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Original Article

# Implementation of Merit System in the First Placement of Police Academy Graduates and its Implications for Career Development: A Case Study at the National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri)

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## Abstract

This research examines the application of the merit system in the first placement of officers graduating from the Police Academy in the National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri) and its impact on career development. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study analyses the challenges faced by teenage officers placed in administrative positions and their effectiveness on motivation and job satisfaction. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with teenage officers, National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri) officials, and relevant stakeholders, and supported by documentation studies. The results showed that academic rank-based placements neglect practical abilities and leadership skills. Administrative placements are often perceived to hinder career progression and can lead to demotivation. The research recommends the need for a balance between academic assessment and practical competence in placement, as well as the implementation of more flexible and transparent policies to ensure sustainable career development. The research recommends several measures for HR development in National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri), including an integrated rotation programme, the use of technology for performance assessment, and cross-field mentoring programmes. In addition, policies that support gender equality and diversity in deployment and strengthening the merit evaluation system are also needed for long-term effectiveness. Periodic evaluation and a holistic approach to human resource management are also needed.

**Keywords**: Merit System, Officer Placement, National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri), Career Development, Job Satisfaction, Youth Officers.

## 1. Introduction

The Indonesian National Police (Polri) plays an important role in maintaining security and public order. This task is increasingly complex along with the times, which includes various challenges, ranging from cyber crime to the threat of terrorism (Hasibuan, 2019). In facing these challenges, the quality of Polri's human resources (HR) is a crucial factor that affects the effectiveness of the institution's overall performance. Therefore, it is important to ensure that Polri's human resource management is well-managed to support its vital tasks.

Based on Law No. 2 of 2002 on the National Police of the Republic of Indonesia, Polri has core duties that include maintaining public security and order, law enforcement, as well as protection, protection, and service to the community. To perform these duties professionally, the National Police requires an effective HR management system, especially in terms of the placement and career development of its personnel (Kumorotomo, 2006). A good

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HR management system will ensure that each individual is placed according to his or her competence and has the opportunity to develop in his or her career.

One of the main approaches in modern HRM is the implementation of a merit system. McCourt (2007) defines a merit system as the principle of placing individuals based on competence and performance, not on the basis of personal relationships or political interests. The main objective of the merit system is to ensure that each position is filled by the most competent and best qualified personnel, which in turn will increase the effectiveness and professionalism of the institution. The implementation of this merit system is expected to assist Polri in managing human resources objectively and efficiently.

In the context of the Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas), the implementation of the merit system in the placement of officers who graduated from the Police Academy faces a number of challenges. Based on Police Chief Regulation (PERKAP) No. 9/2016 on Career Development System (Sisbinkar), the first placement of juvenile troops considers two main factors: clearance rating and organisational needs. However, research by Setyowati (2016) suggests that an excessive focus on academic achievement may overlook other important aspects, such as practical ability and leadership potential, that should be taken into consideration in the placement process.

According to Boyatzis (2008), non-academic skills, such as interpersonal and leadership abilities, are critical to operational effectiveness. When first placement is based solely on academic rank, there is a risk that other important potentials, which can be further developed in fieldwork, are overlooked. This is in line with Kotter (2007) findings, which state that effective leaders must have the ability to motivate teams and adapt to dynamic situations, skills that cannot always be measured through academic achievement alone.

In addition, the placement of officials in administrative positions in the Korlantas often leads to negative perceptions regarding career development prospects (Tana & Nita, 2024). Deci and Ryan (2000) highlight that a mismatch between personal interests and job demands can reduce engagement and job satisfaction. If a youth officer who should be gaining operational experience is instead placed in an administrative position, this can lead to decreased motivation and productivity, known as job mismatch (Locke et al., 1976).

