

# Bureaucratic Neutrality Index in Direct Regional Head Elections

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## Bureaucratic Neutrality Index in Direct Regional Head Elections: Optimism in Developing Professional Bureaucracy in Indonesia

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**Abstract.** *The study aimed to describe bureaucratic neutrality at regional level and its necessity in direct regional head elections in Indonesia. This research is important in examining whether state civil apparatuses are tempted to enter the practical political arena in regional head elections despite being prohibited by the principle of bureaucratic neutrality. This study employed a descriptive quantitative research method and index analysis techniques. A research population of 12,539 state civil apparatuses (SCAs) in Banyumas, Indonesia was utilized, 400 of which were selected as the research samples. Employing Slovin formula, 95% confidence level and margin of error 4.92% were obtained. This study indicates a satisfactory level of bureaucratic neutrality at 3.18 or 79.59. Indicators of high bureaucratic neutrality level include the absence of SCAs' support to non-incumbent or incumbent regent candidates on social media as well as the non-response of SCAs to the request of incumbent regent candidates' campaign team to perform actions that may benefit incumbent regent candidates. Meanwhile, indicators of low bureaucratic neutrality level include the preservation of neutrality upon discovering other SCA colleagues' support to non-incumbent or incumbent regent candidates on social media and the preservation of no support to non-incumbent or incumbent regent candidates. These findings present an opportunity to realize a professional merit and bureaucracy system in Indonesia. This study offers recommendations of increased neutrality awareness campaigns among bureaucratic officials and the importance of encouraging SCAs to consistently remind colleagues who may violate the principle of neutrality. Enforcement of legal actions against violators of bureaucratic neutrality is also necessary as a deterrent effect for bureaucratic officials who are not committed to upholding bureaucratic neutrality.*

**Keywords:** *bureaucracy, merit, neutrality, political officials, professional*

**Raktažodžiai:** *biurokratija, nuopelnas, neutralumas, valstybės tarnautojai, ekspertai*

### Introduction

In the early development of public administration in America, bureaucracy was trapped in the political-administrative dichotomy. This paradigm stipulates that bureaucracy and politics must be strictly separated (Taylor, 1912; White, 1926; Willoughby, 1918; Wilson, 1887). Political officials as the representation of people's legitimacy are considered the most competent parties to design policies. They are relatively confident in their belief that their representation may sufficiently produce policies that will bring benefits to the general public. On the other hand, bureaucracy is positioned as an institution that will work after policies in political institutions are completed. Bureaucracy is a party that works in policy implementation and is prohibited from allocating values. In the political-administrative dichotomy, policies are exclusively the domain of political officials (Svara, 2001).

Bureaucracy must design its merit path to produce bureaucratic leaders. Bureaucracy has the competence, experience, honesty and public loyalty criteria to select professional bureaucratic leaders. Political officials, on the other hand, need bureaucratic officials who may help them carry

out their political promises. This creates an interesting proposition for the study of bureaucratic neutrality in Indonesia.

One of the characteristics of bureaucracy is that it is led by an official who is directly elected by the people. Discussions on the neutrality of the Indonesian bureaucracy in regional context are interesting since the regional heads are elected every five years. This suggests that once every five years, the bureaucracy has an opportunity to appoint a new leader at regional level. The neutrality of local bureaucracy in Indonesia is therefore essential since, on the one hand, it must display neutrality, but on the other hand, certain political officials see the bureaucracy as a political machine and several bureaucratic officials are eager to enter the practical political arena themselves to secure their position in the bureaucracy (Afriani, 2006; Awaluddin, 2010; Azhari, 2011; Simamora, 2018).

It is interesting to observe and discuss bureaucratic neutrality during the 2018 regional head election in Banyumas Regency in which two pairs of candidates competed for the position of regent and vice regent of Banyumas. The two pairs of candidates were Mardjoko-Ifan Haryanto and Ahmad Husein-Sadewo Tri Lastianto (Widiyatno, 2018). Mardjoko was the Regent of Banyumas during 2008-2013 period with Ahmad Husein as the Vice Regent. Mardjoko, as a former regent, certainly had a solid base in the bureaucracy. Ahmad Husein himself was the Regent of Banyumas from 2013 to 2018, thus also an incumbent with a solid base in the bureaucracy. Bureaucracy in the political perspective is a strategic stance to gain votes.

