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The Impact of the Implementation of the Merit System on Independence, Justice and Transparency as KPK Law Enforcement Officers: Before and After Changes to the KPK Law Regarding Rewards and Punishments

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Abstract: This study aims to determine whether there is a relationship between the implementation of the merit system and the professionalism, commitment, competence, and objectivity of KPK investigators, and to determine the differences in professionalism, commitment, competence, and objectivity of KPK investigators before and after the implementation of the merit system. To this end, this study used a mixed research approach, distributing questionnaires and conducting interviews with several KPK employees. The planned number of respondents was 92 people, but only 60 people returned questionnaires that were eligible for analysis (response rate 65%). Hypothesis testing was conducted using non-parametric statistics Spearman Rank correlation and Wilcoxon difference test. Regression and also Qualitative Sequential Analysis were conducted to confirm the results. The results prove that the implementation of the merit system has a significant positive impact on aspects of professionalism, commitment, competence, and objectivity. This study also contributes to the consideration of policy formulation in an effort to improve the professionalism, commitment, competence, and objectivity of KPK law enforcement officers.

Keywords: Merit System, Professionalism, Commitment, Competence, Objectivity.

INTRODUCTION

The Merit System according to Law Number 5 of 2014 concerning the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) is a policy and management of ASN based on qualifications, competencies, and performance in a fair and reasonable manner without distinction of political background, race, color, religion, origin, gender, marital status, age, or disability. Meanwhile, Law Number 20 of 2023 concerning the State Civil Apparatus states that the merit system is the application of an ASN Management system that is in accordance with the concept of meritocracy. Meritocracy is a fair and equitable approach to human resource management that does not discriminate based on ethnic background, race, color, religion, origin, gender, marital status,

age, or special needs. It is based on qualifications, competencies, potential, and performance as well as integrity and morality.

Based on the evaluation results of the implementation of the merit system in non-ministerial state institutions conducted by the State Apparatus System Commission (KASN) in 2023, 10 state institutions obtained assessment results that were included in the high category, namely: (1) BPOM, (2) BKKBN, (3) BPKP, (4) LKPP, (5) LAN, (6) ANRI, (7) BPS, (8) BKN, (9) BSSN, and (10) BASARNAS (KASN, 2023). Based on these data, the KPK is not yet included in the state institutions that are able to achieve high scores in the implementation of the merit system. This is certainly an internal problem for the KPK, considering that the implementation of the merit system can affect the behavior and performance of its employees.

The shift toward a more structured merit system began around the 2010s, particularly after several high-profile cases involving high-ranking state officials and large corporations demonstrated the importance of having truly competent and professional employees. At this time, the selection of KPK employees began to involve a more open and competency-based recruitment process. The merit system assessment in 2022, before the KPK changed its employee status to civil servants, received a score of 362.5. In 2023, the KPK's merit system assessment decreased to 326.5.

Regarding the implementation of the merit system at the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), the researcher is motivated to conduct an empirical study on the relationship between the merit system and the professionalism, commitment, competence, and objectivity of KPK law enforcement officers. To the author's knowledge, this type of research has never been conducted at the KPK. Therefore, from a scientific and novel perspective, this research is worthy of being conducted. Finally, the researcher intends to use a mixed methods approach, with an explanatory sequential model using interviews to provide in-depth analysis and strengthen the quantitative findings.

Literature Review

Merit System

Law Number 5 of 2014 concerning the State Civil Apparatus (*Aparatur Sipil Negara/ASN*) defines the merit system as a policy and management approach for ASN that does not discriminate based on political background, race, skin color, religion, origin, gender, marital status, age, or disability, but is instead based on qualifications, competence, and performance in a fair and reasonable manner. Furthermore, Law Number 20 of 2023 concerning ASN states that the merit system is an ASN management system aligned with the principles of meritocracy. Therefore, the merit system serves as the foundation for ASN management with the expectation of producing high-performing and competitive employees. Because it allows individuals to advance their careers based on their unique skills and abilities, without being influenced by factors such as gender or ethnicity, merit-based human resource management (*HRM*) is considered effective in attracting the best candidates. Under the merit system, recruitment and promotion are determined by performance rather than political connections or other non-merit considerations. In essence, the merit principle emphasizes that employees should be selected and promoted according to their abilities relevant to the position. Through the implementation of a fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory merit system, it is expected to enhance the professionalism, integrity, and competence of law enforcement personnel within the Corruption Eradication Commission (*KPK*).

