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Impaired Neutrality: A Propensity That Occurs Among Indonesian Bureaucrats in the Election

Abstract

This paper explores the propensity of neutrality disruption among Indonesian civil servants during political elections. It aims to provide empirical evidence to prove that some Indonesian civil servants have the proclivity to violate neutrality by supporting political candidates in a campaign or through social media during the elections. This research was conducted with qualitative methods by literature review, examining policy documents, and a descriptive study to provide an overview of the theoretical normative and practical findings. This research utilized the Indonesian Civil Service Commission (KASN RI) report which showcased 1,399 neutrality violation reports and 982 neutrality violation cases among Indonesian civil servants in 2020 (2020 was the year of 270 simultaneous heads of regional elections in Indonesia), making Indonesia among the “few & self-interest” sphere countries in the modified dimension of interest and societal spheres framework. As the way out from the neutrality infringement paradox, this paper proposed a collaborative approach between government agencies to overcome civil servant neutrality violations and strategies to reduce abuse of power by the head of the government agency during the elections. The implication of this study is to remind the bureaucracy that dynamics and disharmony in implementing neutral competence and political responsiveness inside the bureaucracy occur during elections. Academically, this study is significant in showcasing the complex relationship between neutral competence and political responsiveness in bureaucracy. Practically, the study is substantial for the bureaucracy to learn how to prevent and be immune from political influence during the election.

Keywords:

election; neutral competence; political responsiveness; neutrality violation; bureaucracy; civil servant; abuse of power; Indonesia

Introduction

Discussion regarding the neutrality of civil servants is significant because Indonesia

is a democratic country that chooses political leaders through elections. Unlike the police and military, civil servants in

Indonesia have the right to choose political leaders but are required to provide quality public services and act neutrally. This research can also serve as a reminder for civil servants to remain neutral in the simultaneous elections that will be held in 2024. Previous studies about civil servant neutrality in Indonesia were less likely to discuss literature related to the dynamics between neutral competence and political responsiveness (Hadiyantina, 2020; Kartini, 2019; Nugroho et al., 2019; Ruslihardi et al., 2021) and focus only on civil servant neutrality issues in the specific region (Santoso, 2016; Setyowati, 2016; Ardiansyah, 2022).

This research showcases that disharmony between neutral competence and political responsiveness in bureaucracy occurs during political elections in Indonesia. In other words, civil servants have the propensity to violate the neutrality norms by favoring certain political candidates, as well as taking political actions outside of the government’s political agenda during the elections. During the 2020 Indonesian simultaneous election, the Indonesian Civil Service Commission (KASN RI) received 1,399 civil servant neutrality violation reports and 982 neutrality violation cases (Indonesian Civil Service Commission, 2020), proving that the relationship between neutral competence and political responsiveness is sophisticated during the elections.

Indonesia held its fourth simultaneous regional head elections for a total of 270 positions, including 9 (nine) provinces, 224 (two hundred twenty-four) districts, and 37 (thirty-seven) municipalities in 2020 (International Foundation

for Electoral Systems, 2020; Sukmajati M., 2020). Furthermore, Indonesia has more than 100 (one hundred) million eligible and verified voters, approximately 300,000 (three hundred thousand) polling stations throughout the nation, and recruited 3,303,407 (three million three hundred three thousand four hundred seven) ad hoc election officials from the general public (International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2020).

Even though the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020, both administration and legislative bodies persisted to run the simultaneous regional head election in December 2020 because it was labeled as a national strategic plan (Sukmajati M., 2020). Based on the Election Vulnerability Index (IKP) released by The General Election Supervisory Agency of Indonesia (BAWASLU RI), several potential problems that may occur in the election: low voter turnout, civil servant neutrality violation, lack of integrity and professionalism of election organizers, violations of electoral rules by candidates, and bribery (Sukmajati M., 2020).

Based on the study by the National Civil Service Agency of Indonesia from 2020 - 2021, the growth of the number of active Indonesian civil servants has fluctuated. The table displays the data divided by their location of work (National Civil Service Agency of Indonesia, 2021).

With the immense number of civil servants, Indonesia will overcome many challenges to maintain its civil servants’ neutrality, especially during the political election event. We know that approximately 0.02% (with the assumption of 982 civil servants that violated the neutrality principle in 2020 compared to 4,168,118 total

Table 1.
Indonesian Civil Servants in Numbers

Statistics	June 2020	December 2020	June 2021	December 2021
Active Civil Servants	4,121,176	4,168,118	4,081,824	3,995,634
Central Civil Servants	946,606 (23%)	958,919 (23%)	949,050 (23%)	936,859 (23%)
Local Civil Servants	3,174,570 (77%)	3,209,199 (77%)	3,132,774 (77%)	3,058,775 (77%)

Source: obtained from secondary data of BKN (2020 & 2021)

active civil servants in Indonesia in December 2020) disobeyed the implementation of neutral competence and political responsiveness. Concerns about the number of Indonesian civil servants and how they could negatively impact neutrality during the election are becoming urgent. Indonesia will always have election events periodically, and the possibility of neutrality violations made by Indonesian civil servants before and after the election event will continue to be a looming concern. Therefore, this research proposed two research questions:

Did neutrality violations or disharmony between neutral competence and political responsiveness occur during the 2020 election in Indonesia?

