



Transformation of Civil Servant Loyalty Post-Regional Election: From Personal-Political Monoloyalty to Professional-Institutional Multiloyalty in Jayapura City

Untung Muhdiarta^{1*}, Muliadi Anangkota¹, Billy Piter Werimon¹, & Muhammad Zaenul Muttaqin²

¹Government Science Study Program, Universitas Cenderawasih, Indonesia

²Public Administration Study Program, Universitas Cenderawasih, Indonesia

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*Corresponding Author:

umuhdiarta1@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The transition of local political leadership after an election may reshape power relations, career security, and civil servants' loyalty orientations. This study examines post-election civil-service loyalty and identifies institutional mechanisms that can shift personal-political monoloyalty toward professional-institutional multiloyalty in Jayapura City. A qualitative case-study design was employed. The primary data came from in-depth interviews with eight informants at different levels of the local bureaucracy and were analyzed through thematic coding and cross-informant comparison. The findings reveal a stable-adaptive bureaucracy: public services continued, while rotation, promotion, and acting appointments became sites of career uncertainty. Civil-service loyalty was layered and situated on a continuum encompassing personal, official, institutional, professional, legal, and public-service commitments. Procedural uncertainty, perceived political intervention, organizational culture, superior-subordinate relations, and career security may strengthen personal loyalty. By contrast, a transparent and credible merit system shifts civil servants' dependence from political figures to competence, performance, and institutional procedures. The study argues that merit operates not only as a personnel-management instrument but also as a mechanism for depersonalizing loyalty. Such transformation requires six mutually reinforcing pillars: auditable merit, career protection, continuous ethics and neutrality development, transitional leadership, competence and welfare development, and public-service accountability.

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■ INTRODUCTION

The regional government bureaucracy is the primary instrument for governance, development, and public services. In a local democracy, the bureaucracy must operate professionally and impartially, even when political leadership changes. Regional elections often create internal pressure points, as civil servants must balance administrative support for elected regional heads with loyalty to the state, the law, organizations, professions, and the public interest.

Normatively, Law Number 20 of 2023 concerning the State Civil Apparatus places professionalism and a merit system as the foundation of civil servants' management. After the contestation ends, the bureaucracy must translate the legitimate political mandate of regional heads without being drawn into

partisan loyalty. The problem lies in how employees interpret personnel decisions during the transition period. Promotions, transfers, rotations, and appointments of acting officers can be understood as organizational decisions. However, they can also be interpreted as signals about where power lies and what underpins career security.

Bureaucratic neutrality rests on the principle that public administration operates professionally, impersonally, and under the law. Wilson's (1887) separation of politics and administration remains a useful normative boundary, but contemporary government practice shows that the two realms cannot be separated absolutely. Political leaders set direction and priorities, while the bureaucracy provides the technical knowledge and implementation capacity (Peters, 2018). The relationship between

the two is therefore interdependent and must be governed by rules, not conceptual barriers. Neutrality is therefore not a passive attitude toward the government's agenda. Civil servants must respond to legitimate policies, but are prohibited from using their authority, services, and organizational resources for partisan interests. This article distinguishes two forms. Electoral neutrality means not engaging in partisan support during a contest. Substantive neutrality means working objectively and non-discriminatorily, and not using the bureaucracy as an instrument of retribution after the contest ends.

Moreover, patronage describes the exchange of support and resources between patrons and clients. Within bureaucracies, positions become strategic resources when career decisions are not solely determined by competence and performance. Broad discretion, closed processes, and weak oversight increase the risk of personalization of personnel decisions (Johnston, 1979; McCourt, 2013). In Indonesia, Kristiansen and Ramli (2006) documented payments for positions in regional bureaucracies after decentralization, while Blunt et al. (2012) assessed that patronage remained a hallmark of post-New Order governance. This pattern persists because it benefits both parties in the short term, even though it harms the organization in the long term. Career uncertainty breeds anticipatory compliance, which is the adjustment of employee behavior based on expectations about the leader's intentions in the absence of direct instructions. Closeness is then seen as a rational safeguard. Procedural justice works in the opposite direction. Rubin (2009), analyzing a survey of US federal employees, found a positive relationship between perceptions of fairness in employment procedures and employee trust in their superiors, and a negative relationship with intention to leave the organization. When employees believe performance protects their careers, they are more likely to offer professional advice.

A merit system requires civil servants to be managed based on qualifications, competence, performance, integrity, and fair treatment. These requirements extend beyond administrative compliance. A new system is substantive when officials understand and trust the job standards, selection stages, assessment weights, and decision bases. Such credibility reduces the incentive to seek protection through political figures or networks. Cross-national evidence supports the emphasis on recruitment. Dahlström et al. (2012) found that meritocratic recruitment was associated with lower levels of corruption in fifty-two countries, while competitive salaries, career stability, and internal promotions showed no comparable effect. Meyer-Sahling and

Mikkelsen (2016) added that officials' experience applying merit in practice, not the existence of civil service laws themselves, relates to politicization and corruption. The merit system therefore serves a dual purpose. It improves the quality of civil service management while simultaneously depersonalizing loyalty. When consistent procedures determine careers, civil servants shift their dependence from patrons to systems, competence, and performance.

