

Research Article

Transparent and Accountable Governance of State Civil Servants (ASN) Position Transfers and Promotions: A Qualitative Study in the Field of Formation and Transfers Regional Personnel Agency of Pasuruan City

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Abstract: This research seeks to examine the management of transparent and accountable civil service transfers and promotions in the Formation and Mutation Division of Pasuruan City's Civil Service Agency (BKD). The study is based on the significance of the merit system in upholding bureaucratic professionalism, since the procedures for transfer and promotion frequently influence equity and organizational effectiveness. Employing a qualitative case study method, data were gathered via in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document examination. The results show that the transfer and promotion systems in BKD Pasuruan have progressed towards transparency via data-driven management, yet obstacles persist in communicating policies and involving employees in performance evaluations. Accountability has been enhanced via performance-driven assessments incorporated with the e-performance system and job analysis. The conversation emphasizes that the effectiveness of governance practices is affected by organizational flexibility, engaged leadership, and the public service motivation of civil servants. This research determines that the interplay of data-based policies, performance assessment frameworks, and a transparent bureaucratic environment establishes the basis for creating a just, efficient, and sustainable civil service governance model.

Keywords: Accountability; Bureaucratic Reform; Civil Service Governance; Transfer and Promotion; Transparency.

Received: October 11, 2025

Revised: October 27, 2025

Accepted: November 26, 2025

Published: November 30, 2025

Curr. Ver.: November 30, 2025



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1. Introduction

The management of human resources for civil servants is one of the important pillars for the effectiveness of regional government implementation; the process of job transfer and promotion functions as a career management tool for state civil servants (ASN) who have a strategic role in ensuring the suitability of competencies, motivation, and placement of employees in appropriate positions to meet public service needs (Kusuma et al., 2023). At the national policy level, the legal and technical framework has guided the application of merit principles and the use of job analysis and workload analysis as the basis for determining staffing needs, as well as initiatives to digitize

personnel administration processes to accelerate services and increase transparency. However, the application of these principles in practice at regional levels shows differences, necessitating a contextual study of implementing institutions, such as the Formation and Mutation Division of the Pasuruan City Regional Personnel Agency (BKD), to understand the actual conditions, constraints, and opportunities for reform in the management of transfers and promotions.

Recent empirical research has revealed numerous challenges relevant to transfer and promotion practices at the regional level: research on performance requirements in the digital era indicates that promotion mechanisms that are not yet connected to electronic performance data lead to delays and the risk of subjectivity (Edyanto, 2018; Hidayatulloh & Fauziyah, 2025), other studies have highlighted that the implementation of merit systems is often hampered by institutional capacity, local political interference, and fragmentation of personnel data (Hakim, 2024). Research on personnel information systems also emphasizes that the implementation of applications both nationally and locally (such as SIKeP) can improve process accountability if supported by quality standards and increased technical competence of implementers (Gusty et al., 2020). These findings reflect the discrepancy between official policy and implementation on the ground, which serves as the empirical basis for this research.

The novelty of this research lies in its emphasis on integrating procedural analysis of the selection, assessment, and promotion administration mechanisms with governance dimensions (transparency, accountability, internal participation) and data digitization aspects in a single, detailed case study of the Formation and Mutation Division of the Pasuruan City Regional Personnel Agency (BKD). This contrasts with studies that only assess technical obstacles or merely review regulatory aspects (Anggraini & Bramantio, 2025; Sah et al., 2023). This study seeks to formulate a transfer-promotion management strategy that combines merit-based practices, the use of electronic performance data, and both internal and external oversight mechanisms that can be applied in the context of a medium-sized city government. This approach is expected to produce operational policy recommendations that are contextually appropriate, realistic, and replicable for similar regions.

Practically, the main issues identified from initial observations and literature sources are: (1) low transparency of information regarding the selection process and the basis for evaluating promotion candidates, which leads to perceptions of unfairness; (2) reliance on manual procedures or disparate data, which slows transfer/promotion decision-making and allows for subjectivity; (3) non-technical pressures such as political intervention or local support that undermine the principle of merit; and (4) limited capacity of Regional Personnel Agency (BKD) human resources to utilize information systems and convert performance data into the basis for personnel policies (Yus & Yuliharsi, 2024). This situation has resulted in inappropriate placements, decreased employee morale, and the potential for a decline in the quality of public services. This is a problem that requires comprehensive management solutions.

Following an analysis of these conditions and gaps, the purpose of this study is to explore the management practices of job transfers and promotions in the Formation and Transfer Division of the Pasuruan City Regional Personnel Agency (BKD), including selection procedures, the use of performance data and information systems, internal and external control mechanisms, and institutional and contextual factors that influence transparency and accountability. The objectives of this study are: (1) to comprehensively explain the transfer-promotion process; (2) to identify technical and institutional challenges that hinder the practice of meritocracy and transparency; and (3) to formulate recommendations for a management model that combines the principle of merit, information digitization, and oversight mechanisms to increase the legitimacy and effectiveness of personnel policies at the city level.