Professionalism

According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), the meaning of the word professionalism is quality, quality characterized by a profession or professional person. Anyone who earns a living performing tasks requiring a certain level of knowledge, skill, or training is

considered a professional. In addition to adhering to a code of ethics and ethical standards, there are usually standards of competence, knowledge, or education that must be demonstrated (sometimes in the form of an exam or credential). Professionalism, on the other hand, refers to the mental attitude and commitment of members of a profession to continually develop and improve their professional qualities.

Mulyasa (2019) defines professionalism as the state, direction, values, goals, and caliber of knowledge and power related to one's livelihood. The term "professionalism" describes a mindset consisting of people's dedication to a profession to consistently recognize and improve their professional competence. The dedication of professionals to improve their professional skills and consistently refine methods in carrying out tasks according to their calling is called professionalism. Mulyasa (2006:39): Start with the original source. Although professionalism is usually associated with the workplace, not all jobs are professions because each profession has unique characteristics that distinguish it from other types of work. The qualities, qualities, and behaviors that define a profession or professional person are related to professionalism. There are five aspects of professionalism according to Hall (1968) in Rosnidah et al. (2011): social responsibility, independence (autonomy demand), belief in professional regulations (belief in self-regulation), relationships with other professions (professional community affiliation), and dedication to the profession (dedication).

Commitment

The Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia defines commitment as a commitment to achieving a goal and complete devotion to an organization. It refers to a feeling of partiality or a tendency to feel tied to a relationship, promise, job, belief, or activity. This can be used to indicate commitment. Commitment is defined as a commitment to a task. According to Allen and Meyer (Wibowo, 2020), emotional intimacy, participation, and individual identification in the implementation of organizational activities can be characterized as organizational commitment. A member is inspired to remain involved in the organization through this emotional connection. An individual's commitment is crucial. A person's level of commitment can be used to measure their steadfastness and accountability, whether in light or heavy, happy or difficult circumstances. Without commitment, consistency is impossible (Wibowo, 2020). A good organization has highly committed members. Organizational performance improves in line with the level of commitment of each individual. Those who are committed always give their all in everything they do. The attitude or behavior a person displays toward an organization, demonstrating their dedication to achieving the organization's vision, mission, values, and goals, can be described as commitment to the organization. Mutual trust, emotional intimacy, and alignment of expectations between members and the organization are the foundation of this loyalty. As a result, members are highly motivated to continue playing a vital role within the organization.

Competence

According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), competence is defined as the ability, knowledge, authority, and power to decide or determine something. Competence is the ability needed to perform or carry out work based on knowledge, skills, and work attitudes. Competence is the ability, skill, or authority to do or determine something. Competence is a crucial component that a person must possess to perform tasks and work effectively.

Competence is the ability to carry out or perform a job or task based on skills and knowledge and supported by the work attitude required by the job (Wibowo, 2020). The LOMA competency dictionary (Veithzal, 2009) defines competency as the personal qualities of an employee that enable them to function at a higher level. These individual characteristics include personality traits, motivations, values, attitudes, knowledge, and abilities.

Every person has a number of basic competency characteristics, including the following;

1. Traits, namely the reasons behind an individual's attitudes, behaviors, or how they react to situations. For example, self-confidence, self-discipline, resilience, or hardiness.
2. M*otive*, namely something that is often dreamed of, thought about, and desired by someone, so that it gives rise to an action or a motivation for the action that will be carried out.
3. Self-concept are a person's attitudes and values. Tests can be used to measure these attitudes and values to determine what motivates people to take action.
4. Knowledge, namely the information he has in a particular field.
5. Skills or expertise, namely the ability to perform certain mental and physical tasks.

