

Opportunities and Challenges of Affirmation Policy in Civil Servant Candidate Selection (CPNS) in Indonesia

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Abstract

The inequality and inequity that still exist in access to employment opportunities is one of the reasons for the importance of implementing affirmative action policies. This policy aims to increase the participation of marginalised groups, including women, people with disabilities, and people from remote areas. The opportunities offered by this policy include increasing diversity in the bureaucracy and strengthening social representation. However, significant challenges also arise, such as the potential stigmatisation of candidates admitted through this route, as well as the risk of lowering quality standards if not matched by a rigorous selection mechanism. This article discusses the opportunities and challenges of implementing affirmative action policies in the selection of Civil Servant Candidates (CPNS) in Indonesia by exploring how affirmative action policies can be effectively implemented to achieve the goals of social justice and improved quality of public services in Indonesia. The results show that in its implementation, the affirmative action policy opens up opportunities for equity and equality of opportunity for groups that have not been represented or marginalised in CPNS selection, increasing community motivation and participation. However, challenges also accompany the implementation of this policy such as inconsistent implementers and the stigma of discrimination. Hopefully, these findings can provide insights for policymakers and stakeholders in designing more inclusive and sustainable strategies.

Keywords. Opportunities and Challenges, Affirmative Policy, CPNS

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the mandate of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, every citizen has the right to a decent job and livelihood. This mandate emphasises that the state has the responsibility and obligation to improve the welfare of the people. (Nasution & Yuniasih, 2022). The affirmation policy implemented by the Indonesian government in the selection of Civil Servant Candidates (CPNS) is an effort to create equality and justice in access to public bureaucratic positions. The affirmation policy aims to provide wider opportunities to groups of people who have been marginalised such as women, people with disabilities and those from disadvantaged areas. (Supriadi, 2020). Although it has a good goal of seeking equity and equality, in its implementation, various opportunities and challenges arise. Opportunities that may be presented by this policy can be seen from the point of view of increasing social representation in the bureaucracy, which is expected to create responsive and inclusive public services. (Dharmanto & Nalle, 2022). In addition, this policy also has the potential to encourage active participation from various levels of society in the implementation of development, because the bureaucracy functions as the front line in providing services to the community. (Amin, 2018). The background of positive discrimination stems from various long-standing problems of social and economic injustice. There are several things behind the emergence of this affirmation policy, namely:

1. **History of Oppression:** Many groups, such as racial minorities, women, or people with disabilities, have experienced systemic discrimination, marginalisation, and oppression. Positive discrimination aims to redress the harms caused by this history.
2. **Economic Inequality:** Many marginalised groups often have limited access to education, employment and other economic resources. This policy is expected to help improve economic opportunities for them.
3. **Diversity:** In educational and workplace contexts, diversity is considered essential for creating an inclusive and productive environment. Positive discrimination helps to increase the representation of underrepresented groups.
4. **Social Awareness:** As awareness of human rights and social justice issues increased, many countries began to implement policies that supported marginalised groups to achieve equality.

5. Legal and Policy Influences: Some countries have laws that support positive discrimination, such as the Civil Rights Act in the United States, which encourages affirmative action in education and employment.

However, in addition to opportunities, there will also be challenges that cannot be ignored. (Hidayatullah et al., 2024; Latuconsina, 2014). A selection process that is not fully objective and the potential for discrimination in its implementation will have an impact on dissatisfaction among prospective participants. In addition, the effectiveness and transparency of the implementation of this affirmation policy is also still being debated by various parties. (Dewi & Setiawan, 2021). The affirmation policy in CPNS selection must be implemented optimally because it considers aspects of justice and equality. (Rahman, 2023). Several studies have been conducted to evaluate the impact of affirmative action policies in CPNS selection. Analyses of several regions that have implemented this policy show that although there is an increase in participation, there are still issues of reverse discrimination that need to be addressed. (Budi, 2023). This paper aims to illustrate that the implementation of affirmative action policies must be accompanied by good education and socialisation so that people understand its purpose and benefits.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Affirmative action is a strategy implemented to provide special opportunities for marginalised groups in society. The aim of this policy is to achieve social justice and equality of opportunity. In its implementation, the affirmation policy does not only focus on providing access, but also on efforts to empower these groups to be able to compete equally with everyone in various sectors, one of which is in CPNS selection. (Malihah, 2020). Affirmation policies in Indonesia are closely related to efforts to achieve social justice and overcome inequality that has existed in society. This policy began to develop in Indonesia after the reformation in 1998. During this period, there was an awareness of the need for equal opportunities for all levels of society, especially marginalised groups, such as women, people with disabilities and indigenous peoples. Reform is considered to have opened up opportunities for public participation and pluralism in various fields of life, including the government sector. (Sayuti, 2013). One of the first steps in implementing affirmation policies in Indonesia was the passing of Law No. 39/1999 on Human Rights, which emphasised the importance of protecting the rights of marginalised groups. In

addition, Law No. 12 of 2003 on National Education and Law No. 8 of 2016 on persons with disabilities also cover several aspects of affirmation in accessibility and education. (Oktaviani & Megawati, 2021).