Bureaucratic loyalty encompasses loyalty to the state, law, organization, political leaders, profession, and society. These orientations can reinforce each other, but they can also conflict. Christensen (1991) demonstrates the inherent tension between political loyalty and professional autonomy in the working relationship between civil servants and elected leaders. Personal-political monoloyalty occurs when figures become the center of loyalty and supersede rules and public interests. Professional-institutional multi-loyalty is a layered loyalty structured hierarchically across five objects. The state and law sit at the highest level; public interest and professional ethics define action; organizations provide the implementation framework; professions set work standards; and loyalty to legitimate leadership is functional and subordinate to the previous four layers. These two typologies rarely emerge as separate entities. A civil servant may be professional in daily service but be calculative when their career is at stake. A person's position on the continuum depends on the interaction of four groups of factors. Regulatory factors include personnel regulations, codes of ethics, and the application of merit systems; political factors include relationships with regional heads and perceptions of intervention in job decisions; organizational factors include work culture, communication, and superior-subordinate relationships; and individual factors include ethics, experience, and career security calculations.

Jayapura City was chosen as the study location because it serves as the center of government and public services in Papua, as well as a space for intensive interaction among political elites, the bureaucracy, and the community. This choice has a theoretical basis. Berenschot (2018) found that clientelism in Indonesia is more intense in provincial capitals whose economies depend on state spending than in poorer rural areas of Java, making this area an informative case for examining political and bureaucratic relations. Leadership changes in this city are accompanied by a restructuring of power relations, a restructuring of networks, and new expectations for the apparatus. When loyalties shift to personal-political ones, professionalism

weakens. When transitions are managed through credible procedures, the bureaucracy remains stable and consistently serves the public.

Previous studies have discussed neutrality, bureaucratic politicization, patronage, and merit systems. Most of this research focuses on civil servants' involvement before and during elections. Studies on how loyalty is negotiated after regional heads take office are limited, particularly in situations where continuity of service coexists with job uncertainty. Another gap lies in the tendency to understand loyalty as a binary choice: loyal versus disloyal, or loyal to the leader versus loyal to the rules.

This article offers a different reading by placing monoloyalty and multiloyalty on a single continuum. Monoloyalty refers to a focused loyalty orientation toward a figure or patron as a source of protection and career opportunities. Professional-institutional multiloyalty refers to layered, normatively structured loyalties to five objects: the state and law, the public interest and professional ethics, the organization, the profession, and the legitimate leader. Loyalty to the leader remains necessary in official relations, with four layers of boundaries above it.

This gap generates two research questions. First, what are the dynamics and forms of civil servants' loyalty within the Jayapura City Government bureaucracy after the regional elections? Second, what regulatory, political, organizational, and individual factors shape the direction of such loyalty? Furthermore, how can a merit system encourage a shift from personal-political loyalty to professional-institutional loyalty? The first question is descriptive-analytical and is answered through informants' experiences. The second question is explanatory and culminates in a strategic model developed from findings, an analytical framework, and the literature on strategic planning in public organizations. The article contributes by shifting the focus from electoral neutrality to post-election loyalty, positioning monoloyalty and multiloyalty as a continuum that allows hybrid forms of loyalty, and framing a merit system as a mechanism for depersonalizing loyalty. The second research question culminates in strategy formulation, so the analytical framework requires a foundation for understanding what constitutes strategy. Chandler (1969) identified long-term goals, courses of action, and resource allocation as its constituent elements. Mintzberg (1987) expanded this definition to include plans, decision patterns, positions, and organizational perspectives, making strategy more than a set of planning documents. Bryson and Bert (2024) added that strategic planning in public organizations is both systematic and adaptive to changes in the political environment. These three

implications imply that loyalty strategies must address career systems, leadership, supervision, competency development, and service culture in an integrated manner; ethical socialization and calls for neutrality alone are insufficient.

This study's six-pillar strategic model was formulated by synthesizing empirical findings on civil servants' loyalty patterns in the Jayapura City Government and literature on strategic planning in public organizations. The model is a conceptual framework that explains how to strengthen the merit system based on the research context, not a model whose effectiveness has been tested. Applying the model to other organizations or regions requires adjustments to institutional characteristics, local political dynamics, and organizational capacity, and needs to be tested through implementation research and policy evaluation.

■ METHOD

Informant/Research Subjects

This study involved eight informants purposively selected from various levels and bureaucratic units within the Jayapura City Government. The informants included city government officials, the Regional Secretariat, the National Unity and Politics Agency (Kesbangpol), district governments, and village governments. This diversity of positions was intended to obtain different experiences and perspectives on organizational adjustment following a leadership transition, from senior levels, administrators, and local government service providers.