Objectivity

The Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) defines objectivity as a true state free from the influence of one's own beliefs or thoughts. Another way to define objectivity is to be honest and unaffected by individual or collective perspectives and concerns when making choices or taking actions. According to Agoes (2018), "Objectivity is objective, on target, unbiased, and always based on facts or supporting evidence." This notion implies that everything must be stated honestly, rationally, and without concealment. Employees who uphold integrity will behave honestly and firmly, while those who uphold objectivity will act fairly and impartially in their work, free from personal interests or pressure from others (Agoes, 2018). Therefore, objectivity refers to an employee's steadfast attitude in carrying out their duties and obligations to the company. Employees must act honestly, with integrity, and impartially so that they can carry out their work without being influenced by demands or pressure from certain parties or their own interests.

METHODS

This study uses a mixed method research type with a sequential explanatory design, namely combining quantitative and qualitative methods in stages to obtain more comprehensive results. The study was conducted on KPK employees as a population, with a total of 64 people, and a minimum sample of 60 people selected using a purposive sampling technique with the criterion of not having a structural position. The research instrument was a Likert scale questionnaire that had been tested for validity and reliability, with the independent variable being the implementation of the merit system and the dependent variables including professionalism, commitment, competence, and objectivity. The data collection technique was carried out by distributing questionnaires to respondents, then analyzed using descriptive methods to describe the variables, as well as inferential analysis including linear regression to test the influence between variables, Spearman Rank correlation to test the relationship between variables, and the Wilcoxon test to compare differences before and after the implementation of the merit system.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Processing Results

Testing the Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

Before being used to collect data, the questionnaire must first be psychometrically tested for validity and reliability. Validity testing is performed using the product-moment correlation coefficient; while reliability testing is performed using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

A questionnaire is said to be valid if it has a validity coefficient greater than 0.30 (Widiyoko, 2012), and is said to be reliable if it has an Alpha-Cronbach coefficient value greater than 0.70.

In this study, validity and reliability testing was conducted using 30 trial respondents. The results of the validity and reliability test data analysis are presented in Table 1 as follows.

Table 1. Results of the Validity and Reliability Analysis of the Questionnaire

Questionnaire	Coefficient Validity	Coefficient Reliability
Implementation of the Merit System	0.5991 - 0.7696	0.9048
Professionalism	0.7578 - 0.8007	0.9056
Commitment	0.6073 - 0.8203	0.9046
Competence	0.6351 - 0.7939	0.8713
Objectivity	0.5317 - 0.8304	0.8752

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2024 (Appendix 2)

Based on the results of the validity and reliability analysis in Table 4.1, it can be explained as follows: The validity coefficients for the variables Merit System Implementation, Professionalism, Commitment, Competence, and Objectivity are shown in the table above. The validity coefficient is greater than 0.30, indicating that all five variables are valid. The Alpha-Cronbach reliability coefficient of all five variables exceeds 0.70, indicating that the variables are reliable. Therefore, it can be concluded that the questionnaire on the Implementation of the Merit System for Professionalism, Commitment, Competence, and Objectivity is valid and reliable, making it suitable for use as a data collection instrument.

Description of Research Variables

The respondents or sample used in the study numbered ninety-two people. However, only 60 questionnaires were returned and completed completely, so the data analysis in this study is based on these 60 respondents.

This variable description is used to explain the variable according to its category without comparing it with other variables. The following variable categories were used in this study: very good, good, fair, poor, and very poor. The following is an explanation of each variable used in this study.

1. **Implementation of the Merit System**
   Providing an overview of the implementation of the Corruption Eradication Commission Merit System based on the opinions or assessments of respondents. Of the 60 KPK employees who were used as respondents in this study, 1 person (1.7%) stated that the implementation of the merit system at the KPK was classified as very good; 2 people (3.3%) stated that the implementation of the merit system was not good; 16 people (26.7%) stated that the implementation of the merit system was quite good; 36 people (60.0%) stated that the implementation of the merit system was good; and 5 people (8.3%) stated that the implementation of the merit system was very good. Therefore, the KPK is said to have implemented the merit system quite well.
2. **Professionalism**
   The description of the professionalism of KPK employees is presented below. Of the 60 KPK employees who participated in this study, one person (1.7%) had low professionalism, ten people (16.7%) had fairly good professionalism, twenty-six people (46.3%) had relatively good professionalism, and twenty-three people (38.0%) had very good professionalism, according to the data in Figure 4.2. Therefore, KPK employees can be said to be very professional.
3. **Commitment**
   The following illustrates the level of dedication of KPK employees. Of the 60 KPK employees who participated in this study, the results showed that 5.0% had poor commitment, 2 (3.3%) had moderate commitment, 34 (56.7%) had good commitment, and 21 (35.0%) had very good commitment. Therefore, KPK employees can be said to be relatively committed.
4. **Competence**

