



## The Principle of Professionalism of the State Civil Apparatus in Public Service

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### ABSTRACT

The professionalism of the State Civil Apparatus (Aparatur Sipil Negara/ASN) constitutes a fundamental principle in the implementation of public services that prioritize societal interests. ASN are not merely responsible for executing government policies, but also serve as the frontline actors in delivering public services that are effective, efficient, transparent, and equitable. This article aims to examine the principle of ASN professionalism in public service delivery in Indonesia, as well as the factors influencing it within the framework of bureaucratic reform and increasingly complex public demands. The research employs a qualitative approach using a literature review method, analyzing national scientific journals, statutory regulations, and other relevant literature related to ASN professionalism and public service. The findings indicate that ASN professionalism is not an isolated concept, but is shaped by several key factors, including human resource competence, ethical conduct and integrity of civil servants, the utilization of information technology in public services, and the implementation of a merit-based system in ASN management. Adequate competence enables civil servants to perform their duties optimally, while service ethics play a crucial role in fostering public trust. Furthermore, the adoption of digital technology has proven effective in enhancing service efficiency and transparency, whereas the merit system promotes objectivity and fairness in career development. The implications of this study highlight the necessity of continuously strengthening ASN professionalism through capacity building, ethical development, and adaptive bureaucratic reforms in response to contemporary challenges. Therefore, ASN professionalism serves as a vital foundation for achieving high-quality public services oriented toward public satisfaction.

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### INTRODUCTION

Public service delivery constitutes one of the primary indicators of governmental effectiveness within a modern constitutional state. The quality of public services reflects the state's capacity to meet citizens' fundamental needs in a manner that is equitable, efficient, and sustainable. In the Indonesian context, public service is not merely viewed as an administrative obligation of the government, but also as a concrete embodiment of the welfare state principle, which places public interest at the core of governance (Dwiyanto, 2021). Consequently, the role of the State Civil Apparatus (Aparatur Sipil Negara/ASN) as the main executor of public services becomes highly strategic in achieving national objectives.

The State Civil Apparatus functions as both a servant of the state and a servant of society, bearing responsibility for implementing public policies and delivering services with professionalism and integrity. Law Number 5 of 2014 on the State Civil Apparatus explicitly mandates that ASN uphold fundamental values, adhere to codes of ethics, and apply the principle of professionalism in carrying out their duties. This principle requires civil servants to possess appropriate competence, qualifications, and performance aligned with their positions, while acting objectively and responsibly (Juliani, 2019). Accordingly, ASN professionalism serves as a crucial prerequisite for the realization of high-quality public services.

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Nevertheless, in practice, public service provision in Indonesia continues to face various structural and cultural challenges. Numerous studies indicate that insufficient professionalism among ASN remains a significant barrier to the optimization of public services. Issues such as slow service processes, low responsiveness, limited transparency, and the persistence of unethical behavior in service delivery demonstrate that the principle of professionalism has not yet been fully internalized within the governmental bureaucracy (Hamirul et al., 2018). These conditions have contributed to declining public trust in government institutions.

ASN professionalism is closely linked to the competence of human resources. Competence encompasses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to perform tasks effectively. Professional civil servants are expected not only to master technical aspects of their work but also to possess managerial capabilities, public communication skills, and a sound understanding of public service values (Fahlevi, 2024). In the absence of adequate competence, public service delivery tends to become procedural in nature and fails to adequately respond to the increasingly dynamic and diverse needs of society.

Beyond competence, ethics and integrity represent essential components in the development of ASN professionalism. Public service ethics demand that civil servants act honestly, fairly, and without discrimination, while refraining from any abuse of authority. Weak internalization of ethical values within the bureaucracy may give rise to maladministration and corrupt practices in public service delivery. Therefore, ASN professionalism must be grounded in strong moral and ethical foundations to ensure that public services genuinely prioritize the interests of the community.

Advancements in information technology also present both challenges and opportunities for public service delivery. Digital transformation has encouraged a shift in bureaucratic work patterns toward faster, more transparent, and accountable services. The implementation of e-government and digital-based services requires ASN to possess adequate technological literacy and adaptability to changing work systems (Apriani & Ramadhany, 2025). In this context, professionalism is no longer measured solely by compliance with administrative procedures, but also by the ability to utilize technology to enhance the quality of public services.