What kinds of strategies can the Indonesian government use to maintain neutrality during the election period?

This study is relevant for both academia and practitioners. For academia, it provides insights into the fact that the election is an arena for civil servants to choose whether they will help balance or violate the harmony between neutral competence and political responsiveness. Practically, it produces recommendations for bureaucracy to be apolitical during the election. Previous studies in this field are also less likely to highlight the importance of bureaucracy in implementing neutral competence and being responsive to the ambitions of the administration to implement political responsiveness (Aberbach & Rockman, 1994; Öhberg et al., 2017). Therefore, this study fills the gaps from the previous studies by showcasing the empirical evidence that demonstrates some Indonesian civil servants have a proclivity to violate neutrality by supporting political candidates in a campaign or through social media during the elections. It also represents a sophisticated relationship between neutral competence and political responsiveness in bureaucracy that occurred during the elections and offers contextual recommendations for

solutions to the problems. This study will conduct an assessment in Indonesia.

The study from the Indonesian Civil Service Commission shows that 1,399 neutrality violation reports and 982 neutrality violation cases were received in 2020. These neutrality violations resulted from various causes. This paper will break down the neutrality violations into more specific categories and systematically examine the causes. The lessons learned from this study are important for the Indonesian bureaucracy to overcome future election challenges and to improve the resilience of the bureaucracy throughout the election. This study consists of an introduction and research questions in the first part. Second, a review of the literature with a focus on political leaders, bureaucratic, and Asian perspectives. Third, a brief research methodology explanation. Fourth, law in Indonesian civil service, government effectiveness index data, case studies of abuse of power by the head of the agency, and Indonesian civil servant neutrality violation report. And finally, the fifth part of this paper will conclude by offering policy recommendations to overcome the complex challenges of being neutral in Indonesia.

Literature Review

Bureaucratic Perspective: Neutral Competence

Neutral competence is defined as the ability of bureaucrats to do governmental work expertly, in an explicit manner to set objective standards rather than to make decisions based on personal, party or other obligations and loyalties (Aberbach & Rockman, 1994; Dickinson & Rudalevige, 2007; Hollibaugh, 2015; Kaufman, 1956). It emphasizes taking administration out of politics (Aberbach & Rockman, 1994; Demir & Nyhan, 2008; Goodnow, 2003; Kaufman, 1956; Overeem, 2005; Rosenbloom, 2008). Hecló's argument stated that neutral competence does not only concern giving the best independent decision on the issues to elected leaders, but it

exists to serve their aims (Aberbach & Rockman, 1994; Hecl, 1975). It has the long-term, broader interest of the country and the government in mind by focusing on a vested interest in continuity. In other words, it serves elected leaders and their appointees and focuses on the long-term interest and the institutional health of the government (Aberbach & Rockman, 1994; Genieys et al., 2022; Hecl, 1975).

This system works when there is trust among elites and politicians put their trust in civil servants and believe they are committed to serving the general interest of the state as best as they can (Aberbach & Rockman, 1994). Meanwhile, Rourke points out a case from the United States that neutral competence is an act to provide administrative agencies with a particular capacity to shed light on policy-making issues (Rourke, 2018). Still, to Rourke, neutral competence has been highly acceptable as an administrative ideal if the president considered themselves a modest agent of change that will lead to a prominent transformation in society (Rourke, 2018).

Based on West's arguments, the neutral competence doctrine is divided into the old as a traditional model and the new as a reframing model (West, 2005). The traditional model is an assumption that politics and administration were conceptually distinctive and practically separable activities (West, 2005). The new model of reframing neutral competence emphasizes that it has moved institutional boundaries separating politics from administration (West, 2005). The new model is a way to reconcile nonpartisanship and objectivity with responsiveness to politically based control. It distinguished the roles of political appointees and career civil servants within the administrative process (West, 2005).

Political Leader Perspective: Political Responsiveness of Bureaucracy

Political responsiveness in the United States is an argument that civil servants and

government agencies within the Executive Office of the President (EOP) can be responsive to what politicians wanted because they are agreeing to engage in politicized behavior (West, 2005). In the United States' case, political responsiveness was a form of distrust by the Nixon and Reagan administrations of the existing bureaucracy to do what administrations wanted because it desired to make significant changes in the systems with or without congress approval (Aberbach & Rockman, 1994). Both administrations decided not to trust the neutral and competent top civil servants because of the violation of obedience to the existing law or considered advice (Aberbach & Rockman, 1994; Moynihan & Roberts, 2010). A label is attached to the bureaucracy as a committed believer in achieving administration policy goals. It demands responsive appointees that are equally responsive to career civil servants in top positions to do what the administration intended, which means responsive individuals that would share the worldview of the President (Aberbach & Rockman, 1994; Bryer, 2008; Lee & Park, 2021; West & Raso, 2013).

