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Research article

Do Civil Servants' Perceptions of the Implementation of a Merit System Influence the Personal Growth Initiative?

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Abstract.
This study aimed to examine the influence of civil servants' perceptions about the implementation of a merit system on this personal growth initiative of the Regional Civil Service Agency of South Sulawesi province. The data were obtained using two questionnaires, namely the personal growth initiative scale and the perception scale. The research used quantitative methods and linear regression. The results of the study indicated that the perceptions of the merit system implementation had a significant influence on the personal growth initiative of the Regional Civil Service Agency employees. It was found that the magnitude of the effect of perceptions about the merit system implementation on the personal growth initiative was 0.341.

Keywords: personal growth initiative, merit system, civil servants

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1. INTRODUCTION

The efforts of Indonesian government in order to achieve the goal of achieving world-class government in 2024 will not be possible without transformation in various sectors including the bureaucratic sector through bureaucratic reform. One of the efforts to reform bureaucracy to realize clean and professional governance is to implement a merit -based performance system [1] . This is also reinforced by Setyowati who revealed that bureaucratic reform efforts should be directed directly at creating a professional and clean apparatus that has sensitivity in serving the community, one of which can be achieved by implementing a merit system [2].

The merit system is a performance management mechanism based on the principle that every task or job should be carried out by people who have the appropriate competencies, so that the assessment of individuals is centered on their competencies. Therefore, merit system allows organizations to prepare opportunities and encourage every employee to develop themselves in order to provide the best for the interests of the organization [3]. Competence is a basic thing that becomes an important point in the merit system implementation because according to Palan [4], competence is the degree of ability possessed by an individual to do the expected task. Competence includes the

characteristics that underlie the behavior, motives, personality, self-concept, values, knowledge and skills possessed by individuals in order to complete tasks. Without adequate competence, a person will find difficulties in carrying out the tasks assigned to him.

Therefore, the Government of Indonesia has regulated the implementation of a merit system in order to implement organizational changes and development of human resources for the apparatus through Law No. 5 of 2014 concerning ASN (State Civil Apparatus). The ASN Law regulates how civil servants (PNS) at the central and regional government levels apply clean and competency-based performance and professionalism. Since it was first launched, every year the government has mapped out the merit system implementation at various levels of government from the center to the regions, with the hope of obtaining data that can reveal how far the central and regional governments have implemented the merit system in managing ASN resources and how effective it is. The government through this mapping effort is trying to prepare a database for the State Civil Apparatus Commission so that it can carry out its supervisory and guidance functions optimally [5].

Based on the merit system mapping published by Committee of Civil Servant (KASN) in the form of a policy brief in 2018 it was found that the majority of provincial governments were still in category II "less", which means they only achieved part of the existing assessment criteria. There are six provinces that have met category III "Good", all of which are located at Java Island . Meanwhile, in the eastern part of Indonesia, some provinces are classified as "Bad" category I. The results of the mapping illustrate that the internal merit system implementation in the Regency/City Government is still relatively low. As many as 83.5% of the Regency/City governments fall into the "N" and "Poor" categories [5]

The mapping carried out by KASN in the following year, 2019 showed that the merit system implementation in the provincial government does not have a significant difference when compared to 2018. The majority of provincial governments are classified in category II "Less", and none of the provinces has succeeded in occupying the category IV "Very Good". This mapping shows that the merit system implementation in the provincial government in Indonesia is still relatively low and it is very visible that there is a significant disparity between one province and another, so it can be concluded that the merit system implementation in the provincial government is still relatively uneven [6].

The uneven merit system implementation in the provincial government needs to be accompanied by guidance, especially for provincial governments which are still

classified in category I "Poor" and II "Poor". Such guidance may include improvements to aspects of personnel resource management, including: identification of employee needs; career development, including training and education; mutation promotion; and employee performance appraisal. The failure of the provincial government to implement the merit system was also caused by various factors, including; the human resources of the apparatus available in the province, the availability of the budget, the limited infrastructure, and how well the provincial government understands the merit system implementation itself. The high climate of political intervention also causes a lack of support from regional heads to implement a merit system in the regions [6].

