN placement based on individual quality and competence, not personal or political factors (Kurniawan et al., 2020). This system encourages a more objective, transparent, and accountable selection and promotion process by prioritizing the ability and performance of ASNs in carrying out government tasks. In the Indonesian context, the implementation of the merit system has been regulated through various regulations, one of which is Law Number 20 of 2023 concerning the State Civil Apparatus, which emphasizes the importance of ASN placement based on the principle of meritocracy. Article 1 point 15 states that the Merit System is implementing the ASN Management system by the principles of meritocracy. The merit system is a system that is considered fair and open. Merit system-based promotion considers the career continuity of employees who will occupy ASN positions, which are held objectively, competitively, transparently, and accountably. This system can be integrated into the existing bureaucratic structure by revising the current regulations and implementing training programs to ensure a smooth transition.

Implementing the merit system is a crucial step in our fight against corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN) in the bureaucracy (Herlambang et al., 2023). The placement of an ASN by its competence is expected to create a bureaucracy that is more professional, efficient, and has integrity. In addition, the merit system positively impacts ASNs' work motivation because it provides fairer opportunities for career development.

Research related to applying the merit system in the placement of ASN has been widely conducted at home and abroad. Previous studies generally show that applying the merit system in the bureaucracy contributes significantly to improving the quality of governance. For example, research conducted by Pollitt and Bouckaert shows that countries that apply a merit system in the recruitment and promotion of civil servants have higher levels of bureaucratic efficiency and lower levels of corruption (Pollitt, C., & Bouckaert, 2011). This finding aligns with research conducted by Rauch and Evans, who found that implementing meritocracy is directly proportional to the quality of governance and public services (Rauch & Evans, 2000). In Indonesia, several studies have been conducted to evaluate the implementation of the merit system in the bureaucracy; Rinaldi, et al.'s research shows that although regulations supporting the merit system already exist, its implementation in the field still encounters various obstacles, primarily related to the resistance of bureaucratic culture that still tends to be patrimonial and bureaucracy that is often influenced by political pressure (Rinaldi et al., 2023).

Therefore, a study of the implementation of the merit system in the placement of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) is crucial to foster good governance (Evelina, 2018). This study aims to analyze the implementation of the merit system in the placement of ASNs to enhance good governance. Specifically, this study will examine the implementation of the merit system in Indonesia, the challenges faced in its implementation, and its impact on the quality of public services and overall governance. This study is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of more inclusive and effective public policies, as well as support bureaucratic reform in Indonesia.

METHOD

This descriptive qualitative research, conducted with meticulous attention to detail, aims to analyze and understand the application of the merit system in structuring the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) and its impact on good governance. Research data sources come from secondary data in the form of laws and regulations related to ASN and literature related to the merit system and governance. These

sources include relevant journal articles, books, and official reports (Noor, 2023). The data collection technique was carried out by reviewing relevant documents such as government regulations, policies, and reports discussing the merit system's implementation and ASN management. The literature study helps understand the theoretical and practical context of the research topic. The data was analyzed qualitatively using the thematic analysis method to identify patterns, themes, and critical issues related to implementing the merit system. This analysis helped us understand how the merit system affects governance and identify relevant challenges and solutions. With this approach, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of merit system implementation and its contribution to improving good governance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Implementing good governance principles is fundamental to achieving sustainable and equitable development (Monkelbaan, 2019). In this context, managing human resources, especially the State Civil Apparatus (ASN), plays a crucial role (Susanti & Syahlani, 2022). Good governance requires a transparent, accountable, and merit-based system to ensure that ASNs in strategic positions have adequate qualifications and competencies to carry out their duties and responsibilities (Subroto & Indriati, 2024).

The merit system, which emphasizes assessment based on performance and qualifications, is considered an effective solution to improve the quality and integrity of government (Sofyani et al., 2020). By implementing a merit system, it is expected that the recruitment, placement, and development process of ASN can be carried out objectively, fairly, and by the needs of the organization and society. Therefore, implementing the merit system in ASN placement is essential for improving good governance.