The fluctuating relationships between neutral competence and political responsiveness has commonly existed in the United States' administration history. Rourke highlighted a case study of Lawyers in the Justice Department who had a dilemma between serving the President or abiding by the laws they have agreed to uphold. The Watergate Affair in the 1970s shows the relationship between the bureaucracy and an agent who serves the President as the principal (Rourke, 2018). The relationship dilemma between neutral competence that looks for objectivity and political responsiveness in the administration cannot neatly be resolved (West, 2005). Both systems existed in the operation of democratic bureaucracy, and they need nurturing to create the neutral competence that could make the policymaking into advanced forms of professionalism and politics, giving the

government its command in a democratic order (Rourke, 2018).

Asian Perspective: A Responsive Competence

As the paradox in the United States case was to ensure civil servants with neutral competence were responsive to elected political leaders (Poocharoen & Brillantes, 2013), a limited study was conducted about the neutral competence and political responsiveness in the Asian context since the majority of literature came from the Western democracies (Duong, 2021). The neutral competence perspective is significant in Western countries, and not widely known in Asian countries. In the Asian context, responsive competence has more emphasis (Duong, 2021).

Poocharoen & Brillantes (2013) emphasized that the democratization process is significant to understand how each government reacts to political neutrality. There is more emphasis on implementing merit systems to create an elite class of civil servants in Asia, unlike in the United States. (Poocharoen & Brillantes, 2013). Moreover, Asian governments have characteristics of powerful bureaucracies that could work collaboratively with political leaders (Poocharoen & Brillantes, 2013). Therefore, Asian governments want to build a competent bureaucracy that is responsive to political leaders without creating an elite class of civil servants (Poocharoen & Brillantes, 2013).

In the Singapore context, there is merit-based recruitment to ensure people joining the ruling party or the regime are the best candidates (Poocharoen & Brillantes, 2013; Tan, 2008). Moreover, in the China context, some of the civil servants must be communist party members (Burns, 2007; Poocharoen & Brillantes, 2013). In China, cadre organizations have a significant role to promote the party as a good governance role model (Guo-Brennan, 2021). Chinese civil servants have party-affiliated cadre organization members and non-party government officials (Guo-Brennan, 2021). Moreover, 80% of civil

service posts are owned by Chinese party members (Guo-Brennan, 2021; Rothstein, 2015).

A Balance between Neutral Competence and Political Responsiveness

The implementation of neutral competence with value-neutral techniques derived from science and professions to achieve a goal based on the constitution (Öhberg et al., 2017; Green, 1998), without any independent judgment about the correctness of the actions of government (Öhberg et al., 2017; Thompson, 1985) seems significant and ideal. However, Svava emphasized that politics and policy information cannot be separated in practice. Neutral competence could be a threat if civil service blindly follows the letter of the law and acts on scientific and professional knowledge without considering their government's political ambitions. It could be of limited use to the same or be beyond democratic control as the worst-case scenario (Öhberg et al., 2017; Svava, 1999, 2001).

Therefore, it is significant for civil servants to balance the demand for responsiveness against the demand for correct behavior in a merit bureaucracy just like a scenario of the issue between responsive and neutral competence in the American literature (Aberbach & Rockman, 1994; Christensen & Opstrup, 2018; Kaufman, 1956). With the mindset of long-term interest and the institutional health of the government, a sound balance between political advisers and civil servants is significant to apply in the bureaucracy (Eichbaum & Shaw, 2010; Öhberg et al., 2017). However, the normative seems far from reality in the bureaucracy. In a more specific political context, civil servants frequently violate neutrality during the election. The election is an instrument of democracy and a platform to obtain legalized government leaders (Kartini, 2019; Etzioni and Halevy, 2011). In the case of Indonesia, the chief of government at both central and local levels is elected through election methods. The elected leaders who win the elections will lead the government.

Unfortunately, The Election Supervisory Board of Indonesia (Bawaslu RI) found 1,096 cases of neutrality violations committed by Indonesian civil servants, military, and police during the 2019 general election in Indonesia (Kartini, 2019). This finding shows that the expectation to balance political responsiveness and neutral competence in bureaucracy is challenging to uphold during the election.

Civil service management reform with objective and competency-based examinations through recruiting and promoting the best bureaucrats is a counter-response to the alleged corruption, nepotism, and incompetence associated with patronage (West, 2005). Spoil systems have been used for a long time in the government sectors and are popular because of their approach to authority. They could ensure the stability and eternity of a civil servant career (Ali et al., 2017). Therefore, reforming civil service management is crucial through the implementation of a merit system with the placement of civil servants based on their competencies, qualifications, and performance. The merit principle also could protect civil servants from abuses by political appointees in their institutions for inappropriate decisions made by political leaders (West & Durant, 2000).

Dimensions of Interest and Societal Spheres Framework

This research utilizes the modification of dimensions of interest and societal spheres framework (Rothstein & Teorell, 2008; Walzer, 1983). The idea of this framework is to recognize that the same individuals often operate

simultaneously in different spheres. Thus, civil servants as individuals might behave differently between moral spheres. This framework will also highlight which norms are appropriate and which are not.

