

The Role of Job Promotion in Mediating the Influence of the Merit System on Employee Performance in the Regional Government of North Bolaang Mongondow Regency

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ABSTRACT

Employee performance is a reflection of the success or failure of an organization. organization in carry out task and function mainly to achieve its targets, goals, vision, and mission. Maximum performance in ASN is the main basis for achieving good governance. This study aims for now and analyzes role mediation Promotion Position and the influence of the Merit System on Employee Performance in the Regional Government of North Bolaang Mongondow Regency. This study uses a quantitative research approach through a causal mediation design and survey techniques. The study population consists of all ASN at least Group III.B in the Regional Government of North Bolaang Mongondow Regency. The number of samples in collection 146 data respondents through probability sampling techniques. Data analysis uses method Partial Least Square - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3.0 software. The results of the study show that the merit system has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, with a larger T-statistic value and a higher t-value. α ($3.126 > 1.64$) and value P-Value is smaller than the value sig ($0.002 < 0.05$). System merit influential positive and significant to Job promotion. The T-Statistics value is greater than the alpha value ($54,740 > 1.96$) and the P-Value value is smaller than the sig value ($0.000 < 0.05$). Job promotion has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. The T-Statistics value is greater than the alpha value ($6,700 > 1.96$) and the P-Value value is smaller than the sig value ($0.000 < 0.05$). Job promotion plays a mediating role in the influence of the merit system on employee performance. The value T-Statistics bigger from mark α ($6,820 > 1.64$), And mark from P-Value more small from mark sig ($0.000 < 0.05$).

Keywords: Merit System, Position Promotion, Employee Performance.

I. Introduction

Employee performance is an important factor in organizational success, as it reflects employees' ability to achieve organizational goals. Nugraha (2020) explained that performance is an important output of organizational activities because it can serve as a measure of a local government organization's success in accomplishing its mission. Pusparani (2021) stated that employees are among the organizational resources that play a crucial role in achieving organizational objectives. Furthermore, Çilhoroz et al. (2023) and Bharti et al. (2022) emphasized that sustainable employee performance is characterized by stability and the capacity

to meet self-development expectations. Therefore, both employees and organizations need to prioritize sustainability in performance management. However, Syahraini et al. (2025) found that employee management within Indonesia's civil service has not yet fully prioritized performance sustainability. The main problems affecting employee performance are often associated with transparency, fairness, career development motivation, and the work environment (Hariyadi et al., 2025).

One of the primary strategies for addressing these challenges is human resource development through the implementation of a merit-based assessment system. Law No. 5 of 2014 concerning the State Civil Apparatus (Aparatur Sipil Negara, ASN) emphasizes the principles of fair and objective human resource management. Under the merit system, ASN management policies are expected to be based on qualifications, competencies, and performance without discrimination. Consequently, promotion to a position should reflect an employee's abilities and qualifications (Faiz et al., 2020). Nevertheless, implementing the merit system according to the principles of transparency and fairness remains challenging, and its implementation has not yet been optimal (Hariyadi et al., 2025). In contrast, Nur et al. (2020) argued that a merit system can promote fairness among employees while positively influencing employee performance. This suggests that establishing clear and equitable personnel management procedures through a merit system can strengthen employee morale and support improved performance.

Hidayah and Herachwati (2021) argued that the merit system, in its current implementation, has not fully achieved its intended objectives of promoting fairness and justice. In practice, personnel management remains vulnerable to monopolistic practices, politically influenced recruitment, and other interventions that undermine the system's effectiveness. Furthermore, performance evaluations conducted under the merit system have not fully captured overall organizational achievements, potentially contributing to suboptimal levels of professionalism and performance among civil servants. These conditions indicate that the implementation of the merit system remains constrained by various institutional and practical challenges (Hidayah & Herachwati, 2021). Similarly, Suryanto and Darto (2020) found that the Indonesian civil service has not fully implemented the merit system in accordance with established procedures. This situation reflects the limited awareness and capacity of some stakeholders responsible for implementing the system. In addition, Salsabila et al. (2024) reported that the merit system has not been implemented optimally, despite expectations that it would improve personnel management and organizational performance.

The inconsistencies in previous findings indicate the need for further research into the relationship between merit system implementation and employee performance. In this context, job promotion is an important factor to examine because it may explain how the merit system translates into improved employee performance. Sutrisno (2019) stated that a performance-based promotion system can foster a culture of productivity by motivating employees to perform to the best of their abilities. Similarly, a promotion system based on performance can minimize the risk of nepotism and bias in promotion decisions (Nasution et al., 2024). These arguments suggest that job promotion may serve as an intervening mechanism through which the merit system influences employee performance.

The implementation of the merit system in North Bolaang Mongondow Regency (Bolaang Mongondow Utara or Bolmut) provides a relevant context for examining this relationship. According to tinta.news (2024), the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government received a *Good* rating for its implementation of the merit system in State Civil Apparatus management, with a score of 285.5. This achievement indicates progress toward a more professional and performance-oriented personnel management system. The implementation of the merit system is expected to replace outdated administrative practices with a modern governance approach that supports the achievement of regional development objectives. Nevertheless, Bilodatu et al. (2024) reported that governance performance, particularly in the general affairs and equipment sectors of North Bolaang Mongondow Regency, remained suboptimal. Similarly, Mokoolang et al. (2022) found that some employees had not performed their duties effectively. Tasks that should have been completed within one week were delayed, work targets were not consistently achieved, and some employees lacked a sufficient understanding of their primary duties and responsibilities.