The selection of informants was based on three main criteria. First, position and involvement in the organization, meaning the informants were still actively holding positions within the Jayapura City Government during the post-election transition period. This ensured a variety of perspectives across bureaucratic levels and functions. Second, relevance of function and responsibility, meaning the informants had duties related to personnel management, organizational coordination, government administration, and public service delivery. Third, direct involvement in the transition process, meaning the informants had direct experience in dealing with or implementing organizational adjustments that arise with leadership changes. To capture this change, informants had at least three years of service within the Jayapura City Government. They had worked there before the transition, giving them experience with the organization's conditions before and during the change process. These criteria allow us to assess their actual involvement in the organizational change process, which is the focus of this research. To maintain confidentiality, the dataset does

Table 1. Demographic Profile Of Informants

Code	Position	Level	Institution
I-1	Civil servant/official	Official	Jayapura City Government
I-2	Acting Head of Industry, Trade and Cooperative Office	Senior	City Government
I-3	Head of Protocol Subdivision	Administrator	Secretariat
I-4	Head of Division, Kesbangpol	Middle	Kesbangpol
I-5	Head of Kesbangpol	Senior	Kesbangpol
I-6	Head of Urban Village	Local	Urban Village
I-7	Acting Head of Population and Civil Registration Office	Senior	City Government
I-8	Secretary of Muara Tami District	Administrator	District

not include informants' names or identities. We assigned each informant the code I-1 to I-8.

Research Design and Approach

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine the dynamics of civil servants' loyalty following the regional head election in the Jayapura City Government. A qualitative approach was selected because post-election loyalty is embedded in organizational routines, political interactions, and individual experiences that quantitative indicators alone cannot adequately capture. The case study design enabled an in-depth examination of how loyalty was interpreted, negotiated, and experienced within a single bureaucratic setting during the transition to a new local administration.

The study focused on the Jayapura City Government because the leadership transition created an organizational context in which questions concerning neutrality, personnel management, professional commitment, and political influence became particularly salient. Rather than estimating the prevalence of particular attitudes, the study sought to explain how different forms of loyalty emerged and how actors in different bureaucratic positions understood them.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected through eight semi-structured interviews using an interview guide organized around five analytical dimensions: post-election loyalty dynamics, loyalty typologies, merit system and civil service management, factors influencing loyalty, and strategies for strengthening professional loyalty. These dimensions correspond directly to the study's research questions.

Before data collection, the researchers obtained formal permission to conduct the study through a research authorization issued

by the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Cenderawasih University, to the participating government institutions under letter number 1093 /UN20.1.3/PG/2026.

Before each interview, participants received an explanation of the research objectives, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality procedures, and their right to decline to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any stage. Interviews proceeded only after participants agreed to participate. Personal identifiers were removed from interview transcripts, and all quotations are reported using anonymous participant codes.

The interview guide covers dimensions related to both research questions. The post-election loyalty dynamics and loyalty typology dimensions address the first question, and the results are presented. The merit system and civil servants management dimensions, loyalty-forming factors, and strategies for strengthening professional loyalty address the second question.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Data analysis followed an iterative thematic procedure. The researcher manually analyzed the complete transcripts of eight interviews. The researcher chose manual analysis because the data were limited to eight transcripts, allowing the researcher to trace each code back to the context of the informant's statement. The researcher read all transcripts repeatedly before coding to gain a comprehensive understanding of the informants' experiences and identify elements relevant to the research questions.

Coding was conducted in several rounds. In the first round, the researcher marked statement units containing information about post-election loyalty, changes in employment relationships, the placement or replacement of officials, the implementation of a merit

system, political influence, and the apparatus' response to leadership changes. Initial codes were assigned based on the meanings emerging from the informant's statements. In subsequent rounds, codes with similar meanings were compared and grouped into broader categories, including regulatory, political, organizational, and individual factors.

The coding process was iterative, and initial codes were not automatically retained when statements with different meanings emerged in other transcripts. Each category was reviewed by comparing all statements within it, then returning to the original interview context if differences in meaning were identified. Statements that both supported and did not fully align with the dominant pattern were retained in the analysis to limit interpretive bias and prevent categories from being constructed solely from statements by specific informants or the researcher's initial interpretations.

After completing the coding process, comparisons were conducted across informants, taking into account their respective positions and bureaucratic units. This comparison examined whether a theme emerged across multiple organizational positions, differences between senior officials and administrators, and its relevance to informants' work contexts. The resulting clusters were then compared with the study's research questions and analytical framework. The empirical findings from this process were then used to construct interpretations regarding monoloyalty, multiloyalty, and strategies for strengthening professional loyalty.

To strengthen the findings, the study employed theoretical triangulation. Interview data from the eight informants were analyzed using Merit System theory, serving as the ideal standard for bureaucratic professionalism, and juxtaposed with Patron-Client Relationship theory to examine the reality of political reciprocity between civil servants and elected regional heads. By contrasting these perspectives, the researcher could objectively verify the validity of the field data while revealing the extent to which the merit system endured or was co-opted by practical political interests following the regional elections.

Three limitations limit the scope of the study's claims. The eight informants allowed for in-depth exploration of experiences but did not allow measurement of the distribution of views by position or work unit. Personnel data, including transfer documents, assessment results, and selection minutes, were not accessed, so the study cannot state that political interests influenced specific position decisions. The study also took place in a single city, so the patterns

found explain this case and serve as propositions that can be tested elsewhere.

■ RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Jayapura mayoral election was held in November 2024, with Abisai Rollo and Rustan Saru winning as mayor and deputy mayor. They won with 72,351 votes, ahead of the other three candidates by about 3,000. The change in power in Jayapura City also changed the established organizational culture, including strategic positions within the regional apparatus.

Changes in the structure and adjustments in assignments within the city bureaucracy also shape the direction of civil servant loyalty, which typically involves transfers, promotions, and demotions. These changes result from the pre-election period or cycle. Supporters of the elected candidate may receive priority promotion rewards over supporters of their rivals. These dynamics, at the very least, impact the public service system, which differs from what it was before the election.