The neutrality of bureaucracy in direct elections during the post-Reformation era must indeed be enforced. Bureaucratic officials are prohibited from publicly offering support to candidates, either in cyberspace or in the real life. Law Number 5 of 2014 concerning State Civil Apparatus (SCA) states that the "neutrality principle" is that each SCA shall not take side from any kind of influence and shall not favor certain interests (Article 2 item h). SCAs must be free from any parties and political parties' influence and intervention (Article 9 paragraph 2). This is also reinforced by various circulars stating that bureaucratic officials must not carry out activities in favor of a certain candidate. With regards to various political events organized in 2018-2019, Circular of the Minister of Empowerment of State Apparatuses and Bureaucracy Reform of the Republic of Indonesia Number B/71/M.SM.00.00/2017 was issued on 27 December 2017, regulating the implementation of neutrality of SCAs in the implementation of 2018 simultaneous regional elections, 2019 legislative election and 2019 presidential and vice president election. This was the manifestation of the government's serious measure in maintaining bureaucratic neutrality. The circular even prohibited uploading of, responding to (in the form of likes and comments) or distributing pictures/ photos of prospective candidates/ prospective regional head candidates, vision and mission of prospective candidates/ prospective regional head candidates, as well as anything linked to prospective candidates/ prospective regional head candidates through online media and social media platforms. According to the circular, SCAs were also prohibited from taking a photo together with regional head/vice regional head candidates and using hand gesture/movement indicating alignment or support.

Bureaucratic neutrality in the post-Reformation era is a public demand. Bureaucratic officials are prohibited from conducting political practice under any circumstances. They are also prohibited from becoming a member of a political party's management committee and election campaign team in any executive or legislative election events. In addition, they are prohibited from providing likes, comments, and posing with a candidate on social media platforms. This shows that the post-Reformation era genuinely encourages and drives bureaucracy into a professional institution. Bureaucratic neutrality is important to be discussed during the simultaneous regional elections for three main reasons, namely historical precedents, neutrality of state apparatuses, and current regulations (Hadiyantina, 2021). Learning from Hong Kong and Thailand, bureaucratic reforms are pursuable by prioritizing achievement, accountability, transparency, public participation, and empowerment (Huque & Jongruck, 2020).

Nevertheless, bureaucratic neutrality remains a problem in Indonesian. As of 2018, the State Civil Apparatus Commission (SCAC), an institution overseeing bureaucratic neutrality in Indonesia,

reported 985 violations of the neutrality principle by SCAs (Mokhsen et al., 2019) as presented in Table 1 below.

*Table 1. Types of Violation of Neutrality Principle by SCAs in 2018*

NO.	TYPE OF VIOLATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1.	Organizing activities that lead to alignments (meetings, invitations, appeals and giveaways)	270	27.41
2.	Engaging in social media campaigns/outreach (posts, comments, shares, likes)	218	22.13
3.	Engaging in campaign activities	150	15.23
4.	Attending the declaration of candidates	83	8.43
5.	Becoming a participant in a campaign wearing party/SCA attributes	82	8.32
6.	Taking photos with candidates and signaling hand gesture indicating alignments	77	7.82
7.	Taking part as an election campaigner	19	1.93
8.	Becoming a member and or administrator of a political party	12	1.22
9.	Becoming a spokesperson/information provider in political party activities	11	1.12
10.	Utilizing facilities through bureaucratic position for campaign activities	11	1.12
11.	Creating decisions and/or carrying out actions that may benefit or harm certain candidates	10	1.02
12.	Installing banners/billboards for self-promotion or as regional head/deputy regional head candidates	9	0.91
13.	Nominating oneself/being nominated as Governor/Vice Governor, Regent/Vice Regent, Mayor/Vice Mayor without resigning from current post	3	0.30
14.	Declaring oneself as a regional head/vice regional head candidate	2	0.20
15.	Providing support to candidates for Regional Representative Council/ regional head (independent) by submitting a photocopy of ID card	1	0.10
16.	Serving as a campaign participant using state facilities	1	0.10
17.	Other violations	26	2.64
Total		985	100

Source: adapted from Mokhsen et al. (2019).

