
The Implementation of the Merit System in the Placement of Civil Servant Positions Within the Regional Government of Mimika Regency

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Abstract

Merit-based civil servant (ASN) management serves as a fundamental principle in the implementation of bureaucratic reform. Effective governance of the civil servant is crucial for producing high-quality public servants. Efficient human resource management leads to a reliable, competent, and professional ASN workforce. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the merit system in the placement of civil servants, particularly in structural positions within the local government of Mimika Regency, Central Papua. The research adopts a post-positivist paradigm and employs a qualitative method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with seven officials and one community figure, as well as through literary document analysis involving official letters, reports, and relevant legislation. The findings reveal that merit system has not been fully implemented in the appointment process within the Mimika Regency Government. Not all appointed officials meet the required qualifications and competencies. Additionally, there is a lack of transparency and accountability in the placement process, which continues to generate controversy in the management of civil servants in the region. The study identifies several key obstacles to the effective implementation of the merit system, such as strong interference from individuals close to the regional head regent and spouse, favoritism and personal biases, ethnic dominance in official appointments, and limited understanding or appreciation of the merit system itself. Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed to establish a merit-based system in the Mimika Regency Government, such as developing a comprehensive grand design and roadmap, enacting local regulations, implementing a transparent evaluation mechanism, minimizing political interference, enhancing merit system literacy, and empowering indigenous civil servants.

Keywords: Merit System, Position Placement

I. Introduction

Merit-based civil servant management constitutes the foundation of bureaucratic reform. In 2020, the Indonesian government prioritized civil servant management as a key focus. Through the Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS), the government formulated the Technocratic Draft of the National Long-Term Development Plan (RT-RPJMN) 2020–2024.

This development agenda aims to cultivate globally competitive human resources by fostering talent in both the public and private sectors.

The RT-RPJMN 2020–2024 outlines five national priority agendas, with the third agenda specifically focusing on “Enhancing the Quality and Competitiveness of Human Resources.” The government has also established development priorities for public administration, particularly emphasizing: (1) Strengthening performance accountability, (2) Improving innovation and quality of public services, and (3) Reinforcing the implementation of merit-based civil servant management.

Under this framework, the National Civil Service Agency (BKN) assumes a supervisory role in ensuring adherence to foundational norms, ethical standards, and the application of the merit system in civil servant management policies across government institutions.

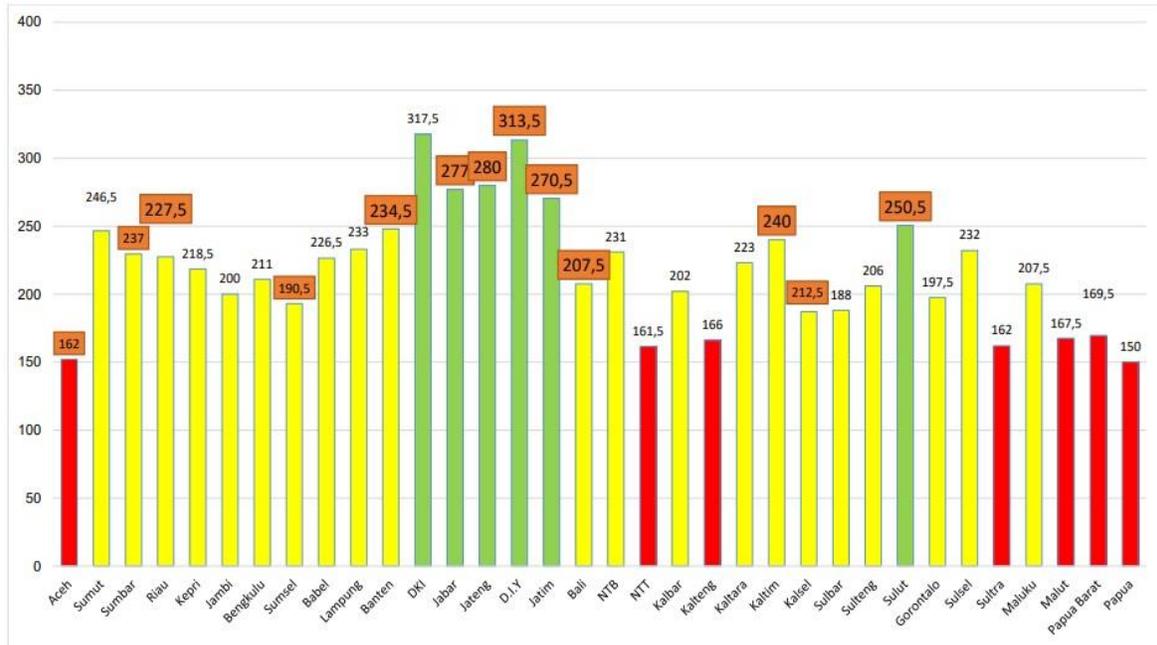
Through the establishment of these priorities, the Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS) has outlined three key areas for institutional reform: (1) Enhancing performance accountability, (2) Advancing innovation and the quality of public services, and (3) Strengthening the implementation of merit-based civil service management. These priorities have guided the National Civil Service Agency (BKN) in fulfilling its responsibilities to monitor compliance with core standards, ethical codes of conduct for civil servants, and the application of the merit system in civil service management policies across government institutions.

