

The Role of Civil Servant Neutrality in Facing the Indonesian Political Year 2024-2029 on the Political Interest, Political Leadership, and Merit System Perspective

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Abstract. In the coming 2024 political year in Indonesia, the role of Civil Servant becomes crucial in maintaining the integrity, neutrality, and effectiveness of government. The struggle to preserve the neutrality of the ASN in this election is also vital for the electoral process to run fairly and free from inappropriate political interference. Overall, the concept of political interest, political leaderships, and Merit System covers a variety of impulses, motivations, and goals that drive individuals and groups in a political context. Understanding political interests is essential in analyzing political dynamics, decision-making, and conflict within a political system. The method used in this research is the mixed method which combines methods qualitatively and quantitatively. This research will focus on regional governance especially in the province scope around the island of Sumatra by selecting the location of a particular province with reports of electoral violations and complaints of violations of the neutrality of the Civil Servant that entered the KASN, BAWASLU and other associated electoral organizers. The study aims to examine the importance of maintaining the neutrality of civil servants during the election period to ensure fair competition among all participants and prevent unfair intervention. The research also highlights the potential problems that may arise if civil servants do not remain neutral during the election period, such as the abuse of resources for political purposes and the loss of public trust.

Keywords: Civil Servant, Neutrality, Indonesian Political Year

1 Introduction

Election becomes an important process for choosing the people who will occupy the seat of government. Sarbaini [1] stated that elections are seen as an arena of struggle to fill political posts in government conducted using the method of election conducted by a conditional citizen. In general, elections can be understood as a way conducted of the people to determine their leader or representative in government and can be said as the right of people as citizens to elect their representatives in government.

In the 2024 General Election in Indonesia, the role of Civil Servants (PNS) is very important in maintaining the integrity, neutrality, and effectiveness of government. This attitude of maintaining neutrality is indeed a challenge for civil servants, especially in the Regional Government (Pemda). The 2019 elections provide valid evidence that the Personnel Supervisory

Officers (PPK) in the regions are very likely to become political actors who can play power relations with civil servants in the regions so that they will greatly threaten the principle of civil servant neutrality.

The State Civil Apparatus Commission [2] reported that from January to December 2019 there were 412 complaints received or submitted to the State Civil Apparatus Commission (KASN) and the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu). A total of 386 of the 412 complaints have been processed into recommendations by KASN with 528 violating civil servants. Data for 2020 until June 15, 351 complaints have been received and forwarded by Bawaslu and 243 of them have been received by KASN. Violations that occurred in 2019-2020 were still dominated by campaigns/socialization through social media (post/comment/share/like).

Kasim and Supriyadi's research [3] found that there were 9 (nine) Legislative Candidates from different parties who had practiced money politics, and none of the candidates were reported to the Election Supervisory institution, let alone prosecuted to court. Furthermore, the study, which took the research location in Palu, Central Sulawesi, found that in the implementation of the 2019 simultaneous elections, imperative norms governing political behaviour in elections, for example, rules prohibiting money politics during the campaign, quiet period and during voting, did not run effectively to control all those involved in the election process, especially election participants and organizers. Gunanto's research (2020) related to Bureaucratic Politicization in the implementation of Pilkada in Indonesia also noted several things related to election violations involving incumbent Civil Service Officers (PPK) in the regions and political parties and posed a "threat" to the principles and attitudes of neutrality of civil servants in the implementation of elections. Research by Siagian, et al. [2] related to the principle of neutrality of civil servants in the implementation of elections confirms that restrictions on the right to elect and be elected by civil servants are very important to be applied to realize the legal certainty guaranteed by the constitution by complying with a number of requirements that must be met as an application of the principle of neutrality.

Saputra's research [4] on the urgency of the principle of neutrality and the application of the merit system as a strengthening of the principle of neutrality of the State Civil Apparatus in General Elections in review of Law Number 5 of 2014 concerning State Civil Apparatus found that consistent and firm implementation of the merit system can strengthen the neutrality of civil servants. This is because the Merit System criteria are equivalent to the principles of the modern democratic system proposed by Weber (in Viera and Ivan, 2022).

Previous research generally only focused on one or two aspects or variables in relation to civil servant neutrality for the context of research within the scope of implementing elections, for example: between political interests and civil servant neutrality, political leadership and civil servant neutrality, and merit systems and civil servant neutrality by taking research loci in local government agencies. From all the previous studies and the explanation above, researchers in this study want to examine and explore how aspects or variables of political interests, political leadership and the merit system affect the neutrality of civil servants in organizing elections in the 2024 political year. This research will focus on and try to explore: how "The Role of the State Civil Apparatus in Welcoming the Indonesian Political Year 2024-2029 in the Perspective of Political Interests, Political Leadership and Merit Systems?"