Based on the research findings, government services and administrative routines continued after the regional elections. Civil servants' relationships with the new leadership largely took place through formal channels, and adaptation took the form of adjusting to the new regional head's vision, program priorities, communication style, and policy direction. I-3 summarizes this transition in the following terms:

"After the election, the bureaucracy generally continued to run as usual. At the outset of the transition, however, organizational adjustments and reassignment of duties meant that some services were temporarily affected." (I-3)

However, these dynamics are not evenly distributed throughout the organizational chain. These changes are concentrated around rotations, promotions, temporary-position fills, and civil servants' understanding of the new leadership's disposition and vision. I-5, for example, describes a wave of reassignments across echelon II, III, and IV positions, mostly filled temporarily, alongside persistent complaints about compensation:

"After the election, there were shifts across many echelon II, III, and IV positions in Jayapura City; most of the new appointments were acting officials, while permanent appointments went to echelon II officials who had passed the senior leadership examination. Staff carried out their duties

well, but the main constraint was that the income allowance was small relative to the workload." (I-5)

Other informants read the same reshuffling through a more political lens. I-8 associated appointment with political support, while I-4 pointed to a mismatch between placement and expertise:

"Most of those holding echelon II, III, and IV positions were supporters of the elected regional head. Personnel are placed in positions that do not match their expertise. Appointment leans toward the political logic of repaying favors." (I-4)

Based on the interview results, post-election stability in Jayapura City indicates an adaptive state in which service functions continue while relationship structures, leadership expectations, and career paths are recalibrated. These interview results are supported by observations showing that the change in regional head affects only a portion of civil servants as a form of reciprocation for the leader's victory. This logic of bureaucratic politicization was largely formed pre-election and shows its results post-election.

Meanwhile, post-election civil servant loyalty tends to be oriented toward leadership preferences and job security considerations. In this situation, civil servants can express commitment to regulations and public service while considering their leaders' preferences when faced with promotions, transfers, or job uncertainty.

However, regulations on civil servant career paths should refer to Government Regulation No. 11 of 2017, later amended by Government Regulation No. 17 of 2020 concerning Civil Servant Management. This regulation stipulates that civil servant career paths are based on competency and work performance. In other words, the politics of favors in providing public services after elections underscores a covert form of bureaucratic politicization.

On the other hand, civil servants loyalty is stipulated in Law No. 20 of 2023 concerning the State Civil Apparatus, which outlines the values of civil servant who are AKHLAK (Service-Oriented, Accountable, Competent, Harmonious, Loyal, Adaptive, and Collaborative), guided by the Pancasila ideology and the 1945 Constitution; loyal to the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia and the legitimate government; and upholding the good name of fellow civil servants, leaders, agencies, and the state, as well as maintaining official and state secrets.

In the context of this research, informants view loyalty to leadership as necessary for coordination, discipline, and program implementation, a view that can be maintained as long as it refers to loyalty in an official capacity. I-6 explicitly draws the line:

"Loyalty to the leader matters within the bounds of official duty, but it must remain within the corridor of loyalty to the institution and the regulations." (I-6).

A similar point was made by informant I-8, who reframed personal respect in institutional terms:

"Even though most civil servants hold loyalty toward the figure of the leader, most of them understand that this loyalty is directed at the leader as an institution of the state, not as an individual." (I-8)

However, this restructuring is fragile. Institutional loyalty erodes rapidly when organizations are not perceived as managing careers fairly, as illustrated in I-4:

"Some civil servants orient themselves toward the organization, while others orient themselves toward the leader, and this affects their performance. Someone may carry out work mainly to appear capable in the leader's eyes; when that effort goes unrecognized, their loyalty declines." (I-4)

Loyalty to an institution is therefore not built sufficiently through symbols, oaths, and the restatement of organizational values; it must be met with organizational treatment that civil servants can trust.

However, professional loyalty proved to be the most consistent layer. Commitment to working within one's competence and responsibilities was deemed unchanged regardless of the regional head, as expressed directly by I-1:

"I work not because of the leader but because of the core duties and functions that are my responsibility." (I-1)

This consistency demonstrates the normative foundation for a shift in loyalty orientation. The remaining challenge lies in translating these agreed-upon norms into everyday decisions, especially when professional considerations conflict with concerns about being transferred or losing a position.

Factors that shape the direction of loyalty

This section discusses the four groups of factors that have been formulated, namely regulatory, political, organizational, and individual factors, and ends with a discussion of interactions between groups. Four groups of factors help explain why civil servants within the same organization exhibit different loyalty orientations: regulatory, political, organizational, and individual.

