

## Policy innovation towards regional heads who nominate as independent candidates

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**Abstract:** This article originates from the phenomenon of pairs of regional head candidates who advance and win through independent channels in regional elections. The presence of individual regional heads needs to be tested, especially when building a corruption-free government. The author takes the case of the recruitment of local government echelon officials, considering that this sector is very prone to corruption. The research was conducted in two areas where regional head positions were and are held by independent candidates, namely the City of Bukittinggi, West Sumatra Province and East Tanjung Jabung Regency, Jambi Province. The research method used is qualitative with data collection techniques in the form of in-depth interviews with many parties, literature studies, observation, and documentation. From the results of the research, it was found that the practice of buying and selling government positions that often occurs in many regions is actually not found in the two studied regions. Regional heads from these individual channels have succeeded in carrying out policy innovations by not intervening much and fully surrendering the mechanism for the recruitment process for echelon officials to the regulations. Even if changes are made, they are not prominent in nature and are always put forward under the principle of meritocracy. This in itself gives rise to stability in governance. For this reason, the existence of individual regional head candidates is shown to be linear with the corruption prevention agenda. Despite this, regional heads from individual channels still need strengthening, such as state funding support in Pilkada, affirmation of requirements, and more inclusive arrangements.

**Keywords:** Innovation; Policy; Recruitment; Position; Head of Region, Individual

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### Introduction

Independent candidacy for regional heads from the individual route has been allowed since Constitutional Court Decision No. 5/PUU-V/2007 and Law No. 12 of 2008. Since then, the interest of regional head candidate pairs for the Pilkada from the individual route has been high. Based on Pilkada trends from 2015 to 2018, there were 289 individual candidates who ran for Pilkada, with 19 winning (Dinarto & Ng, 2021). In 2020, out of a total of 270 regions that carried out Pilkada, there were 68 pairs of regional head candidates from the individual path and six winners (Syambudi & Bernie, 2020). Even though the winning rate for regional head candidates from the individual route is relatively low, in the range of 6.5%-10%, their presence brings new energy to the strengthening of the agenda for eradicating corruption in local governments.

Misra et al. (2021) shows that the opening of the mechanism for individual candidates in regional elections is actually an anti-thesis for suppressing the dominance of money politics, which is often carried out by political parties. It is common knowledge that every candidate supported by a political party is forced to incur huge costs starting from massive campaigns (Fahmi et al., 2020), deployment of a succession team (Mietzner, 2015), and survey financing (Ufen & Mietzner, 2015). This figure will increase when candidates engage in corrupt practices in the form of giving dowries to be supported by a party or combination of political parties (Djuyandi & Herdiansah, 2018; Muhtadi, 2019), and vote buying in an effort to win the Pilkada (Aspinall &

Sukmajati, 2015; Robison & Hadiz, 2017). As a result, a regional head candidate's choice to run for election through an individual route seems to be the best choice to escape the ties of corruption.

The choice to nominate in the Pilkada from the individual route in the Pilkada is not only logical, but a choice that raises positive perceptions from the public. Tomsa and Setijadi (2018) describes the case of the emergence of a massive political movement called 'Friends of Ahok', which voluntarily collected KTPs as a condition for candidacy by individual route in the 2017 DKI Jakarta Pilkada. The community's motives for supporting individual candidates cannot be separated from hope for the emergence of candidates for regional heads who are free from political party affiliation (Dinarto & Ng, 2021). With the minimum potential for money politics and high public trust, each pair of regional head candidates from the individual path who win the Pilkada has a strong foundation in building a corruption-free government.

**Table 1.** Recapitulation of Regional Heads Who Become Suspects of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) due to the sale and purchase of positions in the 2016-2022 period.

No.	Period	Name	Position	Supporting Party and Regional Head Election Supporters
1.	2016	Sri Hartini	Klaten Regent	PDIP, Golkar
2.	2017	Taufiqurrahman	Nganjuk Regent	PDIP, PKB
3.	2018	Sunjaya	Cirebon Regent	PDIP
4.		Purwadisastra Abubakar	Bandung Barat Regent	PDIP, PKB, PBB, PKNU, PKPI, PKBIB
5.	2019	Dzulmi Eldin	Medan Mayor	Golkar, PDIP, PKS, PAN, PKPI, Nasdem, PBB
6.		Mohammad Tamzil	Kudus Regent	PKB, PPP, Hanura
7.	2021	M Syahrial	Tanjung Balai Mayor	Golkar, PDIP, Gerindra, PKS, Demokrat
8.		Novi Rahman Hidayat	Nganjuk Mayor	PKB, Hanura, PDIP
9.		Puput Tantriana Sari	Probolinggo Mayor	Gerindra, PDIP, PPP, Nasdem, Golkar
10.	2022	Agung Wibowo	Pemalang Regent	PPP, Gerindra
11.		Abdul Latif Amin Imron	Bangkalan Mayor	PPP, Golkar, Gerindra