This research, which will take a research locus in a Regional Government (Pemda) agency, will specifically explore the role and involvement of civil servants in the 2024 political year in three variables or aspects, namely: political interests, leadership, and merit systems. These three aspects or variables in previous studies were partially associated with civil servant neutrality. Researchers want to explore how these three aspects or variables as a whole and holistically with their dimensions or indicators affect the neutrality of civil servants, especially in the

implementation of elections in the 2024 political year.

The questions to be answered in this study are how does the influence of Political Interests, Political Leadership, and the Merit System affect the role of neutrality of civil servants in the 2024 elections?

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Political Interest

According to Arifin [5], free elections are the minimum definition of democracy, which expects the birth of political action or political behavior of voters as part of citizens' political participation. Citizens' participation in voting in elections is one of the minimal forms of participation. However, there are always people who do not exercise their political rights by not voting in elections. Political interests are interests related to power and decision-making in a political system. Political interests can come from individuals, groups or institutions that want to gain or avoid losses in a policy or political decision. Considering the aspects of politics, power, and bureaucracy in the dynamics of governance in Indonesia, there is a strong political and power tug-of-war that has a strong effect on shifting the functions and roles of the bureaucracy.

One of the important factors and has received a lot of public attention for the mistake of politicizing the bureaucracy which causes civil servants to be non-neutral is the coaching model. The civil servant coaching system has been carried out by giving full authority to the Minister, Governor, Regent, Mayor who are political officials. A career bureaucratic official such as a civil servant should be coached by the highest career bureaucratic official in the government, not a political official as has been the case so far. This coaching pattern makes civil servants unprofessional and is always co-opted by political interests, because the Personnel Supervisory Officer (PPK) is a political official.

Hamid's research [6] related to the politicization of the bureaucracy in the 2006 Banten elections, concluded that the politicization of the bureaucracy was carried out by incumbent candidates by carrying out mutations before and after the elections that did not reflect professionalism. Mutations emphasize political interests, and patrimonial relationships between incumbents as patrons and bureaucrats as clients. In addition, it was found that the use of resources for the benefit of the incumbent's image. The politicization carried out is beyond the authority of the Election Supervisor so that it cannot ensnare violations committed by the incumbent. Martini's research [7] related to bureaucratic neutrality in the 2013 Central Java Regional Election found a non-neutral bureaucracy, the use of state facilities or official vehicles for campaigning and village heads who took sides in favor of one of the bureaucratic candidates. The Regional Secretary of Central Java always socializes employee discipline and neutrality of civil servants as directed by Menpan RB to prevent politicization.

Rakhmawanto [8] states that several causes of politicization and neutrality of civil servants include:

- a. The absence of strict monitoring of the implementation of policies governing the neutrality of civil servants.
- b. The absence of strict sanctions against employees who violate civil servant neutrality regulations.
- c. There is no socialization of various regulations related to the neutrality of civil servants, so that many employees do not understand.

- d. There is no commitment from political officials and career civil servants to maintain the neutrality of civil servants.

Bureaucracy is the choice of building political power because it has power, authority and a system that is different from other public organizations. Bureaucratic power is always utilized by political elites in matters of winning elections. According to Heywood [9], there are 3 (three) sources of bureaucratic power, namely: a) strategic positions and bureaucrats in the policy process; b) logistical relationships between bureaucrats and ministers; c) the status and expertise of bureaucrats. Setiyono [10] also states that bureaucracy has 4 (four) sources of power, namely: a) mastery of information and expertise; b) authority related to policy making; c) political support (legitimacy); and d) its permanent and stable nature.

This research will specifically explore aspects of political interests that examine how the politicization of the bureaucracy is carried out in several ways (Martini, 2011) which greatly affects the neutrality of civil servants, especially in Pilkada. Several ways of politicizing the bureaucracy are shown through: the use of state facilities, mobilizing civil servants during elections and regional elections, dividing positions carried out by the ruler or incumbent to cadres or representatives of the supporting political parties, commercialization of positions and removal of career positions for political reasons are considered to affect the neutrality of civil servants, which according to Yamin (2013) emphasizes 2 (two) indicators, namely: (a) not involved; and (b) impartial.

2.2 Political Leadership

Political leadership is a person's ability to influence others in achieving common goals. According to Yukl [11], political leadership is the process of influencing the activities and behavior of others to achieve certain goals in certain situations. Political leadership can also be defined as a person's ability to lead, direct, and coordinate others in achieving common goals [12]. Hasibuan [13] also stated that leadership is a way for a leader to influence the behavior of subordinates, so that they want to cooperate and work productively to achieve organizational goals.