These findings highlight a potential gap between the formal implementation of the merit system and

actual employee performance in the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government. The underlying personnel management challenges may be associated with practices that have not fully incorporated the principles of objectivity, competence, and performance. Based on these observed conditions, individual performance targets may not be achieved consistently, while bureaucratic delays can discourage employees from improving their capabilities and innovating in the workplace. In this context, the merit system is expected to ensure that job promotions are based on qualifications, competencies, and performance rather than subjective considerations, such as personal connections, political affiliations, or seniority alone (Bewinda et al., 2023; Aswin, 2025).

Based on these considerations, this study aims to examine and analyze the role of job promotion in mediating the relationship between the merit system and employee performance in the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government. Specifically, the study seeks to clarify whether the implementation of the merit system contributes to employee performance directly or indirectly through job promotion. The findings are expected to provide empirical insights into the role of performance-based promotion in strengthening merit-based personnel management and improving employee performance in local government institutions.

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Merit System

The merit system is a fundamental approach to personnel management in modern bureaucracy, emphasizing objectivity, professionalism, and performance. Young (1958) and Heryyanto and Muzakki (2022) associate the merit system with scientific principles and objective assessments of work outcomes. This approach is consistent with Weber's ideal model of bureaucracy, which emphasizes administrative neutrality and independence from political influence, enabling public institutions to focus on delivering public services effectively. Manuel (2022, p. 24) explained that the merit system ensures that recruitment and promotion decisions are based on professional competence rather than political interests. This approach helps prevent the placement of individuals in positions that do not match their qualifications and capabilities. Similarly, Meyrina (2016, p. 176) described the merit system as a personnel management approach that prioritizes competence, expertise, and professionalism throughout the employment process, including appointment, placement, promotion, and retirement, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

In this study, the merit system is conceptualized as an approach to managing human resources based on objective criteria, professional competence, performance, and transparent personnel procedures. The indicators are adapted from previous studies and the relevant regulatory framework, particularly Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform Regulation No. 40 of 2018 and Nurmaya and Febrina (2021). These indicators comprise human resource planning based on workload, fulfillment of position competency standards, open selection for promotion, comprehensive career management, performance-based rewards, performance-based sanctions, implementation of the code of ethics as reflected in employee behavior, competency development based on performance evaluation, protection of State Civil Apparatus (ASN) from abuse of authority, and competency-based personnel information systems. These dimensions reflect the extent to which personnel management practices are aligned with merit-based principles. Their implementation is expected to support more objective decisions, strengthen professional accountability, and create a personnel management environment that encourages employees to perform according to established standards.

2.2. Job Promotion

Job promotion refers to the movement of an employee to a higher position within an organizational hierarchy. Edison et al. (2016, p. 231) defined promotion as movement to a higher position or career level,

which generally involves greater responsibilities, authority, and work demands. Similarly, Kasmir (2016, p. 166) described promotion as the transfer of an individual from an existing level to a higher one. Promotion may provide employees with greater organizational status, authority, responsibilities, and income, potentially improving their quality of life and that of their families. Siagian and Khair (2018) emphasized that employees generally seek opportunities for promotion because promotion represents a form of career advancement and may serve as an indicator of their work achievements. From this perspective, job promotion is not merely a change in position but also an organizational mechanism for recognizing employee contributions and providing opportunities for professional development. In this study, job promotion is understood as the advancement of an employee to a higher position through procedures that consider objective qualifications, competence, performance, discipline, and other relevant requirements. The indicators are adapted from Government Regulation No. 17 of 2020, Article 72, and Hasibuan (2019), as reported in the original manuscript. They include objective consideration in promotion decisions, equal promotion opportunities for eligible civil servants, authorization by the competent personnel authority, performance assessment by authorized officials, honesty, discipline, teamwork, task proficiency, loyalty, and appropriate educational qualifications. These indicators emphasize both procedural fairness and individual suitability for a higher position. When implemented consistently, promotion procedures can help ensure that career advancement reflects employee capabilities and organizational requirements rather than subjective preferences.

2.3. Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to the work outcomes achieved by employees over a specified period. Supriyanto et al. (2021) described employee performance as the results produced by employees during a particular period. Similarly, Wibowo et al. (2020) associated performance with the quality and quantity of work achieved by employees. These definitions indicate that employee performance involves not only the completion of assigned tasks but also the extent to which the resulting work meets established organizational standards. In public organizations, employee performance is particularly important because it contributes to administrative effectiveness, accountability, and the quality of public services. Employees are expected to perform their duties in accordance with organizational objectives, professional standards, and applicable regulations. Consequently, employee performance can be assessed through several dimensions that capture both work processes and outcomes.

In this study, employee performance is measured using indicators adapted from Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform Regulation No. 6 of 2022 and the works cited in the original manuscript, including Pasalong (2020), Budiarti et al. (2024), Afandi (2018), Dwiyanto (2016), and Robbins and Judge (2018). The indicators comprise planning, implementation, work monitoring, guidance, responsiveness, accountability, quantity, quality, efficiency, and independence. These dimensions provide a multidimensional perspective on employee performance. They cover the planning and execution of assigned responsibilities, the monitoring and improvement of work processes, responsiveness to organizational and public needs, accountability for results, and the efficient and independent completion of tasks.

