

## Systematic Literature Review: Political Patronage Versus Merit System on Local Government Analysis VOSViewer

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### Abstract

*It is important to improve the public sector with recruitment rules that aim to improve public services by minimising political interests and patronage practices. The purpose of this study is to examine the development of the application of the merit system in the prevention of patronage practices in local government. Bibliometric analysis using VOSViewer. The literature review in this study provides an overview of the improvement of the public sector from the perspective of the merit system, taking articles in the period 2013-2023. The results obtained in this study are the prevention of patronage practices with the merit system in local government administration successfully implemented in Indonesia, namely in the cities of Medan, Deli Serdang and DIY, while in other countries it was successfully implemented in the African state of Nigeria, the merit system is used to prevent political patronage in the public sector by ensuring the acceptance of competent employee candidates, and reducing the influence of political patronage that previously hindered the development of public services and justice.*

**Keywords:** Merit system, Local government, Political patronage, Bibliometrics, VOSViewers

### Abstrak

Pentingnya peningkatan perbaikan sektor publik dengan regulasi rekrutmen pegawai yang berorientasi untuk meningkatkan pelayanan masyarakat dengan meminimalisir kepentingan politis dan praktik patronase. Tujuan dari penelitian ini untuk melihat perkembangan penerapan *merit system* pada pencegahan praktik patronase dalam penyelenggaraan pemerintahan lokal. Menggunakan analisis bibliometrik VOSViewer. Studi literatur dalam penelitian ini memberikan gambaran mengenai perbaikan sector public perspektif *merit system* dengan mengambil artikel pada rentang periode 2013–2023. Hasil yang diperoleh dalam penelitian ini adalah pencegahan praktik patronase dengan merit system pada penyelenggaraan pemerintahan lokal berhasil dilaksanakan di Indonesia yaitu di kota Medan, Deli Serdang dan DIY adapun di negara lain berhasil dilaksanakan di Negara bagian Afrika yaitu Nigeria, merit system digunakan untuk mencegah patronase politik pada sektor publik yaitu dengan memastikan penerimaan kandidat pegawai yang kompeten, dan mengurangi pengaruh patronase politik yang sebelumnya menghambat perkembangan pelayanan publik dan keadilan.

**Kata kunci:** Merit System, Pemerintahan lokal, Patronase politik, Bibliometrik, VOSViewer

## Introduction

Resources that are always necessary for any organisation to achieve its goals include materials, people, technology, money, machines and others. One of the most important resources in the journey of an organisation is people because people have the ability to organise, manipulate, transform and use other resources to support the journey and achieve organisational goals (Bassey et al. 2021).

However, the practice of appointment and recruitment of civil servants in local government institutions basically refers to a number of regulations that contain different provisions on various mechanisms and procedures used in the appointment and recruitment of employees. A number of regulations and decisions made by the authorities indicate that the procedures for appointing and recruiting senior officials should be carefully considered. These placements are not only about filling gaps in organisational structures, but also about institutional governance, human resource development, creating a good work culture, and other issues that affect the performance or productivity

of the relevant government agencies (Wijaya et al. 2019).

Reports published by Transparency International, Open Government 2015, IMD World Talent 2015, and Worldwide Governance Indicators 2012 show that Indonesia's government efficiency is far below that of Singapore in the 2015 Corruption Perception Index. The study shows that Indonesia's bureaucracy is still very poor compared to its Southeast Asian neighbours. Moreover, the report shows that Indonesia's public sector reform agenda is irrelevant compared to current progress and demands such as good governance, professionalism, transparency and accountability, trade liberalisation or globalisation, and the enforcement of ethics and morality among public service providers. Specifically for local government, recruitment procedures need to be reformed. Since people play an important role in governance, the first thing to do is to recruit human resources that match their capacity and potential to occupy positions in local government.