Implementation of merit system in ASN placement: challenges and solutions for better governance

In the modern era, where transparency, accountability, and efficiency are critical societal demands, the concept of Good Governance has gained significant relevance (Yagboyaju & Akinola, 2019). A well-functioning government not only formulates policies that align with public needs but also delivers swift, accurate, and responsive public services. The merit system, a human resource management system in which team member recruitment, promotion, and placement are based on their qualifications, abilities, and achievements rather than on subjective factors such as personal relationships, politics, or nepotism, plays a crucial role in addressing these demands. It emerges as a vital tool in shaping a professional and competent bureaucracy, thereby enhancing the quality of public services.

The merit system, a human resource management system, is a key player in promoting transparency and accountability (Moon & Hwang, 2013). It ensures that team member recruitment, promotion, and placement are based on qualifications, abilities, and achievements, rather than subjective factors such as personal relationships, politics, or nepotism. This system aims to create a professional and competent bureaucracy, which in turn can support the creation of better public services. Through the merit system, the government seeks to instill integrity, transparency, and accountability in the bureaucracy (Oliveira et al., 2024). Meritocracy in the bureaucracy ensures that ASNs who occupy essential positions in the government have competencies that match their duties and responsibilities (Vincent Simandjorang & Kurniawan, 2022). In Indonesia, the implementation of the merit system is regulated by Law Number 20 Year 2023 on State Civil Apparatus, which places a strong emphasis on the importance of competence and performance in ASN management.

One of the main components of the merit system is a fair and transparent recruitment process (Haider, 2019). In this system, every individual wanting to become an ASN must undergo a rigorous and objective selection process based on their qualifications and abilities. This ensures that only genuinely competent individuals with integrity can fill strategic positions in government. In addition, applying the merit system in ASN placement provides various significant benefits in realizing Good Governance (Dwiputrianti et al., 2024). Some of the main benefits of implementing this system are as follows:

- 1. Increased Professionalism and Competence of ASN: The merit system ensures that ASNs who are recruited and promoted are individuals who have qualifications and competencies that match the demands of the job. This is crucial in creating a professional and competent bureaucracy that provides effective and efficient public services.
- 2. Preventing Nepotism and Corruption: One of the biggest problems in ASN management in many countries, including Indonesia, is the practice of nepotism and corruption in the recruitment and promotion process. The merit system prevents these practices by placing competence and performance as the primary basis for ASN placement.
- 3. Improving Government Accountability: With the merit system, the government can more easily evaluate ASN performance based on objective standards. This increases government accountability regarding human resource management so that the public can have more confidence that the ASNs working for them are competent and integrity individuals.
- 4. Improving the Quality of Public Services: With competent and professional ASN, the government's quality of public services will improve. This is in line with the primary objective of Good Governance, which is to create public services that are effective, efficient, and responsive to community needs.
- 5. Creating a Transparent and Open Bureaucracy: One of the main principles of Good Governance is transparency in government management. The merit system supports this transparency by ensuring that the ASN recruitment, promotion, and placement processes are carried out openly and fairly. This transparency increases public trust in the government and encourages public participation in government processes.

Although the merit system offers significant benefits in creating good governance, its implementation in Indonesia still needs to overcome several challenges (Turner et al., 2022). Some of the main challenges in implementing a merit system in Indonesia are as follows:

- 1. Culture of Nepotism and Politics in the Bureaucracy; Although Law No. 20/2003 on ASN has regulated the implementation of the merit system, the practice of nepotism and politics in the bureaucracy is still a major challenge in Indonesia. Many public officials still utilize their power to promote individuals who have personal or political relationships with them, without considering the individual's competence and performance. However, by launching a comprehensive anti-nepotism and anti-corruption campaign, and imposing strict penalties for those found guilty, we can pave the way for a more fair and efficient system.
- 2. Lack of Institutional Capacity to Implement the Merit System: The implementation of a merit system requires support from institutions that have the capacity to carry out recruitment and promotion processes in an objective and transparent manner. However, the lack of proper training for those involved in the recruitment and promotion processes often leads to biased decision-making. This causes the implementation of the merit system to fail often. It's crucial that we address this lack of capacity to ensure the success of the merit system.
- 3. Lack of Monitoring and Evaluation: One of the weaknesses in implementing the merit system in Indonesia is the need for more monitoring and evaluation of the ASN recruitment and promotion process. Although there are rules governing the implementation of the merit system, the lack of supervision from the authorized parties causes nepotism and corruption to occur frequently. It's imperative that we strengthen our monitoring and evaluation processes to prevent these issues.
- 4. Resistance from Bureaucrats: The implementation of the merit system often faces resistance from bureaucrats accustomed to non-transparent recruitment and promotion practices. Many bureaucrats feel that implementing a merit system will reduce their power in determining who will occupy strategic positions in the government. However, it's important to communicate the potential benefits of a merit system, such as increased efficiency and fairness, to address this resistance.

To overcome these challenges, comprehensive efforts are needed from various parties, including the government, supervisory institutions, and the community. Some efforts that can be made to optimize the implementation of the merit system in Indonesia include:

- 1. Strengthening Institutional Capacity: The government needs to strengthen the capacity of institutions responsible for ASN recruitment and promotion, both in human resources and technology. This is important to ensure that the recruitment and promotion process is objective and transparent.
- 2. Improved Supervision and Evaluation: Supervision of the implementation of the merit system needs to be improved, both by the government's internal supervisory institutions and by the public. Periodic evaluation of ASN performance is also essential to ensure that promoted individuals are genuinely competent and accomplished.
- 3. Socialization and Education on the Merit System: The government needs to conduct broader socialization on the importance of the merit system in ASN management. This socialization should cover all layers of the bureaucracy so that every individual involved in the recruitment and promotion process understands the principles of the merit system.
- 4. Law Enforcement against Nepotism and Corruption Practices: Implementing the merit system will only be effective if the practices of nepotism and corruption in the bureaucracy are dealt with firmly. Vigorous law enforcement against perpetrators of nepotism and corruption is essential to create a clean and transparent bureaucracy.

Implementing the merit system in ASN placement is essential to creating Good Governance in Indonesia. This system ensures that the appointment and placement of employees are based on competence and performance, not on subjective factors such as nepotism or politics. With the merit system, the government can create a professional, competent, and accountable bureaucracy, improving the quality of public services in Indonesia. Although the merit system implementation still faces many challenges, efforts to overcome these challenges must continue to realize a more transparent, fair, and effective government.

Structuring the position of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) based on the merit system to realize good governance

Good governance is one of the essential pillars of creating effective and efficient public services (Jameel et al., 2019). Good governance principles such as transparency, accountability, efficiency, and community participation are essential to ensure that the government, by good governance, can broadly impact various aspects of life, including improving community welfare, creating jobs, and alleviating poverty. In terms of public services, Good Governance serves as an instrument to ensure that the services provided by the government to the community are open, fair, and right on target (Cabannes & Lipietz, 2018). With good governance, the government becomes more accountable so that people can easily oversee the government's running and be actively involved in decision-making.

One of the biggest challenges in realizing effective and efficient public services is preventing abuse of authority, corruption, and nepotism (Nkyabonaki, 2019). These problems often arise due to the need for more human resource management systems in the government sector, especially in recruitment and placement. Therefore, applying the merit system in ASN management is essential to overcome this problem. ASN, as the spearhead in implementing public policies and services to the community, plays a crucial role. They are responsible for translating government policies into concrete actions in the field and ensuring that public services run well, thereby making a significant impact on the lives of citizens.