Leadership factors play a central role in elections as they can influence voter turnout, decision-making, government effectiveness, and the quality of public services. In a democracy, the selection of qualified leaders is essential to ensure the realization of good governance and sustainable progress for a country or region. Democracy is not only translated as the process of choosing the best through the mechanism of general elections to ensure that the circulation of leadership continues according to the mandate of the constitution.

Leaders in the regions or what are also called Personnel Supervisory Officers (PPK) are generally not born from a merit system process but a political process that is selected by the mechanism of elections or regional elections. In other words, PPK, especially in the regions, are not career civil servants but political officials. This condition is the basis so that political leadership plays an important role in its implementation by PPK in the Regional Government. Political leadership is defined as a person's ability to lead and direct a political group or organization in achieving predetermined goals. Political leadership also involves the ability to influence and motivate others to work together to achieve these goals. Political leadership is the core of the political system because political leadership is the main driver for other sources and tools in political organizations and can influence others with its political strategy.

According to Yukl [11], political leadership involves three main elements: influence,

purpose, and context. Influence is the ability to influence others to follow a desired direction. Goals are the results that a political group or organization wants to achieve. Context is the situation or condition that affects the way political leadership is carried out. In addition, political leadership also involves the ability to understand and manage conflict and build good relationships with various parties involved in the political process. This is in line with Northouse's [12] opinion that political leadership involves the ability to understand and manage complex political dynamics. According to Grint [14], political leadership also involves three dimensions, namely power, policy, and politics.

In the Indonesian context, political leadership also involves cultural and religious aspects. According to Hefner [15], political leadership in Indonesia is strongly influenced by cultural and religious values in society. This can be seen from the ways of political leadership carried out by political leaders in Indonesia, which often refer to cultural and religious values in society.

Research conducted by Sutrisno [16] with the title Principles of Neutrality of the State Civil Apparatus in Regional Head Elections in Surakarta City, Sragen Regency and Bantul Regency shows that the non-neutrality of civil servants in Pilkada in Surakarta City, Sragen Regency and Bantul Regency occurs due to being influenced by a number of factors including civil servant loyalty factors, family relationships, career ambitions, ambiguity of regulations, weak law enforcement, and low public awareness to participate in reporting findings of civil servants suspected of being involved in Pilkada contestation. The ideal political leadership style for civil servants' neutrality is one that reflects their neutrality and independence in carrying out government tasks.

Political leadership also involves leaders who can motivate and inspire group members to achieve common goals. Political leadership involves civil servants in every decision-making process. Leaders who apply this style of political leadership provide space for civil servants to express their views, share ideas, and participate in policy planning and implementation. It reflects neutrality by providing equal opportunities for all civil servants to contribute and influence the decision-making process. There are several indicators of the political leadership style, namely: (1) good relations between leaders and employees; (2) respect for employees; (3) management that listens to the aspirations of its subordinates.

2.3 Merit System

A merit system can be thought of as a system of rewards given to individuals based on their achievements or performance. This system aims to motivate individuals to work harder and achieve better results. The merit system can also be used to improve overall organizational performance. ASN management is the management of ASN to produce ASN employees who are professional, have basic values, professional ethics, free from political intervention, clean from corrupt practices, collusion, and nepotism.

According to Lawler (2012), a merit system can be thought of as a reward system that is based on individual performance. This system rewards individuals who achieve better than expected results. Such rewards can be in the form of bonuses, salary increases, or promotions. Merit systems can also be used to improve overall organizational performance. According to Milkovich and Newman [17], merit systems can help organizations to achieve their goals more effectively. By rewarding individuals who achieve better results, organizations can motivate individuals to work harder and achieve better results.

The merit system in civil servant management is regulated in Article 134 of Government

Regulation Number 11 of 2017 concerning Civil Servant Management, including criteria such as:

- a. All positions already have job competency standards.
- b. Employee needs planning is in accordance with the workload.
- c. Selection and promotion are carried out openly.
- d. Has career management consisting of planning, development, mindset, and succession plan groups obtained from talent management.
- e. Rewarding and sanctioning employees based on objective and transparent performance appraisal.
- f. Implementing the code of ethics and code of conduct for civil servant employees.
- g. Planning and providing competency development opportunities according to the results of performance appraisals.
- h. Provide protection to civil servants from acts of abuse of authority.
- i. Have an integrated competency-based information system that can be accessed by all civil servants.

Hayat [18] emphasizes that the existence of Law Number 5 of 2014 also clarifies the position of civil servants who are given, neutral, professional, and oriented towards public services. The state guarantee for civil servants is protection against the political intervention of their superiors, as well as the management built into Law Number 5/2014 on Civil Servants which implements a merit system.