The following provides an overview of the competencies of KPK employees. Of the 60 KPK employees who participated in this study, it turns out that 6 people (10.0%) had competencies in the poor category, 3 people (5.0%) had competencies in the fairly good category, 8 people (13.3%) had competencies that were classified as good, and 43 people (13.3%) had competencies that were classified as good. 71.7%) had competencies in the very good category according to the data in Figure 4.4. Therefore, KPK employees can be said to have very good competencies.

5. **Objectivity**

The following is the objectivity of KPK employees presented. Of the 60 KPK employees who participated in this study, it was seen that 1 person (1.7%) had objectivity that was classified as poor, 9 people (15.0%) had objectivity that was fairly good, 34 people (56.7%) had objectivity that was classified as good, and 16 people (26.7%) had objectivity that was very good according to the data in Figure 4.5. Therefore, it can be said that KPK employees have objectivity that is very good.

First Hypothesis Testing – Spearman Test

The first hypothesis of this study suspects a relationship or correlation between the implementation of the merit system at the Corruption Eradication Committee (KPK) and the professionalism, commitment, competence, and objectivity of KPK employees.

The test was conducted using Spearman's non-parametric rank correlation analysis. This is because this analysis does not require the data to be normally distributed. The test is as follows:

Hypothesis testing:

Ho: The implementation of the merit system at the Corruption Eradication Committee is not related to the professionalism/commitment/competence/objectivity of KPK employees.

H1: The implementation of the merit system at the Corruption Eradication Committee (KPK) is related to the professionalism/commitment/competence/objectivity of KPK employees.

Table 2. Results of the First Hypothesis Testing

No	Questionnaire	Amount of Data	Spearman's rho test	Prob	Results	Conclusion
1	Professionalism	60	0.6444	0.0000	Ho is rejected and H1 is accepted because the p value is less than 0.05.	The results of the hypothesis testing are that there is a substantial relationship or correlation between the professionalism of KPK employees and the implementation of the organizational merit system.
2	Commitment	60	0.5766	0.0000	Ho is rejected and H1 is accepted because the p value is less than 0.05.	It can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between the commitment of KPK employees and the implementation of the merit system at the KPK.
3	Competence	60	0.4020	0.0016	Ho is rejected and H1 is accepted because the p value is less than 0.05.	This shows that there is a strong correlation or link between the implementation of the merit system at the Corruption Eradication Committee and the skills of its employees.

4	Objectivity	60	0.6543	0.0000	H1 is accepted while Ho is rejected because the p value is less than 0.05.	There is a substantial relationship or correlation between the impartiality of KPK employees and the implementation of the organizational merit system.

Second Hypothesis Testing - Wilcoxon Test

The second hypothesis in this study states that the professionalism, commitment, competence, and objectivity of KPK law enforcement officers differ before and after the merit system is implemented. Testing was conducted using a non-parametric Wilcoxon test. The Wilcoxon test provides a non-parametric alternative when data does not meet the assumption of normality, so it can still be used to analyze changes or effects in paired measurements. In the first stage, it is necessary to test the normality of the data distribution first to determine whether the data used follows a normal distribution or not.

Differences in Professionalism Before and After the Implementation of the Merit System at the Corruption Eradication Committee

Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test for Professionalism Data

The results of the normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk Test show a value for the y1post variable for W = 0.89614 with a p-value = 0.00010, which is smaller than 0.05. Meanwhile, the y1pre variable for W = 0.98927 with a p-value = 0.87751, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data is normally distributed.