The implementation of a merit-based system for the placement of civil servants is expected to promote good governance. In principle, meritocratic policy—whether at the national or regional level—must uphold the tenet of professionalism. The merit system requires careful planning, recruitment, selection, placement, promotion, compensation, and performance evaluation, all designed to foster professionalism in personnel management. Law No. 20 of 2023 mandates that both central and regional governments manage civil servants in alignment with merit-based principles throughout recruitment, selection, and placement processes.

Merit-based civil service management aims to enhance professionalism, neutrality, integrity, and the performance of civil servants. The merit system prioritizes qualifications, competencies, and achievements while eliminating discriminatory practices. The ultimate objective of implementing the merit system is to realize a more effective bureaucracy.

As of 2019—prior to the legislative revision of the Civil Service Law—the oversight of the merit system was conducted by the State Civil Apparatus Commission (KASN). Based on KASN’s assessment of merit system implementation across Indonesia’s provinces in 2019, seven out of 34 provinces received poor evaluations. These provinces included West Papua, North Maluku, Central Kalimantan, Southeast Sulawesi, Aceh, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), and Papua. Notably, Papua ranked the lowest, scoring only 150 out of a possible 400 points.

Graph 1.1. Evaluation of Merit System Implementation by Province in Indonesia



Source: Department of Research and System Development, KASN – 2019

These findings suggest that the implementation of the merit system has not yet been optimized across all government institutions, whether at the central or regional level. To advance good governance, the government must continuously improve the quality of its civil service. Competence and high performance have become essential obligations for all civil servants. Civil servants must possess qualifications, competencies, and performance levels that are in accordance with the requirements of their positions, as stipulated under the merit system. In practice, however, the merit system has not been implemented optimally. This is evident when comparing the 2019 merit system performance graph with the 2023 distribution map, which illustrates the level of merit system implementation across Indonesia's provinces.

Figure 1.2. Distribution Map of Merit System Implementation in Indonesia, 2023



Source: Merit System Implementation Supervision Division, KASN – 2023

The map indicates that provinces marked in green have successfully implemented the merit system, yellow signifies suboptimal implementation, and red denotes poor implementation. The presence of red and yellow indicators in numerous regions underscores that the merit system is still far from being fully realized nationwide. Furthermore, the map reveals a pattern: provinces located in the eastern part of Indonesia tend to receive lower evaluations for merit system implementation.

Specifically, the Province of Papua consistently received low scores from 2019 to 2023, reflecting a lack of progress in adopting a merit-based approach to managing the civil service. This stagnation represents a significant challenge for Papua, especially following the establishment of new autonomous regions (Daerah Otonomi Baru – DOB) in 2022: South Papua, Central Papua, Highland Papua, and Southwest Papua—all of which were carved out of the former Papua and West Papua provinces.

Despite these developments, the entire Papua region, including the new autonomous provinces, still performs poorly in terms of merit system implementation. Given that Papua is granted special autonomy funding, it becomes the responsibility of the governments of Papua, West Papua, South Papua, Central Papua, Southwest Papua, and Highland Papua to enhance bureaucratic effectiveness through the merit system, thereby ensuring the delivery of high-quality public services.

In order to improve the quality of public services, all regencies and municipalities in Papua must adhere to the principles of meritocracy in managing their civil service human resources. Mimika

Regency, which was previously part of Papua Province, officially became part of Central Papua Province following the enactment of Law No. 15 of 2022 concerning the Formation of Central Papua. Mimika is considered one of the regencies that functions effectively in terms of administrative governance.

During a public discussion held in December 2023 by LPPSP FISIP Universitas Indonesia, in collaboration with the Government of Mimika Regency and PT Freeport Indonesia, the Deputy Regent of Mimika, Johannes Rettob, S.Sos., M.M., stated that Mimika is ranked third nationally in terms of regional budget (APBD) among all regencies in Indonesia. This implies that, with one of the highest APBDs in the country, the Mimika Regency Government is expected to be supported by a professional civil service capable of administering governance effectively.

A professional civil service is characterized by the qualifications and competencies of its personnel. Accordingly, in the exercise of their duties, both the regent and deputy regent must be supported by competent officials, devoid of favoritism. The appointment of civil servants must comply with administrative and legal regulations.