The stigma against placement in administrative units is further reinforced by cases of transfers that are perceived as career 'boxing'. For example, *Komjen Pol* (Ret) Dharma Pongrekun's statement in a podcast that his career was 'boxed in' after being transferred to Lemdiklat Polri shows how placement in a particular unit can be seen as an obstacle to career development. Similarly, there is a stigma attached to Yanma Polri, which is often regarded as an 'outcast unit' for troubled officers. According to Christensen and Lægreid (2011), it is important for organisations to change in order to adapt to changing circumstances, but rigid deployment systems hinder mobility and competence development.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding more about the application of merit systems in HR management in Polri. Mubin and Roziqin (2018) stated that an effective merit system should consider not only technical competence, but also aspects of motivation and professional development. This research is expected to provide useful recommendations for Polri to improve the officer placement system and reduce the negative impact of the stigma attached to administrative assignments.

In addition, the results of this study can also provide practical contributions for Polri in formulating more effective placement policies. Ali et al. (2017) emphasised the importance of a comprehensive performance evaluation system to support the implementation of a merit system. By capturing the challenges and opportunities in the first placement of officers, Polri can develop better strategies to ensure sustainable career development for all its personnel.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyse the implementation of the merit system in the first placement of officers graduating from the Police Academy in the National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri) and its impact on career development. Specifically, this research will examine three main aspects: (1) how the merit system is applied in initial placement, (2) the challenges faced by young officers in administrative positions related to motivation and job satisfaction, and (3) the impact of initial placement on long-term career development. This research is expected to provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of the merit system in the context of Polri. This research will utilise a qualitative approach to deeply explore the experiences and perspectives of teenage officers and relevant stakeholders in the National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri). Through in-depth interviews and document analysis, this research aims to produce concrete recommendations that can be used for the improvement of the placement and career development system within Indonesian National Police (Polri).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Merit System in Human Resource Management

Merit system is a fundamental approach in modern human resource management. McNamee and Miller (2009) define merit as individual characteristics that reflect competence and performance. In the context of public organisations, merit systems aim to ensure that recruitment, placement, and promotion are based on ability and merit, rather than external factors such as personal relationships or political affiliations.

McCourt (2007) identifies four main components of a merit system: (1) application at all levels of positions, (2) selection of the best candidates, (3) open access, and (4) transparency of the process. This system is an important foundation in bureaucratic reform and increasing the professionalism of the state apparatus. Setyowati (2016) adds that effective implementation of a merit system can improve organisational performance and public trust.

### 2.2. Officer Deployment in the Police Context

Officer placement is a crucial aspect of police human resource management. Based on PERKAP No. 9/2016, the first placement of officers graduating from the Police Academy considers academic achievement and organisational needs. However, Boyatzis (2008) argues that placements that rely solely on academic grades may overlook other important competencies such as leadership and interpersonal skills.

Research by Umiati et al. (2022) shows that the availability of placement with competencies has a significant effect on officer work motivation. When officers are placed in positions that match their abilities and interests, they tend to show better performance and higher levels of job satisfaction (Nurwicaksono et al., 2023).

### 2.3. Career Development Theory

Savickas (2002) views career as a series that forms the position of a person's working life. This theory emphasises that career development is a continuous process involving various stages and decisions. Gibson et al. (1987) added that effective employee management can increase employee engagement and organisational effectiveness.

Deci and Ryan (2000) through self-determination theory highlight the importance of autonomy and competence in work motivation. When individuals feel their work matches their aspirations and abilities, they tend to be more motivated and committed to the organisation. This is relevant to the context of placing officials in administrative positions that are often perceived as less challenging or limiting career development.

### 2.4. Placement Implications on Job Satisfaction

Herzberg (1966) identified factors that influence job satisfaction, including recognition, responsibility, and advancement opportunities. In the context of National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri), the placement of administrative positions may influence these factors and impact on officer job satisfaction.

Locke et al. (1976) stressed the equivalence between individual expectations and job realities. Job mismatch that occurs when officers are placed in positions that do not match their expectations can result in decreased motivation and productivity. Krumboltz in his social learning theory adds that experiences and interactions with the work environment influence individual career development.