2.4. Hypothesis Development

a. The Effect of the Merit System on Employee Performance

The merit system is designed to ensure that personnel decisions, including recruitment, selection, placement, and career development, are based on qualifications, competence, and performance. Under a merit-based approach, employees are assigned to positions that match their capabilities, enabling them to perform their duties and responsibilities more effectively. The original manuscript associates this principle with Law No. 5 of 2014 concerning the State Civil Apparatus. Lenvik (2017), as cited in Park and Joen (2021), emphasized that the merit principle seeks to ensure that qualified and competent individuals occupy appropriate positions. This principle provides a theoretical basis for expecting merit-based personnel

management to strengthen individual capabilities and organizational effectiveness. When employees are selected and placed according to relevant competencies, the organization is better positioned to align employee capabilities with job requirements.

The relationship between the merit system and employee performance can also be explained through equity theory. Adams (1965) proposed that employees evaluate fairness by comparing their contributions with the rewards and treatment they receive. In the context of personnel management, transparent and objective decisions can strengthen employees' perceptions of organizational fairness. When employees believe that their qualifications and contributions are recognized appropriately, they may be more motivated to fulfill their responsibilities and achieve organizational targets. Empirical findings reported by Damayanti and Hamka (2024) further illustrate the potential consequences of weaknesses in merit system implementation. Their study identified challenges associated with personnel placement that did not adequately consider educational qualifications, competence, and performance. Such mismatches may contribute to employee demotivation, inefficiency, and difficulties in achieving organizational objectives. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of a merit system depends not only on the existence of formal regulations but also on their consistent implementation in personnel decisions.

In the context of the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government, the merit system is expected to support employee performance by ensuring that personnel decisions are aligned with qualifications, competence, and work achievements. Nevertheless, the relationship requires empirical examination because the existence of a formal merit framework does not automatically guarantee improved employee performance. Based on the theoretical arguments and previous findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: The merit system has a positive and significant effect on employee performance in the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government.

b. The Effect of the Merit System on Job Promotion

The relationship between the merit system and job promotion is grounded in the principle that career advancement should be determined by objective qualifications, competence, and performance. Rather than relying on personal preferences, political connections, or other non-merit considerations, promotion decisions under a merit system should follow transparent and accountable criteria. Lenvik (2017), as cited in the original manuscript through the discussion by Park and Joen (2021), supports the view that merit-based personnel management provides a foundation for objective career decisions. When promotion criteria are clearly defined and consistently applied, employees can better understand the requirements for career advancement. Transparency in promotion procedures may also strengthen employee trust in the personnel management system and reduce opportunities for subjective decision-making.

Damayanti and Hamka (2024) discussed challenges in the implementation of the merit system and highlighted the importance of more efficient, fair, and transparent human resource management. Their findings provide a basis for examining whether merit-based procedures are reflected in promotion practices. When promotion decisions are aligned with employee qualifications and achievements, career advancement can become a mechanism for implementing merit principles in practice. However, the existence of a merit system does not necessarily mean that promotion decisions are consistently objective. Sabaruddin et al. are cited in the original manuscript in connection with problems in the selection process for high-ranking leadership positions, including application, assessment, and appointment stages. These issues suggest that the relationship between the merit system and job promotion depends on the extent to which established principles are applied throughout the promotion process. The bibliographic details of this citation need to be verified before publication. In the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government, the merit system is expected to provide a framework for determining promotion eligibility through relevant qualifications, competence, performance, and other established requirements. Accordingly, examining the effect of the

merit system on job promotion is important for determining whether merit-based personnel management is reflected in career advancement practices. Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: The merit system has a positive and significant effect on job promotion in the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government.

c. The Effect of Job Promotion on Employee Performance

Job promotion can influence employee performance by providing opportunities for career advancement and recognizing employees' contributions to the organization. When promotion decisions are based on clear and fair criteria, employees may perceive that their efforts and achievements are valued. This perception can encourage them to maintain or improve their work performance. Robbins and Judge (2018) provide a basis for understanding how career opportunities and recognition can influence employee motivation and work behavior. This relationship can also be explained through expectancy theory. Vroom (1964) argued that motivation depends partly on employees' expectations that their efforts will lead to performance and that performance will produce valued outcomes. In the context of job promotion, employees may be more motivated when they believe that improved performance increases their opportunities for career advancement.

Promotion may also strengthen employees' commitment to their organization. When employees perceive that advancement decisions are fair and reflect their contributions, they may develop greater confidence in organizational personnel practices. Locke's (1976) work on goal-setting theory provides a broader perspective on the relationship between work goals and performance. Clear performance expectations and meaningful outcomes can help direct employee effort toward organizational objectives. However, the precise relationship between promotion, job satisfaction, commitment, and performance should be evaluated in light of the evidence provided by the relevant empirical studies. The original manuscript also refers to Mathis and Jackson (2008), Setiawan (2016), and Simanjuntak and Pangaribuan (2018) to support the relationship between promotion and employee performance. These studies are presented as evidence that promotion can function as a form of recognition and that transparent promotion policies may contribute to employee motivation and performance. The original sources should be checked to confirm their research settings, findings, and applicability to public-sector employees.

In the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government, job promotion may encourage employees to improve their performance when advancement is perceived as a meaningful outcome of professional competence and work achievement. Conversely, promotion procedures that are perceived as unfair may weaken the motivational value of career advancement. Therefore, the effect of job promotion on employee performance warrants empirical examination. Based on the theoretical arguments and previous studies, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Job promotion has a positive and significant effect on employee performance in the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government.

d. The Mediating Role of Job Promotion in the Relationship Between the Merit System and Employee Performance

The merit system may influence employee performance directly by promoting objective and competence-based personnel management. It may also influence performance indirectly through job promotion. This indirect relationship is important because the principles of a merit system can be translated into practical career opportunities, allowing promotion to function as a mechanism through which merit-based personnel decisions influence employee behavior and work outcomes. The original manuscript cites Chariah et al. (2020) as evidence of a positive relationship between merit system implementation and employee performance. It also refers to Setiawan and Mujiati (2016) in discussing the relationship between transparent, performance-based promotion and employee motivation and performance. Although these

studies provide a starting point for the proposed relationship, their specific findings and methodological characteristics should be verified before they are used to substantiate the mediation argument.

