Enhancing Village Government Performance through the Merit System: Insight from Sirna Jaya Village

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A B S T R A C T

The study aimed to evaluate the implementation of the merit system in enhancing the performance of village governance in Sirna Jaya Village, Bekasi Regency, through talent management. A descriptive-qualitative research method was employed, involving interviews, documentation, and literature review to gather insights from village officials and community members. The findings revealed that the merit system's implementation was inconsistent, with recruitment and promotion not fully based on competency and performance. Talent management strategies, including training and structured development, were found lacking, resulting in underutilized potential. However, periodic monitoring and evaluation, along with a rewards system for high-performing officials, showed promising results. Despite improvements in public service delivery, significant gaps in recruitment transparency and competency-based placements remained. The study concluded that a more structured approach to talent management, equitable training distribution, and competency mapping are essential for optimizing governance performance and achieving sustainable public service improvements.

A B S T R A K

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi implementasi sistem merit dalam meningkatkan kinerja organisasi melalui manajemen talenta di pemerintahan Desa Sirna Jaya, Kecamatan Serang Baru. Metode yang digunakan adalah penelitian deskriptif kualitatif, dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa wawancara, dokumentasi, dan tinjauan literatur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan sistem merit belum optimal. Proses rekrutmen dan promosi masih belum sepenuhnya berbasis kompetensi dan kinerja, serta kurang transparan dalam pengelolaan sumber daya manusia. Selain itu, manajemen talenta belum terstruktur dengan baik, dengan minimnya pelatihan dan pengembangan bagi aparat desa. Namun, beberapa aspek seperti sistem evaluasi berkala dan mekanisme penghargaan telah mulai diterapkan. Studi ini merekomendasikan perencanaan kebutuhan talenta, pelatihan berbasis kompetensi, serta penghargaan kinerja untuk meningkatkan efisiensi organisasi dan kualitas pelayanan publik. Integrasi sistem merit dengan manajemen talenta dapat menciptakan budaya kerja yang kompetitif dan mendukung reformasi birokrasi.

INTRODUCTION

Bureaucracy is a fundamental element in achieving good governance. It plays a vital role in enforcing regulations, maintaining stability, and distributing economic resources. However, the politicization of bureaucracy at various levels of government has created a persistent negative perception, adversely affecting the quality of public services (Kravariti & Johnston, 2020). This condition has prompted the government to initiate Bureaucratic Reform, which aims to fundamentally update and improve the administrative system, particularly in delivering excellent public services (Kementerian Pendayagunaan Aparatur

Negara dan Reformasi Birokrasi, 2019). Achieving high-quality public services requires a professional, responsive, and adaptive bureaucracy.

One approach that supports bureaucratic reform is the implementation of talent management. Talent management enables the government to identify, develop, and optimize the potential of its personnel effectively (Suparman & Soantahon, 2022). With the merit system as its foundation, talent management ensures that individuals in strategic positions possess the required competencies and performance levels. In the context of village governance, this approach not only enhances bureaucratic efficiency but also aligns with the broader goals of bureaucratic reform by fostering better public services. It paves the way for building a results-oriented and adaptive bureaucracy.

The merit system is a competency- and performance-based approach designed to support fair, transparent, and accountable human resource management. In government organizations, this system ensures that recruitment, promotion, and development are conducted based on merit rather than subjective factors such as personal or political affiliations. Talent management, as a key instrument of the merit system, allows organizations to identify, develop, and retain individuals with the potential to contribute significantly to organizational performance (Sandinirwan et al., 2022).

The application of the merit system in village governance is increasingly relevant for improving public service delivery and governance quality. As the frontline unit in the governmental structure, village governments play a strategic role in serving local communities. However, challenges such as limited personnel competencies, lack of transparency in human resource management, and low accountability levels often hinder their effectiveness (Suryanto & Darto, 2020). Talent management offers a strategic solution to these issues. Through this approach, village governments can implement more systematic human resource management, starting from talent needs planning to the career development of village officials. Furthermore, integrating the merit system with talent management fosters motivation, encourages a competitive performance culture, and positively impacts organizational outcomes (Halawa et al., 2024).

In 2019, the State Civil Apparatus Commission (KASN) issued Regulation Number 9 concerning Procedures for Self-Assessment of the Implementation of the Merit System in Local Government Agencies. This regulation provides guidelines for assessing the application of the merit system. Annually, KASN evaluates the implementation of the merit system using a Self-Assessment mechanism in line with Regulation Number 9 of 2019. The results reflect the extent to which the merit system has been adopted in each assessed agency, categorized into four levels: Very Bad, Bad, Good, and Excellent (Dwiputrianti et al., 2019).