2.4 Civil Servant Neutrality

Neutrality of civil servants is one of the crucial issues in organizing elections. In an effort to maintain the neutrality of civil servants from the influence of political parties and to ensure the integrity, cohesiveness and unity of civil servants, as well as to be able to focus all attention, thoughts and energy on the duties assigned, civil servants are prohibited from becoming members and / or administrators of political parties, as well as running for themselves with the conditions specified by the Law (UU). The involvement of civil servants' neutrality in elections has been regulated in Article 2 letter F of Law Number 5 of 2014 concerning the State Civil Apparatus (PNS) which states that: "the implementation of policies and management of civil servants is based on the principle of neutrality". The principle of neutrality in question is that every civil servant does not take sides from any form of influence and does not favor the interests of anyone [19].

Neutrality is one of the principles that is very important to implement to realize professional civil servants. Civil servant neutrality is related to impartiality, where a civil servant must be fair, objective, unbiased, free of influence, free of intervention, free from conflicts of interest, and not take sides with anyone. Civil servant neutrality is not only related to political activities, but also in the delivery of public services, policy making, and civil servant management. Non-neutrality of civil servants has an impact on the professionalism of civil servants, which significantly affects the delivery of public services and the effectiveness of government administration.

If it is related to the implementation of elections, especially regional elections, neutrality can be defined as impartial behavior, or not being involved by the government bureaucracy during the campaign period for regional head candidates in the regional elections either secretly or openly. Yamin [20] states that there are at least 2 (two) main indicators of neutrality, namely:

- a. Not involved
In the sense of not becoming a success team for candidates during the campaign period or becoming a campaign participant either by using party attributes or civil servant attributes.
- b. Impartiality
In the sense of not assisting in making decisions and/or actions that benefit one of the candidate pairs, not conducting activities that lead to partiality towards one of the Regional Head/Deputy Regional Head candidate pairs during the campaign period including meetings, invitations, appeals, calls, or providing goods to civil servants within the scope of their work units, family members, and the community, and not assisting in using state facilities related to positions in the context of winning one of the candidates for the Regional Head/Deputy Regional Head pair during the campaign period.

According to Septiana [21] neutrality towards politics must be owned by civil servants so that they are not involved in becoming members of political parties and avoid political interests that direct civil servants to be able to mobilize the masses / public for "certain" political interests. All these provisions result in a dilemma for civil servants, on the one hand they are political beings who have political preferences in determining, and on the other hand as a profession they must be neutral/not take sides with certain parties/parties.

2.5 Relationship between Political Interest, Political Leadership, Merit System and Civil Servant Neutrality

The relationship between political interests, political leadership, merit system, and civil servant neutrality is that political leadership with quality and integrity can influence the implementation and maintenance of an effective merit system. Political leaders who value the neutrality of civil servants and promote the principles of meritocracy can strengthen the neutrality of civil servants in carrying out their duties. Conversely, if there is strong political pressure or lack of enforcement of the merit system, the neutrality of civil servants may be jeopardized and lead to unfair practices or corruption. Therefore, it is important for political leaders to build a culture and system that supports the neutrality of civil servants by respecting the principles of meritocracy in the appointment and promotion of civil servants. Political leaders who prioritize the public interest and ensure the independence of civil servants can help maintain neutrality and good quality public services. The dimensions of civil servant neutrality according to Yamin [20] are the attitudes shown by civil servants to: a) not get involved; and b) not take sides. The framework for this research is described below:

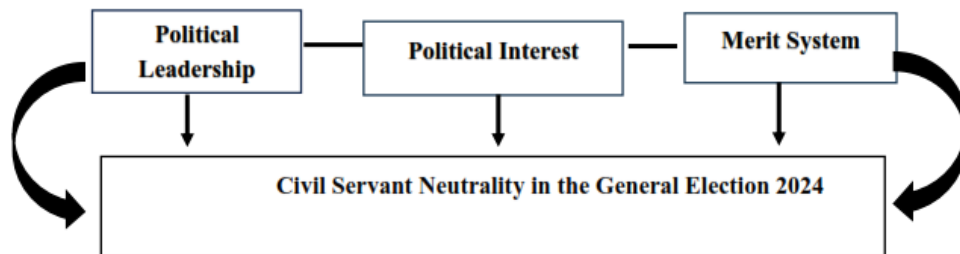


Figure 1. Research Framework

Based on the theoretical review and framework above and considering the approach or method of this research using a combination method (mixed method), the following research hypotheses can be formulated:

- a. The combination of effective political leadership, lack of political interests, and a strong merit system will significantly contribute or influence the improvement of civil servant neutrality in the 2024 elections.
- b. Factors such as political leadership, pressure of political interests, and implementation of the merit system simultaneously affect the neutrality of civil servants, which can be measured through a quantitative approach and understood more deeply through a qualitative approach.

