Social Capital, Bureaucratic Neutrality, and Regional Head Election in Indonesia

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Abstract

Civil servants are frequently described as being separate from politicians in good local governance. Regrettably, civil servants are urged to assist in the maintenance of power through the use of social capital. In Indonesia, decentralisation facilitates the accumulation of social capital. However, a body of literature has established that social capital is a predictor of the bureaucracy's quality. This study delves into something else by examining how social capital fosters a mutually beneficial relationship between the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) and the incumbent, resulting in the ASN's non-neutrality in Regional Head Elections (Pilkada). We used a qualitative case study approach, within which we interviewed members of the civil apparatus about social capital and its relationship to the performance of the State Civil Apparatus. The findings indicated that the ASN's lack of neutrality in the Pilkada occurred as a result of the establishment of social capital relations between superiors and the ASN in the form of information channel relationships (paternalism and/or nepotism culture), obligations and expectations (the ASN's contribution to the incumbent), norms and effective sanctions (superiors' invitation), as well as adjusted community organisations (weak community control).

Keywords

social capital, state civil apparatus, non-neutrality of ASN, Pilkada.

1. Introduction

Globalisation and public demands enforce governments to become more complex (Denhardt and Denhardt 2015; Mergel et al. 2018). This is because the government is required to implement good governance, ensure the fulfilment of sustainable development, and provide quality public services by both public and international organisations (Lawton and Macaulay, 2014). These global trends and public demands form the increasingly complex structures of interaction between politics and administration (Demir and Nyhan 2008; Hildebrand 2008; Frederickson 2009; Demir and Reddick 2012).

The political and administrative dichotomy has long been debated in public administration science. Despite the pros and cons of these notions, the interaction between the two is inseparable in the dynamics of public administration (Dahlström and Niklasson 2013; Ebinger et al. 2019). This concept was proposed by President Woodrow Wilson, who wanted to build an apolitical public administration, because he believed that the mixing of political administrations would spoil the system, as it happened in the United States (Akif Özer 2015). Some of the relations between administration and politics will have a negative impact on policy implementation, Although it has long been

stagnant, this discussion has again attracted the attention of academics in recent years (Hustedt and Salomonsen 2018; Dubey 2020; Johnson et al. 2020). This is due to the fact that political actors in several countries practically take advantage of public administration in order to smooth their way of victory, particularly the incumbents (Berenschot 2018). This led to a practical idea called 'bureaucratic neutrality', which was discussed massively by both academics and practitioners (Krauss and Schurmeyer 1987; Tanwir and Fennell 2010; Hustedt and Salomonsen 2018).

Academics and practitioners who are struggling for bureaucratic neutrality argue that the side of the bureaucracy for power will set aside their main task, which is to provide the quality of public services to the community (Bauer and Ege 2012; Purwaningsih and Widodo 2020). This is due to the fact that bureaucrats will focus on the change of power that can put them into the competition. This condition is considered as bureaucrats' momentum that can bring them financial or career benefits (Berenschot 2018).

Neutrality is a bureaucratic tradition in Western countries (Anderson and Martin 1983; Martin et al. 1998; Kira and Forslin 2008). The concept of neutrality is attached to the merit system in which the purpose of the two is to create a quality bureaucracy by relying on the competence and ability of candidates with regard to recruitment and promotion (Ebinger et al. 2019). In other words, neutrality and merit-based recruitment are often seen as the opposite of the politicisation of public administration. Recruitment which is carried out based on achievement and competence rather than on personal relations or political affiliation is expected to be able to create a neutral bureaucracy (Purwanto et al. 2018).

The idea of bureaucratic neutrality is expected to be able to guarantee competence and protection from opportunist ideas that emerged from temporary and pragmatic political leadership (Martin et al. 1998; Englert and Sondermann 2013; Satkunanandan 2019). Therefore, bureaucracy plays a central role in the support of a modern and democratic government. In responding to an increasingly dynamic public administration environment, the expertise and competence of bureaucrats is required to meet the demands of the community (Serpa and Ferreira 2019). In other words, bureaucracy is expected to make elected politicians able to implement political decisions with the best available knowledge (Levitan 1942; Spicer 2015; Miller 2018). On the other hand, bureaucrats are obedient services and subject themselves to the will of political rulers, which may sometimes differ from law and the common good. The idea of bureaucratic neutrality in the modern public administration system is not as strict as it had been when first introduced (Painter 2004; Purwanto et al. 2018). The idea survives as fiction rather than reality. The idea of bureaucratic neutrality is challenged, because in practice, the bureaucracy is not neutral at all and is involved in many political activities instead (Miller 2018).