This framework consists of two dimensions of interest: the first shows the type of interest, and the second is the scope of interest (Rothstein & Teorell, 2008; Walzer, 1983). The type of interest refers to the disparity between self-regarding and other interests. The scope of interest refers to the inquiry of whether the type of monopolized interest is for everyone or restricted to groups such as family, clan, group member, tribe, and community affiliations (Rothstein & Teorell, 2008; Walzer, 1983). *The state sphere* emphasized that laws and policies are applied equally to all, as stated in the principles of political equality and equality before the law. *The market sphere* implies that everyone should have equal access to the market, for example, the law against monopolies/trusts. It also means a transaction regardless of family background, ethnicity, or religion they had. *The family/clan sphere* is a situation where people should behave according to the self-interest of their family members/friends' group and is a restricted entrance only for the members. Lastly, *special interest groups* came from an idea of making things better for their members (self-interest) and are restricted to particular members (Rothstein & Teorell, 2008; Walzer, 1983).

This research modifies the dimensions of interest and societal spheres framework into the context of relationships between neutral competence, political responsiveness, and the election in Indonesia. This research utilized

Table 3.
Dimensions of Interest and Societal Spheres Framework

Scope of interest: How many are to be included?	Type of interest: Interest is for everyone or certain groups?		
	"All"	Other regarding	Self-regarding
The state		The market	
"Few"	The family/clan	The interest group	

Sources: Walzer (1983) & Rothstein, B. O., & Teorell, J. A. (2008).

Table 4.
A Modification in Dimensions of Interest and Societal Spheres Framework in this Research

Indonesia's Bureaucracy during the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Election		
Scope of interest: <i>How many are to be included?</i>	Type of interest: <i>Interest is for everyone or certain groups?</i>	
	Other regarding	Self-regarding
"All"	Neutrality: a balance between neutral competence and political responsiveness in Indonesia's bureaucracy. (Neutrality)	Neutral competence in Indonesia's bureaucracy.
"Few"	Political Responsiveness in Indonesia's bureaucracy.	Neutrality violation: a violation of neutral competence and political responsiveness in Indonesia's bureaucracy.

Sources: Adapted from Walzer (1983) & Rothstein, B. O., & Teorell, J. A. (2008).

this modified framework because we want to recognize that Indonesian civil servants often operate simultaneously in multiple spheres during the election. Neutrality violation evidence showcased in this research will define the position of Indonesia in this modified framework.

In this modification framework, the two dimensions of interest (type and scope of interest) are related to Indonesia's context, especially in Indonesia's bureaucracy during the 2020 simultaneous regional head election situation. *Neutrality: a balance between neutral competence and political responsiveness in the bureaucracy of Indonesia's sphere* represents the state sphere (scope of interest: all & type of interest: other regarding by Rothstein & Teorell, 2008; Walzer, 1983) in this framework. It means that the bureaucracy of Indonesia can harmonize the implementation of civil service law and the responsiveness to the administration during the 2020 election. *A neutral competence in the bureaucracy of the Indonesian sphere* represents the market sphere (scope of interest: all & type of interest: self-regarding by Rothstein & Teorell, 2008; Walzer, 1983) in this framework. It means that the bureaucracy of Indonesia only focuses on implementing the civil service law and professionalism of civil service without considering the ambitions of the administration.

Political responsiveness in the bureaucracy of Indonesia sphere represents the family/clan sphere (scope of interest: few & type of interest:

regarding other types by Rothstein & Teorell, 2008; Walzer, 1983; Walzer, 1983). It means that the administration has eminent power to rule the bureaucracy of Indonesia and fulfill its interests. *Neutrality violation: a violation of neutral competence and political responsiveness in the bureaucracy of the Indonesian sphere* represents the interest group sphere (scope of interest: few & type of interest: self-regarding by Rothstein & Teorell, 2008; Walzer, 1983; Walzer, 1983). It means that the civil servant has violated the neutrality and code of conduct based on the civil service law and tends to involve and be exposed to political activity outside the administration's ambition.

Methods

This paper conducted a qualitative research method that included a literature review, analyzing policy documents, and a descriptive study. The literature review provided the theoretical background of neutral competence, political responsiveness of bureaucracy, a balance between neutral competence and political responsiveness, responsive competence in Asia, and the modified dimensions of interest and societal spheres framework. Descriptive statistics with secondary data from the Indonesian Civil Service Commission (KASN RI) report illustrating the violation of civil servant neutrality in the 2020 Indonesian election also will be utilized in this paper for the analysis process.

This research additionally provided descriptive studies with secondary data on the policy document or Act of Civil Service in Indonesia, the world government effectiveness index in Southeast Asia from the World Governance Indicator (WGI World Bank), and abuse of power in leadership case studies in Indonesia. The determinant of this study is the 2020 simultaneous head of regional elections in Indonesia, which affects the neutrality violation rate in 2020. Based on what was learned from the literature review and findings from the civil servant neutrality violation in 2020, there will be some policy recommendations to overcome and reduce the possibility of additional neutrality violations in Indonesia, especially during the election.