Table 1 shows that violations of bureaucratic neutrality in Indonesia are relatively high, suggesting the challenges in separating bureaucracy and politics in the country. Bureaucracy remains greatly dependent on politics in its activities (Purwanto et al., 2018). The Election Supervisory Board also reported to SCAC that during the period of January 1 – June 15, 2020, there were 369 cases of SCAs' neutrality violation (Purnawan, 2020), further indicating that bureaucratic neutrality in Indonesia demands serious attention.

It is impractical for bureaucratic officials who depend on political officials to create professional bureaucracy since they greatly disrupt the system of electing bureaucratic leaders who are professional, genuinely concerned about public aspiration and capable of formulating and executing rational and democratic policies. The bureaucracy that is dependent on political officials in the recruitment of its personnel will produce incompetent officials whose main focus would be to serve their superiors instead of the general public (Cameron, 2022; Indiahono, 2019; Purwanto et al., 2018). Incompetent officials generally provide half-hearted services that are not in favor of the public, placing higher emphasize in pleasing their superiors instead. This is one the reasons why bureaucratic neutrality is extremely crucial.

A study on bureaucratic neutrality index in Banyumas Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia is deemed necessary since it is needed to examine the level of bureaucratic neutrality in Banyumas Regency during the 2018 regional head election. This research aimed to answer a pertinent question: What is the level of bureaucratic neutrality index in Banyumas Regency during the 2018 regional head election? This study employed a bureaucratic neutrality instrument developed by the researcher. This research attempted to design a standard bureaucratic neutrality index, which may be used to observe bureaucratic neutrality level of regency/city bureaucracy nationally. The objective of this study is to examine bureaucratic neutrality level in regional head elections. The results of the research are expected to offer valuable insights for the development of further studies on bureaucratic neutrality in Indonesia.

### **Literature Review**

Conceptually, a bureaucracy is a group of political officials directly elected by the people. The position of head of bureaucracy in representing the people suggests that the bureaucracy must be led by the people's representative to accommodate their interests in daily activities (Gnoffo, 2021; van Warden, 2015). The use of social media may offer benefits in policy making since it potentially forces policymakers on three aspects: bureaucracy, affordability of social media, and affective public (Breek et al., 2021). Social media may increase public involvement in public policies (Zavattaro & Brainard, 2019), as well as policy setting agenda (Aldaihani & Shin, 2022; Alonso-Muñoz & Casero-Ripollés, 2018; Feezell, 2018; Su & Borah, 2019; Triantafillidou et al., 2020). The bureaucratic leader and the bureaucracy must work as hard as they possibly can to design and implement public policies and public services for the benefit and prosperity of the general public. This is why political officials assume special positions in the bureaucracy. Their speciality is that they have the privilege to manage bureaucracy, including the authority to transfer, promote and even discharge civil servants under their authority (Freeman, 1958; Stephenson, 2008). On the other hand, bureaucracy is equipped with a career path designed in a merit system (Ferreira & Serpa, 2019). Bureaucracy has the privilege and must design career paths and establish minimum competency for bureaucratic positions, therefore a bureaucratic leader is someone who truly meets the requirements of a bureaucrat. Only an official who is competent, professional, honest, disciplined and loyal to the general public should be deemed a genuine bureaucratic leader. The two conditions above lead to two repercussions: political officials consider themselves to have control over the people and a bureaucracy with a merit system in official recruitment in a direct democratic system is under threat. The threat comes from two parties: first, political officials who only select bureaucrats who get along with them regardless of the merit system; and second, bureaucratic officials who are tempted to get close to political officials for the influence of power in the bureaucracy. These two extreme points can undermine bureaucratic neutrality in the direct regional election era. Social media may also be restrained at any time by the ruling political leaders when used effectively by political opponents to their advantages (Kellam & Stein, 2016). Under these conditions, bureaucrats will also be encouraged to be completely neutral on political events, including on social media.