Paired T-Test on the Professionalism variable

Based on the results of the Wilcoxon analysis, the Z value is -8.3176 with p = 0.000. Because the p value is <0.05, Ho is rejected and H1 is accepted. The conclusion from this hypothesis testing is that the professionalism of KPK employees between before and after the implementation of the merit system is significantly different. The average score of the professionalism variable before and after the implementation of the merit system is 18.133 and 21.60; so there is an increase or improvement in professionalism.

Differences in Commitment Before and After the Implementation of the Merit System at the Corruption Eradication Committee

Shapiro-Wilk Data Normality Test on Commitment Data

The results of the normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk Test show a value in the y2post variable for W = 0.90344 with a p-value = 0.00018, which is smaller than 0.05. And in the y2pre variable for W = 0.92674 with a p-value = 0.00145, which is smaller than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data is not normally distributed.

Wilcoxon test on the Commitment variable

Based on the results of the Wilcoxon analysis, the Z value is 7.248 with p = 0.000. Because the p value is <0.05, Ho is rejected and H1 is accepted. The conclusion of this hypothesis testing is that the commitment of KPK employees between before and after the implementation of the merit system is significantly different. The average score of the commitment variable before and after the implementation of the merit system is 18.68333 and 24.26667; so there is an increase or improvement in commitment.

Differences in Competence Before and After the Implementation of the Merit System at the Corruption Eradication Committee

Shapiro-Wilk Data Normality Test on Competency Data

The results of the normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk Test show a value in the y3post variable for W = 0.77523 with a p-value = 0.00000, which is smaller than 0.05. And in the y3pre variable for W = 0.84436 with a p-value = 0.00000, which is smaller than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data is not normally distributed.

Wilcoxon test on the Competence variable

The Z value = 7.158 with p = 0.000, according to the results of the Wilcoxon analysis. Ha is accepted and Ho is rejected because the p value is less than 0.05. The hypothesis test resulted in the conclusion that there is a significant difference in the competence of KPK employees before and after the implementation of the merit system. The average value of the competency variable before and after the implementation of the merit system was 16.46667 and 21.81667, respectively; this indicates that competence has increased or improved.

Differences in Objectivity Before and After the Implementation of the Merit System at the Corruption Eradication Committee

Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test for Objectivity Data

The results of the normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk Test show the value of the y4post variable for W = 0.96346 with a p-value of 0.06952, greater than 0.05. And also on the y4pre variable for W = 0.97020 with a p-value of 0.14918, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data is normally distributed.

Paired T-Test on Objectivity Variable

The testing of the fourth variable has a different test stage, because the data obtained is normally distributed, therefore the paired t-test method is used to analyze the difference in objectivity before and after the implementation of the merit system at the Corruption Eradication Committee using the following formulation;

The results obtained, t = -23592 with p = 0.0216, are in accordance with the results of the paired t-test analysis. The results obtained p-value <0.05, thus rejecting H0 and concluding that there is a significant difference in objectivity before and after the implementation of the merit system.

The average value of the competency variable before and after the implementation of the merit system was 14.81667 and 15.8 respectively; this indicates that objectivity has increased or improved.

Linear Regression Analysis Results

Linear regression analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between the independent variable (Xpost) and several dependent variables (Y1post, Y2post, Y3post, and Y4post). These findings indicate strong predictive ability of the model, as indicated by a high R^2 value and a statistically significant p-value. The evaluation of the model's effectiveness is as follows;