Based on regulatory factors, informants commonly cite Law No. 20 of 2023 concerning the State Civil Apparatus and Government Regulation No. 11 of 2017, later amended by Government Regulation No. 17 of 2020 concerning Civil Servant Management. Informants set normative boundaries for behavior and reinforce loyalty to the institution. However, these references are internalized unevenly. Some informants reported complete compliance, while I-4 pointed out inconsistencies and their consequences:

"Some civil servants show high loyalty to regulation and workplace ethics, carrying out their duties in accordance with the rules, with discipline, responsibility, and an effort to serve the public well. Others, though, sometimes neglect these standards, possibly because they still regard compliance with regulations and ethics as unimportant as long as the main task is completed. In my view, however, how a task is carried out matters as much as the result achieved; disregarding rules and ethics, even when the work is finished, can erode accountability, public trust, and the quality of governance." (I-4)

From this view, civil servant loyalty tends to be monoloyal, prioritizing assigned tasks over government rules and ethics. Indeed, if we examine Article 4 paragraph (2) letter e of Law No. 20 of 2023 concerning civil servants, the form of civil servant loyalty is dedicated to prioritizing the interests of the nation and state; this article, in addition to adhering to the state ideology, states that civil servant loyalty refers to the legitimate government and the institution's good name. Thus, loyalty becomes ambiguous when linked to regional governments in the civil servants' career system. On the one hand, civil servants are required to be loyal to the rules; on the other, to the leadership.

Political factors also produced the sharpest disagreement among informants, particularly over whether legitimate policy directives influence personnel decisions. I-1 acknowledged the influence but declined to overstate it:

"We cannot deny that influence certainly exists, though how large it is I cannot say." (I-1)

I-4 offered a more specific estimate, tying magnitude to particular personnel processes:

"If I had to put it on a scale of one to ten, I would say the influence falls around five to seven. Political dynamics often affect transfer, rotation, and promotion, carrying elements of personal closeness or reciprocal favor; even as some civil servants continue to work professionally and follow the rules regardless of the political dynamics around them." (I-4)

While informants acknowledged its potential existence, their differences of opinion centered on whether the practice was well established or still a risk worth noting. I-8 and I-4 took a more assertive position:

"Political closeness still affects promotion even though the government has established a merit system." (I-8) *"Promotion is often carried out because of political closeness; some appointments are forced through not based on professionalism but on political proximity."* (I-4)

The legitimacy of regional heads in establishing policy direction differs from the justification for personalizing bureaucratic management. Political direction remains legitimate as long as it prioritizes programs within a legal framework; it becomes problematic when it enters personnel decisions not supported by competence, performance, and organizational needs. The analytical boundary between legitimate policy direction and personalization of civil service management is therefore a governance principle worth applying in the post-election phase. Perceived intervention is most common in strategic positions, those closest to the decision-making point. This proximity does not eliminate the requirement for professional competence, but it does demand stricter procedures, as the consequences of misplaced appointments extend to local government performance and public services.

Then the organizational factors show that most informants view work relationships as professional and service culture as something that has a positive charge, and I-7 explains this culture in detail:

"The working culture in our agency emphasizes professionalism, discipline, integrity, teamwork, and an orientation

toward serving the community. Leadership also continues to build an open, accountable, results-oriented culture that produces a conducive and productive working environment." (I-7)

These conditions help explain why the bureaucracy remains stable despite uncertainty in work assignments; collective work norms, organizational routines, and service responsibilities anchor it against political turmoil. However, I-4 describes a similar culture that still falls short of the stated standards:

"The current working culture is not yet optimal. Some civil servants do not fully understand their duties and functions or the responsibilities attached to them, and excellent service to the public has not yet reached its full standard." (I-4)

Organizational culture can also work the other way around when deference to superiors is perceived as unlimited. Closed communication, informal instructions, and leadership examples that value closeness normalize personal loyalty; behavior with visible consequences carries more weight than written values, so when closeness yields faster access than achievement, informal messages trump official slogans. The I-5 report on communication between agency heads and mayors illustrates how closed channels translate into practical friction:

"Communication between OPD heads and the mayor has not worked well; there are technical matters we need to convey, but communication is difficult because the mayor does not use a WhatsApp number, so important matters must go through the deputy mayor or the regional secretary, and important letters sometimes sit for a long time on the mayor's desk until we call or message his aide to remind him that they need to be acted on quickly. This makes the bureaucracy in Jayapura City slow, because there is no effective communication between superiors and subordinates." (I-5)

The quality of superior-subordinate relations depends heavily on the middle tier of leadership, as I-4 explained:

"A great deal depends on the competence of the middle leader in an agency, the secretary or head of division at the echelon III level, because the middle leader mediates between the top leader and the staff. When the middle leader can both lead the staff and serve as an extension of the top leader, the relationship

between leadership and subordinates works well." (I-4)

A relatively professional superior-subordinate relationship is an institutional asset for Jayapura City, fostering psychological safety, a condition in which civil servants can convey data, risks, or policy alternatives without fear of being perceived as disloyal. In a healthy bureaucracy, technical disagreements do not equate to insubordination, and superiors' ability to distinguish professional criticism from disciplinary action improves decision-making quality.

Finally, individual factors suggest that most informants believe loyalty should not shift with leadership changes, while also acknowledging that security, promotion opportunities, and job uncertainty shape motivation and behavior. I-7 states the mediating role of career security directly:

"Yes, job security can affect civil servants' loyalty. Those who feel their careers are managed fairly, objectively, and based on the merit system tend to show stronger motivation, commitment, and loyalty toward the organization. Conversely, when uncertainty arises, or when a position is perceived to be shaped by nonprofessional factors, motivation and loyalty can decline." (I-7)

Based on this information, informants believe competence and performance protect their careers, giving them more room to maintain professional judgment; when institutional guarantees are weak, personal closeness becomes a rational choice even when it harms the organization as a whole. Therefore, an official's integrity requires a protective institutional environment.