Theoretically, a merit system establishes the criteria for evaluating employee suitability and career advancement. When these criteria are implemented consistently, promotion decisions are more likely to reflect qualifications, competence, and performance rather than personal connections or nepotism. This relationship is consistent with the principles of objective personnel management associated with the merit system and the relevant provisions of Indonesian civil service legislation. Job promotion may subsequently influence employee performance by strengthening the perceived relationship between work achievements and career opportunities. When employees believe that effective performance and professional competence are recognized through promotion, they may have stronger incentives to improve their work. Conversely, if promotion decisions are perceived as inconsistent with merit-based criteria, employees may question the value of their efforts, potentially weakening the motivational benefits of the system.

Nevertheless, the mediating role of job promotion should not be assumed solely from the existence of theoretical relationships between the three variables. A positive effect of the merit system on promotion and a positive effect of promotion on performance provide a theoretical rationale for the proposed indirect relationship, but the mediation effect must be established through an appropriate empirical test. In the context of the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government, job promotion is therefore examined as a potential mechanism linking merit-based personnel management with employee performance. This approach enables the study to investigate whether the merit system contributes to performance partly through promotion practices, in addition to any direct relationship between the merit system and employee performance. Based on these theoretical arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Job promotion mediates the relationship between the merit system and employee performance in the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government.

Based on the preceding discussion, the proposed research framework examines the direct effect of the merit system on employee performance, the effect of the merit system on job promotion, the effect of job promotion on employee performance, and the indirect effect of the merit system on employee performance through job promotion.

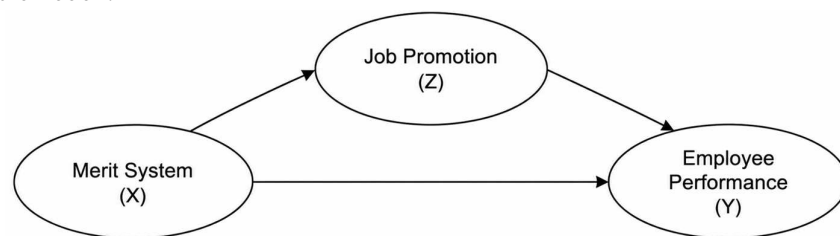


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

III. Research Method

This study employed a quantitative research design with a causal approach to examine the effect of the merit system on employee performance, with job promotion serving as a mediating variable. The target population consisted of all State Civil Apparatus (ASN) employees in the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government who held at least the rank of Group III/b. The total population comprised 1,696 employees. According to Ferdinand (2014), excessively large sample sizes may cause statistical models to become highly sensitive, making it difficult to obtain a satisfactory goodness-of-fit assessment. Ferdinand further suggested that the sample size should be approximately five to ten times the total number of indicators across all study variables. In this study, the research instrument comprised 31 indicators. Accordingly, the sample size was determined using the range of five to ten times the number of indicators, resulting in a minimum of 155 respondents and a maximum of 310 respondents. The study selected 186 respondents, equivalent to six times

the total number of indicators. The respondents were State Civil Apparatus employees of the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government who met the minimum rank requirement of Group III/b.

This study used a survey method to collect data from the selected respondents. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. SmartPLS uses a bootstrapping procedure to estimate the statistical significance of model parameters without relying on the assumption of normally distributed data. This approach is particularly useful for evaluating relationships among latent variables and testing direct and indirect effects. PLS-SEM consists of two main components: the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model). The measurement model evaluates the relationships between latent constructs and their observed indicators, whereas the structural model examines the hypothesized relationships among the constructs. This study employed a reflective measurement model, in which the observed indicators are assumed to reflect the underlying latent constructs.

Before testing the research hypotheses, the research instrument was evaluated for validity and reliability. The initial validity assessment used the item-total correlation approach by comparing the calculated correlation coefficient (r -count) with the critical value (r -table). An item was considered valid when its calculated correlation coefficient was positive and greater than the critical value, using degrees of freedom (df) equal to $n - 2$. Conversely, an item was considered invalid when its calculated correlation coefficient was lower than the critical value. Reliability was initially assessed using Cronbach's alpha. A variable was considered reliable when its Cronbach's alpha coefficient exceeded 0.60, whereas a coefficient below 0.60 indicated insufficient reliability according to the criterion adopted in this study. Higher Cronbach's alpha values generally indicate greater internal consistency among the items measuring a construct.