In human resource management, affirmation policies are certainly needed to realise equitable recruitment and selection and minimise inequality in employment opportunities. The affirmation policy itself was officially introduced in the 2018 CPNS selection. In this policy, the government provides a special quota for prospective employees from certain previously marginalised groups such as women and people with disabilities. This aims to increase the participation of these groups in the public bureaucracy. From 2020 to 2024 there has been a continuous evaluation and renewal of the affirmative action policy in CPNS selection. Affirmative action is a policy designed to increase opportunities for *historically* disadvantaged groups, such as racial minorities and women, in education, employment, and access to other resources. (Yuliantri & Elmas, 2021). Affirmative action encompasses a range of policies and practices that aim to redress injustices experienced by particular groups through the recognition and fulfilment of their rights. By emphasising the importance of ensuring fair representation in social and economic institutions, affirmative action can be seen as a way to improve the quality of life for certain groups. (Jenkins, 2002). Affirmative action policies can be seen as a way to achieve social justice by providing equal opportunities for all individuals, especially for those who were previously marginalised. This view emphasises that equality of opportunity is key to building a just society. Affirmative action is also a response to systemic structures that create injustice for racial minorities. Bell argues that to change patterns of inequality, active measures that support diversity and inclusion are needed. Affirmative action can also be interpreted as an attempt to create equality of opportunity and outcome, and to redress the effects of long-standing discrimination. (Hardiman & Michele, 2002).

Affirmative action policy is often a controversial and debated topic, especially in relation to its social and ethical implications. *Affirmative action* is in principle a discriminatory policy, but is seen as positive discrimination because it is only temporary in order to provide equal opportunities for groups that have been excluded. Affirmation is seen as a positive step to end negative discrimination and create new opportunities that were previously unavailable to marginalised groups. Expanding opportunities for ethnic minorities to increase employee diversity in the workplace. The main objective of affirmation is

diversification, in the world of work the diversity of the workforce includes race, ethnicity, class, religion and physical condition. Affirmation policies achieve a balance between affirmation policies and meritocratic principles. This is a major concern among academics and policymakers. According to research by Fadli, (2024) upholding the principle of meritocracy remains important to ensure that elected candidates truly fulfil the competency criteria needed to carry out public tasks. Therefore, there is a need for continuous evaluation of the implementation of affirmation policies to ensure their effectiveness. One of the important debates in affirmation policy is the balance between the principles of affirmation and meritocracy. This is important, as it emphasises the importance of maintaining quality and competence in the selection of CPNS. Without continuous evaluation, the affirmation policy may lead to a situation where the selected employees do not meet the expected standards, which in turn may affect the effectiveness of public services. Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation mechanism is needed to ensure that the affirmation policy goes hand in hand with the principle of meritocracy. Adjustments in the selection process and training for policy beneficiaries can be a solution to overcome this challenge.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative approach by utilising secondary data as the main source. The secondary data collected consists of various affirmation policy documents, laws and regulations, academic journals, as well as literature relevant to the topic of affirmation policies. This research focuses on the evaluation of affirmative action policies implemented to increase the participation of marginalised groups, such as women, people with disabilities, and people from remote areas, in the CPNS recruitment process.

This qualitative research method allowed the researcher to understand the various dimensions of the affirmation policy, including the opportunities and challenges that arose during the implementation process. We used policy analysis and a comprehensive literature review to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy in achieving the goals of social justice and more inclusive representation in the public bureaucracy. Through this approach, the researcher was able to explore the perceptions of the public and CPNS candidates towards affirmative action policies, including the potential stigma faced by candidates admitted through affirmative action. In addition, this research also analyses the challenges associated with the implementation of affirmative action policies, such as the risk of lowering quality

standards if the selection mechanism is not matched by strict procedures, as well as concerns about the emergence of reverse discrimination among disadvantaged majority groups.