From Table 1, it can be seen that buying and selling of positions occurs almost every year in various regions and is carried out by regional heads who are entirely supported by political parties or a coalition of political parties. The involvement of these regional heads in the practice of buying and selling positions cannot be separated from the high political costs they incur in the Pilkada. Based on relevant previous studies, issues that often arise in Pilkada include the high cost of political financing for regional heads (Sjahrir et al., 2013), corrupt tendencies by political parties and candidates (Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2015; Berenschot, 2018; Muhtadi, 2019), patronage and clientelism (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019; Berenschot, 2018; Warburton & Aspinall, 2018), and the strengthening of populist politics (Lestari, 2019; Prayogi, 2019; Savirani & Aspinall, 2017). Meanwhile, other studies reveal the various negative excesses of regional elections, including the expansion of the regional head's power by advancing his wife in elections, as a consequence of the 30% rule for women's electoral representation (Kabullah, 2019), the use of state finances to finance the political activities of the wife of the regional head, who is running as a legislative candidate during elections (Fajri & Kabullah, 2021), low transparency of pairs of regional head candidates in reporting real campaign financing during Pilkada, known as 'accountability dysfunction' (Kabullah et al., 2020), and efforts to expand the power of regional heads by advancing the whole family including the wife in elections (Kabullah & Fajri, 2021). Unfortunately, law enforcement in elections is often neglected, which results in not achieving election justice (Fahmi et al., 2020). From these various studies, there is a common thread that highlights the reduced quality of democracy in Pilkada due to excessive domination of money by the main political parties. This ultimately leads regional heads to become trapped in corruption when they take office by carrying out the corrupt buying and selling of positions.

From table 1 it can be seen that there were no regional heads from the individual route who were arrested for buying and selling positions. This gives hope in efforts to prevent corruption in the bureaucracy while at the same time strengthening the implementation of democracy. Observing this reality, a study that focuses on policy innovation in the recruitment of echelon officials by regional heads from individual channels is interesting, considering that not many have been done so far. Several limited studies outlined the strategies carried out by independent candidates in local elections, including both the campaign strategy of individual candidates in the regional elections of Rembang Regency (Widiptya & Utomo, 2017), and the political marketing strategy in the regional elections of Buton Selatan Regency (Suherman & ., 2017). The study from Dinarto and Ng (2021) classifies the characteristics of individual candidates in Pilkada into three categories: partisan candidates, non-partisan candidates, and underdog candidates. Other studies observed from the perspective of voters, such as the political behaviour of voters who chose individual candidates in the regional elections of Labuhanbatu Regency (Tampubolon et al., 2021). Further studies have described the problems of legal arrangements for pairs of regional head candidates from the individual route (Martini & Ibrahim, 2013; Santoso, 2017). From these various studies, the analysis of the phenomenon of regional heads from the individual path is dominated by a political and legal focus. With the theoretical gap above, this study outlines the analysis of policy innovation by regional heads from the individual path in the recruitment of echelon positions. This is in line with the spirit of building an anti-corruption movement based on a more interdisciplinary approach (Priyono, 2018). Thus, approaches to problems from different disciplines in this case policy innovation are very helpful in order to enrich academic studies, especially regarding issues of corruption and anti-corruption.

Innovation is defined as a change, or something that becomes new. Initially, innovation was interpreted negatively, with nuances of revolution and radical change. However, the definition of innovation has shifted to be more positive, to "creating something new". Innovation is understood as the process of creating new products (goods and services), introducing new methods or ideas, as well as creating incremental changes or improvements (Suwarno, 2008). Rogers (2003) explains that innovation is an idea, practice, or object that is considered new by an individual or other adoption unit. Whereas Albury (2005) explains that innovation is closely related to useful new ideas; innovation will mean nothing if its presence does not provide benefits. This is reinforced by Schumpeter's thinking that innovation is the key to economic change, including the process of industrial mutation, which continuously revolutionises the economic structure from within, without having to destroy old values, and at the same time opens up creation for the emergence of new values (Śledzik, 2013). Public policy as an innovation is part of efforts to find solutions to solve complex social problems, economic challenges, and politics hindered by the bureaucracy.

Referring to the growing academic discussion, policy innovation is often associated with policy diffusion. According to Dearing (2009) innovation is one of the key components of policy diffusion theory, wherein innovation can only be carried out if the perception of its adopters is that there is added value or benefits to be gained. This added value is a fundamental part in building the rationality of innovation adopters, meaning they want to follow and are willing to be involved in innovating. Without innovation in policy making, more complex problems or 'the valley of death' will emerge, a condition where policy destruction occurs both at the micro and macro levels.

Innovation is an idea, practice, or value; ideas that are considered new cannot be easily accepted by adopters. Even though these innovations have good goals for improved public policy, change will not occur if they are not socialised properly. Therefore, Schumpeter describes the concept of a trilogy in the theory of policy innovation: invention, innovation, and diffusion (Dearing, 2009). Invention is the discovery of new ideas, methods, or models. Innovation is the adoption of these findings into new items, methods, or models. While diffusion is the process of spreading the values of innovation to a wider environment. Transmission of this value is determined by the speed of adoption. The faster a person accepts the new values that are brought through innovation, the greater the success of the innovation carried out (Marsh & Sharman, 2009). These three variables are actually closely related to and depend upon one another. Therefore, the use of these three

variables will become the basis for thinking in analysing regional head policy innovations from the individual path when recruiting echelon positions in local government.