Bureaucracy is naturally developed according to a merit system (Dwiyanto, 2006; Indiahono, 2019; Rosliana et al., 2019). It is not easy to develop a merit system and professionalism in a bureaucracy since the merit system in Indonesian bureaucracy does not exist in an isolated vacuum space, but floats within the sphere of political officials and public interest. Therefore, such a bureaucracy should be encouraged to be neutral and maintain its loyalty only to safeguard public interest in public services and policies. A bureaucracy that is capable of maintaining the quality of public services will increase public trust in the government (Lanin & Hermanto, 2019; Minelli & Ruffini, 2018). Bureaucracy is known as an organization able to display a sense of stability in a transition period which may be prone to complexity, uncertainty, instability, ambiguity and asymmetry (Ahmed & Aref, 2019).

A bureaucracy which isolates itself from political intervention is referred to as an insulated bureaucracy. Bureaucratic insulation is important to prevent conflicts of value between political and bureaucratic officials and to protect the bureaucracy from political intervention. It should be ensured that bureaucracy is neutral from any influence of political parties (Dunn & Legge Jr, 2002; Mueller, 2015; Reenock & Brian J, 2008). On the other hand, political institutions often fail to provide clear policy objectives, rarely allocate adequate resources to solve problems thoroughly and effectively, and do not provide adequate autonomy to the bureaucracy at the implementation stage (Meier et al., 2019). The disadvantage of the insulated bureaucracy is that it is considered insensitive to public aspirations. Such a bureaucracy is also considered immune to criticism and suggestions, as well as often perceived as an elitist bureaucracy, whereas a bureaucracy should be open to complaints and regard them as valuable and necessary inputs to initiate changes in public services and policies (Hsieh, 2012; Kumar & Kumar, 2016; Minelli & Ruffini, 2018; Nurhidayati, 2019; Parry & Hewage, 2009; Pramusinto, 2014; Shin & Larson, 2020; Singh et al., 2016). Bureaucracy should reflect itself as not



requiring censorship to absorb public aspirations and offer value in policies. Such bureaucracy is called a representative bureaucracy (Pečarič, 2016). On the other hand, it must be admitted that representative bureaucracy also poses the risk of conflicts with other public management principles (Nagel & Peters, 2021). Neutrality is perceived as nonpartisanship, expertise, and impartiality (H. T. Miller, 2018). The strict political-administrative dichotomy ideally does not exist in a contemporary political-administrative system. It is therefore necessary to develop the concept of competent neutrality (Hustedt & Salomonsen, 2018).

Neutrality is an important capital to develop a professional bureaucracy. A confident and competent bureaucracy generally develops bureaucratic professionalism (Decarolis et al., 2018; Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2019; Muhajir, 2009; Thanopoulos, 2014). A neutral bureaucracy enhances public services and policies that benefits the public for the better (Carboni, 2010; Hazgui et al., 2022; Rosliana & A, 2018; Rosliana et al., 2019). The main concern of a neutral bureaucracy is providing satisfying public services and democratic public policies that benefit the general public (Rakhmawanto, 2016; Sutrisno, 2019). Political and bureaucratic officials must develop close cooperation in governmental affairs (Krisnajaya et al., 2019; Ramasamy, 2020). Such a situation is a complementary, in which political officials provide bureaucracy the opportunity to work professionally and independently, while political officials develop reasonable political influence to ensure that the bureaucracy works under the agreed work plan platform (Svara, 1999, 2001, 2006).