However, according to a report from RRI.co.id dated December 5, 2023, the Regent of Mimika executed a reshuffle of officials that allegedly violated existing regulations. Some of the newly appointed officials did not meet the required rank or qualifications for their positions. Notably, one subdistrict head (camat) was replaced by an individual whose educational background was in education—a mismatch considering that the role of camat typically requires academic credentials in public administration or government studies.

Furthermore, between September and December 2023, the regent continued to make personnel changes, and by December, these reshuffles were increasingly seen as inconsistent with statutory regulations. These irregular appointments disrupted the administrative functioning of the bureaucracy. In early 2024, civil servants affected by the reshuffling engaged in work stoppages and demonstrations.

This unrest was also driven by Article 14, paragraph 4 of Law No. 15 of 2022 on the Establishment of Central Papua Province, which prioritizes the appointment of indigenous Papuans (Orang Asli Papua, or OAP) in civil service roles. The protesting civil servants, many of whom were OAP, believed that they—being the original inhabitants—should be granted rightful opportunities to hold government positions.

Such conditions present a major challenge for the Mimika Regency Government. The promotion and transfer of officials have not been carried out objectively, failing to align with the principles of the merit system, which emphasize qualifications, competencies, and performance. It is imperative that the position placement process within the Mimika Regency Government adhere to Law No. 20 of 2023 concerning the State Civil Apparatus. This law mandates a merit-based approach to staffing that prioritizes competency standards and eliminates political or personal interference.

Deviations from merit-based appointments result in misaligned placements that compromise bureaucratic effectiveness. If positions are filled without regard for legal and competency standards, the consequence is a dysfunctional administrative system. An effective bureaucracy can only be achieved when government personnel decisions are based solely on qualifications and competencies, free from subjective influences.

II. Methodology

In accordance with Law No. 20 of 2023 on the State Civil Apparatus (ASN), the Government of Indonesia aims to ensure that the merit system is implemented not only at the central level but also across regional levels. However, in practice, optimal implementation of the merit system has thus far been achieved only within central institutions, specifically ministries and national agencies. At the regional level—provincial, municipal, and regency governments—the application of the merit system remains suboptimal. In particular, the eastern regions of Indonesia have lagged significantly behind in adopting this approach compared to the western regions.

As highlighted in the problem statement, the application of the merit system in the Mimika Regency Government, located within Central Papua Province, still fails to comply with existing legislation concerning civil service management. Proper implementation of the merit system entails that recruitment and position placement must be structured, systematic, and accountable. The process must strictly adhere to the principles of meritocracy.

According to Ministerial Regulation No. 40 of 2018 issued by the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (PERMENPAN RB), the merit system consists of eight interconnected components: workforce planning, recruitment, career development, promotion and transfer, performance management, remuneration, recognition and discipline, protection and service, and information systems. These components must be implemented comprehensively and cohesively. However, in the context of Mimika Regency, particularly with regard to promotions and transfers, current practices often deviate from the core tenets of the merit system.

This study seeks to explore the implementation of the merit system in the context of position appointments within the Mimika Regency Government. For analytical purposes, the study employs the merit system framework proposed by McCourt (2007).

The research adopts a post-positivist paradigm and utilizes a qualitative methodology. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and document analysis. Interview participants included key stakeholders such as the Head of the Civil Service and Human Resources Development Agency of Mimika Regency, the Head of the Health Department, the Head of the Education Department, the Head of Wania District, four indigenous Papuan civil servants (Orang Asli Papua, OAP) who experienced transfers, promotions, or were rendered non-functional (non-job), and one prominent local community leader of Papuan descent.

The primary objective of these interviews was to obtain comprehensive insights from multiple perspectives regarding the appointment process within the Mimika Regency Government.

III. Results and Discussion

This study reveals the implementation of the merit system in the placement of civil servant positions within the Regional Government of Mimika Regency. The analysis focuses on four key aspects of merit system implementation as outlined by McCourt (2007): Job at Every Level, The Best Candidate, Open to All, and Systematic, Transparent, and Challengeable.

Table 3.1 Implications of A ‘Best Person’ Definition

Implication	Current
<i>Applies to jobs at every level candidate</i>	<i>A focus on the point of entry</i>
<i>The appointee is the best</i>	<i>The appointee is merely able to do the job</i>
<i>Posts are open to all eligible candidates</i>	<i>Posts are restricted to certain candidates</i>
<i>The appointment process is systematic, transparent and challengeable</i>	<i>The appointment process may be arbitrary, secretive and unchallengeable</i>

Sumber: Willy McCourt (2007:3)

1. Applies to Job at Every Level

According to McCourt, the merit principle should apply across all levels of employment—from recruitment and placement to promotion—and across all job categories. The Mimika Regency Government has implemented the merit system in civil servant recruitment, primarily through the initial hiring process of civil servants, as governed by Ministerial Regulation No. 6 of 2024 concerning the Recruitment of State Civil Apparatus. This regulation mandates a competency-based approach to all recruitment activities.