There are two locations used in this study, namely the City of Bukittinggi, West Sumatra Province, and East Tanjung Jabung Regency, Jambi Province. The City of Bukittinggi was chosen after taking into account the profile of Ramlan Nurmatias, who served as Mayor of Bukittinggi from 2015-2020. Ramlan Nurmatias' victory in the 2015 Pilkada for the City of Bukittinggi can be said to be phenomenal considering that he is the first regional head to win from an independent route in West Sumatra Province. The victory was achieved with a total of 17,870 votes (or 41.85% of the valid votes) and defeated four other candidate pairs including Ismet Amzis, who became the incumbent Mayor (Fadhilah & Rachman, 2015). In East Tanjung Jabung Regency, Romi Hariyanto was also the first regional head to win from an individual route in Jambi Province. Despite advancing from the individual path, Romi Hariyanto managed to win a landslide victory over Abdul Rasid with a vote of 97,381 votes (or 76.81% of the total valid votes) in the 2020 East Tanjung Jabung Regency Pilkada. The election of Ramlan Nurmatias and Romi Hariyanto is not only interpreted as win for individual candidates in regional elections for the two regions, but a result which has been followed by good performances, where to this day they remain focussed on the problem of corruption.

### **Methods**

The research method used by researchers is qualitative. The qualitative method is an approach that attempts to systematically study and describe the distinctive characteristics of a particular social phenomenon (Miles et al., 2014). The approach used combines the experiences of actors who are directly in contact with problems in the field (emic) and the interpretation of researchers (ethics). An emic point of view means that an event must depart from the understanding of the actor themselves (Moleong, 2013). In the context of this study, researchers will try to explore the perspectives of actors (in this case, regional heads from individual channels) regarding how they encourage policy innovation in the recruitment of echelon officials, as well as how they prevent potential corruption. Meanwhile, from an ethical point of view, the researchers try to make interpretations based on existing subjective understandings. The position of the researchers is seen as 'interpretivist', where their attention and position can influence the type of data they produce (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2013). The use of an ethical perspective is carried out by linking the analysis of recruitment policies by regional heads from individual channels to the contexts that occur around the actors, including historical, social, political, economic, and cultural contexts where they are located.

The data collection techniques in this study were in-depth interviews, literature studies, observation, and documentation. For in-depth interviews, ten people were gathered from various backgrounds relevant to the research problem and chosen regarding other considerations, such as occupation, affiliation, and socio-political environment. Specifically, the twelve people interviewed had relevant track records, namely regional heads (including regional heads from individual channels), success teams for regional head candidate pairs, bureaucrats in local government, political party officials, KPU/Bawaslu commissioners, and representatives of civil society who are connected with local election issues. Observations were made by looking at the activities carried out by individual regional heads. Documentation and literature studies were carried out by accessing relevant documents, starting from the decree on the appointment of echelon officials, the number of employees, and relevant previous studies related to individual regional heads in Indonesia. All of these collection processes were carried out for four months in the City of Bukittinggi, West Sumatra Province, and East Tanjung Jabung Regency, Jambi Province.

### **Results and Discussion**

The policy mechanism for the promotion/transfer of second-echelon positions in the local government has actually been contained in several regulations including Law Number 5 of 2014 concerning the State Civil Apparatus (ASN), Government Regulation Number 13 of 2002 concerning the Appointment of Civil Servants in Structural Positions, and Government Regulation Number



11 of 2017 concerning Management of the State Civil Apparatus. These rules basically emphasise that promotions/transfers of positions must be carried out in a professional manner by prioritising the competence (merit) of ASN. With the support of competent ASNs, the implementation of government programs can be carried out optimally, while at the same time reducing the patronage system in the bureaucracy (Pramusinto, 2021). Conversely, if the bureaucracy is filled with incompetent civil servants, it will have implications for disharmonious superior-subordinate relationships and policy products which tend to be incremental. Therefore, to ensure the upholding of the principle of a merit system in the bureaucracy, the filling of second echelon positions in local government is regulated through a position auction model.

The position auction model basically provides an opportunity for each ASN to compete openly in the context of filling second echelon positions in the local government. ASNs who meet the requirements for certain ranks, formal education, and managerial experience can take part in the job auction by taking several tests, including psychological tests, managerial competency tests, and others. The series of requirements and stages of the exam are expected to produce the best candidates, who have the character of being independent, neutral, competent, productive, with integrity, professional, and oriented towards public service. As for the involvement of the local government itself, which was previously dominated by the Position and Rank Judgment Board (Baperjakat), in the current regulations it has been expanded through the existence of a selection committee (pansel) consisting of bureaucrats, community leaders and academics. It is hoped that the involvement of several parties will ensure that the recruitment process for echelon officials runs independently.

The filling of positions through the position auction model is supervised by the State Civil Apparatus Commission (KASN). The existence of KASN itself is guaranteed by law and is tasked with overseeing every stage of the process for filling echelon-second positions in the local government, starting from the formation of the selection committee, proposing names of candidates, and inaugurating the elected officials. The KASN also has the right to request technical documents from the regional government conducting the bidding for positions, such as a description of the nomenclature of positions to be openly selected, the reasons for filling the positions, the selection schedule, the composition of the selection committee and the assessment centre, the selection method, and the draft announcement of the open selection. If indications of fraud or procedural violations are found in the process of filling the position, KASN has the authority to provide binding recommendations and a copy of the report to the President. Thus, the promotion/transfer policy for echelon two local government officials has been standardised nationally.