In spite of how bureaucratic neutrality is mostly always a myth and fiction, how the government issues various regulations and policies to reduce the political degree of the bureaucracy is significant (Krauss and Schurmeyer 1987; Tanwir and Fennell 2010; Cooper 2018b). Further, although there are many explanations for why bureaucrats are not neutral (Krauss and Schurmeyer 1987; Nicholson 1998; Tanwir and Fennell 2010; Cooper 2018b; Hustedt and Salomonsen 2018), calls for studies related to this theme are still required to emerge, practically in line with the increasing politicisation of contemporary bureaucracies.

This article contributes to adding to the literature on political and administrative relations, particularly by exploring how incumbents build social capital in regional government and how they use it to smooth their way for winning again in the second term. Basically, the 'social capital' phrase refers to the capacity of individuals to obtain valuable material or symbolic goods based on the virtue of social relations and membership in social groups or the capacity of a person to be favoured with the benefits of collective action based on the virtue of social participation, trust in institutions, or commitment to determining the ways in carrying out something (Ritzer 2005). This means that social capital can be converted into social relations which then grow and provide benefits to the interacting parties. As to the government, we argue that the social capital between the regional head and the State Civil Apparatus leads to the growing non-neutrality of the apparatus in regional head elections.

Social capital in relation to non-neutrality of the ASN is interesting to study, because the previous literature had focused more on identifying forms of it and why this phenomenon happens (Anderson

and Martin 1983; Martin et al. 1998; Myers 2004; Zhou 2010), whereas this paper is targeted more deeply by arguing that this non-neutrality occurs due to the reciprocation and the accumulation of social capital by incumbent candidates or political dynasties and the State Civil Apparatus.

2. The political-administrative dichotomy

The idea of a political-administrative dichotomy has been discussed for a long time as well as debated in public administration. This division is interesting to study, but it does not truly exist in practice (Miller 2018). As a consequence, the political and administrative dichotomy is ritualistic and conditional, and is replaced by concepts that emphasise the combination of policy, politics, and administration (Svara 1998, 2001; Yang and Holzer 2005).

In practice, tensions between politics and administration keep happening, because public administrations consider that their intersection is a threat to the neutrality and meritocracy that they are fighting for (Ebinger et al. 2019). Meanwhile, according to political actors, the two must interact and coordinate, considering their intersecting activities and responsibilities (Hustedt and Salomonsen 2018). The tension of the relations occurs mainly due to the fact that the appointment of senior employees is often carried out by neglecting the principles of meritocracy and relying on closeness to political actors (Berenschot 2018).

The practice of political-administrative tension results in the discussion about separating the two totally or, contrary, introducing total assimilation (Overeem 2008). Variations in the degree of political and administrative power occur due to differences in government systems. This is partly because of the lack of a precise definition of public administration. There are two major reasons for the encouragement for public administration to be apolitical (Trondal 2020). First, it is a practical reason to make it easier to explain the division of political and administrative roles in terms of separation rather than a division of functions. Second, it functions to protect administrators from public control, while also enabling politicians to assign administrators responsibility for unpopular decisions.

The relation between politicians and bureaucrats is stated as an effective factor in several studies on the nature of governance and democratic development of a country (Svara 2001; Enroth 2011). This is due to the fact that the legitimacy of the community and the legislature shapes the administrative structure of government both at the central level and the regional level, although in practice, the political process is subject to distinguished individuals and politicians. Nevertheless, it is said in many works of literature that these two groups play a crucial role in the government and development processes (Kirwan 1987; Ngcamu 2013; Banovetz 1994).

These two actors are intimately connected with – and reliant on – each other. The relation between the two is important in terms of building a democratic government (Enroth 2011; Ayee 2013). From this, one can draw a conclusion that the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats is significant in governance. This is due to the fact that the level of success (and/or failure) in governance as well as development depends on the relation between these two (Svara 1998; Dunn and Legge Jr. 2002; Schuh and Miller 2006). Thus, a good relationship between the two will strengthen the legitimacy of the government and vice versa, i.e. a bad and conflictual one will destroy the legitimacy of the government.

The nature of the relationship between politics and the bureaucracy – combined with the precise roles of leaders and politicians in the political and administrative process – has been debated for a long time (Schuh and Miller 2006; Svara 2008; Stocker and Thompson-Fawcett 2014). The relation between the two is a classic problem in modern government. It is inseparable from the options of the government system chosen by a country. This still happens, even though the dominance of the bureaucracy is one of the characteristics of modern government. However, the discussion on political and bureaucratic relations is a consistent phenomenon in both developed and developing countries' governments (Berenschot 2018).