However, the application of the merit principle in employee placement and promotion has not been consistent across all position levels. Specifically, the promotion process has only involved competitive selection for high-ranking positions, namely Primary High Leadership Positions (JPT Pratama or Echelon II).

This was confirmed through interviews with the Head of the Mimika Regency Health Department, who stated that in 2021, an open selection process (job auction) was conducted for Echelon II officials. The selection process for these senior positions comprised five stages: administrative screening, managerial competency testing, track record evaluation, essay writing, and interviews. The selection followed a knock-out system, meaning that candidates who failed at any stage were automatically disqualified from proceeding to the next stage.

The implementation of the merit system in these open selections was considered objective and included external oversight from the National Civil Service Agency (BKN), the State Civil Apparatus Commission (KASN), and academic experts.

However, open selection was not conducted for Echelon III and IV positions. Instead, placements in these roles were based primarily on an employee's experience and past performance. According to interviews with the Sub-Coordinator for Promotions and Transfers at the Mimika Human Resource Agency, the absence of a structured selection process for these positions has led to the appointment of less-qualified personnel to mid- and lower-level roles. Additionally, it was found that Mimika Regency does not maintain a clear and measurable competency standard for job positions. Although the competency framework has been discussed, it is not consistently applied in practice. For administrator and supervisory-level positions, evaluations are conducted by the Personnel Supervisor Officer (PPK) using the most recent personnel data from the Human Resources Agency (BKPSDM). However, this approach has not yielded placements that align with employee qualifications, competencies, and performance levels due to the absence of formal competency standards.

2. The Appointee Is the Best Candidate

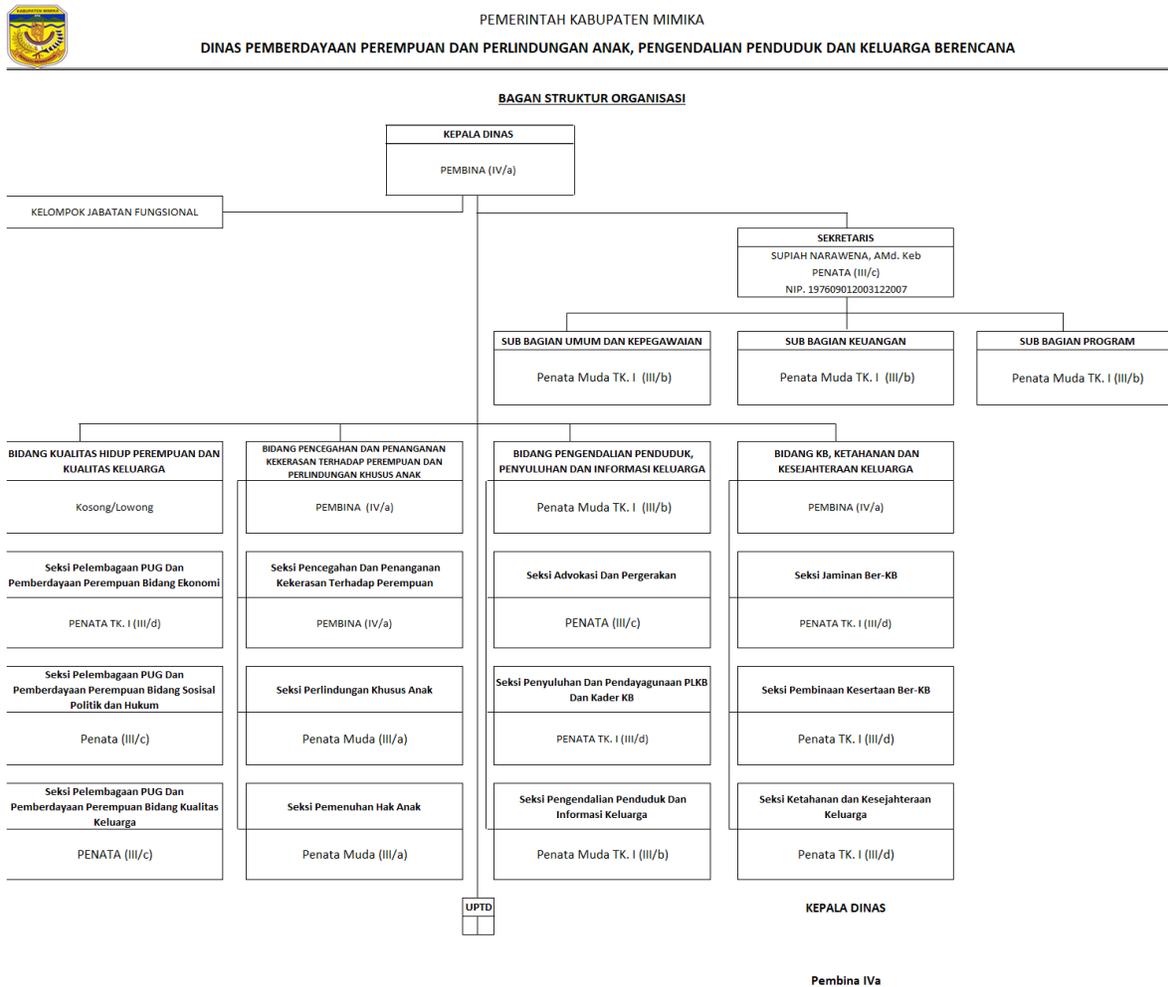
According to McCourt (2007), appointing the best candidate means selecting individuals who have demonstrated excellence and capability to assume specific responsibilities. This principle emphasizes proven competence and qualifications—not merely prior experience or position—but also actual ability to perform duties effectively.