Table 3. Linear Regression Analysis Results

No	Variables	R^2 value	Explanation	F-statistic	P	Explanation
1	Professionalism	0.990	This model can be trusted to describe the relationship between the Implementation of the Merit System (Xpost) and Professionalism (Y1post)	6,149,964	p <0.001	> p-value < 0.001 indicates that this result is almost certainly not a coincidence, so we are confident that the relationship between Merit System

			with a very high level of reliability of 99%.			Implementation (Xpost) and Professionalism (Y1post) is real and significant.
						> F-statistics shows that the regression model used is very significant and reliable.
						> The implementation of the Merit System (Xpost) has a big influence on Professionalism (Y1post)
2	Commitment	0.986	This model almost completely fits the existing data. Thus, this model can be trusted to describe the relationship between Merit System Implementation (Xpost) and Professionalism (Y1post) with a very high reliability level of 98.6%.	4,204,185	p <0.001	> a very small p-value (< 0.001) confirms that the relationship between Merit System Implementation (Xpost) and Ypost is not a coincidence, but rather a real and significant relationship.
						> The high F-statistic value (4204.185) indicates that this model is much better at explaining the data compared to models that only use the average or no independent variables.
						> The implementation of the Merit System (Xpost) plays a big role in influencing Ypost
3	Competence	0.983	This shows that 98.3% of the variance in Competence (Y3post) is explained by the Implementation of the Merit System (Xpost). This indicates that the regression model used is very effective in explaining the variation that occurs in Competence (Y3post) (dependent variable) based on the Implementation of the Merit System (Xpost) (independent variable). Meanwhile, the remaining 1.7% is variation that cannot be explained by this model.	3,505,741	p <0.001	> p-value <0.001 strengthens that the relationship between Merit System Implementation (Xpost) and Competence (Y3post) is very likely not a coincidence, because there is less than a 0.1% chance that this result occurred randomly.
						> The high F-statistic value (3505.741) indicates that this model is substantially better at explaining variation in Competence (Y3post) compared to the model that does not use Merit System Implementation (Xpost) as a predictor.
						> The implementation of the Merit System (Xpost) really has an impact on Competence (Y3post)

4	Objectivity	0.991	This model explains 99.1% of the variance in Objectivity (Y4post), indicating a very effective fit. This indicates that the regression model used is very successful in explaining the variation that occurs in Objectivity (Y4post).	6,222,810	p <0.001	> a very small p-value (< 0.001), which indicates that the possibility of this result occurring by chance is very small (less than 0.1%), we can conclude that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables in this model is real and statistically significant. > The very high F-statistic value (6222.810) indicates that this model is much better at explaining the variation in the data compared to models that only use the mean or no independent variables. > The implementation of the Merit System (Xpost) really has an impact on Objectivity (Y4post)

Explanatory Sequential Method Analysis

Qualitative results provide answers to hypotheses and allow for further exploration. Based on the responses from five informants, the following results were obtained:

Regarding the professionalism variable, the question: "In your opinion, after the implementation of the merit system, has there been an increase in the quality of work?" The answers they gave were:

1. "Competency improvement is more structured and neat, but due to budget limitations, the number of participants involved is limited" (NS2).
2. "In my opinion, after the KPK implemented the merit system, organizational productivity declined, due to frequent employee transfers without regard for competency. Previously, the KPK implemented a specialization system, ensuring that each employee was an expert in their respective field." (NS1)
3. "Personally and in the unit there is currently improvement, but there is no sustainability" (NS3).
4. "There is improvement" (NS4)
5. "There are positive changes, because competency development is more focused and measurable" (NS5)

In response to the question: "In your opinion, what aspects related to efforts to improve the quality of work are still lacking or weak? What do you think are the causes?" The answers they gave were:

1. "The leadership aspect is the most important aspect in improving the quality of work. Leaders who have a combination of hard and soft competencies will greatly influence the performance of their subordinates. It seems difficult to find such a figure, therefore the Selection Committee must be selective in choosing organizational leaders" (NS1).
2. "Employee capabilities that are considered less than optimal are not evenly distributed among all employees in a unit, due to training not being evenly distributed to all employee personnel. The causes are budget and also the focus of leadership policies" (NS2).

3. "It is still less than optimal because there is no continuity in the training" (NS3).
4. "The weakness is that there is no continuity of training due to budget limitations" (NS4).
5. "Current recruitment prioritizes fresh graduates more than before the merit system was implemented, but this is not a problem, due to the more measurable training. The reason is that the recruitment system originates from the central government, namely BKN" (NS5).