Furthermore, in the last few decades, global phenomena tended to generate horizontal and vertical specialisations, and it caused many public service tasks to be transferred from the central government to local governments (Alford et al. 2017). The existence of these practices in developing countries provides evidence that local governments are subject to substantial interference from

political and bureaucratic relations in the provision of public services (Berenschot 2018). Thereby, one of the next important tasks is to find a balanced symbiosis between politicians and the bureaucracy. This gives momentum to the urge to make the bureaucracy neutral in order to avoid a detrimental relation between politics and bureaucracy. In this light, the next section discusses bureaucratic neutrality (Porter and Rogowski 2018).

3. Bureaucratic neutrality

In several works of literature, the concept of bureaucratic neutrality is also called 'impartiality', which means being free from various kinds of interventions, influences, and making the bureaucracy a fair, objective, and certainly impartial organisation (Faris et al. 2017; Miller 2018; Porter and Rogowski 2018). In practical terms, bureaucratic neutrality is also defined as bureaucracy being free from political intervention, including politicians not taking sides and having an interest in the success of the practical purposes of political parties (Cooper 2018b). A broader definition shows that the concept of neutrality is not only applied to the interaction of politicians and bureaucracy, but also to public services in terms of avoiding discriminatory attitudes in policy formulation by not taking sides with particular groups and bureaucratic management, which is the application of meritocracy in the bureaucracy (Hustedt and Salomonsen 2018).

Impartiality is also defined as a political balance, which is the act of not discriminating when implementing authority based on various kinds of regulations and policies, which needs to be done without considering certain relationships and matters outside the law (Levitan 1942; Miller 2018). Impartiality, then, becomes a guideline for bureaucracy and, thus, bureaucrats should know the various kinds of activities that are allowed or not allowed in making policies or providing public services (Eichbaum and Shaw 2008).

In Indonesia, bureaucratic neutrality is manifested in three schemes, including neutrality in politics, public services, as well as policymaking and human resource management (Perdana 2019; Sutrisno 2019). In connection with politics, neutrality is defined as being impartial and obviously not involved in any political activities that directly or indirectly support a candidate's victory (Berenschot 2018). Neutrality in public services is a form of the application of the principles of impartiality and anonymity in providing public services. Referring to this definition, public services must be impartial and not deliberate on who is provided with services (Levitan 1942). In the case of neutrality in policymaking and bureaucratic management (Portillo et al. 2020), the essence of neutrality includes being committed, having moral integrity, and being responsible in public services, carrying out one's own duties professionally and impartially, avoiding violations of conflicts of interest, and not abusing duties, status, power, and one's own position.

The neutrality of the bureaucracy is significant in many ways, e.g. in creating good governance and bureaucracy that is public-services-oriented (Tanwir and Fennell 2010; Bauer and Ege 2012). As a consequence, various activities have to ensure that the bureaucracy remains on track which is public services-oriented, so that the bureaucracy can still provide high-quality public services to the community regardless of who the leader is (Gusman et al. 2016). The importance of bureaucratic neutrality is also a manifestation of the substance of public services, i.e. the efforts to provide work comfort and professionalism, and fair law enforcement. In particular, by being neutral, the bureaucracy can lead to a more effective implementation of regional autonomy and focus on solving problems of the community (Cooper 2020).

Although it is one of the classic topics in public administration, the neutrality of the bureaucracy in literature still attracts academics who wish to examine this problem. This is due to the fact that the research subjects – namely bureaucracy and politics – are dynamic. There have been two main streams, the first of which includes those who adhere to theoretical idealism and who believe that the bureaucracy must be separated from administration by strict boundaries (Miller 1993; Rosenbloom 2008). The political-administrative dichotomy is an analytical construction, used as an expression of legislative supremacy and institutional violations of particularism (Svara 1999; Rosenbloom 2008; Steinfeld et al. 2017). Meanwhile, the second stream is a group that believes that the interaction between the two cannot be denied in the dynamics of governance. In this kind of situation, the administration lives in a situation where politics is a part of its role.

4. Social capital and how it is used by incumbents

Regional head elections are an arena for political contestation with competition between candidate pairs. The competition is influenced by the capacity of each regional head candidate pair. The competition is not only between political parties; what is more important is also the capacity of the candidate, such as personality, capacity, credibility, popularity, political experience, and educational and employment background, which are all factors in the emergence of social capital in political contestation (Pratikno 2007; Baharuddin and Purwaningsih 2017).

