



DYNAMICS OF RECRUITMENT OF REGIONAL GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRATIC ELITE OFFICIALS IN PALOPO CITY, INDONESIA

Suryadi

Doctor of Public Administration, Associate professor at the Postgraduate of Brawijaya University, Malang, Indonesia
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7430-3803>
s.c62@mail.ru

Abdul Juli Andi Gani

Doctor of Administration Science, Professor at the Postgraduate of Brawijaya University, Malang, Indonesia
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5525-6642>
Abdull.ju.78@gmail.com

Andy Fefta Wijaya

Doctor of Public Administration, Associate professor at the Postgraduate of Brawijaya University, Malang, Indonesia
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9083-7052>
fefta.researcher22@yahoo.com

Kasmad

Doctoral student of Postgraduate of Brawijaya University, Malang, Indonesia
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5456-8908>
Kasmad.papers.66@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study explores the dynamics of recruitment of elite bureaucratic officials in the Palopo City Government, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The case study research was conducted by involving seven participants who knew in detail and clearly about the recruitment process for this High Leadership Officers. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, observation, and document analysis. After the data is collected, it is analyzed using a spiral model. The research results can be grouped into two main parts: the dynamics of capability and the dynamics of culture. The dynamics of capacity in the recruitment process for High Leadership Officers is related to the requirements for various competencies that prospective officials must possess. In addition, candidate officials must also have a cultural aspect so that in carrying out their duties later, they do not conflict with the norms and rules that apply in the area. This finding shows that the recruitment process for high-ranking officials in Palopo City has implemented both aspects well and is considered under applicable procedures and laws.

Keywords: Recruitment, High leadership officilas, Capabilities dynamics, Cultural dynamics.



DINÂMICA DE RECRUTAMENTO DE OFICIAIS DE ELITE BUROCRÁTICA DO GOVERNO REGIONAL NA INDONÉSIA

Resumo

Este estudo explora a dinâmica de recrutamento de funcionários burocráticos de elite no governo da cidade de Palopo, Sulawesi do Sul, Indonésia. A pesquisa de estudo de caso foi realizada envolvendo sete participantes que conheciam detalhada e claramente o processo de recrutamento para esses Oficiais de Alta Liderança. Os dados foram coletados por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas, observação e análise documental. Depois que os dados são coletados, eles são analisados usando um modelo espiral. Os resultados da pesquisa podem ser agrupados em duas partes principais: a dinâmica da capacidade e a dinâmica da cultura. A dinâmica de capacitação no processo de recrutamento de Oficiais de Alta Liderança está relacionada com os requisitos de várias competências que os futuros oficiais devem possuir. Além disso, os candidatos a funcionários também devem ter um aspecto cultural para que, no exercício posterior de suas funções, não entrem em conflito com as normas e regras vigentes na área. Essa descoberta mostra que o processo de recrutamento para funcionários de alto escalão na cidade de Palopo implementou bem ambos os aspectos e é considerado sob os procedimentos e leis aplicáveis.

Palavras-chave: Recrutamento, Oficiais de alta liderança, Dinâmica de capacidades, Dinâmica cultural.

1. INTRODUCTION

Recruitment activity is one of the essential activities in human resource management that impacts the organization. Recruitment can be defined as finding prospective employees and stimulating them to work in an agency. In addition, recruitment can also be interpreted as the process of attracting individuals with the appropriate number and qualifications to fill positions in the organizational structure (Wehrich and Koontz, 1994; Borichev et al., 2022; Akhyadov et al., 2022). In the perspective of public organizations, the recruitment process is an activity in finding and designing interested applicants to meet the required qualifications. The recruitment process must be planned and carried out with many things in mind. This means that recruitment is not only carried out for recruiting prospective employees. Recruitment aims to provide a large enough group of candidates to be selected according to specified criteria (Saviour et al., 2016).