### 2.5. Implementation of Merit System in Public Sector

Recent research on the implementation of merit systems in the Indonesian public sector points to various challenges. Ali et al. (2017) identified barriers such as transparency and the strong influence of non-merit factors in placement decisions. Mubin & Roziqin (2018) added that the success of the merit system requires strong commitment from the leadership and an objective evaluation system.

This literature review provides a theoretical basis for understanding the complexity of merit system implementation in the placement of officials and its impact on career development. The theories and research results discussed demonstrate the importance of a balance between academic and practical competencies, as well as the need for a placement system that considers individual career aspirations.

## 3. Methods

This research on the implementation of the merit system in the first placement of officers who graduated from the Police Academy at the National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri) uses a descriptive qualitative approach. According to Bogdan (1992), qualitative research produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and behaviour that can be observed. This approach was chosen for its ability to explore an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the research subjects, especially regarding the impact of placement on career development.

The research location was chosen at the National Police Traffic Corps (Korl Korlantas Polri antas) with consideration of the characteristics of this unit which has a complexity of tasks that include administrative and operational aspects. Traffic Corps (Korlantas) provides a rich context for understanding the implementation of the merit system and the impact of placing officials in administrative positions on their career development. The complexity of Korlantas' tasks and organisational structure allow researchers to observe the various dynamics that occur in the process of officer placement and career development.

In collecting data, this study used two types of data sources: primary and secondary. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with teenage officers who graduated from the Police Academy, officials of the National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri), and HR policy stakeholders at the Police Headquarters. Direct observation of work activities in administrative positions was also conducted to gain contextual understanding. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected from policy documents, regulations related to the merit system, performance reports, officer placement statistics, as well as relevant literature and previous research.

Referring to Milles et al. (2014), data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth interviews with a semi-structured approach, direct observation, and documentation

studies. In-depth interviews allow researchers to obtain detailed information about informants' experiences and perspectives, while observation provides a first-hand understanding of the work dynamics within the Traffic Corps (Korlantas). Documentation studies complemented the data by analysing official documents and records related to the implementation of the merit system.

The selection of informants was done purposively by considering the relevance and capacity of the informants in providing the required data. The main informants were teenage officers who graduated from police academy (Akpol) who were placed in administrative positions, complemented by the perspectives of Traffic Corps (Korlantas) officials involved in personnel placement, Polri HR officials who understand the merit system policy, and observers or learners who focus on police HR management.

Data analysis adopted the interactive model developed by Milles et al. (2014), including the process of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out to select and connect raw data from the field, followed by the organisation of information that allows drawing conclusions. The analysis process ended with interpretation and verification of the research findings.

To ensure the validity of the data, this research uses triangulation techniques that include triangulation of sources, methods, and theories. Source triangulation is done by comparing information from various data sources, while method triangulation uses several data collection methods for verification. Theoretical triangulation analysis is completed by using various theoretical perspectives to understand the phenomenon under study.

This research method was designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of the merit system and its impact on the career development of officers in the National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri). The chosen qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the experiences and perceptions of the research subjects, while data triangulation ensured the validity of the research findings. Through this methodology, the research is expected to produce findings that contribute to the policy development of placement and career coaching within the Polri.

# 4. Results and Discussion

## 4.1. Merit System Applied in the First Placement

The system of applying benefits in the placement of officers who graduated from the Police Academy at the National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri) shows a significant gap between the policy stipulated in PERKAP Number 9 of 2016 and field practice. The policy explicitly states that the officer placement process must consider aspects of individual competence and organisational needs, but findings in the field reveal that academic rank remains the dominant factor in decision-making. This potentially overlooks other important dimensions, such as leadership ability or operational potential, which are more relevant to performance in the field.