Basically, the term 'social capital' refers to (a) benefits by virtue of social relations; (b) benefits by virtue of one's own acions; (c) benefits by virtue of participation in group success; and (d) the fact that the crucial premise for social activities is trust (Ritzer 2005). Coleman (2011) considered social capital as something that is directed or created to facilitate individual actions in their social structure. Meanwhile, physical capital refers to physical objects, while human capital refers to individual property in which social capital refers to the relationships between individuals, social networks, and the reciprocal norms and beliefs that arise from them (Putnam 2000).

Both Coleman and Putnam recognised that social capital can both increase and decrease over time (Field 2010). Meanwhile, Fukuyama (2002) explained that each group has the potential for social capital to the degree in which it is utilised in terms of the radius of trust. Haridison (2013) concluded that the perspectives of several experts on the conception of social capital refer to: (a) a set of actual and potential resources; (b) entities which consist of particular aspects of the social structure, and these entities facilitate the actions of individuals in that structure; (c) horizontal associations; (d) actor's ability to guarantee benefits; (e) information; (f) norms; (g) values; (h) reciprocity; (i) cooperation; and (j) network.

In the context of the Pilkada, the currently serving regional head generally tries to establish social relations with the ASN and the community components to make beneficial social capital for them later, when the regional head re-runs the Pilkada for the second term. The involvement of social capital that has been established and built from the beginning will be sufficient to determine the success of programmes and activities in the economic, social, cultural, and political sectors. That is the reason why the incumbent generally wins in the second period of the Pilkada in Indonesia.

Social capital in the era of decentralisation provides greater power to regional heads, based on which the can mobilise bureaucrats and the resources attached to them (Boschi 1999; Mahakanjana 2004; Widmalm 2014; Silitonga et al. 2015). The regional head, at a certain point, will make policies that strengthen their relationship with the bureaucrats, in which this action contributes to favouritism for certain groups (Silitonga et al. 2015). Thus, social capital emphasises the existence of individual investment in social relationships with other people, where this social relationship will produce benefits that can be used at any time, one of which is the momentum of regional head elections.

The emergence and development of social capital in public organisations at the local government level is inseparable from the role of decentralisation of power from the central government to the regions (Fisman and Gatti 2002; Joaquin 2004). At the beginning, power is concentrated in the hands of political elites who manipulate economic institutions for personal and group interests. The distribution of functions for the central and regional government and authorities makes local governments more independent in managing resources under their authority, including making policies and budget allocations without the need for central government interference (Asthana 2012).

Incumbents, supported by their economic and political power, have the interests and means to maintain the conditions for a position that gives them benefits (Czap and Czap 2019). This goal is achieved by investing in actors who play a major role in the network, including bureaucrats. This subsequently results in what is called a 'patronage network' or 'patron-client relationship' (Silitonga et al. 2015). In this situation, the patron gives benefits and protection to their clients, the bureaucrats. The clients reciprocate with loyalty and support, which they do primarily in order to maintain a source of income and influence. Incumbents can make use of various resources and manoeuvres as long as there remains the loyalty of the bureaucrats in the network. What is unique is that bureaucrats will be very flexible in regional head elections (Silitonga et al. 2015). Thus, a politician who has no influence during the election period may lead their district in the coming period.

5. Research methods

This study aimed to examine the role of social capital in incumbents' winning in regional head elections by utilising the local bureaucracy as a political power to achieve this goal. Therefore, qualitative research methods were relevant to meet the research objectives, particularly to find the process or context behind the phenomenon being studied in-depth (Creswell 2014). Research with a qualitative design provides an in-depth point of view regarding the meaning, process, and context of the investigated phenomenon.

This study took form of a case study in Muara Enim Regency; the aim was to capture the phenomena related to the mobilisation of the local bureaucracy in incumbents' winning, and this the study covered it using the social capital theory. Muara Enim is a representation of the bureaucracy at the micro-level of bureaucratic politics, with regard to which various studies are currently called for.

The main data source in this study was observation supported by interviews. The observations were made by observing the incumbent regent candidates long before the general election was held. This is due to the fact that one of the authors works as a local bureaucrat; thus, the author witnesses various bureaucratic dynamics, particularly ahead of the regional head elections. This approach was chosen, as it allowed an informal exchange of information. and most of the information was confidential. Practically, we observed the phenomenon for about 3 years. In more detail, the first two years had been before the regional election, while the third year was after the regent was elected.