The implementation of a low and uneven merit system among governments at the provincial level in Indonesia is of course a problem and can have an impact on the acceleration of the realization of the ideals of bureaucratic reform, namely creating a clean and competency-based bureaucracy. Therefore, it is necessary to adapt and pilot efforts from provincial governments that become outliers by successfully implementing a merit system in managing their bureaucracy. One of the few provincial governments that has successfully implemented a merit system is the provincial government (pemprov) of South Sulawesi. Reporting from news Voi.id [7], the Provincial Government of South Sulawesi (South Sulawesi) won the first best title in the "Good" category for the Provincial Government Level with a value of 310.5 points in the Meritocracy Award event; Award for the Merit system implementation for Government Agencies organized by KASN at the Bidakara Hotel, South Jakarta, on Thursday, January 28.

The Good category obtained by the South Sulawesi provincial government shows that the South Sulawesi provincial government has implemented a merit system in most aspects of ASN management that they organize. Therefore, the South Sulawesi provincial government has the right to hold an open selection to fill the JPT position while remaining under the supervision of the ASN Commission which will be evaluated every year. The award is the highest achievement that the provincial government can achieve in relation to the merit system implementation as mandated by Law No. 5 concerning Civil servant (ASN), especially related to Civil servant (ASN) management.

The fact that the South Sulawesi provincial government has succeeded in implementing a merit system in managing employees and administering the bureaucracy is of course a phenomenon that deserves more attention, both for the government and for academics. The success of the South Sulawesi provincial government should be capitalized as material for study and research which is expected to produce findings that can be referred to by various parties, especially provincial governments in other regions in Indonesia so that they can realize similar successes so that in the end they

can accelerate the roll out of comprehensive bureaucratic reform. Not only that, the study of the merit system implementation needs to also touch on the impacts caused by the successful merit system implementation on changes in the culture and mindset of civil servants in the South Sulawesi provincial government.

Changes in the culture and mindset of the state civil apparatus are indeed a very important aspect and are highly expected to occur after the implementation of a merit system at one level of government. Mokhsen [5] wrote that one of the four main objectives of implementing a merit system is to develop civil servant's capabilities through career guidance and training. Without a change in culture and mindset among civil servants, any objectives of implementing the merit system will not be possible to achieve. Therefore, it is necessary to find out how much of a change in mindset occurs due to the career development opportunities that are open due to the merit system implementation . Whether by opening up opportunities for anyone to develop a career and achieve a position as long as they have brilliant competencies, they can stimulate the growth of mindset and initiative in employees to develop themselves personally.

The mindset and initiative to develop oneself theoretically is called Personal Growth Initiative . Personal Growth Initiative is a variable that captures the views of individuals who believe that personal growth and development is crucial in life. Personal Growth Initiative refers to the awareness to be actively involved in everything that can help him grow, his ability to identify the resources he has and is needed to grow, and the skill to plan in order to achieve the goal of self-development as a life satisfaction [8].

Personal growth initiative is a very crucial quality for a state civil servant in a government that implements a merit system which upholds meritocracy and competence as the main values. Because individuals who have a high personal growth initiative have a positive impact on the development of career identity and vocational identity [9]. In addition, individuals with personal growth initiatives can better adapt to any situation [10]. Individuals with high personal growth initiative are also able to cope with stressful situations [11]. And have the ability to create life satisfaction by finding the right solution for every problem experienced [12]. High personal growth initiative also has a negative correlation with depression and anxiety disorders [13], [14].

As important as the personal growth initiative is in ensuring career growth and employee competence, it raises the urgency to examine what factors can influence the emergence of personal growth initiatives in individuals . However, previous studies examining the factors that can lead to personal growth initiatives are still very limited. Several factors that can influence personal growth initiative, including one of them is personality[15]. The pattern of transparency and fairness is very thick in the

merit system implementation , especially in the matter of open selection, where high leadership officials (JPT) are selected objectively based on competence, and everyone has the same opportunity without any political intervention and emotional connection is very likely to raise perceptions within the employee that has the same opportunities. This perception, if examined more closely, has the opportunity to naturally foster personal growth initiative in employees. So that research on whether the perception of the merit system implementation can foster personal growth initiatives is relevant and important to do.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Merit System

Merit system is a concept that comes from two words, namely; the word merit ; which means good things that should be appreciated and the word system ; is a set of things that relate to and cooperate with one another[16]. In other words, it can be concluded that the merit system in the context of human resource management of the apparatus is an effort to manage the human resources of the apparatus by placing merit (merit) as the most valued value in employee performance. In this context, the award given to an employee depends on how competent and accomplished the employee is in carrying out his performance.