## Methodology

### Population and Sample

The research was conducted by employing a survey research method. The research population included 12,539 SCAs in Banyumas Regency (BPS-Banyumas Regency, 2019). In a study, population is a group of individuals having and displaying similar characteristics (Creswell, 2012). The bureaucratic neutrality survey employed the Slovin technique (Arikunto, 2006; Sugiyono, 2015) to determine the samples, resulting in 400 respondents with 95% confidence level and 4.92% margin of error. The study respondents consisted of 208 (52%) male participants and 192 (48%) female participants (Research Data Processed 2020). This shows that the bureaucratic respondents of the study were relatively balanced by gender.

Most study respondents were bachelor degree holders with 215 participants (53.75%), followed by 47 diploma (D1-D3-D4) holders (11.75%) and 35 postgraduate degree holders (8.75%) (See Table 2). The respondents' education levels were at least senior high school, indicating that most respondents were highly educated and capable of following the bureaucratic neutrality issue.

*Table 2. Respondents' Educational Level*

CRITERIA	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Elementary school	1	0.25
Junior high school	5	1.25
Senior high school	81	20.25
Diploma	47	11.75
Bachelor degree	215	53.75
Postgraduate degree	35	8.75
Doctoral degree	2	0.5
Not available	14	3.5
Total	400	100

Source: Processed Research Data, 2020

The research data demonstrate that the majority of respondents were SCAs with positions at level three and above (257 people or 64.25%), indicating that most respondents were of relatively established economic level with good positions in the bureaucracy (see Table 3).

*Table 3. Respondents' Bureaucratic Position Level*

CRITERIA	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Level II	92	23

CRITERIA	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Level III	215	53.75
Level IV	42	10.5
Not available	51	12.75
Total	400	100

Source: Processed Research Data, 2020

### **Bureaucratic Neutrality Index Analysis**

The Bureaucratic Neutrality Index (BNI) indicators (see Table 5) developed in this study are based on regulations governing the neutrality of the bureaucracy in Indonesia (including Law Number 5 of 2014 concerning State Civil Apparatus (SCA) and Circular of the Minister of Empowerment of State Apparatuses and Bureaucracy Reform, which regulates the implementation of bureaucratic neutrality), the types of neutrality violations that often occur are obtained from the report of the State Civil Apparatus Commission, various literatures discussing bureaucratic neutrality, as well as the results of preliminary research. These indicators are believed to be the main factors that determine whether an SCA maintains or violates bureaucratic neutrality.

BNI values are calculated using the weighted average value of each research question. There were 13 questions to calculate BNI, each of which had equal weightage obtained using the following formula:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Weighted average value} &= 1/\text{number of elements} \\ &= 1/13 \\ &= 0.08\end{aligned}$$

The BNI values were obtained through a weighted average value approach with the following formula:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Average of each indicator } \bar{x} &= \Sigma X/N \\ \text{Neutrality Indicator Index} &= \bar{x} \times 0.08\end{aligned}$$

$$\text{BNI (Total)} = \Sigma \text{Neutrality Indicator Index}$$

To facilitate interpretation of Bureaucratic Neutrality Index assessment, ranging between 25-100, the BNI were converted to a base value of 25, with the following formula: Conversion of BNI = BNI x 25 (see Table 4).

Table 4. *Bureaucratic Neutrality Index, Conversion and Indication*

BUREAUCRATIC NEUTRALITY INDEX/ BNI	BNI CONVERSION	INDICATION
1.00 - 1.75	25 - 43.75	Very Bad
1.76 - 2.50	43.76 - 62.50	Bad
2.51 - 3.25	62.51 - 81.25	Good
3.26 - 4.00	81.26 - 100.00	Very Good

Source: Processed Research Data, 2020

### **Results**

A study on bureaucratic neutrality index in Banyumas, Indonesia is essential in examining bureaucratic neutrality at regional level. Two candidates participated in the 2018 regional head direct election in Banyumas Regency, namely Mardjoko-Ifan Haryanto and Ahmad Husein-Sadewo Tri Lastianto. Mardjoko was the Regent of Banyumas in 2008-2013, while Ahmad Husein was the Regent of Banyumas in 2013-2018 or the incumbent. The two candidates, who both led Banyumas previously, had their own supporters and opportunity to influence the bureaucracy. This research empirically proves that the level of bureaucratic neutrality in the regency is satisfactory at 3.18 or 79.59 (see Table 5).