The quality and professionalism of ASN determine the effectiveness of government and the level of public satisfaction with the services provided (Rojikinnor, 2020). A merit system emphasizing competence and performance will not only create a more professional and transparent bureaucracy, but also significantly improve the quality of public services. Thus, the merit system aligns with the principles of good governance, such as transparency, accountability, and community participation

(Keping, 2018). The merit system supports transparency in managing human resources in government, which is an essential element in public service. Transparency means the government's openness to providing information related to public resource management activities to those who need it (Bearfield & Bowman, 2017). All information regarding the process, policies, and results of public services must be open and easily accessible so that the public can monitor all activities carried out by public service providers. This creates trust and integrity in the relationship between government and society.

Transparency emphasizes the government's obligation to provide accurate, honest, and non-discriminatory information while respecting the human rights of individuals, groups, and state secrets. Transparency in merit-based recruitment and promotion is implemented openly, giving each individual an equal opportunity to compete based on competence. Transparency also allows the public to oversee the process, preventing corrupt and nepotistic practices (Douglas & Meijer, 2016).

As one of the essential aspects of good governance, transparency in the merit system ensures openness and accessibility of information related to selection criteria, assessment procedures, and team member evaluation results. Openness allows the public to understand how decisions are made in the recruitment and career development process of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN), thus strengthening public confidence in the system's integrity. Transparency also encourages more effective oversight from the public and related parties in preventing unfair practices such as nepotism and corruption. In addition, with transparent and open access to information, the public and stakeholders can provide input and constructive criticism, ultimately improving the quality of governance and creating a more professional, accountable, and highly competitive bureaucracy.

Second, the merit system increases government accountability in terms of ASN management. Accountability refers to a person's responsibility to those with the right to hold them accountable (Khotami, 2017). This statement is in line with what Sedarmayanti says, which defines accountability as an obligation to provide accountability or answer and explain the performance and actions of a person or an organization to parties with the right or authority to request information or accountability (Safriani, 2017).

The principle of accountability emphasizes the importance of accountability at every stage of the public service process. It means that every decision and action taken by public service providers must be accountable to the public. It includes providing clear and transparent explanations regarding the results achieved and using public resources. Strong accountability will create effective social control and improve the performance and integrity of public service providers (Aziz et al., 2015). With clear standards related to the qualifications and performance that each ASN must meet, the government can more easily measure and evaluate the performance of its employees. This accountability also assures the public that the ASNs working to serve them are competent and professional individuals. This assurance is a cornerstone in building and maintaining public trust in the government.

Third, the merit system encourages public participation in the governance process. With transparency and accountability in the placement of ASNs, the community can be more actively involved in overseeing ASN performance and providing input related to the public services they receive. Community participation is not just essential, but it's a catalyst for change, creating public services that are more responsive to community needs (Rijal, 2023). Public participation allows the community to provide input, opinions, and feedback on the services provided (Nabatchi et al., 2017). Thus, public service providers can better understand the needs and expectations of the community and can improve the responsiveness and relevance of the services provided. In this context, public participation also creates a strong sense of ownership of the policies and programs implemented by the government, fostering an optimistic outlook for the future of public services.

These three principles, accountability, and public participation, support each other in creating a quality and effective public service environment. Transparency opens up space for more robust accountability, where applying these two principles can be enhanced to ensure that ASN talent management is carried out with high integrity and efficiency. This will create a fairer and more professional environment in ASN career development and strengthen legitimacy and public trust in

government institutions and processes. On the other hand, public participation strengthens transparency and accountability by involving the public directly in decision-making and policy implementation, thus creating a more responsive and inclusive government.

CONCLUSION

Implementing the merit system is a strategic step in realizing Good Governance. The merit system, which focuses on competence and performance, prevents the practice of nepotism, corruption, and abuse of authority in the management of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN). Ensuring that team member recruitment and promotion are conducted transparently, fairly, and accountable contributes to creating a professional and integrity bureaucracy. The implementation of a merit system not only improves the quality of public services but also increases public trust in government. Therefore, the merit system is a critical element in strengthening governance that is more effective, efficient, and responsive to the needs of society.

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