The knowledge gained about neutral competence and political responsiveness literature, as well as policy documents and other secondary supporting data (such as the World Government Effectiveness Index, head of agency abuse of power case studies, and neutrality violation case studies) showcased in this research will also help readers to understand that 1,399 civil servant neutrality violation reports and 982 civil servant neutrality violation cases from 2020 Indonesian Simultaneous Elections were a form of disharmony between neutral competence and political responsiveness in Indonesian civil service. Disharmony occurred because some Indonesian civil servants disobeyed the civil service law by failing to act neutrally during the election.

Results and Discussion

The empirical findings from this study provide evidence that supports the scheme showcased in the literature review. It shows a sophisticated relationship between neutral competence and political responsiveness in bureaucracy, especially during the political election in Indonesia. As previous study about Indonesian civil service political neutrality (Hadiyantina, 2020; Kartini, 2019; Nugroho

et al., 2019; Ruslihardi et al., 2021) and Asian democracy (Duong, 2021) rarely discussed neutral competence and political responsiveness perspectives, this research aims to nurture Indonesian civil service neutrality from the western democracy best practices.

The findings presented in this part also show that Indonesia can be categorized as a *“few and self-regarding”* spheres framework for this research (Rothstein & Teorell, 2008; Walzer, 1983). This part showcases the act of conducting civil servant neutrality in Indonesia, the world government effectiveness index in Southeast Asia, abuse of power case studies by the leader of the agency in Indonesia, and the civil servant neutrality violation in the 2020 Indonesian election. The findings in this research will bring benefits and new insights to neutral competence and political responsiveness academic literature by providing real cases as a lesson learned to reduce the chance of neutrality violations in a future election.

Law in Conducting Civil Servant Neutrality in Indonesia

The Civil Service Act of 2014 (Number 5 of the Year 2014) is the law that encourages every civil servant in Indonesia to be neutral. The consideration part of this law highlighted the urgency of civil servants to have integrity, professionalism and neutrality. Civil servants should commit to avoiding political intervention, acts of corruption, collusion, and nepotism. They should be capable of providing public service and put themselves in a unifying role based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Moreover, article two of this law highlighted neutrality as one of the principles used to run civil service management. This means that civil servants are not allowed to take sides based on any political influence or interest. The law also emphasizes the way to protect civil servants' neutrality from the influence of political parties. It enforces the integrality, solidarity, and

unity of every civil servant. To make sure that all civil servants can focus on their work, all civil servants are prohibited from being members or serving on the committee of the political party.

However, neutrality violations commonly happened because of the pressure from the highest leaders in government agencies, such as ministries, agencies, and local agencies led by people with a political background. The highest leaders have the authorization to promote, transfer, and terminate civil servants as civil service management in certain government agencies regulated by The Civil Service Act of 2014. This act also set the role of the President to delegate the authority to recruit, transfer, and terminate officials (except First Rank/Utama Executive, Second Rank/Madya Executive, and First Rank Specialize Official) to the minister in the ministry, head of the agency in the government agency non-ministry, general secretary in the state institution and non-structural institution, governor in the province, regent in the regency, and mayor in the city.

Moreover, Government Regulation Number: 94 in the Year 2021 restrains the Civil Servant Discipline. This law is the renewal of Government Regulation Number: 53 of the Year 2010 and is designed to implement Article 86 in The Civil Service Act of 2014. Article three of this law encourages every civil servant to keep the unity of Indonesia, implement the regulation made by the authorized personnel, obey the constitution, work based on dedication, honesty, awareness, and responsibility, show integrity, an exemplary attitude, and take action to assist all citizens both during and outside of their hours of duty. This law also emphasizes that civil servants must prioritize the national interest rather than personal, or someone else's, or a certain group's interest.

World Government Effectiveness Index: Case Study in Southeast Asian Region

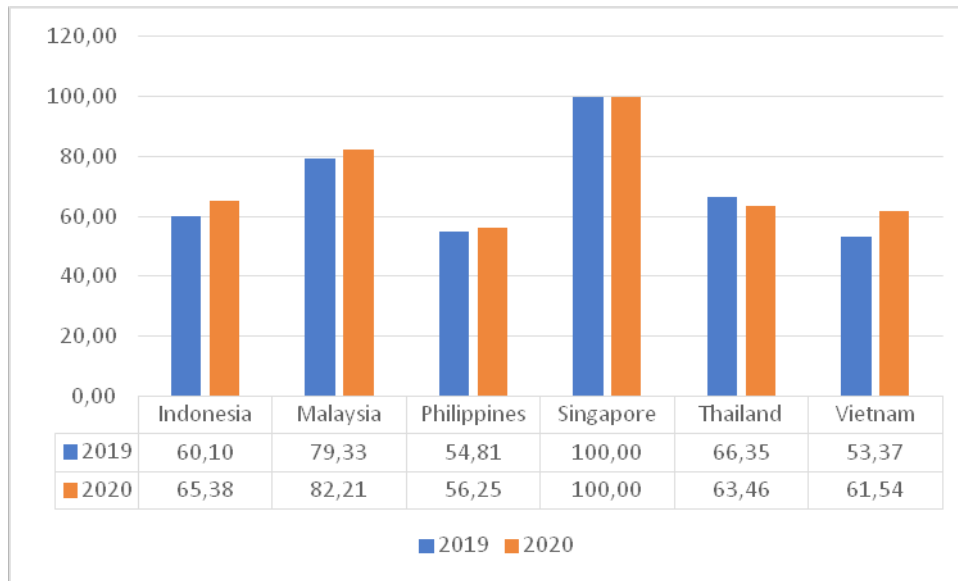
The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) is research summarizing the views on the