Then, interviews were conducted with a number of informants consisting of regional head candidates, bureaucrats, political parties' activists, and general election agencies, such as the General Election Commission and the General Election Supervisory Board. Initially, the respondents were selected initially by purposive sampling, which was then continued by using the snowball technique to obtain a complete story about the incumbents' winning process. The interviews were conducted from August to December 2020. These were semi-structured interviews. Basically, we asked questions about the strategy for winning the elction and how the incumbent mobilised civil servants and their resources.

The observations and interview data were recorded (if agreed by the informant; if not, we used field notes as support to sharpen memory during the process of analysis). The interview transcripts and field notes were then presented in a single document containing complete data. The data was then grouped into five major themes for later analysis in more detail (Miles and Huberman 1994).

6. Findings – social capital work and the non-neutrality of ASN in the *Pilkada*

This paper aimed to explore a case of incumbent winning which mobilised bureaucrats by applying social capital theory in regional head elections (Pilkada). In the context of regional head elections (Pilkada), social capital is the establishment of relationships and trust that candidate pairs have with their constituent communities. The size of the establishment of relationships and the trust of the people who choose them constitute social capital which will affect the opportunities of the candidate pairs in winning the local political contestation. Social capital has a very crucial role and is no less important than other capitals. By having high social capital, candidates are recognised by voters. Through these introductions, particularly the introduction through strong social relations, the voters can make an assessment of whether the existing pair is eligible to be elected or not. If a candidate is considered to have social capital, it means that the candidate not only is recognised by the community, but is also provided with the trust to become a leader.

This time, regional head and deputy regional head elections had the following logic: how are the candidates able to influence and win the hearts of the people? On the other hand, the people will give their voting rights to the candidate they have recognised. In other words,the candidate had had social capital in the midst of society long before. If a candidate does not have social capital yet, and only introduces themselves shortly before the Pilkada is held, it is clear that the candidate will find it difficult to obtain support from the majority of the community (Marijan 2010).

Tracing the non-neutrality of the ASN in the Pilkada requires an experience of 'getting in and melting' in the existence and role of the ASN in local government. The ASN's position in the local governance system in Indonesia is both strategic and vulnerable. The closeness, alignments, togetherness, and solidarity have been built up in social capital relations with regional heads during their tenure, and then run for again in the Pilkada (they are called incumbents). This condition will make it difficult for the ASN to not side with the incumbent.

We found that incumbents made use of civil servants, ranging from civil servants to village heads. Although it was not overtly stated, they were part of the campaign team. In fact, bureaucracy must be apolitical. This was what the incumbent manipulated, particularly the officials consisting of the head of the department, head of the section, and the district head, almost all of whom called themselves incumbents. They joined with different motivations, one of which – and that was the most widely mentioned – was the desire to continue the incumbent struggle, including carrying out many programmes for the welfare of the people which were deemed insufficient with regard to implementing the programmes within only one period. However, more than that, it was all a matter of securing their position and interests for at least five years.

Furthermore, if the incumbent loses, all those who are or are not affiliated with the incumbent have a big opportunity of being moved to a more or less strategic position. Financially speaking, even if they retain their base wage rate, they will lose a significant number of benefits and side income. In the bureaucracy in Indonesia, this can only be obtained when they have a strategic position. It is this kind of fear that then makes the bureaucrats participate in supporting the incumbent. This choice is a choice of life and death for them, again, at least for the next five years.

This is a case of the village head, because the regional head has great authority in setting the budget. By not giving a vote to incumbents, they may lose their budget for development and public services. In particular cases, if they are not supportive, the village head is intimidated. This made it difficult for the village head to be neutral. For example, the village head could be followed by intel who would look for mistakes in the implementation of government policies, and this mistake can then become one of the matters in blackmailing the village head into supporting the incumbent.

The involvement of civil servants and village heads in election campaigns also occurs in many places in Indonesia. In fact, many laws and regulations have prohibited this matter. In these regulations, civil servants are strictly prohibited from providing support to regional head candidates during election campaigns.

Civil servants have control over the country's resources and significant influence. It is a bonus from the previous regime that government resources still flow through the bureaucracy. It still persists, even though some of it has been divided. For example, headmasters determine who is acceptable and who is not. Health workers determine who can obtain better treatment. Village heads also have the authority to determine who receives assistance. The district head and the head of the department can still wait for areas where public services should be prioritised.

All of this still happens, even though it has been explained in many kinds of laws and regulations in Indonesia that meritocracy must not be involved in the public service. In practice, favouritism, bribes, and the exchange of goods or services are taken into consideration. Because of the great control over government resources, civil servants have a large capacity not only to vote, but also to influence the community to vote for incumbents.