Even though the echelon official recruitment policy has been regulated rigidly, the regional head still has loopholes to intervene in the promotion/transfer of echelon officials in the local government. According to article 53, Law Number 5 of 2014 concerning the State Civil Apparatus (ASN), the President, as the holder of the highest authority for fostering ASN, can delegate the authority to determine the appointment, transfer and dismissal of officials, other than main and middle high-ranking officials, and functional officials to several parties, including the Governor in the Province, or the Regent/Mayor in the Regency/City. This means that the regional head, as the Personnel Development Officer (PPK), has great authority in the recruitment policy of echelon officials. Intervention can also be carried out in the form of choosing the lowest ranking candidate from the three candidates proposed by the selection committee. Besides that, intervention can be done by "conditioning" the panel by selecting certain people according to the wishes of the regional head. This shows that professionalism in carrying out the recruitment policy for second-echelon officials in the regional government is largely determined by the attitude of the regional heads themselves. If regional heads use their authority for personal purposes, they will be implicated in the practice of buying and selling positions. Conversely, if the regional head prioritises the merit system principle, the echelon official recruitment policy can run smoothly and be free of corruption.

### **Ramlan Nurmatias Case Study**

Since the implementation of direct regional elections in Bukittinggi in 2005, several figures have taken turns occupying the position of mayor. Interestingly, of the four regional election

winners, Ramlan Nurmatias was the figure who took part in the regional elections for the City of Bukittinggi the most; three times, namely the elections in 2010, 2015 and 2020. In the last two regional elections in 2015 and 2020, Ramlan Nurmatias decided to run from an independent position. For the people of Bukittinggi City, the political decision of Ramlan Nurmatias to nominate three times in the local elections was commonplace, considering that he is known as a successful businessman and has various levels of experience in organisational positions.

In implementing the promotion/transfer policy for echelon two officials in the City of Bukittinggi, Ramlan Nurmatias' policy could be read as fulfilling the vision of the Bukittinggi City Government from 2016 to 2021, which read "The Realization of Bukittinggi as a Tourism, Education, Health, Trade and Services Destination City Based on Religious and Cultural Values." The vision was then developed into five missions: (1) Develop and empower the participation of various potential stakeholders (government, business, and community); (2) Improve government performance in a professional, transparent, accountable, and entrepreneurial spirit; (3) Improve the development, arrangement, and management of facilities and infrastructure in an integrated and environmentally sound manner; (4) Develop a more efficient urban economic system, and (5) Improve the quality of tourism, education, health, trade and services, as well as community social welfare.

Ramlan Nurmatias realised that in order to achieve these five missions, professional governance supported by competent civil servants was vital. For this reason, he chose a deputy mayoral pair from among the senior bureaucrats in the 2015 Pilkada City of Bukittinggi, including Irwandi, who previously served as Regional Secretary of Payakumbuh City. Ramlan Nurmatias realised this step as an effort to build bureaucratic support in achieving the city's vision and mission.

At the beginning of his leadership, Ramlan Nurmatias made many breakthroughs in the bureaucracy. He often held meetings with various Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD). During these meetings, Ramlan Nurmatias was not fixated on listening to the OPD head's explanation, but instead did in-depth, detailed questioning of his own staff present at the meeting. According to him:

"The mayor is a civil servant superintendent. The first three months I still couldn't adjust, because I frankly said I was a private person who was concerned with results, I didn't look at knowledge, what was important was result orientation." (Interview with Ramlan Nurmatias, 21/10/2022)

The attitude of directly asking subordinates and not being trapped by procedural relations produced a responsive bureaucracy. Brainstorming efforts were not only done in the context of internalising his vision and mission for each ASN in the Bukittinggi City Government, but as a re-mapping of the competence of officials. In the end, the vision and mission promoted by Ramlan Nurmatias could be responded to by the bureaucracy quickly. The diffusion of innovation ran optimally within the internal bureaucracy in order to fulfill the mandate set out in the vision and mission, especially with regards to the priority agenda for urban infrastructure development. The revitalisation of the Jam Gadang area, the construction of the upper market, the improvement of the pedestrian walkway, the construction of the Regional General Hospital (RSUD), and the renovation of the zoo are some evidences of changes in the city's infrastructure during the Ramlan Nurmatias era.

Interestingly, Ramlan Nurmatias did not make any big changes in the bureaucracy. He trusted Yuen Karnova to hold the highest bureaucratic position of regional secretary. Karnova himself has been the regional secretary of the Bukittinggi City Government since 2011 and was an official appointed by the previous Mayor, Ismet Amzis. In many cases, there is a tendency for regional secretaries to change after the regional heads change. The lack of politicisation of the position of regional secretary during the Ramlan Nurmatias period was in part due to the absence of political party intervention, given his position as regional head evolved from an individual path. For the political parties themselves, Yuen Karnova's existence is considered tested and communicative. Moreover, he is an official elected by Mayor Ismet Amzis, who is also the Chairman of the Bukittinggi City Democratic Branch Leadership Council (DPC), one of the parties with the largest number of seats in the Bukittinggi City Regional People's Legislative Assembly (DPRD). As a result,

the pressure to replace the regional secretary did not become an urgent issue during the leadership period of Ramlan Nurmatias.