To identify the most suitable individuals for a position, a clear **job specification** is essential. Decenzo et al. (2015) define job specification as the set of qualifications required for a particular role, which typically includes knowledge, skills, education, experience, certifications, and demonstrable ability to perform the job effectively.

Based on interviews with various officials, it was found that candidates considered "best" were evaluated on several criteria: educational background, professional experience, performance record, length of service, competencies, work performance, leadership training (PIM), as well as rank and classification. Individuals appointed to Echelon II positions were generally considered to be top-tier candidates, having satisfied specific requirements such as undergoing leadership training and participating in competitive selection processes. These processes involved submitting academic essays, undergoing academic aptitude tests, and completing interviews. Thus, Echelon II appointments were assessed objectively and deemed to have yielded high-quality personnel.

However, for Echelon III and IV roles, the appointments have not consistently reflected the selection of the most competent candidates. Many appointees in these levels were not subject to formal selection processes, and some were even placed in positions that exceeded their civil service rank or classification. Based on data obtained during this study, it was noted that several

Echelon III positions were occupied by lower-ranked civil servants who, in turn, supervised higher-ranked personnel. This is found through the table below:



For example, in some organizational units within the Mimika Regency Government—such as the Department of Women’s Empowerment, Child Protection, Population Control, and Family Planning—it was observed that a secretary with a rank of III led division heads who held rank IVa. Similarly, certain division heads were ranked IIIb yet supervised section heads with rank IVa.

These findings indicate that the placement process in Mimika Regency has not consistently ensured the appointment of the best-qualified candidates. When lower-ranked officials manage higher-ranked staff, this not only violates standard professional norms but also impedes career development. According to current regulations, civil servants cannot formally evaluate the performance of those who hold a higher rank than themselves.

3. Posts Are Open to All Eligible Candidates

According to McCourt (2007), the “open to all” principle ensures that the selection process for civil service positions is not limited to internal candidates or specific individuals, but is instead guided by fairness and equal opportunity. This approach demands that every civil servant has a fair and equal chance to be appointed, regardless of personal connections or favoritism. Appointments must be based solely on an individual's competencies and qualifications.

Ministerial Regulation No. 40 of 2018 explicitly states that selection and promotion within the civil service must be conducted through an open process. However, interviews with civil servants in Mimika Regency revealed that the actual appointment process is not universally transparent. Vacant positions are not publicly announced, particularly for Echelon III and IV roles. Open selection is only practiced for Echelon II positions.

In McCourt's merit system indicators, “open to all” means that all eligible candidates should have equal access to compete for a position. Fairness and equality must serve as the foundation for any merit-based system.

According to Folger and Kohlmeier (2005), organizational justice entails treating all members equally, without favoritism. When fairness is upheld, it contributes to the creation of a healthy and effective organizational environment. Equality, in this context, refers to how individuals react to decisions perceived as just or unjust. People tend to evaluate fairness not only by what they receive but also by comparing their outcomes with those of others, which can lead to discontent when perceived disparities arise (Folger and Cropanzano, 1998 in Parker and Kohlmeier, 2005).

Such reactions to perceived injustice have indeed occurred in Mimika. Civil servants affected by unjust promotions, transfers, or removals expressed dissatisfaction with how positions were filled. Interview data confirmed that the placement process lacked fairness, as some staff who met all the required qualifications in terms of rank and education were overlooked, while others with insufficient qualifications were appointed.

This breach of fairness and equality has led to widespread frustration, particularly among civil servants from indigenous Papuan communities (Orang Asli Papua, or OAP). Despite meeting qualification standards and demonstrating strong performance, many OAP civil servants were denied appointments, whereas non-OAP individuals with less suitable credentials were given preference. This has sparked protests and demands for the proper enforcement of special autonomy provisions and a merit-based system.

4. The Appointment Process Is Systematic, Transparent, and Challengeable

According to McCourt (2007), a proper merit system ensures that the process of appointing civil servants is systematic, transparent, and subject to challenge. This means that staffing decisions

must follow a structured, clear, and accountable procedure—one that upholds public trust by being fair and justifiable.