The merit system is an employee management mechanism that is not based on political, emotional or familial relationships, but on the insights, skills, competencies and experiences possessed by employees [17]. The implementation of merit system requires all actors who play a role in the system to be competent, clean and professional in carrying out their performance. HR management that implements a merit system has a tendency to attract skilled and professional figures to enter the system in the organization. This happens because the merit system implementation provides opportunities for anyone to develop according to their respective career choices. This tendency is also reinforced by the existence of a special character where the merit system implementation no longer makes differences in gender, ethnicity, and other non-merit factors a relevant variable.

The implementation of a merit system can also stimulate welfare improvement and reduce corruption[18]. The implementation of a merit system according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary is the implementation of a system that carries out recruitment and promotion of employees by making the suitability of competencies with assigned tasks

a top priority, and making kinship and political relations the umpteenth priority. The merit system is the antonym of the spoil system , which is a human resource management system in which every important position in government is occupied only by relatives, colleagues and supporters of those in power. Thoha [19] explained that the concept of a merit system has existed and has been implemented since the Qin and Han dynasties in China. There, the merit system was implemented so that important positions in the kingdom were not only monopolized by the nobles, but also gave opportunities to ordinary citizens who had fair competence. The concept of the merit system then became the inspiration for British rule in the 17th century which then spread throughout Europe and then to the Americas.

In the United States Civil Service Reform Act in 1978, it was noted that the purpose of implementing the merit system is to provide a competent, clean, and productive workforce and improve the quality of public services. In supervising the implementation of these policies, the US Merit Protection Board uses 9 (nine) principles and stipulates 12 prohibitions on implementing the merit system [20]. Merit system is a system that revolves around 7 main principles, including; (1) Recruitment and promotion of employees based on ability with open competition, (2) Carrying out employee training based on performance and achievements, including performance improvement and separation of employees whose performance is difficult to improve, (3) Motivating employees to attend training with the aim of improving quality performance, (4) Freeing the appointment of employees in certain positions from political intervention, (5) Ensuring the fulfillment of wages for employees according to classification and performance, (6) Enforcing honest, consistent and impartial rules, (7) Ensuring fair treatment for employees employees in every aspect of personnel administration without distinction of political affiliation, gender, religion, capability, marital status or other basis. [21]

2.2. Benefits of Merit System Implementation

The management of an organization/institution can obtain many benefits from the implementation of a merit system , especially in the context of human resource management apparatus [22]. These benefits include: (1) organizational productivity can increase because production costs decrease and income increases, (2) the merit system maintains performance quality by providing direct supervision, especially at certain levels, (3) the merit system contributes to the efficient use of employees' working time. thereby reducing wasted work time, (4) the merit system can make savings through more accurate determination of work costs, and (5) the merit system is able to encourage

employees to continuously upgrade their performance, because employees believe that their good performance will get a good reward. just as good. [22]

The merit system implementation will provide benefits for the government that receives an assessment from KASN, among others; (1) The Government is assessed to obtain input and feedback (feedback), (2) the Government is considered to meperoleh opportunity to voice input and feedback (feedback) to KASN, (3) the Government considered to be able to recognize needs- what training needs can be developed, (4) the government is considered to have the opportunity to assess the potential and promotion of career paths, (5) the government is considered to be able to guarantee the objectives of each task and responsibility, (6) the government is considered to be able to obtain study material on the performance design, (7) the government which is considered to be able to benefit from rewards or wages related to performance[22]

The merit system implementation can also provide benefits for the party conducting the assessment, in this case KASN, among others; (1) The assessor can obtain input and feedback (feedback) from the government assessed, (2) The assessor can set goals work activities for the coming period and the target figure to be achieved, (3) The assessor can obtain introduction of the necessary training needs, (4) The assessor can obtain identification of the team's strengths and weaknesses, (5) The assessor can obtain findings and make employees work more comfortably. The implementation of a merit system can also provide benefits to the organization, among others; (1) Improving employee performance by building commitment, (2) Having good and standardized HR management, (3) Various alternative inventory of training needs, (4) Availability of employee management plans, both promotion and succession, (5) Recruitment and selection process clean and optimal [22]