These four groups of factors do not operate in isolation. Politics creates pressure or opportunities; meritocracy determines whether these pressures shape personnel decisions; culture and leadership translate these pressures into work norms; and individuals respond based on ethics, experience, and career-security calculations. This interaction helps explain why civil servants within the same organization can exhibit different loyalty orientations.

The relationship between these factors is cyclical. Non-transparent hiring decisions reinforce perceptions of nepotism; these perceptions encourage proximity-seeking behavior; these behaviors normalize a personalistic culture and justify subsequent decisions. The reverse cycle is also possible: consistent merit-based decisions build trust, trust

encourages investment in competencies, and increased competencies lead to performance that strengthens the legitimacy of the merit system. Change strategies need to break the first cycle while building the second.

The weight of each factor shifts over time. In the initial phase of a leadership transition, political factors, communication, and career security tend to dominate. Once the government structure stabilizes, performance management, organizational culture, and competency development become more important. Therefore, strategies need to adapt to the stages of the transition rather than implementing uniform interventions across the entire government.

After the contestation ends, the bureaucracy must translate the legitimate political mandate of regional heads without falling into partisan loyalties. Law Number 20 of 2023 concerning the Civil Service also emphasizes professionalism and a merit system as the foundation of civil service management. However, interpretations of civil service during the transition period suggest that promotions, transfers, rotations, and the appointment of temporary officials can be understood as organizational decisions. At the same time, this implementation can signal where power lies and what underpins career security.

In other words, post-election patronage describes the exchange of support and resources between patrons and clients, where broad discretion, closed processes, and weak oversight increase the risk of personalization of personnel decisions (Johnston, 1979; McCourt, 2013). This aligns with Blunt et al.'s (2012) observation that patronage remains a hallmark of post-New Order governance in Indonesia. Civil servant loyalty is shaped through the mechanism of career uncertainty. Beyond fostering anticipatory compliance, this type of monoloyalty requires civil servants to adapt their behavior to the leader's expectations.

The dynamics of civil servant loyalty after regional elections tend to be determined by their attitudes and actions before the elections. Civil servants, especially those in strategic positions, often face symbolic violence because they implicitly harbor certain dispositions toward prospective regional leaders. This research finds that those loyal to elected candidates tend to obtain important government positions. According to Rakhmawanto (2020), bureaucratic politicization often occurs in practice because of weak monitoring of policy implementation, weak sanctions, minimal socialization, and inadequate civil servant development. However, this form of bureaucratic politicization does not spread to all civil servants. Instead, promotions to certain positions are limited to echelons II, III, and IV.

Furthermore, these appointments are temporary and do not require the rigorous selection process required for permanent leaders.

The determinants in this study reveal that civil servants' loyalty is formed from monoloyalty, where commitment is directed toward personal obedience to leaders. On the other hand, this emotional attachment serves as a safeguard for the profession and a sense of career sustainability. Conversely, commitment to comply with the rules and regulations binding civil servants tends to be weak. Interview results indicate that some civil servants still hold certain positions despite lacking the competence for those positions. Although temporary, these positions can, in the long term, create a negative stigma among civil servants. This aligns with Sadikin (2025), who explained that the main causes of civil servants' monoloyalty to figures are limited vertical career opportunities due to echelonization policies, minimal formal and informal rewards, and an imbalance in workload without equal compensation. Indiahono et al. (2022) emphasized that monoloyalty to superiors or regional heads blurs the boundaries between loyalty to leaders as government officials and political leaders, which often forms before elections. Thus, a strengthening strategy is needed to shift civil servants' monoloyalty toward multiloyalty, grounded in regulatory values, an organizational merit system, and fair management of moral compensation.

A merit-based appraisal system can build impersonal trust while bridging distributive and procedural justice. As Cho and Sai (2013) argue, distributive, procedural, and informational justice are related to clear career development while suppressing narrow loyalty to specific figures or political exposure during transitions.

Based on the determinants of civil servants' loyalty after the regional elections, bureaucratic politicization tends to occur. Although informants do not explicitly acknowledge it, their views point to political dynamics reflected in transfers, rotations, and promotions. Bureaucratic politicization does not occur only before the general election. Several studies show that this bureaucratic politicization often occurs during the campaign phase, when department heads maintain loyalty to their superiors to avoid post-election effects (Lubis, 2022; Muksalmina et al., 2024; Muttaqin et al., 2021). During this phase, civil servants are most vulnerable, especially those under the local government, as they are directly exposed to the situation. Therefore, after the regional elections, civil servants may face retribution for their actions in the previous period.

Therefore, after the regional elections, efforts to build civil servants' loyalty can

pursue several strategies, particularly multi-loyalty, which emphasizes meritocracy as an institutional filter. Legitimate political directives are translated into targets and policies, while personnel decisions are filtered through competence, performance, integrity, and organizational needs. The six pillars below translate these objectives into institutional action, linking the patterns emerging from the interviews with the strategic arguments developed above. Each pillar is a proposal derived from the factors shaping loyalty and from the depersonalization proposition in Jayapura City. The strategic goal is a shift from personal-political monoloyalty to professional-institutional multiloyalty. In his writing, Redman (2005) argues that multi-loyalty allows individuals within an organization to be loyal to both internal and external stakeholders. In this context, multi-loyalty is built on personal, social, and professional responsibility, as well as public accountability. This shift places such loyalty within a formal framework bound by law, work ethics, organizational goals, and the public interest.