Table 5. *Bureaucratic Neutrality Index in Banyumas Regency*

NO.	INDICATOR	AVERAGE	INDICATOR INDEX
1.	Not showing support for non-incumbent regent candidates on social media platforms	3.89	0.30
2.	Not showing support for incumbent regent candidate on social media platforms	3.86	0.30
3.	Not responding to any request of incumbent regent candidate's election campaign team to perform certain action(s) that may benefit incumbent candidate	3.51	0.27
4.	Not responding to any instruction to perform certain action(s) in favor of incumbent regent candidate in the regional head election	3.42	0.26
5.	Aware of the prohibition in showing support for non-incumbent regent candidate through social media platforms	3.31	0.25
6.	Aware of the prohibition for incumbent regent candidate to mobilize SCAs to gather and display support	3.30	0.25
7.	Aware of the prohibition in providing support to non-incumbent regent candidate in public spaces	3.27	0.25
8.	Aware of the prohibition in showing support for incumbent regent candidate through social media platforms	3.27	0.25
9.	Aware of the prohibition in providing support to incumbent regent candidate in public spaces	3.26	0.25
10.	Preserving the principle of not displaying and providing support to incumbent regent candidate	2.75	0.21
11.	Preserving the principle of not displaying and providing support to non-incumbent regent candidates	2.74	0.21
12.	Preserving the neutrality principle upon learning other SCAs' public support to incumbent regent candidate on social media platforms	2.39	0.18
13.	Preserving the the neutrality principle upon learning other SCAs' public support to non-incumbent regent candidates on social media platforms	2.38	0.18
BNI			3.18
BNI Conversion = BNI x 25			79.50

Source: Research Data, 2020.

This study demonstrates that the three highest indexes include not showing support for non-incumbent regent candidates on social media platforms, not showing support to incumbent regent candidate on social media platforms and not responding to the request of incumbent regent candidate's election campaign team to perform action(s) that may benefit the incumbent. The indicator of not showing support for non-incumbent regent and incumbent regent candidates on social media platforms indicates an index of 0.30, suggesting that the majority of SCAs in Banyumas practically do not show support for any of the candidates of regional head election on social media platforms. The subsequent highest index of 0.27 is the indicator of not responding to the request of incumbent regent's election campaign team to perform action(s) that may benefit the incumbent. The survey results indicate that SCAs in Banyumas carry out their duties freely. The incumbent candidate's election campaign team's use of bureaucratic instruments received resistance from SCAs. The bureaucratic impartiality, including toward incumbents, must be upheld and preserved as the exemplary character in bureaucracy.

This research also shows several indicators with low index, namely preserving the neutrality principle upon learning other SCAs' public support to non-incumbent regent candidates on social media platforms (0.18); preserving the neutrality principle upon learning other SCAs' public support to incumbent regent candidate on social media platforms (0.18); preserving the principle of not displaying and providing support to non-incumbent regent candidates (0.21); and preserving the principle of not displaying and providing support to incumbent regent candidate (0.21). These results imply that, although the indexes are generally satisfactory, the potential for bureaucratic partiality in regional head elections remain.

### Discussion

The political-administrative dichotomy paradigm is conceptually and empirically challenged by policy experts (Harmon, 1989; Simon et al., 1952). First, the position of bureaucracy as policy