2.3. Criteria for Implementation of the Merit Assessment System

The assessment method applied in the merit system is a self-assessment method based on 8 criteria and procedures that have been stipulated in KASN Regulation No. 5 of 2017 concerning Self Assessment of the Merit system implementation in the Management of State Civil Apparatuses in Government Agencies. The 8 criteria include;

1. Have a plan for ASN needs for 5 years which is detailed by type and level of position and compiled based on Position Analysis (compiled based on Anjab and ABK), taking into account employees entering retirement age.

2. Conduct employee recruitment openly and competitively, both from the CPNS, PPPK, and also from civil servants from other agencies.

3. Have career development policies and programs starting with talent mapping, competency gap analysis and performance gaps, strategies and programs to address gaps, as well as the formation of a talent pool and succession plan.

4. Implement performance management starting with setting performance targets, evaluating performance regularly using objective methods, analyzing performance gaps, and having strategies to overcome them.

5. Linking payroll, reward, and promotion policies to performance and discipline.

6. Carry out promotions, transfers objectively and transparently based on the suitability of qualifications, competencies and performance by utilizing the talent pool.

7. Provide protection so that employees can carry out their duties properly and provide services to the public.

8. Having a support system such as an integrated personnel information system, assessment center, and other implementations that support the implementation of ASN management. Open Selection to Get Competent and Integrity Officials Open Selection to Overcome the Spoil System and Prevent Corruption Self Assessment Merit system implementation.

2.4. Personal Growth Initiative

Robitschek [23] states that the initial foundation of the concept of personal growth initiative is derived from Maslow's theory of self-actualization, Erickson's continual personal growth concept, Rogers' concept of fulfilling optimal potential, and active ideas. engagement from Prochaska & DiClemente. As emphasized by Prochaska and DiClemente [24], there are three triggers for the emergence of personal growth initiatives in individuals, namely ; (1) the process of self-development (eg, reasoning and moral abilities), (2) environmental factors (eg a major loss event), and (3) a person's personal struggles (eg divorce).

The personal growth initiative (PGI) focuses heavily on a person's conscious process of growing. The PGI concept clarifies the cognitive and behavioral aspects of a person's conscious growth process during difficult times in life [23]. The main principles of PGI theory include: PGI is closely related to optimal function and mental well-being. PGI also allows a person to have special skills such as readiness to face change, change

planning skills, the ability to utilize all available resources, and the ability to consciously direct himself towards change (Robitschek, 1999; Robitschek et al., 2012).

Robitschek's initial studies on PGI [25] began with an attempt to find out whether major changes in life could affect a person's PGI increase. A recent study by Thoen and Robitschek [11] supports Robitschek's preliminary findings by showing that an intervention that includes training and teaching about PGI will increase PGI in a person. In a study designed to introduce and validate the development of PGI measurements, there is an established scale used to measure PGI called the PGI Scale [23]. With this scale, PGI as a construct can reveal whether a person is aware of the desire to grow within himself, and this will affect the psychological well-being of that person in the end.

Robitschek & Keyes [8] add depth to the PGI theory by proposing that a person with a high degree of PGI tends to be mentally happier than someone with a low degree of PGI. Their findings show that a high degree of PGI is associated with (a) a high degree of self-acceptance, autonomy and self-confidence, (b) good relationships with others, (c) a mature life purpose, (d) connectedness with others. the community he lives in, and (e) happiness and life satisfaction. Furthermore, Robitschek and Keyes (2009) show that high degrees of psychological well-being often occur in people with high PGI degrees.

Robitschek et al [11] found that people with high PGI degrees showed the ability to utilize all available resources, were not resistant to change, were confident, and always had careful planning. In a study examining the major changes that occur in a number of culturally adapted international school students, Yakunina, Weigold, and Weigold [12] provide support for the findings about PGI. Yakunina et al [12] show that the pain of life is very significantly related to the ability to adapt and use all resources when the process of acculturation of a new culture occurs. However, as previously presented findings, PGI can help a person to make positive changes in himself and help a person to become more mentally prosperous and happier.