In public administration, transparency and accountability are foundational principles to prevent misconduct and ensure equitable governance. Transparency involves openness in government operations, including decision-making, resource allocation, and overall public service execution (Hood, 2006). Accountability refers to the government's responsibility to justify decisions to oversight bodies, stakeholders, and the public (Bovens, 2007).

Based on interviews with civil servants affected by staffing changes in Mimika, the current placement process is neither transparent nor aligned with regulations. Several personnel decisions—such as position rotations and appointments—were not conducted openly. Some employees, for instance, received official appointments (SK) without prior public announcement or proper selection procedures, violating the transparency principle.

Furthermore, the lack of transparency has led to significant distrust among civil servants. When personnel placements are not based on applicable civil service laws, employee confidence in leadership diminishes. The perception of favoritism is heightened, especially when appointments are influenced by the personal relationships of decision-makers.

Regarding accountability, the government of Mimika has struggled to explain or defend decisions that affect civil servants' careers. Some civil servants who questioned their reassignment or removal faced punitive actions such as demotion or being assigned to non-functional roles (non-job). These outcomes demonstrate that the appointment process remains largely unaccountable and vulnerable to undue influence.

Ultimately, the dominance of relational factors—such as personal connections to the regional head—has undermined efforts to institutionalize merit-based practices. Transparency and accountability remain ideals rather than realities in the Mimika Regency Government's civil service management.

Despite existing legal frameworks—such as Law No. 15 of 2022 on the Formation of Central Papua Province and Government Regulation No. 106 of 2021 on the Authority and Institutional Framework for Special Autonomy Policy Implementation in Papua—which grant special autonomy to Papuan regions, including Mimika, the application of the merit system remains fraught with inconsistencies. These regulations provide provincial governments in Papua with authority over various aspects of governance, with the exception of foreign policy, defense, monetary policy, religion, and judiciary matters.

One of the key mandates of this special autonomy is to empower Indigenous Papuans (Orang Asli Papua, or OAP) to play a central role in their own governance. In theory, this includes fair access to public office and leadership positions. In practice, however, many qualified and high-

performing OAP civil servants in Mimika have been denied opportunities to occupy leadership roles.

This disparity has led to significant unrest among OAP civil servants. Their frustration culminated in public demonstrations protesting the perceived violation of their rights under special autonomy provisions. The core issue was not just the lack of appointments, but the perception that appointments were being made without fairness or equity. Some appointees lacked the necessary qualifications, while competent OAP candidates were overlooked.

Interview data confirmed that the selection and placement processes are still not grounded in transparent or merit-based principles. Instead, favoritism, personal closeness to political figures, and disregard for official qualifications frequently determine appointments. These conditions violate the spirit and letter of special autonomy legislation and the principles of the merit system. This situation has created widespread disillusionment among civil servants, especially those from Indigenous communities, who feel alienated from their rightful role in regional governance. The lack of transparency and objectivity in appointment decisions has diminished trust in government institutions and weakened bureaucratic effectiveness.

To restore this trust and build an efficient public administration, it is crucial that staffing decisions be made transparently, systematically, and in a manner that is open to scrutiny and accountability. Without addressing these inhibiting factors, the merit system in Mimika—and by extension in other Papuan regions—will remain a theoretical ideal rather than an operational reality.

The appointment of civil servants within the Mimika Regency Government has not been conducted in accordance with the principles of transparency or accountability. Interview data confirm that staffing decisions often diverge from civil service regulations, undermining both internal trust and the legitimacy of leadership decisions.

Factors Inhibiting the Implementation of the Merit System in the Placement of Civil Servant Positions

By definition, the merit system is designed to ensure that appointments are based on qualifications, expertise, and proven competency. However, the implementation of this system in Mimika is hindered by several structural and sociopolitical obstacles, which include political patronage (clientelism), nepotism, discrimination, and ambiguity in defining "merit" itself, as discussed by McCourt (2007).

1. Political Patronage and Nepotism

Political patronage refers to a relationship of mutual benefit between a patron and a client, where favors—such as positions or opportunities—are exchanged for loyalty or political support. In Mimika, this dynamic is evident in staffing decisions made by local political leaders, who tend to prioritize the interests of allies or supporters over the competencies and qualifications of potential appointees.

This form of clientelism distorts the intended function of public administration, reducing merit-based placements to mere political transactions. It undermines organizational integrity and discourages competent civil servants who lack political backing from aspiring to leadership roles.

Political patronage (clientelism) and nepotism represent major barriers to the implementation of a merit-based system in the Mimika Regency Government. Patronage involves reciprocal exchanges of benefits between political figures and their supporters. In the context of civil service appointments, nepotism manifests as favoritism based on familial, emotional, or social connections.