In a political context, this is part of clientelism and control over government resources and everything else, and this is a significant capital, because civil servants are guided by this. In some cases, for example, the community follows the village head, because they will have many things to carry out with the village head, particularly for administrative matters, e.g. those relating to permits. In other words, if they contradict civil servants, their access to many kinds of public services will be restricted.

However, these behaviours are not only based on compulsion. This is made as if it is part of social responsibility, the responsibility of civil servants to provide public services to the community. Public services are formed as if they are goods and services that must be reciprocated in exchange for particular transactions, in this case – a vote for incumbents. This leads to the conclusion that public services as a product of public organisations have transactional value, because the beneficiaries must exchange them for votes for incumbents.

However, once again, civil servants are only one of the most influential actors in the network, as other studies have found religious or traditional leaders playing the same role. In addition, a voter could ignore these transactions and vote with other considerations. Civil servants are only one of many examples of social networks mobilised by regional head candidates to obtain support. A conclusion can be drawn that civil servants, in the case of incumbent winning, are a fairly powerful instrument for mobilising voters, because they have control over state resources as well as the political power to decide what should and should not be carried out with the authority assigned to them.

Eventually, this is at least a violation of the three principles of bureaucratic neutrality, namely politics, public services and policies, and employment management. A violation of these matters will then definitely undermine the application of the principle of meritocracy, which is currently being carried out in Indonesia. This is because politicians drive bureaucrats and their resources and power to be a means of maintaining political support for the incumbent. The threat to meritocracy in this case is due to a promotion to a higher career path rather than due to achievement and performance achievement, in which closeness to political actors is a more decisive factor.

We also found that, currently, a bureaucrat has an important position in the research location; he supported incumbent opponents and expressed his restlessness that he would end his position immediately if the incumbent lost. Moreover, he emphasised that there was also an opportunity for him to be transferred to a remote location. Later, he was sorry for his colleagues who supported the incumbent simply because they wanted to secure their position for at least the next five years.

In this case, before the incumbent ran for a regional head candidate, he had made large-scale transfers, particularly for strategic positions. Those who are loyal will be rewarded by obtaining a strategic position, and vice versa, i.e. those who are not loyal will be moved to a non-strategic position with a quite remote location. This action is considered as a strategic step to secure the steps to win the regional head elections. This is also a threat to those who have not made a choice; now they will feel pressured by seeing other bureaucrats who were transferred.

This is a consequence of direct regional head elections. Direct elections for governors, mayors, and regents have forced the regional head candidates to pay high costs in funding their campaigns. Moreover, as political parties – which should bear all these costs – do not want to bother with campaign funding, almost all campaign funds are borne by the regional head candidates. The advantage of being an incumbent is that they can use government resources to become a campaign tool.

The bureaucratic practices involved in the campaign involve reducing the campaign budget that must be borne. The transaction between campaign funds and this kind of promotion makes other bureaucrats who do not support the incumbent lose their positions. In the internal bureaucracy of regional government, this kind of regional head election causes great disunity and anxiety.

In the bureaucracy in Indonesia, there is a clear division between structural and non-structural officials. Large allowances and many kinds of office facilities are attached to structural positions, such as official cars, and for this reason, this kind of position is the target of those who aim at a career in the bureaucracy. This has a consequence that instead of showing quality performance, loyalty to regional heads is becoming more important. This kind of regional head elections is the right moment for bureaucrats to move up from non-structural to structural positions. For those who have been in structural positions, regional head elections are a moment to maintain the structural positions that are currently being held, or they may even get higher structural positions.

Verifying the motivations – rather than reading them from the literature – this study found that they did all of this because of their own awareness and willingness to get a moment to have a promotion in their career. They are even willing to spend their own money to be used in the campaigns. When the incumbent won, they then lobbied them for a targeted position.

In carrying out a series of position arrangements, regional heads take great advantage of the Regional Government Law and the ASN Law. In the context of the Regional Government Law, regions are free in regulating budget for policies and programmes, while in the ASN Law, regional heads are employment advisory officers who have the authority to appoint and transfer bureaucrats.

7. Discussion

This paper aimed to explore the use of social capital in the bureaucracy by the incumbent to make it a means to win regional head elections. In the previous sections, we have described research findings that explain the many ways in which incumbents establish relationships in social capital networks. As it was stated, social capital has been confirmed to be the cause of regional head corruption (Pena López and Sánchez Santos 2014; Widmalm 2014; González et al. 2015; Silitonga et al. 2015; Bozovic 2017; Islam et al. 2017; Wachs et al. 2019), while this study found that social capital in the local bureaucracy can also be used to win regional head elections. More specifically, we investigated how bureaucrats and the resources of government organisations attached to them are used for this matter.