Interviews with HR officials of National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri) revealed that the internal assessment and evaluation system still relies heavily on academic success indicators. This constraint reflects weak efforts to implement meritocratic principles in the officer deployment system. The results of this study are in line with the findings of Ali et al. (2017), who highlighted similar issues in the public sector in Indonesia. According to them, the use of narrow parameters, such as academic achievement alone, tends to reduce objectivity and accountability in the decision-making process, thus contributing to a lack of organisational efficiency (Ali et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the issue of transparency is also a major challenge in implementing this system. In the context of National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri), the absence of a transparent evaluation mechanism means that assessments of leadership ability and technical competence are often poorly measured. In fact, several studies, such as the one conducted by (Scholarios & Lockyer, 1999), shows that competency-based placements tend to increase organisational effectiveness and create a more productive work environment.

Recommendations include the need to revise the HR evaluation system at National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri) to integrate non-academic competency parameters, such as leadership skills, communication abilities, and field experience, into the placement criteria. This move is supported by modern HR management literature, which emphasises the importance of a multidimensional approach in the selection and placement process (Dessler, 2020). As such, more competency-based deployment practices can support the achievement of organisational strategic objectives more optimally.

The correlation between first placement and initial motivation levels has significant implications for human resource management, especially in organisations with strict structural hierarchies. The findings suggest that first placement can be an important determinant in shaping an officer's initial motivation. Placement in administrative positions tends to demotivate, especially for individuals who aspire to be in the operational field. This is relevant to Herzberg's (1966) theory, which explains that maintenance or 'hygiene factors' such as lack of challenge and development opportunities in administrative positions can function as dissatisfiers. These factors not only inhibit job satisfaction but can also undermine intrinsic motivation.

In addition, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) provides an additional perspective by emphasising the importance of fulfilling three basic psychological needs-autonomy, competence and relatedness. When officers are placed in less challenging administrative positions, the needs for autonomy and competence are often not met. This leads to a decrease in intrinsic motivation, which in turn can affect performance and job satisfaction. Deci and Ryan also state that a lack of challenge and autonomy can lead to feelings of frustration, which inhibits initiative and a sense of fulfilment at work.

This finding is consistent with previous research showing that individuals who feel their roles do not match their career aspirations tend to experience job disengagement (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Administrative positions are often seen as routine and lacking in innovation, which does not provide adequate stimulation for individuals with operational ambitions. This inappropriate placement can also lead to feelings of role incongruity, which has been shown to be a significant predictor of low work motivation (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006).

Therefore, organisations need to consider individual aspirations when making initial placements, especially for rookies who are highly motivated to develop in operations. Providing training, mentoring or job rotation to more challenging positions can be a solution to prevent demotivation. These strategies can also create a balance between the needs of the individual and the needs of the organisation to maintain a motivated and productive workforce.

The entrenched stigma against administrative positions as a 'slow track' in career development, as described in the research findings, has serious implications for the implementation of the merit system in the first placement of officers graduating from the Police Academy, as studied in the context of the National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri). According to Kotter (2007), the phenomenon of 'self-fulfilling prophecy' can explain how negative expectations of administrative positions create an adverse cycle, where the stigma demotivates individuals occupying administrative positions. As a result, their

performance tends to decline, thus reinforcing the perception that these positions are not strategic in career development.

In the implementation of a merit system, which aims to place individuals based on competence and organisational needs, this stigma can be a significant barrier. The placement of officers in administrative positions is often seen as a form of 'punishment' or a career dead end, even though these positions can actually be an important foundation in building the managerial and administrative competencies needed for the next career path (Rivai, 2020). If this stigma is not addressed, the merit system may lose its effectiveness, as individuals tend to prefer operational or functional paths that are considered more prestigious, even though they do not always match their competencies.

Furthermore, the impact of this stigma on organisational dynamics in National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri) can be seen in the form of less than optimal distribution of human resources. Placements that should be based on organisational needs and potential are disrupted by individual preferences influenced by social stigma towards administrative positions. This is consistent with Dessler's (2020) findings that perception bias in careers can hinder the implementation of a meritocracy-based HR strategy.