In an effort to achieve more holistic results, this research also highlights the importance of continuous evaluation of affirmative action policies, to ensure that the principles of fairness and meritocracy are maintained. The researcher analyses how these policies are implemented in several regions in Indonesia, highlighting the various regulations underlying their implementation, including Law No. 8/2016 on Persons with Disabilities and other regulations that provide wider protection and accessibility for marginalised groups. The approach used in this research aims not only to identify the impact of the affirmation policy, but also to propose improvement strategies that can be adopted by the government in order to improve the quality of implementation of this policy in the future.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The affirmative action policy in the selection of Civil Servant Candidates (CPNS) in Indonesia aims to increase the participation of certain groups that are considered marginalised or underrepresented, such as women, people with disabilities, and people from remote areas. Here are some important points about this policy:

1. The main objective of affirmative action is to create social justice by giving more opportunities to historically disadvantaged groups, so that they can contribute to public services.
2. There are quotas and special assessments in the CPNS selection process, where the government can set special quotas for certain groups, such as giving additional weight or special assessments for applicants from remote areas or people with disabilities.
3. The affirmative action policy is also expected to increase diversity, by implementing this policy, it is expected that there will be an increase in diversity in the ranks of civil servants, which will reflect the various backgrounds of Indonesian society.
4. Training and development programmes for prospective employees from marginalised groups could also be part of this policy, so that they are better prepared for their duties and responsibilities as civil servants.

5. While these policies are well-intentioned, challenges often arise, such as the stigmatisation of individuals admitted through affirmative action channels, as well as the risk that a focus on quotas may overlook quality aspects of selection.
6. It is important for the government to continuously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy, ensuring that the goals of equity and diversity are achieved without compromising quality standards.

The affirmative action policy in CPNS selection in Indonesia seeks to create a more inclusive and representative bureaucracy, but requires serious attention in its application in order to achieve optimal results. In the selection of Civil Servant Candidates (CPNS) in Indonesia, there are several special formations or affirmation paths that aim to provide opportunities to certain groups. Some examples of existing affirmation pathways in CPNS selection include, Special formations for Persons with Disabilities, every year, the government provides a special quota for persons with disabilities. This aims to ensure that they have better access to becoming civil servants, Regional Sons and Daughters, some regions apply affirmation policies to give priority to candidates who come from the region. This aims to increase local representation in government and help regional development, Special formations for Ex-Officials, the government provides opportunities for ex-officials who have worked in government agencies to take part in the CPNS selection with certain formations. This aims to reward their work experience and dedication, Apprenticeship or Training programmes, some government agencies also open affirmation pathways through apprenticeship or training programmes for CPNS candidates from certain backgrounds, especially to improve their skills before taking part in the selection, and Special pathways for graduates with good grades, some ministries or agencies open special pathways for graduates of accredited universities with good grades, to support the improvement of the quality of civil servants.

1. Opportunities to Implement Affirmative Action Policy for CPNS Selection

- a. The affirmation policy in CPNS selection offers various significant opportunities. First, this policy has the potential to increase the representation of marginalised groups in the bureaucracy. Greater involvement of women, people with disabilities, and indigenous people can create public services that are more responsive to community needs. In addition, with certain quotas, as stipulated in the Minister of Administrative Reform and Bureaucratic Reform Regulation, access to strategic

positions in government becomes more inclusive. Policy Concepts and Principles of *Affirmative Action*. Affirmation is a policy designed to provide greater opportunities to marginalised groups, whether in education, employment, or government institutions. According to Smith (2016), this policy aims to create social balance by reducing historical injustices experienced by certain groups. In Indonesia, this policy is expected to increase the representation of minority groups in government structures. *Affirmative Action* is a policy designed to increase access and opportunities for marginalised or underrepresented groups, such as certain races, ethnicities, or genders, in areas such as education, employment, and government contracts. The main goal of affirmative action is to address historical injustices and systemic discrimination, and to create a more inclusive environment. In practice in many countries, including the United States, this policy is often applied in university admissions, employee recruitment, and government contracts. For example, some universities consider the racial or ethnic background of prospective students as one of the factors in the selection process. CPNS formation for persons with disabilities is an effort to implement Law No. 8/2016 on persons with disabilities. This effort aims to change people's perception of people with disabilities, where people with disabilities also have the same rights and dignity as citizens in general, including in terms of accessing and obtaining decent work. (Mughtar et al., 2020).