These practices are deeply embedded in Mimika's bureaucratic environment. The regional head, holding a political office, often relies on political allies for support. Consequently, structural government positions become politicized, with appointments reflecting campaign loyalty rather than competence. This situation is further exacerbated by the threat of demotion or non-functional placement (non-job) for officials who do not comply with political expectations—even when their performance is strong. Moreover, reports suggest that some appointments were obtained through financial transactions, undermining the integrity of the public service.

2. Discrimination

Discriminatory practices—especially those rooted in ethnicity, personal relationships, or family ties—also obstruct the application of merit principles in civil servant placement. Decision-making in Mimika is often influenced by proximity to those in power, rather than by objective assessment of qualifications. As a result, key positions are sometimes held by individuals who do not meet the formal criteria for the role.

Close relationships with the regional head or their spouse often play a decisive role in appointment outcomes. This has led to situations where employees of insufficient rank or civil service status (e.g., probationary civil servants) are assigned to positions they are legally ineligible to occupy.

In the context of special autonomy, as provided by Law No. 29 of 2022, the people of Papua—including those in Mimika—are granted the authority to manage their own governance in accordance with national law. This includes managing civil service placements in ways that respect and protect the rights of Indigenous Papuans.

However, in practice, Indigenous civil servants—particularly those from the Amungme and Kamoro tribes, as well as related groups such as Dani, Damal, Nduga, Mee, and Moni—report that their rights have been marginalized. Positions of authority are increasingly dominated by individuals from outside the Papuan region, leading to a perceived erosion of local representation and fairness in government employment.

This pattern not only violates the intent of special autonomy provisions but also fundamentally contradicts the principles of the merit system. If implemented correctly, merit-based staffing would ensure that Indigenous Papuans receive equitable opportunities for advancement while maintaining professional standards.

3. Interpretation and Understanding of the Merit System

A shared and accurate understanding of the merit system is critical to its successful implementation in civil service appointments. All parties involved in the placement process must hold a consistent interpretation to ensure that only qualified, competent, and high-performing individuals are appointed.

McCourt (2007) warns that if “merit” is narrowly defined as simply “being able to do the job,” selection committees may make misguided decisions. By focusing only on minimal ability, committees risk overlooking candidates who are not just capable but truly excellent. This results in the selection of individuals who are merely sufficient, rather than highly qualified.

This issue is also evident in Mimika Regency, where appointments are sometimes based on the ability to perform basic tasks rather than on thorough assessments of qualifications and competencies. Interviews revealed that only a few local government departments—namely the Health Department and Education Department—consistently consider qualifications and competencies when assigning officials.

While some departments demonstrate merit-based practices, overall implementation is hindered by political influence. The Regional Head, as the Authorized Official (PPK), retains full authority to promote, transfer, or dismiss civil servants, and this power is not always exercised in line with merit principles.

Thus, the merit system in Mimika is often reduced to a superficial notion of “capability,” leading to the appointment of individuals who do not fully meet legal or professional requirements. This stems from a lack of understanding among both decision-makers and candidates themselves. In some cases, individuals who do not possess the necessary technical, managerial, or sociocultural competencies, qualifications, or ranks still accept appointments, unaware—or willfully dismissive—of how it compromises both career development and administrative effectiveness. The Human Resources and Staffing Agency (BKPSDM) in Mimika has a pivotal role to play in addressing this gap. As the technical implementing body, it must enhance guidance, supervision, and advocacy to ensure the merit system is understood and applied consistently throughout all departments.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on research findings related to the implementation of the merit system in the placement of civil servant (ASN) positions in the Regional Government of Mimika Regency, it can be concluded that the four core aspects of the merit system have not been fully implemented, particularly in the placement of structural positions. Position assignments based on the merit system—namely, on the basis of qualifications and competencies—have not been applied uniformly across all levels. Open selection, or position auctions, are only conducted for echelon II officials, while appointments to echelon III and IV positions are determined by authorized officials, specifically heads of regional apparatus organizations and the Personnel Administration Officer (PPK), based on evaluations of personnel data from the Regional Human Resources Agency (BKPSDM). However, not all appointments align with the required qualifications and competencies. Moreover, employees are often unaware of position openings for echelon III and IV due to the absence of public announcements. In recent years, several positions have remained vacant.

Appointments in the Mimika Regency Government are nominally based on qualifications such as rank, classification, educational background, and performance records. However, these criteria appear to be treated as mere formalities, as many appointed individuals do not meet the educational, rank, or classification requirements. Numerous employees hold positions that are inconsistent with their educational backgrounds. Furthermore, employees with long tenure, strong performance, and completed training programs are often overlooked, while those lacking such credentials are appointed instead.

Such misalignment between placement and qualifications/competency creates perceptions of unfairness and inequality. While the merit system is intended to promote fairness and equal opportunity, many civil servants in Mimika feel that public administration is being managed unjustly. Employees with superior qualifications, professional records, experience, and completed training are denied promotions, while others without the necessary training or rank are given positions, undermining confidence in the leadership.