quality of governance provided by a large number of enterprise, citizen, and expert survey respondents in industrial and developing countries. These data are gathered from some survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and private sector firms (WGI, 2022). The government effectiveness index reflects perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies (WGI, 2022).

This data is significant for this research because it has one of the indicators that assess the civil service immunity towards political coercion. Since politicians' attempts to influence or control civil servants often occur during the election, hence, this research argues that this descriptive study could help the researcher to understand the independency level of Indonesia compared to other countries. This part will focus on the Government Effectiveness Index in the Southeast Asia region. Therefore, we can see the trend of the independency level towards political forces between ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries, which are believed to have similar characteristics in terms of economic development and cultural context.

Indonesia ranked 3rd in the 2020 government effectiveness index among other Southeast Asian countries according to the statistics in Figure 1. It has shown a significant score development from 60.10 in 2019 to 65.38 in 2020. Right above Indonesia is Malaysia, with 82.21, and Singapore, with a perfect score of 100. Compared to other Southeast Asian countries, Vietnam's government effectiveness score improvement from 2019 to 2020 is the highest of all, with 8.17. It was followed by Indonesia, with 5.28 as the second highest, Malaysia with 2.88, and the Philippines with 1.44. Singapore is the highest achiever with 100 or a perfect score in government effectiveness. However, Thailand

Figure 1.
World Governance Indicators (WGI) – Government Effectiveness Index
in Southeast Asia Region



Source: World Governance Indicators (WGI) and World Bank

is the only country included on the chart whose performance dropped from 66.35 to 63.46.

Abuse of Power in Leadership: Case Studies among the Head of Government Agency in Indonesia

Based on the Indonesian Civil Service Commission (KASN RI) report in 2020, two cases highlighted the abuse of power case studies conducted by the head of local government at the province and regency level (KASN, 2020). The Governor of Jambi (provincial level) and The Regent of Bengkulu Selatan (regency level) have dismissed and demoted civil servants without any accordance with the procedure based on the law. The Governor of Jambi province has dismissed six executive civil servants (Pratama level) without summons and check procedures while the civil servants did not have any discipline issues and performed well in their work. Indonesian Civil Service Commission (KASN RI) has published a recommendation to the Governor to return the six civil servants to their initial positions and has coordinated with The Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucracy Reform of Indonesia (KemenPANRB RI), The Ministry of

Home Affairs of Indonesia (Kemendagri RI), The National Civil Service Agency of Indonesia (BKN RI), The Local Government of Jambi Province, and Jambi Province Legislative Office to solve these issues (KASN, 2020).

Furthermore, there were 46 (forty-six) dismissals and demotions of civil servants in Bengkulu Selatan Regency without any accordance with the procedure based on the law conducted by The Regent of Bengkulu Selatan (KASN, 2020). The Regent did not summon and check the civil servants before he conducted dismissal and demotion, while Bengkulu Selatan civil servants had no problem with their work performance and discipline. Therefore, the Indonesian Civil Service Commission (KASN RI) has published a recommendation to the Regent to return all forty-six civil servants to their initial positions. KASN RI has coordinated with the National Civil Service Agency of Indonesia (BKN RI) to freeze the civil servant employment service of the Bengkulu Selatan Regency as a form of punishment (KASN, 2020). Interestingly, these cases happened in 2020, and

both local governments (Jambi Province and Bengkulu Selatan Regent) engaged in the 2020 simultaneous head of regional election.

Case Study of Indonesian Civil Servant Neutrality Violation in 2020 Simultaneous Head of Region Election

There were simultaneous elections held in Indonesia for 270 local government agencies in 2020. It consists of 9 provinces, 224 regencies, and 37 cities. During the election, the Indonesian Civil Service Commission (KASN RI), a non-structural government body in Indonesia, has the authority to oversee Indonesian civil servants' neutrality or neutrality. The institution received 1,399 reports for civil servants' violations of neutrality.