3. METHOD

The method used in this study is a quantitative method with a linear regression approach using Nalkerke r square statistic tests to test the hypothesis. Data retrieval will be carried out using two questionnaires. First, a scale prepared by the researcher himself, namely the Personal Growth Initiative Scale and second, the Perception Scale of the Merit System Implementation . The Personal Growth Initiative scale is based on the aspects described by Robitschek et al. [11] include readiness to face change, planning for the future, resource utilization and intentional behavior. An example of

a favorable item on the Personal Growth Initiative scale "I believe what I do can improve my self-competence", while for an example of an unfavorable item "I don't believe in myself to change something in myself".

Meanwhile, the Perception Scale on the Merit system implementation is built based on 8 criteria and procedures that have been stipulated in KASN Regulation No. 5 of 2017 concerning Self Assessment of the Merit system implementation in the Management of State Civil Apparatuses in Government Agencies. Examples of items are favorable Perception Scale Perception Scale on Merit System Implementation , "The provincial government gives me the opportunity to develop myself", while for the unfavorable item example "The provincial government hinders me from developing self-competence". The two questionnares that will be used to collect data in this study will use a Likert scale scale consisting of seven categories of answers.

The participants of this research is 134 Civil Servants from Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) of South Sulawesi Province. The characteristics of the subjects who are selected as respondents in this study are civil servants aged 28-50 years and have the maximum rank/class of Young Main Trustees (IVc). The sampling technique used is purposive sampling technique.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Participants in this study amounted to 126 participants who are employees who are administratively registered as civil servants at the Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) of South Sulawesi Province. Details of participants in this study can be seen in the following table;

TABLE 1: Description Of Participants Gender.

Gender	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Male	70	55,5
Female	56	44,5
Total	**126**	**100**

Table 1 shows that there were 126 participants, consisting of 70 males (55.5%) and 56 females (44.5%).

TABLE 2: Description Of Participants Position.

Position	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Apparatus HR Analyst	39	30.9
Apartment HR Assessor	34	26.9
Head of Subdivision	5	3.9
Head of Sub-dept.	3	2.3
Executor/Data Manager	32	25.3
Goods and Services Institution	5	3.9
Secretary	3	2.3
Planner	5	3.9
Amount	**126**	**100**

Table 2 shows the positions of the research participants, including those who are apparatus HR analysis, totaling 39 participants (30.9%). Participants who are Apparatus HR Assessors totaled 34 participants (26.9%). Participants who are data implementers/managers are 32 participants (25.3%). There were 5 participants (3.9%). Participants who are planners are 5 participants (3.9%). There were 5 participants (3.9%). There were 3 participants (2.3%). There were 3 participants (2.3%).

4.2. Results Data

Descriptive analysis aims to explain the description of the two variables that are the focus of this research in a systematic and objective manner. The description of the two variables is the measurement results obtained through responses from questionnaires distributed to all participants. The description of the descriptive results of the Perception variable data on the Merit system implementation in the South Sulawesi Provincial Government and Personal Growth Initiative can be seen as follows:

4.2.1. Merit System

Descriptive data on the Perception of the Merit System Implementation in the South Sulawesi Provincial Government was obtained from the participant's responses to the completed questionnaire. This variable questionnaire consists of 32 items with a score range from 1 to 7, and data processing is carried out through the Microsoft Excel 2018 implementation and JASP 0.14.1.0 for windows .

Based on the description of table 3 above, it was found that there was a sample with the lowest score of 72 and a sample with the highest score of 213. The empirical average value was 148 with a standard deviation of 30 and the Median value of

TABLE 3: Variable Data On The Perception Of The Merit System Implementation In The South Sulawesi Provincial Government.

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Median
Perception of the merit system implementation	126	72	213	148	30	144

144. The researcher used the formula proposed by Azwar [26] that to determine the categorization with two categories, you can use the formula Mean + 3 to determine the high score limit, Mean - 3 to determine the low score. The range of the min value difference does not need to be classified on the grounds that researchers only need two categories [26]

The categorization of the perception variable on the participant merit system can be seen in the following table;

TABLE 4: Categorization Of The Merit System Perception's Participant.