When electing echelon two officials, Nurmatias fully surrendered the process according to the rules. Regional secretaries who automatically serve as Chairperson of Baperjakat are given flexibility in overseeing the auction of positions conducted by the selection committee. Ramlan Nurmatias' stance, not questioning Yuen Karnova's background as a loyalist to the previous mayor, led to a commitment from Yuen Karnova himself to oversee the position bidding process properly and separate from the tendency to buy and sell positions. This led to the sympathy of many civil servants within the Bukittinggi City Government, who themselves succeeded in building the trust of the bureaucracy, foundational to fulfilling the visions and mission of the regional head.

Ramlan Nurmatias' approach and leadership style, which did not make many changes in the bureaucracy, also had implications for his success in building networks with parties, including the central government, and obtaining budget assistance:

Ramlan Nurmatias was able to increase central government assistance. In the case of the construction of the upper market, which caught fire in 2017, the total budget provided by the central government reached Rp. 300 billion (Seconds, 2020). This amount of assistance was very large considering the limited capacity of the City of Bukittinggi APBD. From documents obtained, the average Bukittinggi City APBD each year is only around Rp. 850-900 billion Rp. (Bukittinggi City Regional Regulation Number 8 of 2019; Bukittinggi City Regional Regulation Number 4 of 2020; Bukittinggi City Regional Regulation Number 3 of 2021). This means that the City Government of Bukittinggi is unlikely to rely on their Regional Expenditure Budget (APBD) for development. Ramlan Nurmatias' political communication, which was fluid to many parties, was considered successful in making the development agenda a success.

The steps taken by Ramlan Nurmatias, who succeeded in innovating the echelon official recruitment policy, were apparently not continued by his successors. As Mayor of Bukittinggi sworn in on February 26, 2021, Erman Safar, a Gerindra Party cadre, wants to present a different style of policy from Ramlan Nurmatias. As the youngest mayor in West Sumatra, Erman Safar immediately made several internal bureaucratic changes. However, some of the policies he made were actually counterproductive and led to criticism within the bureaucracy itself, for example the dawn congregation policy for male government officials (Detik, 2021), instructions to change WhatsApp profile photos for every government official in Bukittinggi City with Erman Safar's face (Valoranews, 2021), and the replacement of many echelon officials within the City Government of Bukittinggi. This is illustrated from the Table 2.

**Table 2.** Reinstatement of Number of Echelon Two Officials in the Bukittinggi City Government in 2018 and 2022

No.	Position	Previous Officers/ 2018	Newest Officers/ 2022
		(Ramlan Nurmatias)	(Erman Safar)
1.	Retained		5 (20,83%)
2.	Rotated		7 (29,17%)
3.	Promoted		6 (25%)
4.	Demoted		3 (12,5%)
5.	Mutation		3 (12,5%)
	Amount		24 (100%)

From Table 2 it can be seen that there are several important notes in the policy of promotion/transfer of second echelon positions in the City Government of Bukittinggi from the time of Ramlan Nurmatias to Erman Safar. First, the number of echelon two officials who were retained was 50%, with details of five people (20.83%) in permanent positions and seven people (29.17%) in positions that are rotated. The politicisation of the promotion/transfer policy for second echelon officials within the City Government of Bukittinggi can be seen through three old officials (12.5%) during the Ramlan Nurmatias era being demoted and even retiring, though they had not yet entered retirement age, namely; (1) Muhammad Idris from the Head of the Office of Cooperatives, Small, Medium Enterprises and Trade who was retired, (2) Rismal Hadi from the

Head of the Planning, Research and Development Agency who moved down one echelon to become the Head of Economics, and (3) Novri from the Head The Communication and Informatics Service who moved down one echelon to become the Secretary to the Library and Archives Service. Only two people who were originally staff held their second echelon positions, namely; (1) Rofie Hendria, who became the Head of the Fire Service, and (2) Joni Feri, who became the Head of the Transportation Service. This indicates that there is no stability in the bureaucracy due to the strong political power of regional heads.

Second, at the top position of the bureaucrat, namely regional secretary, there was a change, as Yuen Karnova was replaced by Martias Wanto. Although this change was motivated by Yuen Karnova entering retirement age, Yuen Karnova himself had applied for a sabbatical (time off of more than three months) when Erman Safar took office. Applying for sabbatical from a regional secretary is very unusual given its vital position in the bureaucracy. Based on document tracing, Yuen Karnova himself admitted that he applied for a long leave so that the newly appointed Mayor could immediately appoint an Acting Mayor (Zulnandi, 2021). Even though Erman Safar had the prerogative right to make changes to structural officials, including finding a new regional secretary, this arguably should have been done slowly because to cause minimal internal turmoil in the bureaucracy. Moreover, Yuen Karnova was a senior bureaucrat who had the support of many subordinates. Yuen Karnova's replacement, Martias Wanto previously served as Regional Secretary of Agam Regency, a neighbouring area of Bukittinggi City. Erman Safar's decision to move Martias Wanto is believed by many to be due to Martias Wanto's bureaucratic experience and the addition of the replacement of a new regional head in Agam Regency at the same time. One of the informants stated:

“The regional secretary has a semi-political position because it depends on the regional head who uses it. He must be very clever when changing regional heads. Especially if you're still young, you can get stressed if you don't have a job.” (Interview Z, 11/15/2022)

Martias Wanto's step to move and take the position of Regional Secretary for the City of Bukittinggi after the transfer of power in Agam Regency was not unusual. As a senior bureaucrat, Martias Wanto understood that the position of regional secretary is very political and is determined by the regional head. Changes in regional heads must be anticipated, including by taking advantage of opportunities to move regions. It seems that Martias Wanto's move was also supported by the former Regent of Agam, Indra Catri. This is because Indra Catri and Erman Safar are in the same party, the Gerindra Party. Indra Catri's support for Martias Wanto cannot be separated from his actions, as Wanto was known to be loyalists of Indra Catri when he became the Regent of Agam, as well as a candidate for Deputy Governor of West Sumatra in the 2020 Pilkada (JPNN, 2020). This action was ultimately rewarded with political support from Indra Catri to convince Erman Safar to take Martias Wanto as Regional Secretary of the City of Bukittinggi.

### **Romi Hariyanto Case Study**

The phenomenon experienced in Bukittinggi City was somewhat different from the situation that occurred in East Tanjung Jabung Regency. Romi Hariyanto, the incumbent regent who initially ran for the 2015 Pilkada with the support of a political party, chose to run for the 2020 Pilkada from an individual route. One of the informants said that on several occasions before the Pilkada, Romi Hariyanto said that his reason for advancing from the individual route was "wanting to test the support of the people's vote, whether he is really supported because of his party or figure" (Interview A, 1/11/2022). However, different opinions refute Romi's motives, arguing that the real reason for Romi Hariyanto advancing the individual route in the Pilkada was due to internal conflict within his former National Mandate Party (PAN). One of the informants (Interview W, 30/10/2022) said that Romi Hariyanto was reluctant to pay the dowry or boat fee to Bakri (Chairman of the Regional Leadership Council of the PAN Jambi Province) in the Tanjung Jabung Timur Pilkada because he, as Chair of the PAN Regional Leadership Council (DPD), felt he had struggled and had great success in winning PAN in East Tanjung Jabung Regency in the 2019 Legislative Elections. The conflict between Romi Hariyanto and Bakrie became sharper when Romi Hariyanto decided to resign as Chair of the DPD PAN of East Tanjung Jabung Regency ahead



of the 2020 Regional Head Elections. The practice of dowries in the form of buying political party boats ahead of regional elections has become commonplace, even for party cadres themselves. A study by Misra et al., (2021) shows that dowries have become a common practice for prospective regional head candidates to reach the supporting party in the Pilkada. Thus, Romi Hariyanto's choice to run for the 2020 Pilkada from an individual route appears to stem from his desire to be free from the ties of corruption.

As the incumbent regional head pair for the 2016 to 2021 term, Romi Hariyanto and Robby Nahliansyah sought to continue their vision and mission in a second period of leadership, namely 2021 to 2024. The vision of the Regent, Romi Hariyanto and Deputy Regent, Robby Nahliansyah is "Improving People's Welfare (populist)." This vision is then extrapolated to five missions, namely: (1) Increase quality and environmentally sound regional infrastructure development; (2) Increase people's welfare through the development of a people's economy based on agribusiness, micro, small and medium enterprises, industrial investment, tourism and maritime affairs; (3) Improve the quality of human resources through improving the quality of education, health, and gender equality based on science and technology; (4) Realise a religious and cultured society as well as conducive regional security, and (5) Realise good, clean, transparent and democratic regional governance.

These five missions are inseparable from the characteristics of East Tanjung Jabung Regency, which is a district located on the east coast of Jambi Province. As a new district, East Tanjung Jabung Regency was established in 1999. As mandated by Law Number 54 of 1999, acceleration in development continues to be needed. This cannot be separated from the reality that East Tanjung Jabung Regency is the district with the poorest population among the districts/cities in Jambi Province, with a total poor population of 11.54% in 2019 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2020). With the area and topography dominated by peat, development is the key to overcoming the problem of poverty. All pairs of regional head candidates running for regional elections in East Tanjung Jabung Regency have always made "infrastructure a priority or prima donna program" (Interview AK, 1/11/2022).

Romi Hariyanto realised that the key to success in catching up development in East Tanjung Jabung Regency is the support of a reliable and competent ASN. For this reason, often takes a humanist approach to his subordinates. Most of the informants said that Romi Hariyanto often went out into the open and was easy to socialise with, making him close to anyone, including civil servants. He also disliked the rigidity of protocol as a regent, dressed modestly, spoke the local language, and frequently attended informal and social events. He is also often called "brother", not "Regent" on many occasions, including in official government forums attended by civil servants. One informant said:

"In the 2015 Pilkada, I did not support Romi as Regent because my family supported other candidates. Only when Romi became Regent did my career succeed. I am not vindictive toward him. In fact, now I'm promoted to Kabid" (Interview AL, 11/15/2022)

Romi Hariyanto's humanist approach and fluid communication style within the bureaucracy elicited sympathy from subordinates, including local government officials who initially did not support him in the Pilkada. On several occasions, he also often embraced ASN's shoulders when meeting in person. With this style of communication, it inevitably encouraged solidity of the bureaucracy to adopt his vision and mission of East Tanjung Jabung Regency in their policy agenda. This is evidenced by international recognition of the achievement of the mission in developing quality and environmentally sound regional infrastructure through the 2022 Ramsar's Award; one of twenty-four regions in the world to be awarded the Wetland City Accreditation (Mairiadi & Abdullah, 2022). The award has made East Tanjung Jabung Regency the only local government in Indonesia to win the award to date.