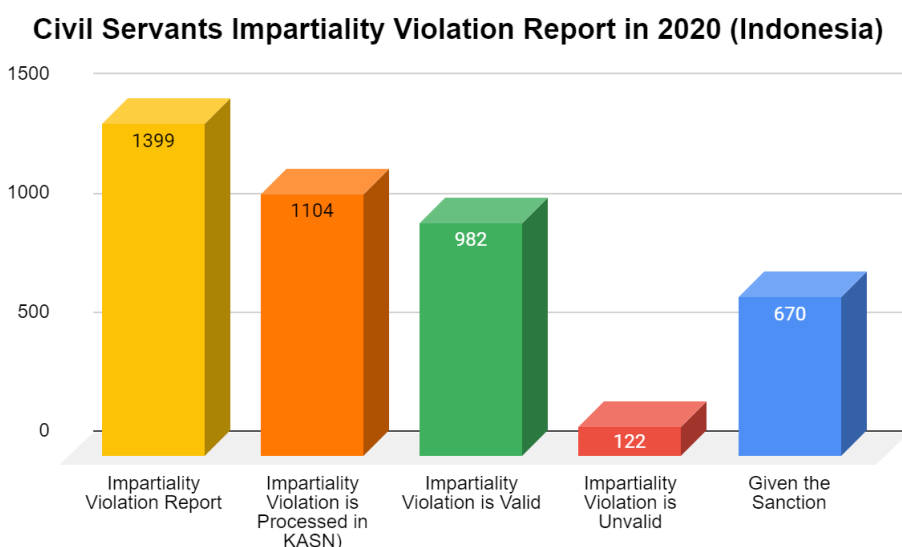
The Indonesian Civil Service Commission (KASN RI) received 1,399 civil servant neutrality violation reports in 2020. 1,104 (78.9%) of the total neutrality violation rate was processed in KASN. After examining the validity, KASN found that 982 (88.9%) reports were valid and 122 (10.1%) were invalid out of the total 1,104. Reports were found to be invalid if they were not relevant to the substance, incomplete, or consisted of vilification. Finally, 670 (68.2%) civil servants

were punished by their head of agency because of their violations.

Celebes island is the highest contributor of civil servant neutrality violations in Indonesia: 484 violations among six provinces based on table 4. Southeast Celebes province, one of the provinces on Celebes Island, contributes 145 civil servant neutrality violations and makes it number one among all in Indonesia. There are no cases found in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. That may be because there was no gubernatorial election in Jakarta during that time. However, there are neutrality violation cases in the central government located in Jakarta. 36 violations were discovered in the central government. Violations were also found in other provinces if the central government offices were deconcentrated.

Civil servants with specialized or functional positions are ranked the highest among all other civil servant positions with 25.9% in table 5. These might happen if they are encouraged by the elected leader or incumbent to gather some power and maintain their position. This maneuver could trigger civil servants who are their inferiors not to maintain their neutrality to maintain their job

Figure 2.
Civil Servants Neutrality Violation Statistics in 2020



Source: Indonesian Civil Service Commission (KASN RI) Report in 2020

Table 4.
Civil Servant Neutrality Violations Report in 2020 based on Central Government & Local Government (34 Provinces) in Indonesia

*Local Government: 1,363 civil servants (Provinces, Regencies, & Cities)			
*Central Government: 36 civil servants (Ministries/Agencies).			
Islands	Provinces	Islands	Provinces
Sumatra Island (10 provinces)	1. Aceh: 0 2. North Sumatra: 64 3. Riau: 34 4. West Sumatra: 63 5. Riau Islands: 12 6. Jambi: 44 7. Bengkulu: 3 8. South Sumatera: 20 9. Bangka Belitung: 3 10. Lampung: 52	Java Island (6 provinces)	11. Banten: 32 12. Jakarta: 0 13. West Java: 42 14. Central Java: 109 15. Yogyakarta: 2 16. East Java: 40
*Total civil servants: 295		* Total civil servants: 225	
Borneo Island (5 provinces)	17. West Borneo: 23 18. Central Borneo: 5 19. South Borneo: 22 20. East Borneo: 14 21. North Borneo: 10	Celebes Island (6 provinces)	22. South Celebes: 104 23. West Celebes: 39 24. Southeast Celebes: 145 25. Central Celebes: 109 26. Gorontalo: 3 27. North Celebes: 84
* Total civil servants: 74		* Total civil servants: 484	
Bali & Southeast Nusa Islands (3 provinces)	28. Bali: 2 29. West Southeast Nusa: 122 30. East Southeast Nusa: 33	Maluku and Papua Islands (4 provinces)	1. North Maluku: 100 2. Maluku: 6 3. West Papua: 2 4. Papua: 20
* Total civil servants: 157		* Total civil servants: 128	

Source: Indonesian Civil Service Commission (KASN RI) Report in 2020

Table 5.
Top 5 Categories of Neutrality Violations

Top Five Civil Servant Positions in Neutrality Violation	Top Five Civil Neutrality Violation Based on Categories
1. Specialized or functional positions: 25.9%.	1. Social media campaign: 27.1%.
2. Executive positions (Echelon I-II): 18.7%.	2. Making campaign event for prospective head of region, legislator, or political appointee: 21.1%.
3. Staff: 15.7%.	3. Taking photo and showing certain gesture and symbol with prospective head of region, legislator, or political appointee: 11.7%.
4. Administrator (Echelon III): 12.9%.	4. Attending campaign event to declare the prospective head of region, legislator, or political appointee: 9.2%.
5. Ward-districts manager: 12.7%	5. Making a political movement approach to become a prospective head of region, legislator, or political appointee: 8.2%.