Various facts show that the performance of the Palopo City government bureaucracy is still unsatisfactory. This is exacerbated by the public perception of a bureaucracy with low performance and is still a public debate to this day. In addition, many community members view the bureaucracy as a system and government management tool that performs very poorly (Garay et al., 2022; Korstjens and Moser, 2018). This happens because people often experience and see for themselves the practices of the bureaucratic apparatus, which have

deviated far from the values of professionalism in the process of carrying out their primary tasks (Creswell, 2002; Akemu Kuroiwa et al., 2022).

The recruitment problem at the district and city government levels still shows various issues. This is caused by the recruitment process of officials who adopt a system of feudalism, dynasties, and paternalistic culture. The recruitment process of officials impacts the ineffectiveness of the administration of government bureaucracy in public services. In addition, other factors that contribute to the quality of public services are the system of nepotism, loyalty, intervention, and the interests of actors involved in the decision process for the appointment of officials. Some researchers mention that several subjective considerations harm the process of recruiting bureaucratic officials, namely those related to seniority, proximity, regional origin, ethnicity, religion, and political order (Helaluddin et al., 2021; Antunes de Souza, & Soares, 2021).

Several empirical studies have proven that the recruitment and selection of regional organizational leaders are not in line with what is expected. Some of these studies were conducted in various government agencies in Southeast Sulawesi Province, Banjarmasin City, Majene Regency, Gorontalo City, and West Papua Province (Ideram et al., 2015). Some of these studies found that the recruitment of High Leadership Officials (HLO) at the local government level was not based on a merit system by considering the capabilities of prospective officials and the culture of meritocracy. Research findings also prove that the recruitment of HLO tends to be more influenced by the dominance of governors, regents, mayors, and members of the Regional People's Representative Council in determining regional leadership officials. Based on this background description, this study aims to answer two research questions, namely, how is the dynamics of capability in the recruitment process for High Leadership Officials (HLO) and how is the dynamics of institutional culture in the recruitment of High Leadership Officials (HLO) in Palopo City?

2. METHOD

2.1. Design Research & Participants

The researchers used a case study design qualitative research to answer some of the research questions above. The case study is a general framework in qualitative research and is described as a phenomenon that occurs in a limited context (Helaluddin & Wijaya, 2019). This method is used to explore events from an individual's journey through interviews or observations and is stated as.

In addition, some of the participants involved in this study were determined using a purposive sampling technique. The reason for using this technique is to identify and select

cases with a lot of information but with limited participants who understand the condition (Creswell, 2002; Helaluddin et al., 2021; Palinkas et al., 2015). Here are seven participants involved in this research, namely: (a) mayor or deputy mayor, (b) chairman of DPRD, (c) secretary of Palopo City government, (d) head of BKD, (e) head of regional apparatus organization, (f) the head of the regional inspectorate, and (g) the selection team for high leadership officers.

2.2. Data Collection

Like qualitative research in general, the main instrument is semi-structured interviews. This type of interview is considered a flexible data collection instrument because, in the interview process, the researcher can shift the topic to other related matters. This interview contains several open-ended questions by providing opportunities for participants to give answers broadly and not feel limited (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003). The questions in the discussion were directed at several aspects, including the disclosure of the participants' lives, responses, perceptions, roles, and others. The following technique is observation, which collects data based on vision and hearing, which is carried out systematically and directed. This technique is done by observing the target or focus of research directly by recording naturally, not artificially, and spontaneously within a particular time (Adler and Adler, 1994; Korstjens and Moser, 2018; Smit and Onwuegbuzie, 2018).

The third data collection technique in this research is the documentation technique. This documentation study is also known as document analysis which refers to reviewing several written documents by researchers (Busetto et al., 2020). This secondary data consists of: (a) laws and regulations, (b) documents on the results of the recruitment and selection of echelon II officials, and (c) other reports relevant to the research problem.

2.3. Data Analysis

After the data was collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis, it was then analyzed using the Spiral Model proposed by Creswell (2002). Some of the activities in this data analysis phase include: (a) organizing and organizing data, (b) reading and recording ideas that arise, (c) describing and categorizing codes into themes, (d) developing and accessing interpretations, and (e) presentation & visualization of data (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). In this analytical technique, the researcher begins to move in a loop of analysis rather than a linear approach. A researcher enters with text or pictures and leaves with a report or descriptive narrative to explain the facts in the field.