Romi Hariyanto's decisions in appointing local government officials also often takes into account socio-cultural considerations of the community. With a heterogeneous community structure in East Tanjung Jabung Regency, Romi Hariyanto, who comes from the Malay ethnic group, is known to be accommodative of other ethnic groups, especially the Bugis and Javanese. This has been proven in the two regional elections, where Romi Hariyanto chose to side with

Robby Nahliansyah, who has a Bugis ethnic background. As a result, in the promotion/transfer policy for echelon two officials, he does not intervene too much and leaves the mechanism to the selection committee as long as it follows the applicable rules. Apart from that, there are other criteria that are often used as standards by Romi Hariyanto in determining promotion/transfer of positions. According to him:

"Of all the elements, of course there is an assessment. Including one of the less popular elements, because we have a commitment to Friday prayers in congregation, Duha prayer, that's one small assessment. We still involve Baperjakat, Pak Sekda and Pak Wabup." (Interview with Romi Hariyanto, 29/4/2023).

This statement shows that the criteria for someone who is placed by Romi Hariyanto is not only based on competence but also the spiritual value of the individual themselves. The use of the spiritual values parameters of the candidate for office, he believes, will be able to direct the person to become a trustworthy and loyal person when holding office. The author believes it is relevant to mention that Romi Hariyanto left the interview session for duha sunnah prayers, which can be seen as evidence of his commitment to this value. Armed with these characteristics, the patterns of promotions/transfers under Romi Hariyanto's leadership were as follows:

**Table 3.** Reinstatement of Number of Echelon Two Officials in the Bukittinggi City Government in 2018 and 2022

No.	Jabatan	Pejabat Lama/ 2018	Pejabat Baru/ 2022
		(Romi Hariyanto)	(Romi Hariyanto)
1.	Tetap		7 (20,59%)
2.	Rotasi		15 (44,12%)
3.	Promosi		11 (32,35%)
4.	Demosi		1 (2,94%)
5.	Mutasi		0 (0%)
	Total Jabatan		34 (100%)

Table 3 shows some notes relating to the recruitment policy for second echelon officials within the East Tanjung Jabung Regency Government. First, the lack of politicisation of promotion/transfer of second echelon officials by Romi Hariyanto is evident. 22 people (or 64.71% who held second echelon positions in 2018) are still trusted today at their previous level, with seven people (20.59%) in the same position and 15 people (44.12%) receiving position rotation. 11 people (38.2%) received promotions from third echelon positions, including service/agency secretaries, section heads, and sub-district heads. Interestingly, among the 13 people, one person has a family relationship with Romi Hariyanto, namely Angga Harisumarta, who serves as Head of the Regional Personnel and Human Resources Development Agency. The placement of Angga Harisumarta in this role is considered by some to be Romi Hariyanto's attempt to exercise control over the bureaucracy by placing someone close to him in it. Only one person (or 2.9%) has been demoted, namely Suhas Purrojani, who served as Inspector at the Inspectorate in 2018, and is currently a staff member. Four people submitted their resignation due to illness which resulted in being unable to carry out their duties, and one person submitted an early retirement on the grounds of running as a candidate for regent in the 2020 Pilkada (namely, Abdul Rasid, who served as Head of the National Unity, Politics and Community Protection Agency). There was no promotion or jump made from a staff position to head of service, as happened in the City Government of Bukittinggi. From this description it is clear that there is stability in the bureaucracy. The principle of meritocracy is clearly enforced, which is marked by the number of third echelon officials moving up to the second echelon. The lack of changes in the internal bureaucracy by Romi Hariyanto as regional head was also acknowledged by one of the bureaucrats:

"I heard myself on one occasion when the Regent summoned all officials to the official residence. There the Regent said, you don't need to give me a deposit. My money is still there. You just focus on work." (AQ Interview, 11/15/2022)

From this statement it is clear that there is a guarantee for Romi Hariyanto to ask every government apparatus, especially officials, to focus on work without thinking about having to give any tribute or reward. There has been no practice of debt bondage, which has occurred in many other regions during Romi Hariyanto's leadership. The practice of tributes and buying and selling of positions has been commonly carried out by several regional heads who have been proven to be corrupt, as a way to recover the political costs incurred in the Pilkada.