In the context of National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri), it is important to re-socialise the strategic value of administrative positions as an integral part of long-term career development. In addition, performance-based rewards for administrative positions can help change negative perceptions and create a more balanced work environment. Thus, the stigma can be minimised, allowing for optimal implementation of the merit system to support fair and competency-based officer career development.

## 4.2. Challenges Faced by Teenage Officers in Administrative Positions Related to Motivation and Job Satisfaction

Career development challenges, particularly for administrative employees, are often characterised by gaps in operational experience, limited professional networks, and the impact of organisational stigma. Research shows that these barriers can affect individuals' motivation and perceptions of their career advancement potential (Baruch & Vardi, 2016). However, the importance of effective adaptation strategies also emerges as a solution. For example, individuals can use administrative positions to strengthen their managerial competencies, improve their understanding of organisational systems, and build strategic relationships with various parties. This perspective emphasises the need for a positive outlook in addressing initial placement challenges.

Merit-based placement aims to ensure that an officer's initial position reflects the individual's competence and potential (Government Regulation No. 11/2017). However, in its implementation, challenges such as operational gaps and stigmatisation of certain positions may also arise, especially if the placement is not in line with the individual's expectations or background.

Adaptation strategies in this context include developing new skills relevant to the position, exploring professional networking opportunities within the organisation, and forming a positive outlook towards their initial experience. Study by Wiratama and Prasojo (2019) in the context of National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri) found that Police Academy graduates placed in administrative positions can leverage this experience to strengthen managerial competencies and broaden understanding of the overall organisational system. As such, initial challenges in deployment can be turned into strategic opportunities to support long-term career development, provided they are supported by a fair performance evaluation system and clear coaching mechanisms. In conclusion, the implementation of the merit system in the first placement provides great opportunities for career development, but

its success depends on the individual's ability to overcome challenges with appropriate adaptation strategies and consistent institutional support. This perspective aligns with the finding that a proactive and adaptive attitude can mitigate the negative impact of early career barriers.

Based on the findings of the research examining the implementation of the merit system in the first placement of officers graduating from the Police Academy at the National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri), there is a close relationship between the implementation of the meritocracy system and the optimisation of career development. The recommendations provided cover important aspects such as the development of more comprehensive assessments, transparency, and the establishment of a career development maintenance programme. These three recommendations are in line with the basic principles of meritocracy, which places individual competence, performance, and potential as the primary basis for placement and promotion decisions. In the context of merit system implementation, the development of a more comprehensive appraisal system is needed to ensure that each officer receives a fair and objective assessment. This includes measurement of technical qualifications, leadership abilities, and psychological aspects relevant to the duties at National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri). This system needs to be equipped with modern technology, such as big data analytics and decision support systems, to improve the accuracy and efficiency of the evaluation process.

Transparency in the deployment process is also an important element to build trust and minimise perceptions of subjectivity. Transparency can be realised through the publication of placement criteria, evaluation results, and the establishment of a feedback system that allows officers to express their aspirations and self-evaluation. This supports the development of a more open, accountable and fairness-based organisational culture. The establishment of a structured career maintenance and development programme is a strategic step to ensure continuity of competency improvement. This programme can include regular training, mentoring and job rotation to broaden officers' horizons and work experience. Strengthening the mentoring system is essential to provide continuous professional guidance, especially in the early stages of an officer's career.

The integration of technology in this process is also key to accelerating and refining the implementation of the merit system. Technology can be used to digitise assessment data, automate administrative processes, and provide wider access to career information. In addition, strengthening organisational culture that supports collaboration, innovation and excellence should be prioritised, given its significant impact on officer motivation and performance.

The implementation of this recommendation requires a strong commitment from the leadership of the National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri) to ensure the policy is effective. In addition, collaboration with various stakeholders within Polri, including training units, HR management, and external organisations, is essential to support the sustainability of this programme. Thus, through consistent implementation of the principles of meritocracy, National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri) can create a deployment system that is not only fair but also contributes directly to officer career development and overall organisational performance. This also strengthens Polri's professionalism in carrying out its duties in the community.