		Low	Unclassified	High
Frequency	Male	10	2	16
	Female	48	9	41
Jumlah		**58**	**11**	**57**
Precentage	Male	7.9%	1.8%	12.6%
	Female	38%	7.2%	32.5%
Averaging Precentage		**45,9%**	**9%**	**45.1%**

Based on the description of table 4, it was found that there were as many as 57 participants who perceived that the merit system implementation in the South Sulawesi provincial government was quite good, but there were also as many as 58 participants who perceived that the merit system implementation in the South Sulawesi provincial government was not good enough.

4.2.2. Personal Growth Initiative

Descriptive data on the Personal Growth Initiative variable was obtained from the participant's responses to the completed questionnaire. This variable questionnaire consists of 25 items with a score range from 1 to 5, and data processing is carried out through the Microsoft Excel 2018 implementation and JASP 0.14.1.0 for windows

Based on the description of table 5 above, it was found that there was a sample with the lowest score of 14 and a sample with the highest score of 84. The empirical average value was 66 with a standard deviationof 13 and the Median value of 70. The researcher used the formula proposed by Azwar [26] that to determine the categorization with two

TABLE 5: Personal Growth Initiative Variable Data.

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Median
Personal Growth Initiative	126	14	84	66	14	70

categories, you can use the formula Mean + 3 to determine the high score limit, Mean - 3 to determine the low score. The range of the min value difference does not need to be classified on the grounds that researchers only need two categories [26]

The personal growth initiative variable categorization can be seen in the following table:;

TABLE 6: Categorization Of Personal Growth Initiative.

		Low	Unclassified	High
Frequency	Male	14	3	11
	Female	31	20	47
Jumlah		**45**	**23**	**58**
Precentage	Male	11%	2%	8%
	Female	24%	16%	36%
Averaging Precentage		**45,5%**	**35%**	**19%**

Based on the description of table 6, it was found that there were 58 participants who had high personal growth initiative values, consisting of 11 males and 47 females. A total of 23 participants who have personal growth initiative values that cannot be classified, consist of 3 men and 20 women. And as many as 45 participants who have low personal growth initiative scores, consisting of 14 men and 31 women.

4.3. Hypothesis Test Result

The hypothesis in this study is that there is an influence of perception on the implementation of the government's merit system on personal growth initiatives in civil servants. The hypothesis of this research is using ordinal regression test with the help of JASP 0.14.1.0 software for windows. used to see and prove the influence of the two hypotheses studied. The results of hypothesis testing can be seen in the following table:

Table 7 shows that the magnitude of the effect of perception on the merit system implementation on personal growth initiatives can be seen through Nagelkerke's score of 0.341. This figure is used to see the variable contribution of 34.1% (0.341x100%). While the remaining 65.9% (100-34.2%) was caused by other factors. Based on the calculation of the significant number 0.00 < 0.05, Ho is rejected, which

TABLE 7: Classification Of Personal Growth Initiatives.

Variable	Nagelkerke	Sig	Information
Perception of the merit system implementation	0.336	0.00	Ho rejected
Personal Growth Initiative			

means that there is an influence on the perception of the government's merit system implementation on the personal growth initiative of civil servants in Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) of South Sulawesi Province

5. DISCUSSION

This study is the first study to connect and examine the relationship between employees' perception on merit system implementation with personal growth initiatives in Indonesia. The results of this study indicate that civil servant's' perception on merit system implementation in the government institution where they work have a significant relationship with their personal growth initiative. Merit System is an employee management system to place an employee in certain positions by making the competence of the employee concerned as the main consideration outside of other qualifications, such as politics and nepotism.

Merit system is an employee management mechanism that is not based on political, emotional or familial relationships, but is based on the insights, skills, competencies and experiences possessed by employees. Ismail [18] adds that the merit system is one of the foundations for competency-based employee management which in its implementation provides significant opportunities for employees to develop themselves and achieve achievements. The merit system implementation begins with recruitment, development, and placement in promotions based on the description of the contents of the ASN Law Article 70 paragraph (1) "That every employee has the right and opportunity to develop competence. Which means that every government employee has the right to education, both formal and informal.