Second, at the top of the bureaucracy, the Regional Secretary of East Tanjung Jabung Regency, held by Sudirman in 2018, switched to Sapril. Sudirman himself served as regional secretary for three regent terms under Zumi Zola (2011-2015), Ambo Tang (2015-2016) and Romi Hariyanto (2016). At the end of 2018, Sudirman decided to move to the provincial government following Zumi Zola, who was then Governor of Jambi. Since 2020, Sudirman has held the position of Regional Secretary for Jambi Province. Sudirman's replacement, Sapril, is a state civil servant who chose a career in the East Tanjung Jabung Regency Government after the split from its parent district in 1999. As a native of the area born in Nipah Panjang, Sapril spent most of his career at the Regional Financial and Asset Management Office, District East Cape Jabung. The closeness of Sapril and Romi Hariyanto was awakened when Romi Hariyanto, who at that time served as Chair of the East Tanjung Jabung Regency DPRD, was assisted by Sapril as Secretary of the East Tanjung Jabung Regency DPRD since 2014. In 2018, Sapril was appointed as Regional Secretary of East Tanjung Jabung Regency and has served since. This means that in the last eight years there has only been one change in the position of the highest bureaucratic official within the East Tanjung Jabung Regency Government. This situation indicates the creation of stability at the helm of the bureaucracy.

### **Analysis of Recruitment Policy Innovation for Echelon Two Heads of Individual Regions**

From the two cases, several common threads can be drawn. First, individual regional heads try not to make the bureaucracy their enemy. This is in contrast to regional heads supported by political parties who tend to directly intervene in the bureaucracy. Individual regional heads tend not to politicise and instead carry out promotion/transfer policies according to the understood rules. This in itself builds trust in the bureaucracy because there are no demands for remuneration, compensation, and bonded positions.

Second, although the mechanism for filling echelon two officials through a bid for positions is carried out entirely by the selection committee, the position of the regional head still determines the final outcome. In the context of individual regional heads in Bukittinggi City and East Tanjung Jabung Regency, the recommendations of the top three candidates brought by the committee became one of the regional heads' considerations in making their choices. Decisions taken are the sole authority of the regional head even though there is room for dialogue with several competent parties, such as Baperjakat. Other considerations in choosing officials include family, ethnicity, and spiritual values.

Third, individual regional heads tend to open up broad participation from their subordinates. The brainstorming process in meetings, as practiced by Ramlan Nurmatias, and the flexible communication style, as practiced by Romi Hariyanto, is an attempt to dig up complete information when mapping the competence of an ASN. Besides that, the opening of space for participation actually becomes a place to internalise their vision and mission into the bureaucracy. When the vision and mission have been well internalised, discretion can be given in order to accelerate the development and delivery of public services. The perception of the bureaucracy as a slow and rigid organisation can ultimately be refuted by the presence of a responsive bureaucracy.

### **Conclusion**

The presence of regional heads from independent candidature in the Pilkada implementation in Indonesia raises optimism for strengthening the quality of democracy. The tendency to buy and sell positions in regional elections is expensive. It appears that individual regional heads are less likely to engage in this practice. Reflecting on the leadership of regional heads from the individual path in Bukittinggi City and East Tanjung Jabung Regency, it shows a positive trend in realising an

accountable and transparent recruitment policy for echelon officials. This linearity is illustrated by a policy process for the promotion/transfer of echelon two officials where there is not much intervention. Instead, regional heads from the individual line tend to be more accommodative to bureaucrats even though they are accompanied by personal considerations. The minimal practice of cleaning up the bureaucracy has led to stability, which is often a characteristic of regional heads from an individual path at the beginning of their leadership.

Even though there is a positive tendency towards the recruitment of second-echelon officials who are brought in by regional heads from individual channels, they also still have the potential to engage in corrupt practices. Regional head from the individual path are still vulnerable to transactional behaviour, considering the high costs incurred starting from the nomination, socialisation, and election stages. Even though no dowry costs are incurred to gain the support of the bearer party, large amounts are still required to mobilise volunteers when collecting Identity Cards (KTP) as a condition for passing verification. After that, there is also the need to mobilize resources for the campaign, finance the campaign team, employ voting booth witnesses (TPS), and sometimes buy and sell votes on election day. If they win, the independent candidates also face the problem of seeking political support in the legislature. As a result, regional heads from the individual path will do everything they can to recover the high political costs, including by manipulating the promotion/transfer policies of second-echelon officials. This can ultimately eliminate the urgency of individual regional heads to realise an accountable government.

Therefore, an optimistic outlook needs to be built on the presence of regional heads from independent candidates. Gradually, this has implications for attitudes and voter participation. Political parties that have had an established political structure have been forced to improve so that they will not be left behind by voters. The existence of independent regional head candidates also faces challenges given the more complex characteristics of the political system. The emergence of individual regional head candidates from political party backgrounds needs to be anticipated through stricter arrangements so that the genuine spirit of individual regional head candidates in the Pilkada is maintained. This departs from the reality as experienced by regional heads from individual channels in Bukittinggi City and East Tanjung Jabung Regency, who both won the Pilkada because they had a clear mass base, efficient and informal means of communication, an emotional connection, and easier programming. The state should provide more proportional funding support to candidates for regional heads from the individual route who are running for regional elections. This can be achieved by allocating financial assistance based on the amount of support that has been verified and approved by the General Elections Commission (KPU). This step is very appropriate as an effort to maintain the integrity and independence of regional head candidates from individual paths and guide them away from opportunities for corruption.

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