## 4.3. The Impact of Early Placement on Long-Term Career Development

Competency development of officials in administrative positions of the National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri) revealed that a structured system of training and competency development is essential to improve the quality of officials in carrying out their administrative

duties. Boyatzis (2008) states that effective managerial and leadership competencies can be achieved through well-planned training programmes and systematically acquired work experience. This suggests that competency development is not only a matter of technical knowledge, but also involves leadership and managerial aspects that are indispensable for officials at the administrative level.

However, the research results show that the competency development programme at National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri), especially for officers placed in administrative positions, has not been fully optimal. This was reinforced by interviews with HR training officials who revealed challenges in designing programmes that can compensate for the limited field experience of these officers. The role of field experience in shaping managerial and leadership competencies is crucial, but this limited experience is an obstacle to holistic competency development for administrative officers.

This finding is in line with Mubin and Roziqin's (2018) research which emphasises the importance of developing a structured training programme to support the implementation of a merit system. The merit system, which focuses on the placement of officials based on competence and merit, is a key factor in improving the effectiveness and quality of governance. In this context, the implementation of the merit system in National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri), especially in the placement of officers who graduated from the Police Academy, has direct implications for their career development. The merit system can ensure that officers who have competencies that match the needs of the position will be placed in the right position, which in turn will encourage better and optimal career development.

The implementation of the merit system also faces challenges in terms of adequate human resources (HR) readiness. As revealed in the interviews, the lack of field experience is an obstacle in developing overall competence. Therefore, it is important to design training programmes that not only focus on theory and knowledge, but also provide opportunities for administrative officials to gain practical experience relevant to their duties. This will strengthen the application of the merit system, ensure that officials are placed according to their competencies, and ultimately improve organisational performance.

The role of leadership in driving changes in perceptions and organisational culture is a very important aspect in the implementation of merit systems and bureaucratic reform, especially in the context of the National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri). As Kotter (2007) explains, effective organisational change requires strong leadership and a clear vision. In this case, the leadership at National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri) plays a key role in creating an enabling environment for merit system implementation, especially in changing the stigma towards administrative positions. The stigma often leads to administrative career paths being viewed as inferior to operational career paths.

A study conducted by Christensen and Lægreid (2011) also confirmed that successful bureaucratic change requires full support from leaders to design and implement inclusive and fair policies, including in terms of officer placement and career development within the organisation. Therefore, leadership support in National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri) to change the view of administrative positions is a crucial aspect in realising a more effective implementation of the merit system. The merit system itself aims to place individuals in the right position based on ability and performance, not based on non-qualitative factors such as connections or previous positions.

Leaders who support merit systems can ensure that officer deployment decisions are based not only on influence or hierarchy, but also on competence and measurable performance outcomes. This can help create a fairer, more transparent and professional organisational culture, and improve member motivation and performance. Therefore, if the leadership of the

National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri) further emphasises the importance of changing perceptions regarding administrative positions, the merit system applied in the placement of officers graduating from the Police Academy will be more accepted and effectively implemented. In addition, this change could also improve officer career development patterns, make administrative and operational tracks more equal in terms of development opportunities, and strengthen quality and professionalism within the police force.

The implementation of ETLE, which enables electronic enforcement of traffic laws through surveillance cameras and automated monitoring systems, demands higher analytical and managerial skills. Officers who previously focused on document management are now also involved in data processing, analysis and data-driven strategic decision-making. This digitisation not only improves operational efficiency, but also expands the skills required in daily tasks, as one ETLE administration officer explained,

*"Digitalisation is changing the nature of administrative work. We are not only taking care of paperwork, but also engaging in data analysis and strategic decision-making,"*

This transformation is in line with Dwiputrianti's (2018) findings that technology plays an important role in bureaucratic modernisation, accelerating changes in administrative systems and improving human resource capabilities. Technology not only serves to improve efficiency, but also encourages increased quality and professionalism among officers. This indicates that police human resources must have the ability to adapt to rapid technological changes in order to meet the demands of an increasingly complex and dynamic job. This increase in competence also opens up opportunities for career development in the police. Officers with good analytical skills, especially in the use of digital technology, will be more easily promoted and get strategic roles in the organisation. Thus, modernisation and digitalisation not only touches the technical aspects of operations, but also enriches the capabilities of Polri human resources in facing the challenges of the times.