2.4. Trustworthiness

Reliability can be achieved in several ways, including credibility, transferability, consistency, and acceptability. This study obtained credibility by triangulating data, investigator triangulation, and member-checking. The investigator triangulation aims to analyze the codes that have been carried out by researchers (Fusch et al., 2018). This triangulation process involves three experienced reviewers in the field of qualitative research. Member checking activities also measure credibility by verifying research colleagues to confirm research findings (Birt et al., 2016; Candela, 2019).

3. RESULTS

3.1. Dynamics of HLO Recruitment Capability

The recruitment process carried out by the Palopo City government is focused on the ability of individual candidates to occupy positions as HLO. There are still many problems encountered during the recruitment process in determining the results of recruitment which are complex and dynamic. The main problem relates to political influence and the support of technological resources that are less supportive. This condition is concluded from the results of interviews conducted by researchers with one of the secretariat staff of the Palopo City government as follows:

“The HLO recruitment process in Palopo City has been carried out in a transparent and accountable manner in accordance with the principles of good governance based on the SCA Law and several established rules. One of them is by using the merit system criteria. However, it is unavoidable that there are still problems faced, among others, related to the ability of resources and support for information technology infrastructure which is still minimal,” (Interview, April 2021).

The HLO recruitment process in Palopo City is also carried out by prioritizing individual abilities to improve bureaucratic performance through an integrated system and task coordination. This is under the statement from the Regional Civil Service Agency of Palopo City as follows:

“The recruitment process that has been carried out so far refers to Law Number 5 of 2014 concerning State Civil Apparatus, which regulates the HLO recruitment process through a selection process and job auction which is called the job fit or competency test. This test considers the ability or capability of the team member based on the knowledge, skills, and ability to overcome various problems in public services in each regional apparatus organization,” (Interview, April 2021).



The results of interviews, observations, and analysis of these documents shows that the Palopo City Government (BKPSDM) has implemented the thinking ahead dimension in HLO recruitment. In this context, BKPSDM gives severe attention and is directly involved in evaluating and controlling the implementation of policies that include integrity, compliance, discipline, and responsibility for the tasks assigned by the Palopo City government. Furthermore, the results of an interview with a Palopo City government official provided the following information:

“In HLO recruitment, the Palopo City government is very serious so that every candidate for office has the competence, ability, and integrity in implementing good governance. If any officials are found to be involved or have deviant behavior, then we will not hesitate to dismiss the person concerned from his/her position,” (Interview, April 2021).

In this regard, the researcher also worked with one of the BKPSDM officials of the Palopo City government to verify the information. Here is an excerpt from his interview:

“We prioritize the capacity of prospective OPD officials, especially the ability to design policies, implement & evaluate policies, and the ability to apply standard operating procedures in public services. This needs to be determined as the main criteria that must be possessed by HLO candidates as a tangible manifestation of efforts to promote good governance in Palopo City.” (Interview, April 2021).

From the interview excerpt, it can be indicated that the implementation of HLO recruitment in Palopo City has implemented the criteria for thinking again, which is an aspect of dynamic governance theory. The Palopo municipal government has also provided added value in designing the capability test for HLO candidates by introducing the principles of good governance. This is reinforced by the results of an interview with one of the respondents who have taken the competency test and job auction as follows:

“Based on our experience, the implementation of the competency test is indeed a bit complicated because we were asked to explain several things briefly. For example, we must be able to: determine the main problems, write down work program priorities, explain alternative solutions to problems in the government bureaucracy, and design implementation strategies,” (Interview, May 2021).