- b. This policy can increase public motivation and participation in the CPNS selection process. When prospective employees feel that they have equal opportunities, this can reduce feelings of injustice and increase public trust in government institutions (Dewi & Setiawan, 2021). Affirmative action is often a controversial topic of debate. Proponents argue that it is important for creating equality and redressing injustice, while opponents argue that it can lead to reverse discrimination, where individuals from the majority group may be disadvantaged in the selection process. Affirmation often considered as positive discrimination in Human Resource Management (HRM) refers to policies or practices that give special advantages or treatment to marginalised or underrepresented individuals or groups in an organisation. The goal of positive discrimination is to address historical inequities and create more equal opportunities for all individuals, especially in terms of

recruitment, promotion, and training. The characteristics of positive discrimination are priority of acceptance: giving priority to certain groups, such as women, ethnic minorities, or people with disabilities, in the employee selection process, the existence of special training programmes (Mubarak et al., 2023; Putri & Sukerti, 2020). Provide training or career development aimed specifically at underrepresented groups to help them reach higher positions. In addition, this policy has quota targets, or specific targets for the number of employees from certain groups in the organisation. Proactive Recruitment Policy: Developing an active recruitment strategy to attract applicants from underrepresented groups. The benefits of positive discrimination are that it increases diversity in the workplace, which can lead to a wider range of perspectives and ideas. Reduces existing inequalities due to historical discrimination. Improved Performance: Various studies have shown that diverse organisations often perform better.

Positive discrimination is an important step in creating a more inclusive and equitable workplace, but it must be applied carefully to ensure a balance between fairness and quality. (Bayani, 2022). The aim is to address historical inequities and create equality of opportunity. This discrimination can be found in University admissions, some educational institutions may provide quotas or extra points for students from minority or disadvantaged backgrounds and disabilities. Job recruitment, some companies may prioritise candidates from marginalised groups in the recruitment process to achieve better diversity. Providing specialised training or scholarships for individuals from disadvantaged groups. Positive discrimination often has its pros and cons. Those in favour will argue that it is important to create social justice, while opponents argue that it can lead to injustice for individuals who do not belong to such groups.

2. Challenges in Implementing Affirmation Policy in CPNS Selection

- a. One of the main issues is the potential for discrimination in the selection process. Although formation quotas are set, there is often uncertainty and lack of clarity in the assessment criteria, which can raise doubts about the objectivity and transparency of the selection. This dissatisfaction can lead to a crisis of confidence among potential participants and the general public. Although for some participants, CPNS selection is considered difficult because it applies a passing grade system, the positive side is that qualified human resources are netted as candidates for the

state civil apparatus.(Sinaga, 2019). The quality of human resources and supporting facilities and infrastructure is also often one of the constraining factors in its implementation.(Kogoya et al., 2023).

- b. In addition, another challenge is the risk of stigmatisation towards the beneficiaries of affirmation policies. Where the acceptance of quotas can lead to the assumption that individuals are selected not because of their abilities, but solely because of the policy. This can have an impact on the motivation and performance of employees selected through the policy. This is in line with research by Bahriah et al., (2022) who said that an employee's work motivation will affect performance. Positive Discrimination Challenge: the term reverse discrimination exists, where there is an assumption that positive discrimination can be detrimental to individuals from the majority group, who may feel overlooked despite being qualified. Negative stigma against employees hired through positive discrimination policies may be stigmatised or perceived as incapable by their peers. Mixed opinions may also potentially occur, especially the different perceptions of test takers who passed and those who did not. Some will undoubtedly express satisfaction with the system, its transparency and fairness, but the opposite opinion will probably exist from those who failed the test. (Syam & Bahfiarti, 2016).

Another major challenge is whether or not a balance between affirmative action policies and meritocratic principles can be achieved. This is a major concern among academics and policy makers. Because the affirmation policy actually wants equality in the fulfilment of human rights. (Razak, 2023). The enforcement of the meritocracy principle remains important to ensure that those elected actually fulfil the competency criteria needed to carry out public duties (Kusumadewi et al., 2015). (Kusumadewi et al., 2022). Therefore, continuous evaluation of the implementation of the affirmation policy is needed to ensure its effectiveness. Meritocracy is a principle where individual positions and rewards are based on abilities, skills and achievements, not based on social factors and relationships between individuals (Sabani et al., 2022). (Sabani et al., 2024). Assessments in meritocracy are carried out fairly and objectively so that each individual has an equal opportunity to succeed. (Utama, 2016). However, in its implementation, meritocracy is often criticised for potentially causing injustice, while affirmation which aims to create justice and equality must also continue to prioritise candidates who have the potential and ability to produce

quality human resources. It is undeniable that fixing bureaucratic problems is closely related to the personnel or human resources themselves.

CONCLUSION

Affirmation policy in CPNS selection in Indonesia is intended for groups or groups that have been marginalised in terms of gaining access and employment opportunities such as people with disabilities, sons and daughters from certain regions. However, affirmation policies also provide opportunities for the best graduates and internship programmes. Although it provides a significant opportunity to create a more inclusive bureaucracy. However, there are also challenges in its implementation, such as discrimination and stigma that must be taken seriously and evaluated continuously. By maintaining a balance between affirmation and meritocracy, it is hoped that this policy can contribute to improving the quality of public services and public trust in government.

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