The gender dimension of office placement, particularly in the context of the placement of female officers in administrative positions, suggests a tendency towards gender-based discrimination in the job placement system. While the policies in place may not explicitly mention differences based on gender, these findings suggest the existence of unequal practices regarding career development, where women tend to be placed in positions that are considered more administrative or less strategic than their male counterparts. This phenomenon is important to analyse, as it concerns the issue of equal opportunities in career and development in the work environment, which should be based on individual competence and achievement, not inherent gender stereotypes.

Sakhiyya and Locke (2019) emphasise that diversity and equality in the application of the merit system are essential to ensure that individuals have equal opportunities in their career development. They cautioned that merit systems, which are ideally objective, are often affected by social biases, one of which is gender bias, which influences decisions regarding placement and promotion. Their research shows that although merit policies and systems are implemented with the intention of reducing discrimination, gender stereotypes still play a role in influencing managerial decisions. For example, women are more likely to be placed in administrative or work-related positions that are perceived as 'softer' or more 'controllable,' while men are more likely to get the opportunity to occupy positions that are perceived as more strategic or have the potential to have a greater impact on the organisation. This points to the need for greater awareness of how these biases can influence decisions in the workplace. Diversity, whether in terms of gender, race or background, should be valued and seen as an

asset that can enrich an organisation's perspective and performance. Therefore, it is imperative to create policies that are not only formal but can also address the potential for gender-based discrimination that often goes unnoticed and impacts equal opportunities for women in the workplace.

## 5. Conclusion

The implementation of the merit system in the first placement of officers who graduated from the Police Academy at the National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri) found that the application of the merit system has not been optimal even though it refers to PERKAP Number 9 of 2016. The assessment still relies too much on academic achievement and less on leadership competence and operational potential. Transparency in the placement process is also limited, with decision criteria not clearly communicated to officers.

Challenges faced by officers placed in administrative positions at Korlantas include decreased motivation, especially for those who expect operational assignments. The stigma of administrative positions as a 'slow track' in career development also affects job satisfaction and limited field experience. Placement in administrative positions was shown to impact long-term career development, with limited professional networks affecting promotion prospects. The research also shows that leadership plays an important role in changing suboptimal perceptions and organisational culture. The gender dimension of placements is an issue of concern, with a trend towards gender-based placements. The utilisation of technology in administration and performance appraisal systems also needs to be developed.

Based on the research findings, several important recommendations can be formulated to support HR development in the National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri). First, the development of an integrated rotation programme needs to be carried out so that officials can gain experience of operational tasks periodically. In addition, the utilisation of technology in the performance appraisal system will create a more objective and comprehensive assessment. A cross-field mentoring programme is also needed to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and experience between operational and administrative officers. Other recommendations include the development of more explicit policies to support gender equality and diversity in placement and promotion, as well as strengthening the evaluation and monitoring system for the implementation of the merit system so that its effectiveness can be ensured and continuous improvement achieved.

Periodic evaluation of the programmes implemented is also important to ensure the goal of sustainable HR development is achieved. This research provides an in-depth insight into the dynamics of the implementation system and its impact on officer career development at National Police Traffic Corps (Korlantas Polri), highlighting the importance of a holistic approach to police HR management. This approach considers the technical deployment, psychological, social, and organisational aspects that mutually influence the effectiveness of the system. The recommended systemic changes need to be implemented gradually and consistently to achieve optimal results in the development of Indonesian police professionalism.

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