implementer occasionally places itself in the position to formulate policy implementation. This suggests that a general policy will one day be translated into specific policies, which consequently encourage the bureaucrats to reformulate the policy at technical level without altering its objectives (Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2019). In this context, bureaucracy often employs its discretion, while discretion itself is widely criticized by political experts as political officials' betrayal of bureaucracy. Second, when administrators are in possession of data, experience and all aspects related to policy implementation, in the presence of political officials, bureaucracy is the most appropriate party to supply valuable information for new policy design or modification. This forces political officials to involve bureaucracy in policy making. The consequently causes bureaucrats involved in policy making process, according to bureaucratic experts, to be able to also allocate values in policies. Political officials often only rely on bureaucracy's substantial policy making ability. Third, political officials in the main characteristics of public administration happen to be bureaucratic leaders who are elected by the people to carry out their campaign promises. The fulfilment of political officials' campaign promises should be translated into bureaucratic works. The policy making process and implementation to fulfill political officials' promises in bureaucracy certainly demands bureaucrats who are willing to be in synergy with political officials (G. J. Miller, 2005; Moe, 2006). Such a process encourages bureaucracy to be vulnerable to political officials' interventions.

Based on the study data, the bureaucratic neutrality index in Banyumas Regency is deemed satisfactory. The low index level in this study is shown by the aspects of preserving the neutrality principle upon learning other SCAs' public support to non-incumbent or incumbent regent candidates on social media platforms and preserving the principle of not displaying and providing support to non-incumbent or incumbent regent candidates. Bureaucracy should be neutral (Adhi & Herman, 2009; Firnas, 2016; Perdana, 2019; Yuwono, 2017). This is important since media, particularly social media, is a major factor in establishing opinions to win a regional head election (Darshan & Suresh, 2019; Hermawati & Runiawati, 2019). Bureaucratic neutrality must be reflected in bureaucratic officials' neutrality in engaging in social media platforms. Leadership talks on social media platforms are important since direct relational leadership has changed the conventional courses of action. Current popular leadership is carried out face-to-face and/or on social media, which leads to a shift in the dominant use of technology by local political leadership from the view of managerialism to the view of social media (Sancino, 2021).

Violations of the neutrality principle among SCAs are typically explained in general since law enforcement to such violation is low. It is difficult to eradicate violations of bureaucratic neutrality due to various obstacles related to the institutions, coordination of supervisors as well as political officials' commitment (Hartini, 2009; Hartini et al., 2014; Sudrajat & Hartini, 2015, 2017). The research results offer a different explanation in that violations occur due to SCAs' lack of concern about their colleagues' violation of the bureaucratic neutrality principle. They tend to keep a blind eye when they discover any bureaucratic officials publicly display support to incumbent or non-incumbent regent candidate on social media. This explains why violations of bureaucratic neutrality often occur among SCAs.

This study also demonstrates that the motive behind bureaucratic neutrality violation is SCAs' low commitment. Bureaucracy's commitment to preserve the principle of not displaying and providing support to incumbent or non-incumbent regent candidate is relatively low. This shows that, although in general the neutrality index level is satisfactory, they are not strong enough to resist the practical political lure of regent candidates. If the person who tempts the SCAs to violate neutrality is the incumbent regent, the challenge is harder, and bureaucratic neutrality potentially increases the risk of possible threat or harm to their career. In addition, the incumbent often uses regional budget allocation for election campaign purposes to ensure victory in the regional head election (Darmastuti & Setyaningrum, 2019).

On the other hand, political officials are expected to refrain from intervening in the bureaucracy through their political power and influence. Bureaucratic officials are encouraged to maintain a good workplace atmosphere within the bureaucracy. This concept is referred to as a

thermostatic model, which signifies political officials' effort to create bureaucracy's good working atmosphere so that the bureaucracy work effectively and efficiently. A good level of bureaucratic neutrality index shows a situation referred to as complementarity (Svara, 2001) and the ability of political officials to maintain a warm atmosphere in the working relationship between bureaucratic and political officials (Jennings, 2009; Norman & Gregory, 2003). This is a good and ideal social capital for developing professional bureaucracy in the future.