Based on the answers of five informants, it can be concluded that, the less favorable aspects related to improving the professionalism of work quality include the recruitment system originating from the BKN so that it is less suitable to the needs of the KPK, the lack of continuity of the training programs that have been carried out. The principle of the merit system as a form of Civil Servant Reform in 1978, one of which is by conducting fair and selective recruitment (Shafritz, et al., 2001).

Next, the commitment variable was asked, "With the implementation of the merit system, do you have a stronger desire to remain part of the Corruption Eradication Committee?" The answers they gave were:

1. Yes, I am committed to remaining part of the Corruption Eradication Committee (KPK), because I believe that the KPK can still be better as long as it is filled with employees who want to advance the nation and state (NS1).
2. The desire to be part of the Corruption Eradication Committee (NS2) becomes stronger.
3. Yes, personally (NS3).
4. From an individual perspective, yes, I am strongly committed, but if you look at the current situation, many employees want to move to other institutions (NS4).
5. Still have a strong commitment, and hope that the Corruption Eradication Committee will become better (NS5).

In response to the question: "In your opinion, what aspects might reduce or hinder employees' desire to remain part of the Corruption Eradication Committee? What do you think are the causes?", their answers were as follows:

1. "In my opinion, exemplary leadership is what will ensure employees remain at the KPK. It can be said that KPK leaders must possess excellent managerial skills and technical capabilities (legal, IT, research, welfare, etc.) that exceed those of employees, so they can serve as role models and role models." (NS1)
2. "There is uncertainty regarding career paths and compensation (salary or health insurance) covered by the institution. This is due to the less-than-smooth conversion system for promotions from KPK employees to civil servants, which is detrimental to the employees themselves." (NS2)
3. "In the form of unclear rotation and mutation. The cause is not in accordance with the fulfillment of the applied competencies" (NS3).
4. "Regarding the mutation system which is unclear regarding its criteria, the mutation system which is not in accordance with competencies, so that the results are less than optimal." (NS4).
5. "The employee status is not independent, because during the transition process, many people resigned. The reason is that they are not independent." (NS5).

Based on excerpts from interviews with key informants, it can be concluded that implementing a merit system can increase employees' desire to remain with the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK). This means increased commitment, driven by the belief that the KPK will improve in the future. However, there are potential variables that could be further analyzed as an indicator of the merit and competency system implementation, namely

leadership quality. These results align with the research findings of Hanif & Suswanta (2021), which found that leadership influences the success of merit system implementation.

The next stage is the competency variable in the question: "In your opinion, after the implementation of the merit system, is there an increase in employee skills/abilities in carrying out their duties compared to before the implementation of the merit system?" The answers they gave were:

1. "Competency improvement is more structured and neat, but due to budget limitations, the number of participants involved is limited" (NS1).
2. "Honestly, I can say that there hasn't been any significant improvement in capabilities at this point." (NS2).
3. "There is improvement" (NS3).
4. "Personally and in the unit there is currently improvement, but there is no sustainability" (NS4).
5. "Current recruitment prioritizes fresh graduates more than before the merit system was implemented, but this is not a problem, due to the more measurable training. The reason is that the recruitment system originates from the central government, namely BKN" (NS5).

In response to the question: "In your opinion, what aspects of employee skills/abilities in carrying out their duties are currently lacking or weak? What do you think are the causes?" The answers they gave were:

1. "In my opinion, there are two aspects that are very influential, namely technical skills (hard skills) and non-technical skills (soft skills). The cause: errors in identifying competency gaps, so that employee competency development is not on target" (NS1).
2. "Employee capabilities that are considered less than optimal are not evenly distributed among all employees in a unit, due to uneven training for all employee personnel. The causes are budget and also the focus of leadership policies" (NS3).
3. "It is still not good because there is no continuity in the training" (NS3).
4. "The weakness is that there is no continuity of training due to budget limitations." (NS4).
5. "Current recruitment prioritizes fresh graduates more than before the merit system was implemented, but this is not a problem because of the more measurable training available." (NS5).