2. Literature Review

ASN formation management must be seen as an important element of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) in the public sector, namely an effort to align recruitment, placement and competency development policies with organizational goals so that bureaucratic capacity is in line with public service needs. (Wiryo et al., 2025). The SHRM approach positions job analysis and workload analysis as technical tools that link organizational structure to actual competency needs; without this alignment, formation tends to be reactive and administrative, making it less effective in improving service performance. In this context, formation planning needs to be viewed strategically by utilizing service needs data, workload estimates, and competency maps so that civil servant placement functions as a tool to increase institutional capacity, not simply to fulfill employee quotas.

A performance appraisal system is the operational foundation that links formation planning with career and promotion policies; Armstrong explains that performance-based assessments need to measure outcomes and related impacts so that evaluation results can serve as an objective benchmark for promotions, reassignments, and competency development (Yapa, 2024). If performance indicators are invalid, or assessments are subjective, formation and promotion decisions will tend to be biased and undermine the merit system. Therefore, a combination of e-performance, standard task-based (output) indicators, and a verification system is necessary for evaluation to function as a fair and effective decision-making instrument (Hakim, 2024; Humas Menpan-RB, 2025).

The existence of technology and indicators are equally inadequate, but individual motivation plays a crucial role in the success of personnel reform. The theory of public service motivation from Denhart and denhart (2007) This study demonstrates that internal motivation of civil servants, their desire to serve the community, integrity, and professional commitment can support acceptance of change, adherence to merit values, and efforts to improve performance. Structural reform and transparent evaluations will strengthen public service because civil servants perceive fairness in the process and clear career

opportunities; conversely, processes perceived as unfair will reduce motivation and create resistance within the organization (Campbell, 2025)

Digital transformation and data-driven governance expand institutions' ability to translate job analysis and workload analysis and evaluation results into adaptive formations: recent research shows that integrated personnel information systems enable the synchronization of competency data, performance records, and needs projections, allowing formation planning to be done in real-time and based on evidence (Heslina & Syahrini, 2021; Paul et al., 2024). However, the success of digitalization depends on the quality of data, the quality of the system, and the ability of human resources to use the tools, otherwise digitalization will only strengthen data separation and create new problems (Mahardhani, 2023; Nur et al., 2024).

The adaptive management framework described by Osborne provides flexible and collaborative governance guidelines for governing formation reform: this approach emphasizes organizational learning, inter-unit coordination forums, and evidence-based policy adjustment mechanisms so that institutions can respond to changing service needs without compromising administrative legitimacy (Sanrego & Muhammad, 2013). In actual application, adaptive formation management integrates SHRM, reliable performance assessment, strong public service motivation, and digital capabilities, creating a synergy that enables the BKD to formulate clear, responsible, and responsive transfer and promotion policies to changes in public services (Ningtyas, 2017). Based on this theoretical basis, intervention policies should focus on technical integration (job analysis, workload analysis, and e-performance), human capacity development, and bureaucratic cultural changes that support merit and accountability.

3. Methods

This study applies a descriptive qualitative research design that aims to describe and analyze in depth the practice of managing ASN mutations and promotions in the Formation and Mutation Sector of the Pasuruan City Regional Personnel Agency. (Pahleviannur et al., 2022). The choice of this design was determined by the need to understand the processes, meanings, and social dynamics underlying the application of transparency and accountability principles in human resource management. The research location was chosen at the Pasuruan City Regional Personnel Agency (BKD) because this institution plays a crucial role in implementing regional employee policies. Subjects in this study included structural officials, staff in the Formation and Mutation Division, and civil servants who had undergone mutation and promotion processes in the past three years. The research method used was a naturalistic approach with a phenomenological approach to understand the experiences and perspectives of informants regarding the mutation and promotion system implemented. The operational definitions in this study include: (1) transparency, namely openness of data in the appointment and promotion process; (2) accountability, namely the responsibility of officials for policies and results of personnel decisions; and (3) merit system, namely the placement of ASN based on ability and achievement.

The main instrument for the study was the researcher himself who functioned as a data collector, analyzer, and interpreter, equipped with a semi-structured interview guide, observation sheets, and document lists. Data collection methods were carried out through in-depth interviews, direct observation of the administrative process, and analysis of personnel documents such as mutation decrees, rank lists, and performance evaluation reports. The data obtained were then analyzed using an interactive model of Huberman & Miles (2012) which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data validity is strengthened through triangulation of sources and techniques, as well as checking by key informants to ensure the validity and consistency of research results.