3 Research Methods

The method used in this research is Mixed Method (combination method) which combines qualitative and quantitative methods. The mixed research model used in this study is an unbalanced concurrent mixed method (embedded design). The mixed method strategy used in this research is a sequence of qualitative and quantitative analysis that aims to identify concept components through quantitative data analysis and then collect qualitative data to expand the available information and obtain a more complete analysis (Sugiyono, 2013).

This research will focus on Local Government, especially in the scope of the province. This research uses 2 (two) fundamental reasons in determining Medan City in North Sumatra Province and Metro City in Lampung Province as the locus or place of research by considering that the two loci, namely: low voter turnout in the two regions in the previous election period based on data from BPS and the Central KPU in 2019, and determination based on the category of elected Governors and Mayors from the two loci in the previous election came from independent or non-party paths which are very different from the general conditions of the Pilkada results that have been carried out.

The population of this research is all civil servants in predetermined research locations, this research will use simple random sampling techniques, which means drawing samples using probability techniques that aim to increase generability and transferability and purposive techniques that aim to improve the quality of inference simultaneously or in studies conducted simultaneously (Tashokkori and Teddlie, 2003). This study uses data collection techniques by distributing questionnaires and interviews. The samples used were civil servants in North

Sumatra Province, especially Medan City and Metro City, Lampung Province with purposive techniques based on data on election violations and complaints of violations of civil servant neutrality from 2019 to 2022 that entered KASN, Bawaslu and KPU. This study uses the Slovin formula in determining the sample because the population is very large: The Slovin formula is calculated using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

n = sample size required

N = population size

e = acceptable margin of error in decimal form

The total population of all civil servants in both Medan City and Metro City Governments is 15,137 civil servants consisting of 11,469 civil servants in Medan City Government and 3668 civil servants in Metro Lampung City Government. If put into the formula, it will be as follows:

$$n = \frac{15.137}{1 + 15.137 \times (0,05)^2} = \frac{15.137}{1 + 15.137 \times 0,0025} = \frac{15.137}{1 + 38} = \frac{15.137}{39} \approx 388$$

The data to be used in this research are primary data and secondary data that will be collected using several research instruments, namely: observation, document review/documentation, interview guidelines and questionnaires. This research questionnaire contains 34 questions with details of 12 questions for political interest variables, 11 questions for Political Leadership variables and 11 questions for merit system variables. The questionnaires and interview guidelines developed in this study refer to 3 (three) X variables (Political Interests, Political Leadership, Merit System) and 1 (one) Y variable (Neutrality). The determination of key informants in this study was determined by purposive sampling technique by considering their roles, duties, functions, and knowledge related to the research topic raised, as well as the authority they have that is closely related to the research topic raised. This research data analysis uses a mixed method with a concurrent embedded design approach, which means combining the use of qualitative and quantitative methods simultaneously or together, but the weights and methods are different.

4 Results and Discussions

4.1 Respondent Overview

The population in this study was 15,137 civil servants with details of 11,469 civil servants in the Medan City Government and 3668 civil servants in the Metro Lampung City Government. After calculating using the Slovin formula, the total minimum sample for this study was 388 civil servants. The number of samples used in this study was 474 civil servants so that it can be said that the sample in this study has met the requirements of the total population of civil servants in the two research locations. Civil servants who became samples or respondents in this study were spread across various Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD) in the Medan City and Metro City Governments. The age of the respondents in this study is very diverse, although there are mostly 2 (two) age categories, namely > (above) 45 years and the age range of 36-45 years. When viewed from the age of these respondents, it can be concluded that these

respondents not only come from different agencies or OPDs but also the positions of each respondent are very diverse.

The education level of respondents in Medan City, North Sumatra who were used as respondents in this study was dominated by the S2/Master education level as much as 46.6%, the D4/S1/Bachelor education level as much as 45.2% and the remaining 8.2% were S3/Doctoral education levels and education levels below D4/S1/Bachelor. The education level of respondents in Metro City, Lampung who were used as respondents in this study was dominated by the D4/S1 education level as much as 44.4%, the S2/Master education level as much as 31.6%, the education level below D4/S1/Bachelor's degree (SMA - D3) as much as 21.9%, and the remaining S3/Doctoral education level as much as 2.1% with a S3/Doctoral education level.

4.2 Validity and Reliability Test

The pilot test of question items in the instrument was conducted on subjects different from the sample used. The results of this item trial selection include validity, reliability, answer distribution, and question item analysis applications. This is done to ensure that when administering the scale to the actual subject the item has been tested for validity and reliability to reduce the error value.