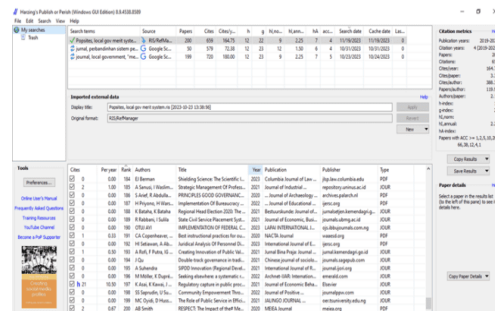
The importance of merit in government organisations should be the

basis of the struggle to implement this recruitment reform in local government. The formation of a selection committee, placement planning, application, selection, evaluation and decision by the authorised PPK is a long process that produces high-ranking officials in a field. This process is designed to ensure that merit principles such as transparency, fairness and competency-based selection are properly and effectively applied in the recruitment process and that this process produces the best person for the job. However, the applicable laws ensure that employees, especially local government officials, do not do anything during this process as it is against the broader bureaucratic reform and merit principles (Wijaya et al. 2019).

## Methods

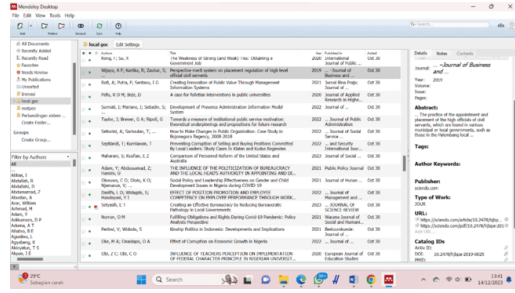
This research uses bibliometric analysis of Harzing's Publish or Perish (PoP) system and VOSViewer. The collection and retrieval of multiple articles or journals on specific topics that are grouped into one (Susanti et al. 2022). The journal search tools used in this study are Harzing's Publish or Perish and VosViewer to create and

display bibliometric networks. By restricting the publication name to 'journal' and using the keywords 'local government' and 'merit system', and selecting journal sources from the Google Scholar website. The literature review in this research is to provide an overview of public sector improvement from a merit system perspective in the context of local government. Articles with a time span of 10 years in the period 2013-2023 were taken and 200 published journal articles were obtained.



Picture 1: Searching journal on PoP

The data were then saved in the form of a RIS file format extension and then visualised in a bibliometric map using the VOSviewer application. In addition, the bibliometric network obtained from Harzing's Publish or Perish was analysed to show the links between the variables to be studied, in order to obtain keyword relationships.



Picture 2: Journal's URL containing keyword on Mendeley

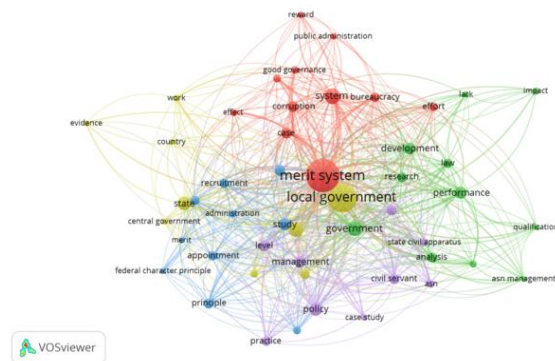
The 200 journal articles stored in the ris file will be added to the Mendeley reference manager. Once the Mendeley file has been added, it can assist in the process of downloading the journal via the URL address. Furthermore, the journals can be tagged with keywords and then sorted and grouped with the aim of finding journals that contain 2 keywords local government and merit systems.

Data in .RIS file format obtained from Harzing's Publish or Perish (PoP) software is then used by the author to visualise and analyse data in bibliometric maps, as well as to see the network relationship between research objects or variables to obtain abstract and keyword relationships through VOSViewer.

## Result and Discussion

Searching the journal URL in Mendeley yielded 3 journals with 2 keywords, namely 'local government' and 'merit system', 7 journals with the keyword 'local government' and 9 journals with the keyword 'merit system'. The remaining 200 journals were not *Open Access*.

The results of the analysis using VosViewer showed that "merit system" and "local government" were the largest or dominant variables in the VosViewer network visualisation, which can be interpreted as these two keywords having been researched by many authors in the past.