### Conclusions

This study concludes that the evidence from Banyumas Regency in Indonesia shows that bureaucratic neutrality at regional level is proven satisfactory at 3.18 or 79.59. The indicators with high index level include not showing support for non-incumbent regent candidates on social media platforms, not showing support for incumbent regent candidate on social media platform and not responding to the request of incumbent regent candidate's election campaign team to perform action(s) that may benefit the incumbent. Meanwhile, low index of bureaucratic neutrality level is demonstrated by the indicators of preserving the neutrality principle upon learning other SCAs' public support to non-incumbent or incumbent regent candidate on social media platforms and preserving the principle of not displaying and providing support to non-incumbent or incumbent regent candidates. On the one hand, these results indicate that, in general, the bureaucracy in Banyumas demonstrates good level of bureaucratic neutrality in regional head election, but on the other hand, it is reported that bureaucratic officials remain vulnerable to politicization and ignorant of coworkers' violations of bureaucratic neutrality. This explains that violations still occur since certain bureaucratic officials lack the principle of preserving bureaucratic neutrality and turn a blind eye when their colleagues are displaying partiality.

The high bureaucratic neutrality index level in Banyumas shows that there is social capital to develop professional bureaucracy at regional level. Therefore, this study suggests the importance of increased awareness campaign of neutrality among bureaucratic officials and the importance of consistently encouraging SCAs to remind their colleagues who violate the neutrality principle. If the message is subtly ignored by the violator, the bureaucracy should take more serious actions. Law enforcement against violators of bureaucratic neutrality is needed as a shock treatment and deterrent effect to bureaucratic officials who are not fully committed to uphold bureaucratic neutrality.

This study is limited in that it has not revealed whether there are differing levels of bureaucratic neutrality among SCAs. In addition, this research has not been able to highlight factors influencing the neutrality of SCAs. It is important to conduct studies to address these limitations in the future to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the neutrality of the bureaucracy in Indonesia.

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Dwiyanto Indiahono

**Biurokratinio neutralumo indeksas tiesioginiuose regionų vadovų rinkimuose: Optimizmas plėtojant profesionalią biurokratiją Indonezijoje**

*Santrauka*

Tyrimo tikslas – apibūdinti biurokratinį neutralumą regionuose ir jo būtinybę tiesioginiuose regionų vadovų rinkimuose Indonezijoje. Šis tyrimas yra svarbus siekiant išsiaiškinti, ar valstybės valdymo aparatas yra linkęs įsitraukti į regioninių vadovų rinkimus, nors tai draudžia biurokratinio neutralumo principas. Šiame tyrime taikytas aprašomasis kiekybinis tyrimo metodas ir indeksų analizės metodai. Tyrime buvo naudojama 12539 Indonezijos Banyumaso miesto valdymo institucijų (VI) visuma, 400 iš jų buvo atrinkta kaip tyrimo imtis. Taikant Slovino formulę, gautas 95 proc. patikimumo lygis ir

4,92 proc. paklaida. Tyrimas rodo, kad biurokratinio neutralumo lygis yra patenkinamas: 3,18 arba 79,59. Aukšto biurokratinio neutralumo lygio rodikliai yra tokie: VI nepalaiko neišrinktų arba socialinėje žiniasklaidoje išrinktų kandidatų į vadovus, VI nereaguoja į kandidatų į vadovų rinkimų kampanijos komandos prašymą atlikti veiksmus, kurie gali būti naudingi kandidatams į vadovus. Žemo biurokratinio neutralumo lygio rodikliai žymi neutralumo išlaikymą sužinojus, kad kiti VI kolegos remia socialinėje žiniasklaidoje išrinktus kandidatus į vadovus ir nepalaikymą išrinktiems arba neišrinktiems kandidatams į vadovus. Šios išvados leidžia įgyvendinti profesinių nuopelnų ir biurokratijos sistemą Indonezijoje, atskleidžia valstybės tarnautojų informavimo apie kampanijų neutralumo svarbą. Kartu būtina taikyti teisinius veiksmus prieš biurokratinio neutralumo principo pažeidėjus kaip atgrasomąjį poveikį valstybės tarnautojams, nesilaikantiems biurokratinio neutralumo principo.

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# Bureaucratic Neutrality Index in Direct Regional Head Elections

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