4. Result And Discussion

Implementation of the Principle of Transparency in the Process of Transfer and Promotion of State Civil Apparatus

Research reveals that the implementation of transparency in the ASN transfer and promotion process at the Pasuruan City Regional Personnel Agency (BKD) is still ongoing. The information distribution mechanism utilizes a digital system based on the Regional Personnel Information System (SIKD), which facilitates ASN access to information regarding job openings, promotion criteria, and selection results. However, several informants revealed that there are still limitations in public access to performance evaluation documents that form the basis for selecting promotions. This indicates an imbalance between open policies and administrative practices that remain hierarchical. Some ASN also believe that the publication of selection results is not fully based on an independent verification mechanism, leaving room for subjective perceptions in the final decision-making process.

From a procedural perspective, this study also revealed that the selection process for transfers and promotions at the Pasuruan City Regional Personnel Agency (BKD) adheres to the merit system principles stipulated in Law No. 5 of 2014 concerning Civil Servants (ASN). However, its implementation still faces administrative obstacles, such as delays in document verification and the synchronization of employee data between divisions. Officials in the Formation and Transfer Division stated that these problems are caused by a limited workforce with a thorough understanding of digital systems. This situation has resulted in delays in promotion and transfer schedules, impacting the efficiency of public services in several regional agencies.

Interviews indicate that although transparency is considered important by civil servants, some officials still tend to use informal practices in the promotion process. This is recognized by informants as a form of "administrative rigor" aimed at avoiding internal conflict between work units. However, this practice creates the perception that transparency has not yet fully become part of the organizational culture within the BKD.

The discussion of these results indicates that the implementation of the transparency principle in the Pasuruan City Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) reflects adaptive efforts as described by Osborne in the theory of adaptive governance, namely the ability of public organizations to adapt to changing environmental demands through technology integration and employee participation. However, the difference between open policies and the old administrative culture remains a structural obstacle (Sanrego & Muhammad, 2013). In the context of public service, Denhardt and Denhardt emphasize that transparency is a crucial tool to strengthen the public service motivation of employees, namely the internal drive of ASN to work ethically and focus on the interests of the community (Negoro et al., 2025). Therefore, the success of transparency depends not only on the digital system, but also on the integrity and moral motivation of the officials who implement it.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of limited access to information on civil servant promotions indicates the need for a more inclusive bureaucratic cultural reform. Armstrong emphasized that a performance-based evaluation system can only function effectively if its assessment indicators are announced transparently and verified by professionals (Akbar et al., 2024). Therefore, the Regional Personnel Agency (BKD) must improve data-oriented transparency mechanisms and expand the involvement of ASN in monitoring the job selection process to ensure organizational accountability and fairness.

Accountability and Responsibility of Officials in the Promotion Process

Research findings indicate that the accountability system at the Pasuruan City Regional Personnel Agency (BKD) has been established through selection minutes and employee performance evaluation reports. The accountability process is implemented in stages, starting with the job selection team and continuing through the Head of the BKD, who reports the final results to the Regional Secretary. However, observations indicate that much of the accountability process remains administrative and not fully based on objective performance. Several officials stated that performance appraisals still rely on the assessments of direct superiors without a robust internal audit system.

Furthermore, interviews revealed that the implementation of accountability principles is often hampered by a lack of measurable performance indicators. Civil servants who receive promotions do not necessarily have a well-documented performance track record. This situation has led to the perception among employees that promotions may still be influenced by non-performance factors such as work experience or personal relationships. However, several informants acknowledged that bureaucratic reforms have encouraged the BKD to begin integrating a digital evaluation system based on E-Kinerja, which is expected to increase transparency and objectivity in assessments.

Other findings indicate that employees at the Pasuruan City Regional Personnel Agency (BKD) have demonstrated dedication to implementing accountability principles, including through the publication of transfer and promotion results on the official BKD website. However, there are still obstacles in providing feedback to civil servants who are unsuccessful in the selection

process. The lack of a formal complaint mechanism has resulted in dissatisfaction among employees with the selection results.

Theoretically, this research finding aligns with Denhardt and Denhart's opinion, which states that accountability in public service reflects moral and administrative responsibility to the public. Effective accountability implementation is not only based on adherence to procedures but also encompasses ethical aspects and public participation. In the context of the BKD, efficient accountability should include performance-based evaluations, as explained by Armstrong, where civil servant performance is assessed through the achievement of agreed-upon indicators and documented digitally (Listiani, 2011).

Osborne also emphasized that accountability in an adaptive governance system requires flexible organizations to adjust accountability mechanisms according to changes in the institutional environment and public expectations (Nurman et al., 2024). This relates to the current situation of the Pasuruan City Regional Personnel Agency (BKD), which is currently digitizing its personnel system to increase transparency and reduce the risk of administrative irregularities. The application of digital accountability principles is crucial for transforming the bureaucratic system toward responsive and trustworthy management.