Source: Indonesian Civil Service Commission (KASN RI) Report in 2020.

security. The second rank goes to the executive position with 18.7%. It is understandable since the executive position is near to the elected position in local and central government. In that sense, their decision will likely be perverted by political interest defined by their elected leader, and also motivated by their desire to secure their job position. Still, in table 2, the highest categories that caused a neutrality violation among civil servants are the social media campaign (27.1%). People are attached to the use of social media, including civil servants. It is easy to use everywhere and

anytime, hence, civil servants may also forget the boundaries they need to consider. In Indonesia, our political interests can only be communicated and shared by casting our votes in the election box and cannot be shared in public or on social media. However, it may seem like a strict policy and a culture that could violate human rights to prevent citizens from voicing their opinions and expressing their viewpoints, but it depends on the culture and values held by every nation since we may not standardize or apply these categories to other countries.

Conclusion

Indonesian civil servant neutrality violations in 2020 (social media political campaign, joining political candidate campaign, taking photos with political candidates to show support, and acting politically to be one of the political candidates) prove that there was neutrality violation propensity which also shaped disharmony between neutral competence and political responsiveness during the 2020 simultaneous region head elections in Indonesia. In 2020, approximately 0.02% (with the assumption of 982 civil servants that violated the neutrality principle 2020 compared to 4,168,118 total active civil servants in Indonesia per December 2020) disobeyed the implementation of the civil service act and the principle of neutral competence and political responsiveness. Nine out of ten government agencies that reached the highest number of neutrality violation cases came from the local government. These confirm that Indonesian civil servants in the local government were more vulnerable to political interference than the central government in 2020. Therefore, successive strategies to encounter neutrality violations are posed in this research.

It is significant to balance the neutral competence and the demand for political responsiveness in bureaucracy as the theoretical idealism. However, the reality generates a dilemma when civil servants faced a situation where they must choose between serving the elected leaders or upholding their professional values. Findings of 2020 Indonesian civil servant neutrality infringements and head of local government abuse of power case studies can be analyzed with the modified dimensions of interest and societal spheres framework by Walzer (1983) & Rothstein, B. O., & Teorell, J. A. (2008). The neutrality violations of Indonesian civil servants in the 2020 election and the abuse of power conducted by The Governor of Jambi and The Regent of Bengkulu Selatan case studies in 2020 prove that Indonesia violated neutral competence

and political responsiveness in Indonesia's bureaucracy sphere by making Indonesia the "*few & self-interest*" spheres. This means that some of the Indonesian civil servants have infringed on the neutrality and code of conduct based on the civil service law and tend to involve and be exposed to political activity outside the administration's ambition in 2020.

To narrow the void in implementing a sound balance between neutral competency and political responsiveness among Indonesian bureaucrats, Indonesia needs an exit strategy to overcome the future of simultaneous elections. Therefore, this paper recommends two practical actions for the government of Indonesia. First, a collaborative approach between government agencies to overcome civil servant neutrality violations during the election period. This approach is implemented through repressive actions by cooperating with other government agencies to punish civil servant neutrality violators (for example violators' HR administration system, political rights to vote, and bank account screening) and preventive actions which regularly improve the civil servant neutrality awareness through a public sector education channel.

Second, this paper proposed strategies to reduce the abuse of power by the head of government agencies. Political appointees in the administration (minister and head of agency) and elected leaders at the provincial level (governor) and municipal or regent level (mayor or regent) has the human resource manager authority given by the President to transfer, demote, promote, and non-job Indonesian civil servants. Although their role might threaten civil servants' job security and force them to be political or violate neutral competence and political responsiveness, those roles cannot be withdrawn from political appointees and elected leaders. The Constitution has stipulated that those roles are decentralized by the President. This is also designed to control the bureaucracy, so they will not work arbitrarily

outside the administration's ambition. The practical approach to encourage the second recommendation is to work together with the government agency that has the credibility to pressure the head agency authority such as 1) The Ministry of Home Affairs of Indonesia (Kemendagri RI) for its daily authority to control the head of the agency, and 2) The National Civil Service Agency of Indonesia (BKN RI) for its public human resource authority.

The implication of this study is to remind the bureaucracy that political election is one of the scourges to implementing civil servant neutrality and could spoil the harmony between neutral competence and political responsiveness inside the bureaucracy. Therefore, this article proposed two strategies: A collaborative approach between government agencies to overcome civil servant neutrality violations during the election and a strategy to reduce abuse of power by the head of government agency to overcome challenges in the future political election. The limitation of this research is in the scope of neutrality violation findings. This research utilizes the civil servant neutrality violation report from the Simultaneous Regional Head Election in 2020. Meanwhile, other election events in Indonesia might contribute new findings related to civil servant neutrality violations. Therefore, future studies to analyze the civil servant neutrality violations in other time series elections or future elections will be a positive contribution to this academic field. Future beneficial contributions to this field include collection of primary data by conducting a survey to gather the perspective of both citizens and civil servants towards civil service neutrality in a future election.

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