Transparent and Auditable Performance Appraisal

The first pillar ensures that the appointment of temporary officials is based on competency standards and organizational needs. Every strategic decision must include written criteria, assessment records, clear rationales, and a secure objection mechanism. Talent management and competency mapping must underpin decision-making. This aligns with Government Regulation No. 11 of 2017, later amended by Government Regulation No. 17 of 2020 concerning Civil Servant Management, which emphasizes that civil servants' career paths are regulated based on competency and work performance.

In this sense, this pillar aims to break patronage. In this sense, meritocracy is an institutional mechanism for eliminating personal loyalty, and its function goes beyond traditional human resource techniques. Beyond strengthening strategy, meritocracy helps identify positions most vulnerable to discretion, particularly strategic roles and those frequently filled by temporary officials. For these positions, the Jayapura City government can publish competency requirements, document the assessment panel, and record the rationale behind each decision. This step creates an audit trail that enables oversight without diminishing personnel officials' authority, while also providing a basis for talent management. Turner et al. (2022) argue that Indonesian bureaucratic reform has made progress in accountability. However, the current system is hampered by status quo interests, and covert politicization persists even after elections.

Career Protection with Monitoring Procedures

Career protection prevents civil servants from feeling forced to change allegiances whenever regional heads change. This includes ensuring tenure in accordance with regulations and strengthening oversight of decisions involving conflicts of interest. Compliance with regulations and an adequate oversight system help ensure position changes follow professional standards. Career protection should extend to both officials and non-official staff. For officials, the focus is on the evaluation process and the basis for dismissal or transfer. For other civil servants, the focus is on equal access to competency development, assignments, and promotions.

Furthermore, within the oversight system, complaint mechanisms must be non-confrontational and time-limited. Research shows that despite a meritocratic system, political proximity in the regions remains far more influential in appointing strategic positions. This aligns with findings by Maysura (2025) and Maisarah & Buana (2025), which explain that civil servants often hesitate to use complaint channels because of career threats. Therefore, complaint channels need to maintain confidentiality, protect complainants from retaliation, and provide clear feedback. The collected complaint data can then serve as a diagnostic tool to identify problematic units or stages of civil service management.

Ethics and Neutrality Training

Ethics training will not be effective if it is only conducted in the lead-up to elections. It should encompass the pre-election, election, and post-election phases, with material that differentiates support for government programs from partisan support for individuals. Case studies of dilemmas should serve as a learning platform. This way, civil servants can reject unlawful instructions without violating official discipline.

The informant's statement that this training has not reached everyone equally indicates a coverage gap. This suggests that leadership-level outreach does not automatically reach staff in every local government agency. Therefore, local governments need to record the content, frequency, and follow-up of this training by work unit and incorporate ethical dilemmas into regular forums.

Transition Leadership and Organizational Communication

Regional heads and heads of local government institutions need to explicitly state that a change in leadership means a shift in

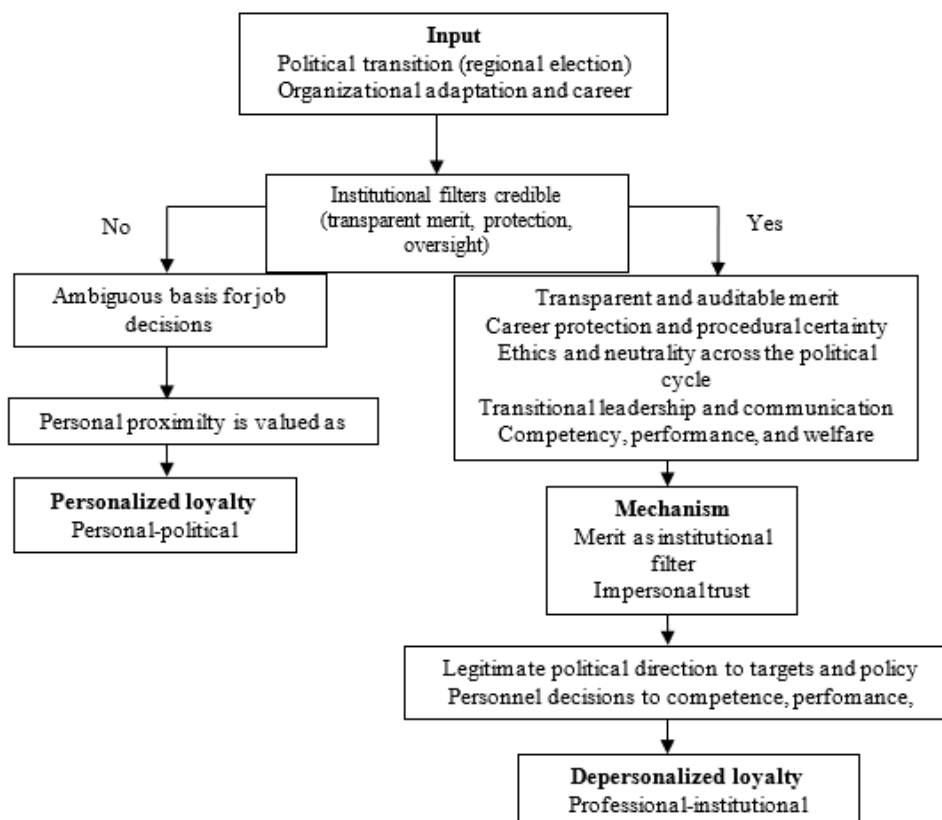


Figure 1. Institutional flow diagram linking political transition, the six interventions, the merit filter, and the two possible outcomes for civil servant loyalty.

policy priorities. Early in their term, cross-agency communication about vision, targets, performance standards, and assurance that evaluations are based on performance are crucial. Open transitional leadership reduces rumors, anxiety, and the habit of interpreting political directives informally.