According to Law No. 15 of 2022 on the Establishment of Central Papua Province—which includes Mimika Regency—and Government Regulation No. 106 of 2021 on the Implementation of Special Autonomy in Papua, each province within Papua has the authority to govern various administrative matters, except for foreign affairs, defense and security, fiscal policy, religion, and the judiciary. Under this special autonomy, Indigenous Papuans (Orang Asli Papua, or OAP) have the right to hold positions of authority in their own regions. In practice, however, many qualified and high-performing Indigenous Papuan civil servants in Mimika have not been appointed to leadership roles. This has sparked unrest among Indigenous ASN, some of whom have staged demonstrations in protest of the apparent disregard for their special autonomy rights. These reactions stem from a perceived lack of justice and equality in the placement process.

The placement of civil servants must be conducted systematically, transparently, and accountably. These principles are critical to establishing a fair and responsible governance

system and maintaining public trust. However, the current system in Mimika Regency lacks transparency, as many appointments are not in accordance with regulations. Accountability, as Bovens (2007) defines it, involves the government's obligation to justify and explain its decisions to oversight bodies, stakeholders, and the public. The failure to adhere to the State Civil Apparatus Law in the placement process has eroded employee trust in regional leadership, particularly when the decision-makers cannot justify or defend their policies. This issue has persisted over the past five years, with policy decisions often lacking transparency and justification.

The head of the regional government, as the key decision-maker, is frequently influenced by close associates. When employees assert their rights, they are sometimes subjected to demotion or sidelining ("non-job" status). Transparency and accountability remain largely absent from the placement process, with nepotism and favoritism prevailing.

Moreover, Mimika, as a special autonomy region under Law No. 29 of 2022, has the authority to manage the interests and basic rights of its Indigenous population, including in civil service matters. Nevertheless, local Indigenous civil servants—particularly from the Amungme and Kamoro tribes, along with five affiliated tribes (Dani, Damal, Nduga, Mee, and Moni)—feel their rights are being undermined. One non-Indigenous ethnic group from outside Papua appears to dominate the appointment of government positions, leading to discontent and perceptions of exclusion.

Several factors hinder the implementation of the merit system in Mimika Regency, including strong intervention from individuals close to the regional head, personal biases, and political patronage. Nepotism, kinship ties, and emotional bonds have resulted in appointments that ignore legal and regulatory qualifications. This favoritism has also led to one ethnic group dominating the civil service, fostering jealousy among employees and creating a toxic work environment. Additionally, there is a lack of understanding of the merit system among leaders, and no local regulation (perda) currently provides a legal framework for merit-based ASN management.

The following are several recommendations for establishing a merit-based system within the Regional Government of Mimika Regency:

1. Develop a Grand Design and Roadmap

The Mimika Regency Government should formulate a long-term framework and roadmap to guide the implementation of the merit system at all levels (Echelon II, III, and IV), including clear competency standards and structured assessment tools.

2. Establish Local Legal Regulations

There is a need to create regional regulations (Perda/Perbup) that formally codify the merit system in civil service management. A strong legal foundation will ensure consistency and legitimacy in applying merit-based practices.

3. Implement Transparent Evaluation Mechanism

Personnel evaluations must be carried out objectively and transparently, using clear, measurable performance criteria. This includes performance appraisals, leadership assessments, and qualification reviews for all candidates.

4. Minimize Political Interference

Steps must be taken to insulate civil service appointments from political patronage, nepotism, and tribal favoritism. Objective decision-making should replace informal influence in promotion and placement processes.

5. Enhance Merit System Literacy

Training and capacity building are essential for human resource managers, department heads, and selection committees to fully understand and apply the merit system. Without this knowledge, implementation will remain inconsistent.

6. Empower Indigenous Civil Servants

In alignment with special autonomy, Indigenous Papuan civil servants must be prioritized for leadership positions—provided they meet established merit-based criteria—while ensuring their career development is protected and advanced fairly.

By enforcing these reforms, the Mimika Regency Government can strengthen bureaucratic integrity, restore employee trust, and improve the overall quality of public service delivery.

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Legislation

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Law No. 15 of 2022 concerning the Establishment of Central Papua Province

Government Regulation Number 11 of 2017 concerning Management of State Civil Apparatus

Regulation of the Minister of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform Number 40 of 2018 concerning Guidelines for the Merit System in State Civil Apparatus (ASN) Management;

Regulation of the State Civil Service Commission Number 9 of 2019 concerning Procedures for Independent Assessment of the Merit System in State Civil Service Management in Government Agencies

Mimika Regent Regulation Number 42 Concerning the Position, Organizational Structure, Duties and Functions and Work Procedures of the Type B Civil Service and Human Resources Development Agency