Hypothesis testing was conducted by examining direct and indirect effects. Direct effects were evaluated using path coefficients and their corresponding p -values. A relationship was considered statistically significant when the p -value was below 0.05, whereas a p -value greater than 0.05 indicated that the relationship was not statistically significant at the 5% significance level. The mediating role of job promotion was examined through indirect effect analysis. This analysis assessed whether the merit system influenced employee performance through job promotion as an intervening variable. The indirect effect was evaluated using the bootstrapping results reported under the *Specific Indirect Effects* section of the SmartPLS output. Statistical significance was determined based on the corresponding p -value, with values below 0.05 indicating a statistically significant indirect effect.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1. Result

a. Evaluation Test *Measurement* (Outer Model)

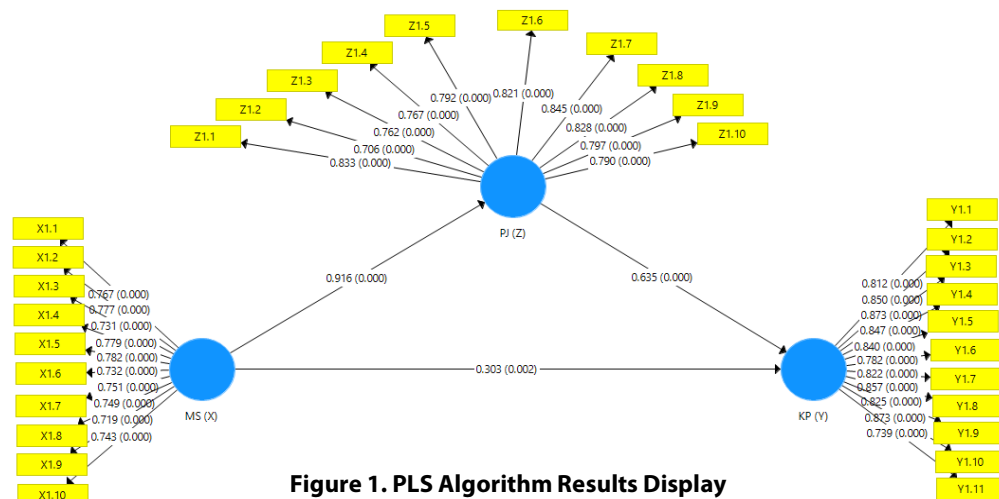
1) Convergent Validity

View the convergent validity parameters, where the loading factor value of each variable for the indicators gives valid values with a fun mark validity above 0.6 - 0.7. In addition, can see from the AVE value of study This bigger from 0.5. Findings can be seen in Table 1 and Figure 1 below:

Table 1. Validity Test Results Convergent

Indicator	Loading Factor	Note:
MERIT SYSTEM		
Human resource planning based on burden Work	0.767	Valid
Fulfillment standard competence position	0.777	Valid
Selection in open HR promotion	0.731	Valid
Management comprehensive career	0.779	Valid
System award based on performance	0.782	Valid
Implementation Sanctions based on performance	0.732	Valid
Implementation code ethics seen in behavior employee	0.751	Valid
Development competence-based evaluation performance	0.749	Valid
Protection of ASN from abuse authority	0.719	Valid

Indicator	Loading Factor	Note:
System information personnel based competence	0.743	Valid
POSITION PROMOTION		
Civil servant promotions are carried out based on comparison objective	0.833	Valid
Condition ASN promotion has equal rights.	0.706	Valid
Promotion Official carried out by the Personnel Development Officer	0.762	Valid
Assessment team Civil servant performance is determined by the authorized official	0.767	Valid
Condition Promotion own Honesty	0.792	Valid
Condition Promotion own level Discipline tall	0.821	Valid
Own ability Work The same	0.845	Valid
Proficient in executing task	0.828	Valid
Own loyalty	0.797	Valid
Own appropriate level of education provision	0.790	Valid
EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE		
Planning	0.812	Valid
Implementation	0.850	Valid
Monitoring Work	0.873	Valid
Coaching	0.847	Valid
Responsiveness	0.840	Valid
Responsibility	0.782	Valid
Accountability	0.822	Valid
Quantity	0.857	Valid
Quality	0.825	Valid
Efficiency	0.873	Valid
Independence	0.739	Valid



Based on outer loading analysis, all indicators in the study are considered valid because the loading factor value exceeds 0.70, so it can be confirmed that every indicator is capable of representing the construct it represents.

2) Discriminant Validity

Another common method used is compare root square from Average Variance Extracted (AVE) with correlation between construct. The model can be said to be good if the values seen in the AVE of each construct are greater than 0.5. Here, the results of the data processing can be shown in Table 3.

Table 2. AVE Values

Variables	AVE value
Merit System	0.567
Job Promotion	0.632
Employee Performance	0.689

Based on validity test results discriminant through Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value, obtained that all variables in study This own higher AVE value tall from 0.50. This is indicates that every construct can explain more from 50% variance from the indicators that make it up, so can concluded that every variables own validity sufficient discriminant Good.

3) Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha (Reliability Test)

For evaluate composite reliability there are two tools measuring that is internal consistency and Cronbach's alpha. In measuring the if achieved value is > 0.70 then can it is said that construct the own high reliability. Cronbach's alpha is a reliability test that is carried out to strengthen results from composite reliability. A variable can be stated as reliable if its Cronbach's alpha > 0.70 . The following are the results testing composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha of Smart PLS

Table 3. Reliability Test Construct

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Information
Merit System	0.915	0.929	Fulfilled
Promotion Position	0.935	0.945	Fulfilled
Employee Performance	0.955	0.960	Fulfilled
Value Limit	≥ 0.70	≥ 0.70	Fulfilled

Based on results testing, obtained that overall variables show mark Cronbach 's *Alpha* above or exceeds 0.70 and Composite Reliability also exceeds standard from 0.70. Because the value it is very much in excess threshold of 0.70, so that can conclude that indicators that make up construct from each variable consistent in evaluate variables in other words, the tools used own level very high reliability in describe concepts in each variable.

b. Inner Model Test (Structural Model)

1) R Square Test

Inner model analysis can be evaluated with using R-square for construct dependent. the value of R-square can used for evaluate influence independent latent variables certain to dependent latent variable whether own substantive influence The results of the inner model test include mark coefficient determination (R-square) as in the table following :