We summarised our findings as presented in Figure 1 presented below. In general, the interaction between the ASN and incumbents is a two-way interaction that is covered in four dimensions of social capital, including trust, reciprocity, relationships with groups with the same social identity, and unequal power relations. In its connection to trust, the social capital relationship between the regional head and the ASN can also be established through assigning positions, facilitating career promotion, or delegating duties to strategic places, which then creates a sense of debt of gratitude by the ASN to the regional head. Additionally, if the ASN has a minimum capacity, this sense of debt of gratitude is the success of the work of social capital established by the superior to the civil servants, who are their subordinates. If the superior then runs for a regional head election in the next term as the incumbent, generally, the ASN will automatically support them as a return of gratitude to the superior. This debt of gratitude is a result of social relations of obligations and expectations (Coleman 2011; Haridison 2013). Superiors establish social relations in the form of embedding favour with their subordinates, and subordinates are obliged to return the favour according to their superiors' expectations. This social phenomenon of debt of gratitude can defeat regulations that demand the neutrality of the ASN in the regional head elections.
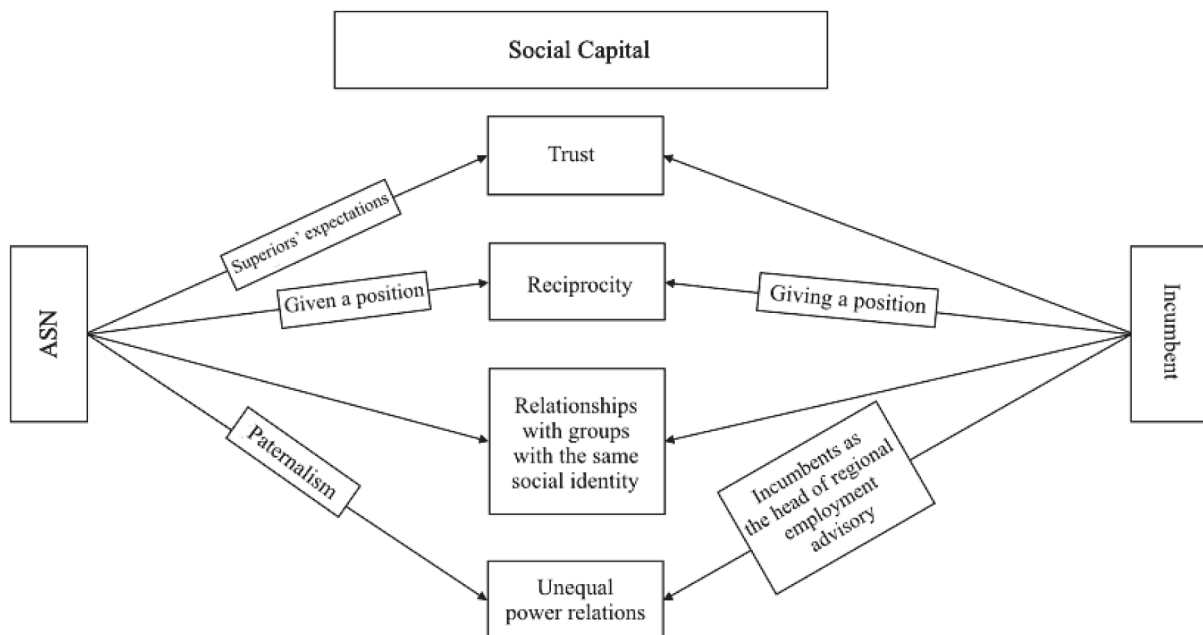

Figure 1. Social Capital and Regional Head Election

Source: researchers' elaboration based on research data.

The culture of paternalism that is still strong drives bureaucratic officials to be more power-oriented than service-oriented, place themselves as rulers, and treat service-users (public) as objects of service who need their assistance (Maani 2005). The culture of paternalism and/or culture of nepotism in regional government is strongly related to the social capital relations that have been

established so far. The paternalistic culture and/or nepotism in the region is powerful; if there are relatives, family, or close friends who run for elections, it is a "taboo" for us not to support them. Even parents, families, and traditional leaders will also ask us to support the candidate. In every campaign in the region, there is, indeed, a phrase (seemed to be related to ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup or SARA) *"kalo ado wong kito, ngapo milih wong lain"* [En. "if there are our people, why choose others"]. The strong paternalistic and/or nepotism that grows from the social capital relations between regional heads and the ASN and their relatives is the result of intensive or frequent communication or intensive social relations (Coleman 2011; Haridison 2013). The social relations of information channels are continuously fostered and developed in order for the cohesion of social capital to be increased so that it can eventually provide feedback to superiors. This well-established social relationship may neglect regulations that require the ASN to be neutral in the Pilkada.