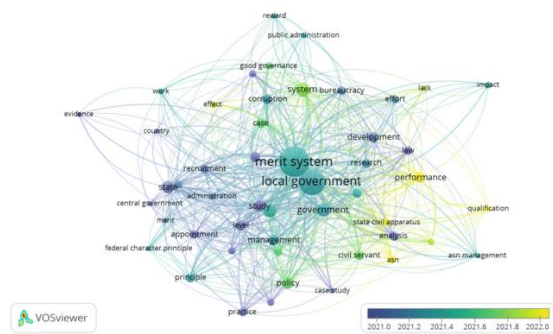
Picture 3: Network Visualization

From the visualization of the bibliometric map VOSViewer obtained 6 Clusters with divisions of them, cluster 1 with 12 items, cluster 2 with

11 items, Cluster 3 with 10, cluster 4 with 10, Cluster 5 with 10 items, and cluster 6 with 3 items, where the merit system items are on cluster 5 and local government items are in cluster 1. Where the division of Cluster on Cluster 1 is composed of agency; central government; country; evidence; implementation; local government; ministry; policy; practice; regulation; state; work is depicted with a network of “red” lines. Cluster 2 variables include administration; case study; challenge; civil servant; development; Indonesia; level; political; problem; research; role depicting with a “green” network. The cluster 3 has a variable in appointment; effect; federal character; principle; merit; influence; apparatus; nigeria; princile; recruitment; case; promotion; young study with a colored “civil” network on the “old” line.

In the section of visualization Overlay Visualization on VOSViewer software it can be seen that by 2022 research related to merit system and local government related to the theme or variable state civil apparatus; asn; performance and some other variables that are seen with the marking of yellow network visualisation is still rarely done

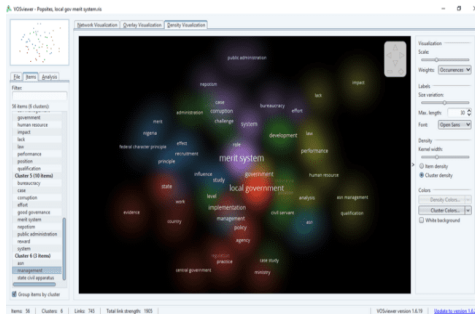
research. Where this is demonstrated by the visualization of overlay nets that are colored from toasca green to purple green, which can be seen in the following figure (4.).



Picture 4: Overlay Visualization

Further on the Density Visualization section of the VOSViewer that is in Figure (5.) below, it can also be seen that the division of the Cluster by color and in accordance with the visualization of the bibliometric map of the Network Visualisation where there are 6 Clusters with division of Cluster 1 in red with a total of 12 items, cluster 2 in green with a maximum of 11 items, Cluster 3 in old blue and 10 items, the cluster 4 in yellow with a minimum of 10 items; cluster 5 with 10 items in purple, and cluster 6 with 3 items in young blue. It can be seen from the visualization that the purple and red circles with the merit system and local

government variables look bigger compared to other variables. This is due to the variable in the period of the last 10 years in 2013-2023.



Picture 5: Cluster Density Visualization

## Local Government

Local government can mean local, self-governing or autonomous government. Local government is described as the institutions and organisations of government at the local level; in other words, local government serves as the institutions that govern the operations of local government. In this sense, the terms 'local government' and 'regional government' refer to councils and mayors, which are made up of councils and regional leaders who elect their officials. In the second sense, local governments indicate what they should do and what they do. In this sense, local governments are the same as local governments because they perform their functions as autonomous regions (self-

government). According to the United Nations Department of Public Administration, it is a national political subdivision governed by law. It is responsible for local affairs such as paying taxes or dismissing employees for certain reasons (Nurcholis 1945).

In the management aspect of local government, in this case, it is the regional government that should be able to create a more adaptive system to achieve the goals of achieving the regional vision and mission. To meet the evolving needs of the community and a means of anticipating environmental changes that continue to occur. Where the changes in question take into account important factors that include changes in the content and context of the public sector (Polyando 2022). Although in the service of the community, local governments are often faced with the disease of their bureaucrats, namely bureaucratic pathology, namely behaviour that is contrary to the rules, norms, morality and rationality required by local leaders themselves (Setyasih 2023).

## Merit System

Amartya Sen stated that meritocracy depends on the perception of people who are considered good. Rewarding merit is known as meritocracy (Wijaya et al. 2019). In other words, a meritocratic system rewards merit. McCourt (2007) defines meritocracy as "the best person" and states that this system must be applied correctly, otherwise corruption or nepotism will occur. McCourt also shows how mistakes in defining merit can lead to corruption. In situations where there are several capable candidates, selectors can take advantage of the ambiguity and appoint family members or supporters of candidates who are almost as capable as the highly capable candidates.