In addition, the concept of HLO recruitment in Palopo City has adopted an open recruitment model by involving all stakeholders and the community in realizing good governance. This concept is also known as cross-sectoral thinking. The primary guideline for conducting recruitment is not closed but open so that all community groups can provide positive and constructive assessments and inputs. An interview with an official of the Palopo City Government as follows:

“The HLO recruitment at the Palopo City Government has involved all fields contained in the SCAC regulations, as well as involving all stakeholders and indigenous community

groups so that the appointment of officials is in accordance with the expectations and wishes of the public. As much as possible, we avoid the recruitment of officials that are feudal in nature, political intervention, and a system of political approaches,” (Interview, May 2021).

3.2. Dynamics of Institutional Culture in the Recruitment Process

The results of this study indicate that the Palopo City government has implemented cultural principles in the official recruitment process. The results of interviews conducted with one of the secretariat officials of the Palopo City government who stated that:

“The recruitment of officials in Palopo City is sacred and is the result of an agreement from all existing stakeholders, including the leaders of traditional groups. Customary leaders do not intervene in local government decisions, but they only provide several criteria as candidates for HLO, such as having skills, knowledge, integrity, never committing immoral acts, not being corrupt, and prioritizing regional, community, religious and cultural interests,” (Interview, May 2021).

Furthermore, the respondent also emphasized that:

“Basically, the recruitment of officials in Palopo City highly upholds the principles of existing culture and developing culture, both on a national and international scale. However, this process still prioritizes the interests of local culture and this is one of the unique things in the recruitment process for officials or service heads in this city,” (Interview, May 2021).

To confirm these findings, the researcher conducted a cross-check by interviewing one of the traditional leaders to find out the truth of the information put forward by the Palopo City government official. Based on these interviews, researchers obtained the following information:

“As traditional leaders in Palopo City, we are indeed asked for opinions regarding candidates for officials who will occupy certain positions. There are several criteria that we put forward as a condition for becoming an official, on the other hand, we have never proposed one particular candidate name. The determination of officials is still carried out through a recruitment process that is open, fair, honest and dignified based on cultural principles in this area,” (Interview, May 2021).

Based on the interview excerpt, it can be concluded that the Palopo City government has prioritized the cultural principles that developed in the surrounding community as one of its references. The criteria used to recruit officials openly must prioritize the principles of local culture, especially the Bugis Culture. Furthermore, the Head of the Palopo BKPSDM gave his perspective related to the cultural principles applied in HLO recruitment as follows:

“Recruitment of HLO for each OPD is carried out with legal and cultural principles that develop and grow in the community. Therefore, our recruitment is based on principles,

principles, basic values in religion and culture, code of ethics, and the integrity of HLO candidates within the Palopo City government,” (Interview, May 2021).

In addition, during an in-depth interview with one of the BKPSDM officials, the following information was obtained:

“In conducting recruitment, the Palopo City Government has used the basic criteria based on a merit system, because it is in accordance with the mandate of Law Number 5 of 2014 concerning SCA. This merit system culture has become the main basis for recruiting officials with an open recruitment system,” (Interview, May 2021).

Developing a merit system culture has also become one of the general criteria in implementing the selection and recruitment system for employees or officials in this region. The results of an interview with one of the heads of offices in the Palopo City government are as follows:

“Based on our experience, the selection and recruitment process for Echelon II officials is in accordance with Law Number 5 of 2014 concerning State Civil Apparatus. Even more than that, we are expected to be able to ground the principles and values and ethics that become the institutional culture within the Palopo City Government according to the mandate of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Palopo,” (Interview, May 2021).

Another finding states that the HLO recruitment process is suitable and relevant to local cultures, such as the *Siri'na pace* culture, which means a culture of shame or self-respect. In other words, the elected official should be ashamed for: (a) committing acts of corruption, (b) enriching himself, (c) committing illegal levies, and (d) immoral acts. The cultural objective to be developed in the recruitment process is a culture of concern for improving public services and being proactive in implementing government policies. This is revealed from the following interview:

“In building a clean and authoritative government, HLO recruitment must be based on the principle of a culture of shame (*siri' na pacce*) among officials, such as the ability to not commit corruption, illegal fees, and enrich oneself. This is a cultural goal that needs to be nurtured in Echelon II officials, especially at the beginning of the selection and recruitment of officials,” (Interview, May 2021).