Table 4. Coefficient Results Determination

Variables	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Y (Employee Performance)	0.849	0.847
Z (Promotion Position)	0.839	0.838

Based on results evaluation of the structural model, the R Square (R^2) value for variables Employee Performance (Y) is 0.849 with The Adjusted R Square value reached 0.847. This shows that 84.9% of the variation in employee performance can be described by the predictors in the model (such as Merit and Promotion System Position), while 15.1% is explained by other factors outside the study. An R^2 value approaching 1 indicates that the model has strength very high explanation. Adjusted R^2 is almost the same as R^2 , also showing that the model is effective and not experiencing overfitting, so the results are statistically reliable. On the other hand, the variable Promotion Position (Z) indicates that the R Square value is 0.839 and the Adjusted R Square is 0.838. In other words, 83.9% of the variation that occurs in promotion position can be explained by factors previously (such as merit system), while 16.1% was influenced by other elements that were not covered in the model.

2) Hypothesis Testing

Testing hypotheses can be seen from t- statistic value and value probability. For testing hypothesis that is with use mark statistics so for alpha 5% the t - statistic value used is bigger from 1.64 (> 1.64) or if If mark the probability more small from sig value 0.5 (< 0.05). Test results hypothesis based on marked coefficient viewed path from T-Statistics / P-value through table following :

Table 5. Test Results Hypothesis

Variables	Coefficient Correlation	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T- Statistics	P- Values	Note
SM (X) -> KP (Y)	0.303	0.097	3.126	0.002	Accepted
SM (X) -> PJ (Z)	0.916	0.017	54,740	0.000	Accepted
PJ (Z) -> KP (Y)	0.635	0.095	6,700	0.000	Accepted
SM (X) -> PJ (Z) -> KP (Y)	0.582	0.085	6,820	0.000	Accepted

Based on the data in Table 8 above, the results from testing the hypothesis in this research are, presented as following:

- Testing Hypothesis 1 (The Merit System Has an Effect Positive and significant On Employee Performance). As based on the results in the table above, that mark from Coefficient Korea is 0.303, and is worth positive, thing This show that merit system has impact positive and significant to performance employee. In other words, more and more effective implementation merit system in matter This for example in the assessment based on performance, transparency, and fairness in management source Power human, then the more tall performance employee This is also proven with T-Statistics value is more big from alpha value ($3.126 > 1.64$) and P-Value value is greater small from sig value ($0.002 < 0.05$), meaning can stated that impact This important in a way statistics. Meaning theoretically that The merit system can functioning as tool managerial that improves enthusiasm and responsibility answer employee in reach target work. With thus so can concluded that results the show hypothesis First accepted.
- Testing Hypothesis 2 (merit system has an effect positive and significant to promotion position). As the results shown in the table above, that mark from Coefficient Correlation is 0.916. number This positive value, and value This is very significant. It can be interpreted as that show existence a very strong and positive relationship between merit and promotion system position. This is also proven with T-Statistics Statistics value is more big from alpha value ($54,740 > 1.96$) and and P-Value value is higher small from sig value ($0.000 < 0.05$). meaning the impact is very big. The meaning theoretically that in organization, promotion position is greatly influenced by implementation merit system. In other words, the more clear and objective merit system is implemented, the more tall possibility promotions based on performance, not merit factor subjective such as work period or connection personal. With thus so can concluded that hypothesis second accepted.
- Testing Hypothesis 3 (Promotion Position Influential Positive and Significant on Employee Performance). Based on the data in the table has obtained coefficient Coefficient Correlation is 0.635, and is worth positive. This is describe that impact positive and significant, where promotion the position applied for with fair and based on ability can increase performance employees. This is also proven with T-Statistics value is more big from alpha value ($6.700 > 1.96$) and P-Value value is greater small from sig value ($0.000 < 0.05$), meaning that impact This own significance statistics. These results can interpreted that promotion position functioning as encouragement psychological and professional support employee For achieve more good, because they realize existence relatedness real between performance and opportunities career. With thus so can concluded that results hypothesis third accepted.
- Testing Hypothesis 4 (Promotion Position Can Play a Role Mediating The Influence of the Merit System On Employee Performance). Based on the data in the table, it is obtained mark Coefficient Correlation is 0.582, the number this is also worth it positive. Correlation results the can show that promotion position in a way significant can play a role mediate connection between merit and performance system employees. This can also seen from T-Statistics value is more big from alpha value ($6.820 > 1.64$), and value from P-Value more small from sig value ($0.000 < 0.05$), meaning influence from mediation This important. And the results from influence No direct the can interpreted in a way theoretical that

impact merit system on performance employee. Not only nature directly, but also through the promotion process position. In other words, implementation consistent merit system increase justice and transparency in promotion position, which in the end increase motivation and performance employee.

4.2. Discussion

a. The Effect of the Merit System on Employee Performance in the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government

The findings indicate that the merit system has a positive and statistically significant effect on employee performance in the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government. This result suggests that more effective implementation of merit-based personnel management is associated with better employee performance in terms of work quantity, quality, efficiency, and accountability. The findings highlight the importance of the merit system not only as a framework for human resource management but also as a strategic mechanism for strengthening employee motivation, professionalism, and accountability in achieving organizational objectives. One important factor underlying this relationship is human resource planning based on workload analysis. When personnel planning considers job requirements and actual workloads, employee allocation can be better aligned with organizational needs and individual competencies. Dessler (2017) explained that effective human resource planning helps organizations place appropriate personnel in suitable positions, thereby supporting improved work outcomes. Similarly, Muhati and Makhamara (2023) emphasized the importance of effective organizational systems and rewards in encouraging employee performance. In the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government, the alignment between employees' competencies and their assigned positions may encourage them to demonstrate greater responsibility and accountability in carrying out their duties.