This leaves the 'patron' with the difficulty of placing the 'client' in a position that requires the right knowledge and expertise rather than one that is left out (Mccourt and West 2007). There may be no application of meritocracy as it has been defined so far. Defining meritocracy as a system for filling positions should result in "the best people providing the best quality

services to the community" (Welasari et al. 2021).

In order to get the "best candidate", government/bureaucratic organisations must apply the principles of merit in conducting selection, namely 1). Jobs at every level; the merit principle applies to promotions as well as initial recruitment and every job level must follow the merit principle, 2). The best candidate; the candidate who, among a number of candidates, is best able to perform the duties of the job adequately, 3). Open to all; giving priority to the requirement of fairness and equality, where all parties are given equal opportunities, so as not to rely only on a limited number of internal candidates, 4). Systematic, transparant and competitive; appointments should be made systematically, openly and competitively (Mccourt and West 2007).

## Application Development of Merit System in Prevention of Patronage Practices on Local Government

The implementation of bureaucratic recruitment or government apparatus in the prevention of patronage practices on local governments in

Indonesia of the results of the review of journals found and producing positive implications for the quality of competent officials has been carried out in the government of the city of Medan, in the district of Deli Serdang which implements the merit system by holding a coherence test and the qualification of strategic officials. (Sembiring & Simanihuruk, 2020).

The implementation of the recruitment of government apparatus using the merit system is also implemented in the government of the village, which is carried out in the territory of Yogyakarta. The recruiting of the rural apparatus is conducted in the neighborhood of the government district of Istimewa Yogyakarta is one of the features of the bureaucratic reform in the field of government and the application of the merits system is not only discourse but has been applied to the lowest administrative level such as the village (Atmojo and Pratiwi 2020).

As for the findings of the merit system that cannot be applied in the recruitment of bureaucracy occurred in the area of the district of Samosir

execution is still controversial due to the presence of pro-contracted related Batak culture that affects the implementation of the ASN Act by the city and district governments in North Sumatera (Sembiring & Simanihuruk, 2020). Therefore, the implementation of the system of merit in the placement of senior PNS officers is a joint task, including the community itself (Wijaya et al. 2019).

The findings related to the anticipation of the practice of political patronage with the merit system in countries other than Indonesia were carried out in the African state of Nigeria in an attempt to implement the merits system because the recruitment process in Nigeria is often based on the practices of political patronship. The controversial recruitment process in Nigeria that is usually based on political patronage and quotas at the expense of capacity must end.

Recruitment in the public service needs to be balanced between performance and quota, by eliminating political considerations thoroughly to ensure efficiency and efficiency. Because before the merit system was

introduced, patronage still affected Nigerian public service recruitment leading to acts of corruption, incompetence, and inefficiency based on social affiliation, religious identity, ethnic fantasies, and rooted political connections (Bassey et al. 2021).

### Conclusion

The writing of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) using this method of bibliometric analysis aims to provide an overview of the implementation of the "Merit system" and "Local Governance" theory by linking to variables that are still rarely used by researchers in general.

The research took and used journal articles over a 10-year period in the period 2013-2023. Retrieved as many as 200 journal articles published with Harzing's Publish or Perish search tools (PoP). Then three journals were obtained containing two keywords, "local government" and "merit system", seven with the keyword "local government", and nine with the key word "Merit system". The Vos Viewer bibliometric analysis facilitates the library research process by generating journalistic mapping visualizations on a

particular theme, i.e. it can see the development of research on that theme that relates to other items/variables. In spite of successes in Medan City and Deli Serdang district as well as DIY in appointing competent officials, in Samosir district there has been cultural controversy affecting the implementation of the ASN, while efforts to improve the quality of staff remain, reaffirming the importance of the placement of qualified officials in the public service, both in Indonesia and other countries such as Nigeria, where the dominance of political patronage in the recruitment process leads to inability, inefficiency, and corruption, which requires a balance of performance and quotas and the elimination of political considerations thoroughly to increase the efficiency and efficiency of public services.

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