Based on the results of the interviews conducted, it can be concluded that the implementation of a merit system can improve employee competency in a more structured and organized manner. However, due to budget constraints, the number of participants is limited. The merit system facilitates promotions based on competency and performance (Caldwell, 1978). This improvement is essentially not optimal, so efforts are needed to optimize employee competency. There are two very influential aspects that are still weak: technical skills (hard skills) and non-technical skills (soft skills). The cause is an error in identifying competency gaps, so that employee competency development is not on target.

Next, regarding the objectivity variable, the question is: "In your opinion, after the implementation of the merit system, has there been an increase in employee objectivity (honest attitude, not influenced by personal or group opinions in making decisions) in carrying out their duties?" The answers they gave were:

1. "In my opinion, KPK employees are recruited with high integrity standards so that objectivity is already embedded from the moment employees join the KPK" (NS 1).
2. "In fact, after we joined the ASN, it actually eroded the egalitarian culture where the leadership and all human organs of the KPK stood at the same height and sat at the same low level" (NS2).
3. "The objectivity of the staff is felt to have increased" (NS3).

4. "When viewed from a 360 assessment, it is very objective, because it is a mutual assessment, based on the performance data provided" (NS4).
5. "Compared to before, my opinion is the same, because there are still interests of each unit in achieving goals" (NS5).

In response to the question: "In your opinion, what aspects related to improving employee objectivity in carrying out their duties are currently lacking or weak? What do you think are the causes?" The answers they gave were:

1. "In my opinion, objectivity can decrease due to a non-objective performance appraisal process. For example, someone becomes demotivated and then acts non-objectively due to the lack of clear indicators for the assessment. A less conducive work environment can also decrease employee objectivity" (NS1).
2. "Starting from the recruitment and induction stages as well as the indoctrination of KPK values, it is considered less than ideal, because the KPK's cultural values were initially good, but were mixed with the ASN culture which has been quite controversial, resulting in the erosion of the KPK's independence, which is no longer neutral." (NS 2)
3. "Currently, it is more towards general policy, which is in line with the interests of the current rulers" (NS 3).
4. "There is a perceived increase in objectivity, due to the alignment of planning made based on leadership direction." (NS 4).
5. "There is no competency mapping of HR so that personnel are not placed in the right place, this results in not achieving the objective goal optimally (NS 5).

Based on the interview results, it can be concluded that KPK employees are recruited with high integrity standards, so objectivity is ingrained from the moment they join the KPK. The implementation of a merit system further enhances KPK employee objectivity. Civil servant performance assessments are based on performance planning, which takes into account targets, achievements, results, and employee behavior to ensure the objectivity of their work performance (Permadi, 2021).

However, there are several aspects that are still weak, including a non-objective performance appraisal process that can reduce employee objectivity; a less conducive work environment; a less conducive organizational culture; and employee placement often occurs that does not match their competencies, thus reducing their objectivity.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that professionalism, commitment, and competence have a positive and significant correlation with the implementation of the merit system at the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and the comparison before and after the implementation of the merit system has a positive correlation at the level of professionalism, commitment, competence and objectivity, however, by using the explanatory sequential method at the interview stage, weaknesses in the implementation of the merit system are depicted; including:

1. The recruitment process refers to a condition in which the selection and acceptance process for employees or staff is not entirely based on the principle of meritocracy, namely an objective assessment of individual abilities, skills and achievements.
2. Limitations in performance measurement: Merit systems often rely on objectively measurable performance indicators, such as numbers or tangible results. However, individual performance isn't always easily or objectively measurable, especially in more creative jobs or those involving interpersonal relationships. This can lead to inequities in evaluations.

3. Placement of employees that does not match their competencies, due to reliance on subjective assessments, which can cause employee achievement to be influenced by the perceptions or biases of superiors or evaluators.

Overall, the implementation of the merit system for the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) can provide benefits in increasing professionalism, commitment, competence and objectivity of each employee.

Despite its significant contributions, this study still has limitations. Among them, it used a purposive sampling method, selecting 60 employees. The population in this study was all law enforcement officers at the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), specifically KPK employees. The research sample consisted of a subset of these KPK employees, which is expected to represent the characteristics of the population. Another suggested variable for further research is the quality of leadership in the implementation of the merit system, as highlighted in the discussion section of this paper.

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