Another important aspect is the implementation of open selection procedures for personnel promotion. Open selection can create a more competitive and transparent environment in which employees are encouraged to demonstrate their capabilities and achievements. Armansyah (2023) reported that transparency in promotion procedures can strengthen employee motivation and discipline. Such procedures may encourage employees to improve their performance because career advancement is associated with their demonstrated capabilities. Haryadi et al. (2025) similarly emphasized the importance of transparent and fair career development policies in supporting employee performance. These findings suggest that local government institutions should strengthen transparency in career development and periodically evaluate personnel management practices to ensure that employee development needs are addressed and organizational performance continues to improve.

The implementation of performance-based sanctions is another dimension of the merit system that may contribute to employee performance. Consistent and proportionate sanctions for violations or inadequate performance can reinforce organizational discipline and clarify expectations regarding employee conduct. Ridwan et al. (2024) argued that fair reward and sanction systems can strengthen desirable workplace behavior and reduce organizational deviations. In addition, the implementation of a code of ethics can support a professional work culture by emphasizing integrity and ethical responsibility. Romandoni et al. (2024) reported that employee integrity is significantly associated with the quality of public services. Together, these findings highlight the importance of implementing merit principles comprehensively, from workforce planning and personnel placement to performance evaluation and competency development. The findings can also be interpreted in relation to Goal-Setting Theory, which emphasizes the importance of clear objectives, commitment, and feedback in directing employee effort toward performance goals. A well-implemented merit system can establish clearer performance expectations and strengthen accountability for achieving organizational targets. Furthermore, the findings are consistent with the principles of meritocracy, which emphasize competence and fairness in personnel management. However, the results should be interpreted as evidence of the relationship observed in this study rather than proof that every component of the merit system independently improves performance. Overall, the findings indicate that effective implementation of the merit system is an important factor associated with employee performance in the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government. These results emphasize the need for consistent,

objective, and competency-oriented personnel management to support a more professional and accountable public administration.

b. The Effect of the Merit System on Job Promotion in the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government

The findings demonstrate that the merit system has a positive and statistically significant effect on job promotion in the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government. This result indicates that more effective implementation of merit-based personnel management is associated with more objective, transparent, and competency-oriented promotion practices. The finding underscores the importance of meritocratic principles in ensuring that career advancement is based on relevant qualifications, professional competence, and employee achievements. One factor that may explain this relationship is human resource planning based on workload analysis and position requirements. When personnel planning is conducted systematically, organizations can identify positions that require specific competencies and determine the qualifications necessary for promotion. In addition, the fulfillment of position competency standards provides an important basis for assessing employees' suitability for higher positions. Employees who meet relevant technical, managerial, and sociocultural competency requirements can be evaluated more objectively against the demands of the positions they seek to occupy. Utami and Nugroho (2022) are cited in the original manuscript as supporting the relationship between competency standards and greater objectivity in public-sector promotion. The original publication should be checked to confirm the precise scope of their findings.

Open selection procedures also strengthen the relationship between the merit system and job promotion. By providing eligible employees with opportunities to compete based on qualifications and work achievements, open selection can reduce reliance on personal connections and other non-merit considerations. Armansyah (2023) similarly reported that transparent promotion procedures can strengthen employee motivation, loyalty, and professionalism. These mechanisms indicate that the merit system can provide an institutional framework for more equitable career advancement. The findings are also consistent with the arguments of Lenvik (2017) and Park and Joen (2021), as cited in the original manuscript, regarding the importance of objective criteria and transparent procedures in personnel management. When promotion requirements are clear, measurable, and consistently applied, employees can better understand the relationship between their professional development and career opportunities. Structured career management can also help employees identify the competencies, training, and achievements required for advancement.

Furthermore, the findings are consistent with previous studies cited in the manuscript, including Suryanto and Darto (2020), Maulana (2021), and Armansyah (2023), which are presented as supporting the importance of merit-based and transparent promotion practices. Nevertheless, the strength of this comparison depends on the extent to which the original studies examined similar variables and organizational settings. In the context of the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government, these findings suggest that the implementation of merit principles is relevant to the quality of promotion procedures. Strengthening competency standards, open selection, and transparent career management may help ensure that promotion decisions reflect employee suitability and organizational requirements. The results therefore highlight the importance of translating formal merit-based policies into consistent personnel management practices.

c. The Effect of Job Promotion on Employee Performance in the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government

The findings indicate that job promotion has a positive and statistically significant effect on employee performance in the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government. This result suggests that more effective promotion practices are associated with better employee performance in terms of work quality, quantity, efficiency, and accountability. The findings also indicate that job promotion may function not only as an administrative form of career advancement but also as a mechanism for recognizing employee contributions and encouraging improved work performance. One possible explanation for this relationship is the application of objective criteria in civil service promotion. When employees perceive that promotion opportunities are associated with superior performance and relevant qualifications, they may be encouraged to improve their work planning, task implementation, and efficiency. Equal opportunities for eligible employees can also strengthen perceptions of organizational fairness. When promotion procedures are

perceived as fair and nondiscriminatory, employees may be more willing to invest effort in fulfilling their responsibilities and achieving organizational targets.