Research shows that leadership during transitions continues to build an open culture and a focus on serving the public. This strength of transparent leadership must be maintained through two-way communication. Beyond conveying the agenda, leaders give civil servants space to explain organizational capacity, implementation risks, and the consequences for the budget and public services (Mattayang, 2019; Suryanto et al., 2024). This exchange helps leaders politically and administratively. Politically, regional leaders can reduce information distortion and narrow the communication gap with subordinates.

Meanwhile, administratively, leaders can build civil servant loyalty to achieve a shared vision of public service. When regional heads and agency heads avoid divisive language based on past political support, they build an inclusive government identity. Transitional leadership also requires direct

rumor management. Organizational restructuring should be communicated through official channels on a clear schedule, as speculation quickly fills information gaps about who is close to key positions and who will be replaced.

Competency Development

Competency development aligned with actual job requirements, meaningful performance evaluations, guidance from superiors, and welfare support strengthen a civil servant's bond with the profession and organization; however, the current work culture is suboptimal, as some civil servants do not fully understand their duties and responsibilities in public service. Consequently, excellent service has not yet become the standard. This aligns with findings from a study by Maisarah & Buana (2025), which found that organizations that demand loyalty without offering equitable development and recognition ultimately produce fragile institutional loyalty.

A prerequisite for developing this competency is establishing a training system for civil servants. Competency development must address the gap between job demands and civil servants' capabilities. These competency development indicators should enable civil

servants to interpret their own work, their agency's goals, and the benefits they provide to the public. Therefore, this strategy is guided by Government Regulation No. 17 of 2020 concerning Civil Servant Management, shifting professional competition pathways away from personal ones.

Public Service Accountability Orientation

Public service is the anchor that unites multiple layers of loyalty. Performance indicators for leaders and civil servants need to link to service quality, complaint resolution, non-discriminatory access, and public satisfaction, so loyalty is measured by contributions to the organization's mandate and outcomes for citizens. Public accountability also extends oversight beyond internal patron-client relationships.

The research results show that after the regional elections, the organization and the assignment of organizational servants within the Jayapura City government changed. These changes initially hampered the service system. Even if short-lived, these changes could undermine efforts to achieve public service accountability. As stipulated in Law No. 20 of 2023 concerning civil servants, civil servants' service preferences must be oriented toward public service interests. However, a state, organization, or professional organization ultimately derives legitimacy from its ability to fulfill the public interest. Every local government institution needs to translate this service orientation into clear standards. Therefore, when employees perceive service quality as influencing career evaluation and development, this public orientation has institutional consequences. Public feedback can strengthen horizontal accountability, provided it is managed alongside verified complaints and professional evaluations.

This model can be summarised as an institutional flow. Political transitions trigger organizational adaptation and uncertainty. When this uncertainty is not filtered through meritocracy, transparency, protection, and oversight, loyalty tends to become personalized. When these personalized filters are credible, loyalty to leadership remains within the official framework and becomes part of a professional-institutional multi-loyalty. The following figure presents this flow, linking the six pillars above as inputs, meritocracy as a filtering mechanism, and two possible outcomes for civil servant loyalty.

CONCLUSION

Based on this study's results, changes in regional heads prompt adjustments in visions, programs, communication patterns,

and leadership styles in Jayapura City. However, in strategic positions, the rotation system, promotions, and temporary positions create uncertainty that activates career calculations. Civil servant loyalty moves on a continuum between personal-political loyalty and professional-institutional loyalty. The results show that procedural uncertainty and the perception that closeness influences careers reinforce monoloyalty. In other words, career security bridges political pressure and aligned professional considerations before and after regional elections. Even in certain temporary positions, patronage-based loyalty must shift to multi-loyalty, where civil servants are selected based on competence, performance, and institutional procedures oriented toward public service. This aligns with the merit system, which emphasizes placing civil servants in positions based on their competencies and expertise.

The regional head elections test the resilience of public bureaucratic institutions in Jayapura City. Although assessments often rely on the completeness of management instruments, this research argues that civil servants' trust in the fairness of the career system determines loyalty, especially multi-loyalty. This also implies the need for a strategy to measure the success of bureaucratic reform in the region. Therefore, measures of bureaucratic resilience during political transitions should reflect perceptions of procedural justice. The dynamics of civil servant loyalty in this study relate to political configurations and may differ across regions, and future research can explore them further.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI USAGE IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the drafting of this manuscript, the author(s) used Claude AI to refine sentence structure and check grammar. Following the use of this tool, the author(s) reviewed and revised the content as necessary and accept full responsibility for the final content of the article.

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