This study aims to explore the implementation of the merit system to enhance organizational performance through talent management within the village government of Serang Baru District. By utilizing a questionnaire method for data collection, the study seeks to provide empirical insights into the effectiveness of the merit system in the village governance context and offer strategic recommendations for developing talent management policies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive-qualitative research method, designed to produce rich, detailed data in the form of written and oral accounts from individuals and observable behaviors. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the social and organizational dynamics within the context of Sirna Jaya Village, Serang Baru District, Bekasi Regency. The village was specifically chosen due to its strategic role in local governance and its potential as a representative case for examining the implementation of governance reforms, particularly the adoption of the merit system and talent management strategies. By focusing on Sirna Jaya, the study seeks to explore how these reforms are integrated into village governance practices to improve public services and organizational performance. Data collection employs a combination of interviews, documentation, and literature review, ensuring a well-rounded analysis. Interviews provide direct insights from village officials and community members, offering a practical perspective on governance challenges and successes. Documentation, including official records and reports, contributes to a contextual understanding of the local governance framework. Meanwhile, the literature review supports the research with theoretical insights and comparative analysis. This multi-faceted data collection approach ensures a holistic understanding of governance practices and reform efforts in Sirna Jaya Village.

RESULT and DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the research conducted, the implementation of the merit system in the village government of Sirna Jaya, Serang Baru Subdistrict, has not yet been optimal in improving organizational performance. The findings indicate that the application of the merit system has not been carried out comprehensively and consistently. This is evident from recruitment and promotion processes that are not yet fully based on competence and performance, as well as a lack of transparency in human resource management.

In terms of talent management, the village government does not yet have a structured system to identify, develop, and retain existing talent. Village officials generally have not received adequate training and development, which prevents their potential from being utilized optimally. Additionally, the lack of monitoring and evaluation of officials' performance poses a challenge in measuring the effectiveness of the implemented merit system.

Talent management is a strategic approach to ensure that every individual in the organization is assessed appropriately according to their potential. McDonnell, Collings, Mellahi, and Schuler (2017) explain that talent management functions to assess the extent to which employees can contribute to achieving organizational goals by ensuring the right individuals are in the right positions. In the context of government organizations, the implementation of talent management not only serves to maintain competitive advantage but also ensures organizational efficiency and success in delivering public services (Ferdian et al., 2022).

The same situation is observed in Sirna Jaya Village, where the talents of village officials vary, reflecting differences in individual abilities. Talent development can be carried out through specialized training focused on career development, such as training in administration, financial management, communication, and public services. Such training

not only enhances technical skills but also contributes to sustainable competitive advantages that can be applied to public service delivery.

Interviews revealed that not all village officials in Sirna Jaya possess adequate management skills to perform their duties. There is still a skills gap that prevents some officials from working optimally. To address this issue, an in-depth identification of the skills possessed by each official is required, along with the provision of relevant training. Additionally, direct consultations with village officials are necessary to identify the challenges they face in executing their tasks.

Another effort that can be undertaken is to provide rewards to officials with good performance as a form of appreciation. This step not only motivates other officials to improve their work but also fosters a work culture that supports the sustainable development of talent.

Table 1 *Results of the Determination of Self-Assessment of the Implementation of the Merit System through Talent Management in Sirna Jaya Village*

Assessment Aspects	Achievements	Description
Recruitment and Selection	Bad	The recruitment process is not fully competency-based and still lacks transparency.
Talent Development	Bad	Several apparatus have participated in training, but it has not been carried out evenly.
Placement Based on Competency	Bad	The placement of the apparatus is not in accordance with the skills.
Monitoring and Evaluation	Good	It has started to implement a periodic evaluation system to measure the performance and effectiveness of talents. There is already a reward mechanism for apparatus that performs well, but it is not consistent.
Awards and Appreciation	Good	The majority of people consider public services to be fast and responsive.
Public Service	Good	

Source: researcher, 2024

From the results of the above assessment, it can be concluded that the implementation of the merit system through talent management in Sirna Jaya Village has various achievements. Although there are aspects that have shown excellent results, there are still aspects that need significant improvement.

The assessment of the merit system implementation in Sirna Jaya Village reflects a mixed performance across different aspects. While advancements have been made in certain areas, such as monitoring and evaluation, as well as public service delivery, other critical aspects like recruitment, training, and competency-based placements still exhibit notable weaknesses. These gaps highlight the need for a more structured and consistent approach to talent management in village governance.