Table 1. Validity Test Results of Political Interest Variable Questions

Numbers	SIG. 2 (-TAILED)	Description	Conclusion
Y1.1	0.000	SIG<0.05	VALID
Y1.2	0.000	SIG<0.05	VALID
Y1.3	0.000	SIG<0.05	VALID
Y1.4	0.000	SIG<0.05	VALID
Y1.5	0.000	SIG<0.05	VALID
Y1.6	0.000	SIG<0.05	VALID
Y1.7	0.000	SIG<0.05	VALID
Y1.8	0.000	SIG<0.05	VALID
Y1.9	0.000	SIG<0.05	VALID
Y1.10	0.000	SIG<0.05	VALID
Y1.11	0.000	SIG<0.05	VALID
Y1.12	0.000	SIG<0.05	VALID

From the table above, each statement item for the political interest variable has a sig 2 (-tailed) value smaller than the 0.05 criterion. So, it can be concluded that statistically each statement indicator for the political interest variable is valid and suitable for use as research data.

Table 2. Results of the Political Interest Variable Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.840	12

The table above shows that the political interest variable has a Cronbach Alpha value of

0.84, which is greater than the 0.6 criterion. So, it can be concluded that the statistical reliability for the political interest variable is valid and suitable for use as research data.

Table 3. Validity Test Results of Political Leadership Variable Questions

Numbers	SIG. 2 (-TAILED)	Description	Conclusion
Y2.1	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y2.2	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y2.3	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y2.4	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y2.5	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y2.6	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y2.7	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y2.8	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y2.9	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y2.10	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y2.11	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid

As can be seen from the table above, each statement item for the leadership variable has a sig 2 (-tailed) value smaller than the 0.05 criterion. So, it can be concluded that statistically each statement indicator for the leadership variable is valid and suitable for use as research data.

Table 4. Results of the Political Leadership Variable Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.929	11

The table above shows that the leadership variable has a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.92, which is greater than the 0.6 criterion. So, it can be concluded that statistically the leadership variable is valid and suitable for use as research data.

Table 5. Validity Test Results of Merit System Variable Questions

Numbers	SIG. 2 (-TAILED)	Description	Conclusion
Y3.1	-	-	Invalid
Y3.2	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y3.3	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y3.4	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y3.5	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y3.6	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y3.7	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y3.8	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y3.9	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y3.10	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y3.11	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y3.12	0.00	Sig<0.05	Valid
Y3.13	-	-	Invalid

From the table above, 11 statement items for the merit system variable have a sig 2 (-tailed) value smaller than the 0.05 criterion and 2 question items (Y3.1 and Y3.13) are invalid. So, it

can be concluded that statistically 12 statement indicators for the merit system variable are valid and suitable for use as research data.

Table 6. Results of the Merit System Variable Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.796	11

It can be seen from the table above that the merit system variable has a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.796 which is greater than the 0.6 criterion. So, it can be concluded that the statistical reliability for the merit system variable is valid and suitable for use as research data.

4.3 Discussion

4.3.1 Quantitative Analysis

Table 7. Statistical Data Results of Research Variables

		Statistics		
		Total_Y 1	Total_Y 2	Total_Y 3
N	Valid	448	451	445
	Missing	26	23	29
Mean		21.3214	45.7406	47.4472
Median		20.0000	47.0000	48.0000
Mode		16.00	55.00	57.00
Std. Deviation		7.41902	8.76111	8.54506

From the table above, the average value of all questions in the questionnaire instrument for the political interest variable is 21.3 and the average value for the political leadership variable is 45.7 while for the merit system variable is 47.4. The median value of the political interest variable is 20, the median value of the political leadership variable is 47, and the median value of the merit system variable is 48. When viewed from the standard deviation value of this study in order to spread the sample data and see the degree of closeness to the average value (mean), then if the standard deviation value of this study is greater than the mean, it means that the data is more diverse, while if on the contrary the standard deviation is smaller than the mean, the data is more similar to the mean.

Table 8. Statistical Data Results of Political Interest Variables

		Statistics											
		Y1.1	Y1.2	Y1.3	Y1.4	Y1.5	Y1.6	Y1.7	Y1.8	Y1.9	Y1.10	Y1.11	Y1.12
N	Valid	465	466	465	464	465	458	463	460	462	463	463	461
	Missing	9	8	9	10	9	16	11	14	12	11	11	13
Mean		1.30	1.23	1.25	2.11	2.53	2.56	1.42	1.40	1.50	1.55	1.41	3.01
Median		1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	3.00
Mode		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Std. Deviation		.706	.611	.596	1.273	1.342	1.363	.776	.727	.890	.956	.785	1.620

From the table above, question number 12 has the highest mean (average) value of the other questions with 3.01, namely: "I know that the current leadership/administrator of civil service rotates or rotates ASN because there is a need and according to the competence concerned, not because the ASN supports one of the election candidate pairs." When observed from the data on filling out questionnaires for respondents in the two research locations, it can be concluded that there were no conditions in which the respondents answered with the dominant number of Likert scales, in other words, they were still hesitant about the realization of the ideal conditions that should occur. In fact, there were respondents who chose other Likert categories so that the answers were more diverse. Thus, it can also be concluded that question number 12 in the questionnaire instrument for this political interest variable must have a high standard deviation value of 1.62 because it has a significant difference in respondents' responses.