As a supervisor (regional head) who still carries out duties, they can use their authority and power to carry out "guidance" in any form to the ASN on the pretext of being the Head of the Regional Employment Advisory. This guidance can be carried out in the form of orders, invitations, prohibitions, appeals, requests, etc., directed to the ASN, especially to get support from the ASN (and their families) in the Pilkada, where the person also runs for elections. This superior's invitation will be effective if social capital relations with subordinates have been established. With the reason for "programme sustainability", there is often an unwritten agreement between "Superiors" and "Subordinates" to support each other politically, with an expectation that the ASN's position will be "safe" if the superior is re-elected. The superior's invitation – supported by the social relations of norms and effective sanctions (Coleman 2011; Haridison 2013) – will provide benefits to both parties in the future, and this condition is able to bypass the regulations that have been set and are still in effect.

We found that, at a certain point, decentralisation – particularly in the presence of various allocations for the use of budget resources, and the inherent authority of regional heads and regional officials – is a great asset for incumbents to win (Asthana 2012; Widmalm 2014; Silitonga et al. 2015). This study placed the exchange between bureaucrats and regional heads as a type of interaction that occurred uniquely in the relationship between regional heads and bureaucrats. The study identified discretionary administrative authority in regional heads and local officials being traded in exchange for public services with electoral votes as a new type of resource (Graeff and Svendsen 2013; Silitonga et al. 2015; Banerjee 2016).

This research has also highlighted that bureaucrats are not neutral actors, even though many kinds of regulations with punitive consequences have required them to be impartial. This study provided an overview of the various bureaucratic behaviours that contribute to incumbents' winning, and thus it identifies bureaucratic non-neutrality behaviour. Then, it showed how regional heads and public officials influence voters' behaviour by allocating various resources attached to them (Berenschot 2018; Purwaningsih and Widodo 2020).

This research has determined that this type of exchange is different from the corrupt exchanges made by regional heads with public officials. Exchanges carried out by regional heads, public officials, and the community cannot occur without social capital in the form of accumulated social responsibility and administrative authority attached to them (Cooper 2018a). Further, this study provided an empirical application of social capital as a resource that, when mobilised within bureaucratic networks, provides access to various other resources. Then, according to this study, social capital can help untangle the complex nodes of interaction between incumbents, bureaucrats, and the community. Thereby, with the allocation of social capital, the economic capital – in this case, the budget for campaigns – can be minimised (Ledet 2011; Wachs et al. 2019).

Furthermore, the interconnected personal relationships within and throughout the bureaucratic network function as channels for the exchange of resources with electoral voices, and extend administrative authority as a resource that can be used by making officials socially involved in the network with the community and incumbents (Jae Moon and Gage 2003; Murphy et al. 2016; Kroll and Tantardini 2019). This is an empirical contribution that confirms that social capital can bind actors in networks.

How social capital is converted into economic capital that benefits public officials and incumbents was also explored in this study (Baharuddin and Purwaningsih 2017; Putri and Qodir 2017).

This is carried out by securing the flow of material from the resources of government organisations that are not cut off. At the same time, profit potential depends on the size of administrative authority and the range of resources accessible in incumbent and bureaucratic networks, which, in turn, depend on incumbent ranks.

8. Conclusion

In this article, we discussed how incumbents use social capital as a tool to mobilise bureaucrats in order to increase their opportunities of being re-elected. In relation to social capital, we found that the patterns of behaviour of bureaucrats and their relationship to incumbents are constructed. Meanwhile, decentralisation produces an even more complex relationship, because, in this case, the bureaucrats and their inherent resources make use of such powers to obtain electoral votes. Incumbents who have strong control over state resources use their authority as the ASN's advisory officials to gain campaign support and also establish control over the state resources that they own. Academically, this study provided empirical evidence that social capital in the bureaucracy is formed, maintained, and can be used at any time for particular purposes, such as corruption or incumbents' winning, as evidenced through the research. In practical terms, bureaucratic behaviour that shows its non-neutrality is useful for investigating to what extent meritocracy and neutrality are difficult to enforce. Considering that the analysis in this study is based on a single case of incumbents' winning, we do not claim that similar phenomena have occurred in many other regions in Indonesia. Therefore, other cases in further research are required to be observed more deeply.

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