The involvement of authorized personnel officials and performance assessment teams may further strengthen the relationship between promotion and employee performance. Clear assessment procedures can help ensure that promotion decisions are based on documented work achievements and relevant qualifications. Dessler (2020) emphasized the importance of systematic evaluation in personnel management. The original manuscript also cites Suryanto and Darto (2020) in relation to performance assessment, employee motivation, and responsibility. These arguments support the importance of credible and transparent assessment procedures, although the specific findings of the cited studies should be verified against their original publications. The relationship between promotion and employee performance can also be understood through motivation theory. When employees perceive promotion as a meaningful outcome of their efforts and achievements, career advancement may provide an incentive to maintain or improve performance. Conversely, promotion procedures perceived as unfair may weaken employees' confidence in the relationship between performance and career opportunities. Therefore, the motivational value of promotion depends not only on the availability of advancement opportunities but also on the perceived fairness and credibility of the selection process.

The findings are consistent with previous studies cited in the original manuscript. Suryanto and Darto (2020) are presented as highlighting the importance of promotion based on ability and achievement, while Maulana (2021) is cited in relation to career clarity, employee motivation, and responsibility. Wulandari (2023) is also referenced as reporting improvements in accountability, work quality, and efficiency among employees promoted in accordance with their capabilities. These studies provide a basis for comparing the current findings with earlier research, subject to verification of their original results and research contexts. Overall, the findings suggest that job promotion is an important factor associated with employee performance in the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government. Promotion procedures that emphasize objectivity, fairness, competence, and work achievements may help strengthen employee motivation and accountability. The results also reinforce the importance of integrating promotion policies with broader merit-based personnel management practices to support professional, efficient, and accountable public administration.

d. The Mediating Role of Job Promotion in the Relationship Between the Merit System and Employee Performance

The findings indicate that job promotion mediates the relationship between the merit system and employee performance in the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government. This result suggests that the relationship between merit-based personnel management and employee performance operates, at least in part, through promotion practices. When the merit system is implemented effectively and promotion decisions are based on objective qualifications, competence, and work achievements, the principles of meritocracy can be translated into tangible career opportunities that may encourage improved employee performance. An important explanation for this mediating relationship is that job promotion represents one of the practical mechanisms through which merit principles are implemented. Workforce planning, competency standards, performance evaluation, and career development provide a framework for identifying employees who are suitable for advancement. When promotion decisions reflect these criteria, employees may perceive personnel management as more objective and equitable. Such perceptions can strengthen motivation, responsibility, and commitment to achieving organizational objectives.

Conversely, the influence of the merit system may be weakened when promotion procedures are not aligned with merit-based principles. If promotion decisions rely on subjective preferences or fail to recognize employee competence and achievements, employees may perceive that their efforts are not adequately rewarded. In such circumstances, the merit system may remain a formal administrative framework without fully translating into the workplace behaviors and outcomes it is intended to support. Job promotion can therefore represent an important mechanism linking the implementation of merit principles with employee performance. The findings are also consistent with the argument that career advancement can influence employee motivation by providing a visible connection between work achievements and professional development. When employees recognize that promotion opportunities depend on their capabilities and performance, they may have stronger incentives to improve work planning, task implementation, monitoring, and accountability. Ridwan et al. (2024), as cited in the original manuscript, emphasized the role of

organizational rewards in reinforcing desirable employee behavior. This perspective supports the argument that promotion practices may contribute to the translation of merit-based personnel management into improved work outcomes.

Suryanto and Darto (2020) are also cited in the original manuscript as supporting the relationship between merit-based promotion and employee responsibility. However, evidence that promotion influences performance does not, by itself, establish that promotion mediates the relationship between the merit system and employee performance. The mediation conclusion must be based on the statistical test of the indirect effect, as reported in the study's empirical results. In the context of the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government, the findings suggest that job promotion may serve as an important mechanism for translating merit-based personnel policies into employee performance outcomes. Effective implementation of the merit system should therefore be accompanied by promotion procedures that are transparent, objective, and aligned with competency and performance requirements. Such alignment may strengthen employees' confidence in personnel management and encourage them to improve their work outcomes.

In conclusion, the findings highlight the potential importance of job promotion as a mediating mechanism connecting the merit system with employee performance. The practical implication is that local government institutions should not only establish merit-based personnel policies but also ensure that these principles are consistently reflected in promotion decisions. Nevertheless, the extent of the mediating effect and whether it represents partial or full mediation must be established through the reported indirect-effect and direct-effect estimates. These statistical results are essential for determining the precise nature of the relationship among the three variables.

V. Conclusion

The findings indicate that the merit system has a positive and significant effect on employee performance and job promotion in the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government. Job promotion also has a positive and significant effect on employee performance and mediates the relationship between the merit system and employee performance. These results highlight the importance of implementing merit-based personnel management that emphasizes transparency, fairness, competence, and performance in promoting a professional and accountable bureaucracy. The practical implications suggest that local governments should strengthen the implementation of the merit system by ensuring that personnel decisions and promotion procedures are objective, transparent, and based on employee qualifications, competencies, integrity, and work achievements. Promotion mechanisms should provide fair opportunities for qualified employees and encourage professional development, accountability, and improved work performance. These measures may support more effective human resource management and contribute to improvements in the quality of public services. This study has limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. The research focuses on the North Bolaang Mongondow Regency Government, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other public sector organizations. Future research could involve local governments in different regions, use larger and more diverse samples, and examine additional variables, such as leadership, organizational culture, and employee motivation, to provide a broader understanding of the mechanisms through which merit-based personnel management influences employee performance.

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