Recruitment and selection are fundamental to building a merit-based governance system. However, as observed in Sirna Jaya Village, the process has yet to fully embrace transparency and competency-based criteria, leading to inefficiencies and potential biases. According to Dwiputrianti et al. (2019), recruitment systems in local governments that fail to prioritize meritocracy often result in underqualified personnel occupying key positions, which undermines the overall performance of governance. This emphasizes the importance of designing a recruitment framework that is not only transparent but also ensures that selected candidates align with the required competencies.

In terms of talent development, the findings indicate that while some apparatus have participated in training programs, these initiatives have not been evenly distributed. Unequal access to training opportunities can hinder the development of a skilled workforce and exacerbate performance disparities. Research by Halawa et al. (2024) underlines that consistent and equitable training programs are essential for fostering a culture of continuous improvement within government organizations. To address this, the village administration must implement a more inclusive training policy that reaches all personnel and targets specific competency gaps.

Placement based on competency is another critical area where significant improvement is needed. Current practices in Sirna Jaya Village reveal that the placement of personnel does not always align with their skills, which can lead to inefficiencies in service delivery. Sandinirwan et al. (2022) argue that competency-based placements not only enhance individual performance but also contribute to organizational effectiveness by ensuring that the right person is assigned to the right role. A systematic approach to identifying and mapping competencies, followed by strategic placement, is necessary to optimize human resource potential in the village administration.

On a positive note, the introduction of a periodic monitoring and evaluation system in Sirna Jaya Village marks a step forward in measuring the performance and effectiveness of talents. As noted by Kravariti and Johnston (2020), regular evaluations are crucial for identifying areas of improvement, rewarding high performers, and ensuring accountability in governance. However, for these systems to be truly effective, they must be implemented consistently and supported by clear performance indicators.

The provision of rewards and appreciation for well-performing apparatus is another commendable aspect of the village's talent management strategy. Nevertheless, the inconsistency in its application limits its potential impact. According to Suparman and Soantahon (2022), consistent reward mechanisms serve as powerful motivators, fostering a competitive performance culture and encouraging innovation within government

institutions. The village administration must, therefore, standardize its reward policies to ensure fairness and transparency.

Public service delivery in Sirna Jaya Village has received positive feedback from the majority of residents, who consider it fast and responsive. This aligns with the goals of bureaucratic reform, which aim to enhance service quality and responsiveness. However, Suryanto and Darto (2020) caution that sustained improvements in public service require a foundation of skilled and motivated personnel, which underscores the interconnectedness of all aspects of talent management.

Sirna Jaya Village has made strides in certain areas of talent management, the overall implementation of the merit system remains a work in progress. Addressing the shortcomings in recruitment, training, and competency-based placements is crucial for creating a more efficient and results-oriented governance structure. By building on the progress achieved and addressing existing gaps, the village can serve as a model for effective merit-based governance in Indonesia.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings, the implementation of the merit system in Sirna Jaya Village through talent management still faces several challenges. The recruitment and selection process is not yet fully competency-based and lacks transparency, while talent development remains uneven, despite some officials having participated in training programs. Additionally, the placement of officials does not always align with their competencies, leading to inefficiencies in role assignments. However, notable progress has been made in monitoring and evaluation, as the village government has begun implementing regular performance assessments to measure employee effectiveness. Furthermore, reward and recognition mechanisms have been introduced, though their application remains inconsistent. From a public service perspective, the majority of the community perceives the services as fast and responsive, indicating a positive impact on service delivery.

To enhance the implementation of the merit system, several corrective measures should be adopted. The recruitment process should be strictly competency-based with transparent procedures and oversight from independent parties to enhance credibility and public trust. Training programs should be systematically and evenly distributed to all officials, ensuring alignment with the village's specific developmental needs and fostering continuous professional growth. Official assignments should be based on skill assessments to ensure proper task alignment, maximizing efficiency and effectiveness in public administration. A structured and sustainable reward system should also be implemented to motivate high-performing officials, reinforcing a culture of excellence and accountability. Meanwhile, the current fast and responsive public services should be maintained and continuously improved through feedback mechanisms to enhance community satisfaction. By implementing these strategic measures, Sirna Jaya Village can strengthen its merit system, ensuring a fair, transparent, and competency-driven governance structure that enhances overall government performance and public service quality.

For future research, it would be valuable to explore the long-term impact of a competency-based merit system on village governance efficiency and employee performance. Further studies could also examine the role of digital technology in enhancing transparency and accountability within the merit system. Additionally, research comparing different village governance models and their approaches to talent management could provide broader insights into best practices. Investigating community perceptions and satisfaction levels over an extended period would also help assess the effectiveness of ongoing reforms. Finally, examining the influence of leadership styles in the successful implementation of the merit system could provide a deeper understanding of the key drivers behind sustainable governance improvements.

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