Challenges in Implementing the Merit System in Job Transfers and Promotions

Field research revealed that the implementation of the merit system at the Pasuruan City Regional Personnel Agency (BKD) still faces numerous obstacles, particularly related to the assessment of civil servant competency and performance history. Informants stated that although the merit system is regulated by Government Regulation No. 11 of 2017, its implementation remains limited to the administrative side. Assessments of civil servant potential and performance have not fully adopted an evidence-based approach.

Interviews revealed that civil servant competency data collection is still conducted manually and not fully integrated with the national civil service system. This leads to discrepancies between employee capabilities and available positions. Furthermore, the internal selection team lacks sufficient assessment tools to objectively assess civil servant managerial and technical capabilities. As a result, position placements often do not reflect the principle of having the right person in the right place.

However, the study also indicates that the BKD has initiated efforts to strengthen the implementation of the merit system through training and certification of officials who assess performance. These efforts reflect the agency's commitment to improving civil servant professionalism. However, without the support of valid performance data and an integrated digital evaluation system, the implementation of the merit system risks losing its significance as a performance-based selection mechanism.

In this discussion, Armstrong's theory shows high relevance to these findings, because the merit system requires a performance-based management approach that emphasizes harmony between performance evaluation and job rewards (Hakim, 2024). An imbalance between performance and promotion can demotivate employees and hinder administrative reform. Osborne also highlighted the importance of organizational adaptability in managing merit systems through a data-driven governance approach, where decisions are based on accurate and verifiable information (Wiryo et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the implementation of a merit system must consider the motivational aspect of public service, namely the belief among civil servants that successful performance-based promotions will strengthen their sense of justice and moral responsibility for public service. Therefore, the integration of a merit system, information technology, and public service ethics is the primary foundation for creating professional and sustainable civil service governance.

Strategy for Strengthening Transparent and Accountable Transfer and Promotion Governance

The research results indicate that the Pasuruan City Regional Personnel Agency (BKD) has designed various innovative strategies to strengthen the management of civil servant transfers and promotions, such as implementing the E-Mutation system and integrating it with E-Kinerja. This system allows for online selection processes, reduces manual intervention, and expedites the verification of personnel documents. Furthermore, the involvement of third parties in data verification is a first step towards an independent monitoring system.

Another strategy identified is developing human resource capacity through digital-based employee management training and strengthening employee integrity values. Informants stated that without establishing a culture of transparency and collective responsibility within the bureaucracy, digital transformation will not be effective. In this context, BKD leaders play a key role in creating an organizational climate that supports professionalism and innovation. However, the research also identified challenges in the sustainable implementation of this strategy, particularly regarding the consistency of oversight and commitment between departments. Several employees argued that the digital system needs to be adapted to meet national administrative and regulatory needs.

In the discussion, Osborne's theory of adaptive governance was closely related to explaining the BKD's efforts to adapt its management strategy to changes in digitalization and bureaucratic complexity (Mahardhani, 2023). Osborne highlights the importance of inter-unit collaboration and policy flexibility to enable reforms to adapt to changes in the organizational environment. Furthermore, Denhardt and Denhardt argue that servant leadership is a crucial element in ensuring the sustainability of innovation within the bureaucracy, as ethical leadership can foster a shared commitment to the values of transparency and accountability (Fahrizi & Ali, 2025).

According to Armstrong, the success of this strategy depends on the ability of the performance evaluation system to assess results not only from an administrative aspect, but also from increasing the effectiveness of public services (Harista, 2023). Thus, the integration of technological innovation, transformational leadership, and a performance-based evaluation system becomes a strategic basis for strengthening adaptive, transparent, and accountable ASN mutation and promotion management at the Pasuruan City Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD).

5. Conclusion

Based on the research results, it was concluded that the management of ASN job transfers and promotions in the Formation and Mutation Division of the Pasuruan City Regional Personnel Agency (BKD) has demonstrated efforts to increase transparency and accountability through the implementation of a performance-based system and the digitization of administrative processes. However, implementation in the field still faces obstacles such as limited coordination between divisions, suboptimal internal communication, and employees' inconsistent understanding of performance evaluation procedures and indicators. The transfer and promotion process is often influenced by non-technical factors that have the potential to reduce public trust in the objectivity of human resource policies. Therefore, recommendations include the importance of strengthening a data-based management system that integrates formation planning, performance assessment, and job promotions, increasing human resource capacity related to technical competencies and work ethics, and optimizing internal evaluation mechanisms to be more transparent and participatory. Furthermore, it is crucial for the BKD to increase transparency by regularly publishing evaluation results and ASN performance reports, so that the transfer and promotion process truly reflects professionalism, integrity, and the principle of fairness in employee career development within the Pasuruan City Government.

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