On the other hand, research findings state that there is a close relationship between the development of organizational culture and the creation of team member professionalism in the management of government administration. This is very reasonable because the culture of team member professionalism in the administration of the Palopo City government currently focuses on the formation of team member professionalism with high-performance standards based on applicable values and norms. The results of an interview conducted with one of the secretariat officials of the Palopo City government, who stated the following:

“In carrying out HLO recruitment, we are very concerned and consider several prerequisites that prospective officials need to have. One of them is the ability to fulfill obligations in shaping the character and character of leadership in accordance with local cultural values. This means that when they take office, they will not conflict with the local culture, rules, and norms of the applicable regulations,” (Interview, May 2021).

Based on these findings, it can be stated that basically, the implementation of HLO recruitment in Palopo City has been based on the existence and cultural position that has developed in organizational life and the community environment. The recruitment process has involved the principles, goals, and artistic positions, which become the conceptual framework and the main foundation. This is because the organizational culture has become the fundamental values, beliefs, and mentality of the Palopo City regional leadership in achieving the shared vision, mission, goals, and targets.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study state that the dynamics of capability is seen as the primary dimension that plays an essential role as a standard in conducting HLO recruitment in Palopo City, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Capability dynamics uses human resources to adapt the organization to changing times and aims to improve performance (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Zollo and Winter, 2002). Blyler & Coff (2003) state that capability dynamics is an activity to reconfigure human resources to react to market changes. In short, recruitment is carried out by prioritizing three competencies for prospective officials: thinking ahead, thinking again, and thinking across sectors.

In addition to the capability dynamics, this study finds evidence that cultural dynamics are also one of the primary considerations in conducting HLO recruitment in Palopo City. This is evidenced from several indicators of the findings that prospective applicants need to have three main prerequisites, namely: (a) considering the principles of organizational culture, (b) meritocratic criteria as the main basis for HLO candidates, and (c) being able to carry out the role as glue. In fostering a sense of national unity, these results strengthen the dynamic governance theory, which asserts that people in organizations are important assets that can build organizational culture (Saviour et al., 2016). This means that people in these organizations can influence their attitudes and actions in carrying out their roles as state administrators.

These findings strengthen several theories about meritocracy principles which are seen as organizational culture. Meritocracy needs to be developed in public organizations because it has a very positive impact on reducing the risk of corruption, career development, and organizational effectiveness. The merit system is based on merit, education, certain standards,

and specific competency requirements conducted openly and through intensive interviews. In addition, other studies suggest that meritocracy is associated with merit-based recruitment and promotion through competitive examinations, interviews, portfolios, and performance based assessments (Sundell, 2014; Suzuki and Hur, 2021).

In addition, a meritocratic culture can also provide opportunities for officials to improve their careers while maintaining control over their performance. In other words, culture and meritocracy can affect the maturity of bureaucratic behaviour and their ability to carry out public services (Oliveros and Schuster, 2018). Several studies also link the meritocratic system to prioritize team member recruitment based on work performance and not political connections (Byrkjeflot et al., 2018; Gualmini, 2008).

5. CONCLUSION

1. This study aims to explore the dynamics of High Leadership Officers (HLO) recruitment in the municipal government of Palopo, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, focusing on the recruitment process. This study seeks to obtain in-depth information about the pattern and systematics of recruiting officials at the Palopo municipal government from various parties directly involved in the process. The research findings can be classified into two main aspects: the dynamics of capability and the dynamics of culture. In general, this study's findings indicate that recruiting officials at the Palopo municipal government is under applicable laws and regulations.

2. Regarding capability dynamics, the HLO recruitment process has prioritized several skills that official candidates must possess. There are three competencies that these candidates must possess, namely the skills to think ahead, think again, and think across sectors. Furthermore, other findings in this study are related to aspects of local culture, which must remain one of the references in determining HLO. This means that prospective officials must possess and apply elements of Bugis culture that are in line with the goals of the Palopo municipal government in realizing good governance.

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