Table 9. Statistical Data Results of Political Leadership Variables

		Statistics										
		Y2.1	Y2.2	Y2.3	Y2.4	Y2.5	Y2.6	Y2.7	Y2.8	Y2.9	Y2.10	Y2.11
N	Valid	463	462	462	463	463	464	463	460	461	463	463
	Missing	11	12	12	11	11	10	11	14	13	11	11
Mean		3.53	4.10	4.28	4.36	4.13	4.26	4.21	4.22	4.16	4.33	4.10
Median		4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00
Mode		4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Std. Deviation		1.406	1.218	.995	.924	.948	.937	.943	.986	.974	.944	1.081

From the table above, question number 4 has the highest mean (average) value of the other questions with 4.36, namely: "There is always encouragement or motivation from the Leader/Staff Supervisor to perform and contribute to the agency." This data shows that indeed the respondents have high participation and even the standard deviation value is not too high for this number and most of the respondents responded or gave answers strongly agreeing.

Table 10. Statistical Data Results of Merit System Variables

		Statistics												
		Y3.1	Y3.2	Y3.3	Y3.4	Y3.5	Y3.6	Y3.7	Y3.8	Y3.9	Y3.10	Y3.11	Y3.12	Y3.13
N	Valid	463	463	462	460	463	458	459	461	462	458	461	462	462
	Missing	11	11	12	14	11	16	15	13	12	16	13	12	12
Mean		3.92	3.95	2.17	2.31	3.90	3.97	3.97	3.94	3.85	3.87	3.83	3.84	3.98
Median		4.00	4.00	2.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode		4	4	1	1	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	5
Std. Deviation		1.026	1.043	1.231	1.309	1.164	1.140	.966	1.003	1.128	1.098	1.062	1.084	1.065

From the table above it can be seen that question number 13 has the highest average (average) of the other questions with a figure of 3.98 namely: "I know that every ASN employee in the agency or organization where I work has the same self-development opportunity as 20 Hours of Teaching (JP) each year." This data shows that indeed the respondents have high participation and even the standard deviation value is not too high for that number and most respondents respond or give answers between agree and fully agree.

From the above data, it can be concluded that:

- a. The variable of political interest mainly relates to several indicators namely: the influence of the political party in the career placement of the PNS, the difficulty of separating the political interest from the politicization of the PSN, and the presence of a void of rules to guarantee the absence of political intervention in the bureaucracy,

has a significant influence on the neutrality of PNS. It became interesting to note because the elected Mayor of Metro Lampung was of an independent line and not of the Parpol cadres so that Parpol's intervention and political interest in the government of the city of Metro Lampung should be minimized.

- b. Political leadership variables and merit systems have no significant influence on the neutrality of the PNS in Medan and Metro. In other words, the political leadership Variable and the merit system and support on its implementation well the role of the neutrality of the PS in the end of the 2024 Election.

4.3.2 Qualitative Analysis

From the results of in-depth interviews with some key informants in the North Sumatra Province (especially in the City of Medan) that have been determined earlier, the conclusions of the qualitative analysis are as follows:

- a. Political interest in holding elections and Head of District Election (Pilkada) before 2024 has a major influence on ASN neutrality in North Sumatra. The PPK elected from the Parpol cadres or from an independent path cannot be avoided from actions and the negative impact of political interests. In the process of Pilkada especially in the districts and cities in the province of North Sumatra tend to be potentially carried out by the incumbent although in some district such as Toba Samosir, and Tapanuli South people and ASN are not easily utilized or mobilized to support Candidates in Pilkada and tend to reject the presence of politization.
- b. The political leadership aspects and the implementation of the merit system in the North Sumatra Province in particular the City of Medan do not give a major or dominant influence on the neutrality of the ASN. However, there are actions taken by the PPK in districts or cities in the North Sumatra province, especially the petitioner or incumbent, using his authority in the use of the budget of the MP and mobilizing certain ASNs that enable him to occupy important positions in the government he leads. In fact, the number of such cases is not significant, and many occurred rather there are actually a few districts and cities in the North Sumatra Province whose people and ASN have boldly and firmly refused to be exploited or mobilized by the PPK or incumbent that is the cadre of a particular Parpol.