Moonti and Polidu [27] state that one way that can be applied to implement a merit system is to apply a skills-based employee development mechanism that is established by providing training so that employees can become competent in carrying out the tasks they carry out. However, to do these tasks, it requires awareness, enthusiasm, intention, determination, willingness and willingness of the employee concerned to want to develop himself. Moonti and Polidu [27] further add that awareness and determination

to develop oneself will be more easily realized if an employee is able to surpass and overcome the mental barriers attached to him. This mental barrier inherent in the mind of an employee is what prevents him from wanting to move forward to reach his goals, achievements or any changes for the better in his career.

In order to successfully implement the merit system in the government bureaucracy, employees who not only do not have mental barriers to progress, but also have the passion and determination to develop their personal competencies. Because in the end, those who will occupy important positions based on merit are employees who have competencies that match the positions to be filled. Personal growth initiative is one of the factors that can guarantee employees to have the determination to develop personal competence.

Previous studies in the field of clinical psychology and counseling have found that personal growth initiatives consistently have a positive impact on optimizing individual function and enthusiasm for growth [28]. For example, personal growth initiatives can strengthen psychological, social, and emotional well-being [8]. Personal growth initiatives have a positive impact on improving the cognitive and behavioral skills needed to make self-change [11]. Therefore, research related to human resource development and management has begun to pay attention to the role of personal growth initiatives [29].

Robitschek et al. [11] revealed that the personal growth initiative has four dimensions, including; planfulness (planning the process of self-growth), readiness to change (readiness to make specific changes in oneself), intentional behavior (a conscious effort to develop oneself), and use of resources (utilizing available resources both internally and externally to develop oneself). These dimensions describe the cognitive and behavioral skills needed to take advantage of opportunities for self-development. Personal growth initiative is an important factor in strengthening one's proactive attitude and empowerment at the same time in developing oneself [30]. Personal growth initiatives uniquely focus individuals on improving skills in accepting and making changes within themselves [31].

The results of this study confirms that when employees feel that there is a good merit system in their place of work, it will cause them to have higher personal growth initiatives . The perception that the merit system implementation has been going well will create confidence in employees that they have opportunities and opportunities to develop their competencies, so that they can trigger the employees' desire to be proactive to make changes in themselves, and in the end try to develop their competencies because they are aware of the competencies needed. In the end, those developed

will be rewarded, either in the form of compensation in the form of compensation or promotion. [31]; [32]; [28].

However, this study still has some limitations. The result of this study could not fully generalized to represent the civil servant in Indonesia because the respondents being assessed in this study is only from single institution. There should be further research in a large scale involving more and various institutions from any level of government from the local level until the national level, in order to gain sufficient data to represent and to examine the true state of personal growth initiative among civil servants in Indonesia. Another limitation of this study is the lack of litteratures associating the merit system implementation with personal growth initiative among civil servants in a global scale therefore this limitation leaves a gap to fulfill.

6. CONCLUSION

This study aims to find out whether there is an influence of employee perceptions on the merit system implementation in Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) of South Sulawesi Province and find out how significant the influence is. Based on the results of the literature review, the opportunity perceived by employees to develop their careers and competencies can stimulate the employee's desire to make positive changes in himself and start trying to develop himself so that in the end lead to personal growth initiatives in the individual.

The hypothesis in this study was tested using quantitative research methods through ordinal regression test with the help of JASP 0.14.1.0 software for windows. The results of the study indicate that the perception on merit system implementation in the place where civil servant works has a significant influence on their personal growth initiative. Based on Nagelkerke's statistical test, it was found that the magnitude of the effect of perception on the merit system implementation on personal growth initiative was 0.341. This figure is used to see the variable contribution of 33.6% (0.336x100%). While the remaining 66.4% (100-33.6%) was caused by other factors. Based on the calculation of significant figures 0.00 < 0.05 then Ho is rejected. This means that there is an influence of civil servant's perceptions on merit system implementation in BKD of the South Sulawesi Provincial Government to their personal growth initiative.

The result of this study could give a valuable recommendation for the government to closely consider. Since the civil servant's mindset to grow and develop themselves plays a vital role in the success of merit system implementation, the government could

pay more attention on the personal factors of the civil servants, especially the factors related to willingness to learn. The government should thoroughly develop a healthy and suitable environtmens and culture which enable civil servants to manifest their willing to learn and grow, so that the goal of merit system implementation can be achieved in the end game.

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