While from the results of in-depth interviews with key informants in Metro City obtained some results of qualitative analysis in this study namely:

- a. Political interest in holding elections and Pilkada before 2024 has a major influence on ASN neutrality in the Metro City. It can be seen from how Political Parties (Parpol) actively strives to include its cadres in the government despite the mayor elected from the independent path. Moreover, Parpol through the DPRD also actively calls for the “drop” of 25% management of the ABPD. The elected PPK from the Parpol cadres as well as from independent path cannot be avoided from the actions and negative impact of the political interests of Parpol so it can be concluded that the variable of political interest is very dominant affecting the implementation of ASN neutrality in the City of Lampung Metro.
- b. In other words, the political leadership style of the Mayor of Metro does not threaten the neutrality of the ASN in the Metro City in the electoral process especially Pilkada 2024.

- c. The implementation of the merit system in Metro City also does not give a major influence or dominance on the neutrality of ASN.

5 Conclusion

The political interests of both the Political Party and the Local Authority in the region (as the Parpol's cadres) are almost inevitable. The Governor of North Sumatra and the Mayor of Metro Lampung who were born as independent candidates in Pilkada 2020 could not escape the negative impact or actions that lead to political interests:

- a. Quantitative data previously obtained from ASN Metropolitan Government of Lampung as respondents showed as much as 34.2% (63 people) respondents strongly disagree, 15.2% (28 people) the respondents do not agree, and 7.1% (13 people) of respondents somewhat agree with the condition that the leader / civil servants (PPK) currently serving mutate or rotate ASN because there is a need and according to the competence concerned not because the ASN supports one of the Election Candidate/Caleg pairs. In other words, PPK rotate or modify ASN in Lampung Metropolitan Authority tends on the grounds or reasons because there are interests of PPK.
- b. Quantitative data previously obtained from the Government of Metro Lampung ASN responded to indicate as much as 34.2% (63 people) respondents strongly disagree, 15.2% (28 people) the respondents do not agree, and 7.1% (13 people) of respondents somewhat agree on the condition that the leader / civil servants (PPK) who currently serves mutate or rotate ASN because there is a need and according competence concerned not because the ASN supports one of the pair of Election Candidates/Caleg. In other words, the PPK rotate or mutate of ASN in Lampung Metro has a tendency on the basis or reason because there are interests of PPK.
- c. Political interests have a major influence on the neutrality of ASN both in North Sumatra Province (especially Medan City) and Metro City. In other words, the embodiment of political interests by the Civil Service Supervisory Officials and Political Parties in the elections has a negative impact on the implementation of ASN neutrality. The form of political interests of Political Parties and Personnel Supervisory Officers in the implementation of elections and regional elections is manifested in the acts of politicization and mobilization of ASN by Political Party cadres who become incumbent Personnel Supervisory Officers and the use of Regional Government budgets to win one of the Candidate Pairs in the Regional Head Election. Violations of ASN neutrality in North Sumatra (especially Medan City) and Metro Lampung City are often committed by Civil Service Supervisory Officers who are incumbent.
- d. Political leadership and the implementation of the merit system do not have a major or dominant influence on ASN neutrality. In other words, the style of political leadership and the implementation of the merit system in both North Sumatra Province (especially Medan City) and Metro Lampung City do not threaten the neutrality of ASN in the election process. Leadership consistency in implementing the merit system is still something that needs to be improved because it is still not consistently implemented in both North Sumatra Province, especially Medan City and Metro City, Lampung.

To maintain and ensure the neutrality of ASN in the 2024 General Elections and Pilkada, learning from North Sumatra Province (especially Medan City) and Metro Lampung City,

several things are suggested by the researchers are as follows:

- a. The Personnel Supervisory Officer (PPK) should be handed over to the Regional Secretary who is more involved and has a career path that is characterized by ASN. This is necessary so that Governors, Mayors, and Regents who become PPK in the regions do not abuse their authority by mobilizing and politicizing ASN during elections or regional elections.
- b. Socialization and internalization of understanding of ASN neutrality still need to be routinely carried out to ASN so that they really understand what ASN can and cannot do in relation to maintaining their neutrality. This needs to be done intensely from the Kesbangpol Section in collaboration with the local KPU and Bawaslu.
- c. Clear and binding rules need to be formulated by the Regional Government together with the KPU, Bawaslu, and KASN regarding ASNs who actively commit neutrality violations, including Regional Heads or PPKs who commit violations, not only in the form of recommendations and warnings.
- d. Strengthening the civil service institutions in the regions, Kesbangpol, KPU, Bawaslu and KASN in overseeing the implementation of ASN neutrality in the regions, including being given the authority to provide firmer and clearer sanctions, not only reprimands or recommendations for violations of neutrality committed by the Regional Head or PPK or ASN.

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