Furthermore, the adoption of a merit-based system in ASN management serves as an important instrument in fostering bureaucratic professionalism. The merit system emphasizes objectivity, competence, and performance in recruitment, promotion, and career development processes. Research by Sefullah et al. (2020) demonstrates that consistent implementation of the merit system contributes to increased ASN professionalism while simultaneously reducing nepotism and bureaucratic politicization. A well-functioning merit system provides incentives for civil servants to continuously improve their competence and performance.

Despite the government's ongoing bureaucratic reform initiatives, the implementation of the professionalism principle within public service delivery still encounters complex challenges. These challenges include resistance within organizational culture, limitations in human resource capacity, and discrepancies between policy frameworks and practical implementation (Podungge & Aneta, 2020). Consequently, a comprehensive examination is necessary to understand how ASN professionalism is applied in public services and to identify the factors influencing its effectiveness.

Based on this background, this article aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the principle of professionalism among the State Civil Apparatus in public service delivery in Indonesia. The discussion focuses on four main aspects: the conceptual framework of ASN professionalism, the role of competence in public service delivery, the significance of ethics and work culture among civil servants, and the influence of the merit system and digital transformation on ASN professionalism. Through a qualitative literature-based approach, this study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of public service policies and ASN management in Indonesia.

By comprehensively understanding the principle of ASN professionalism, it is anticipated that future public service delivery can be conducted more optimally, oriented toward public satisfaction, and aligned with the principles of good governance. ASN professionalism is not merely a normative requirement, but a strategic necessity for realizing effective, democratic, and equitable governance.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach using a library research method. The qualitative approach is selected because the purpose of this research is to explore and critically analyze the concepts, principles, and implementation of professionalism among the State Civil Apparatus (Aparatur Sipil Negara/ASN) in public service delivery, rather than to quantitatively measure relationships between variables. This approach allows for an in-depth conceptual and normative examination of ASN professionalism based on theoretical perspectives and findings from previous studies (Creswell, 2017).

The research adopts a descriptive-analytical design, which aims to systematically describe the principle of ASN professionalism in public services while simultaneously analyzing the factors influencing its implementation. The analysis focuses on key aspects such as the concept of ASN professionalism, civil

servant competence, public service ethics, the application of the merit-based system, and the role of digital transformation in enhancing the quality of public services.

The data used in this study consist of secondary data obtained through an extensive review of relevant literature. These secondary sources include peer-reviewed national academic journals, scholarly textbooks, statutory regulations, and policy documents related to the State Civil Apparatus and public service administration. National journals are utilized as primary sources to ensure the validity of the data and its relevance to the Indonesian bureaucratic and public administration context.

Data collection is conducted through documentation study by identifying, categorizing, and reviewing literature directly related to the research topic. The selected sources are filtered based on thematic relevance, publication recency, and their contribution to discussions on ASN professionalism in public service delivery. The collected data are then systematically organized to facilitate the analytical process.

Data analysis is carried out using content analysis techniques. This method is applied to interpret and construct meaning from written sources by identifying central themes associated with the principle of ASN professionalism. The analytical process involves data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Relevant information is first selected and condensed, then presented in a structured analytical narrative aligned with the research focus.

To ensure data credibility, this study applies source triangulation by comparing and examining literature from various authors and academic publications. This approach is intended to achieve a more objective and comprehensive understanding of ASN professionalism in public services and its implications for improving the quality of public service delivery in Indonesia.

## DISCUSSION

### The Concept and Principle of Professionalism of the State Civil Apparatus

The professionalism of the State Civil Apparatus (Aparatur Sipil Negara/ASN) represents a fundamental concept in the delivery of high-quality public services. Professionalism is not solely interpreted as the technical ability of civil servants to perform administrative tasks, but also encompasses their attitudes, conduct, and moral commitment in fulfilling their role as public service providers. Professional civil servants are expected to operate in accordance with established competency standards, codes of ethics, and applicable legal regulations, while prioritizing public interests over personal or group interests (Mutiarawati, 2024).

From a normative standpoint, the principle of ASN professionalism is firmly grounded within Indonesia's public administration legal framework. Law Number 5 of 2014 on the State Civil Apparatus stipulates that ASN management must be based on principles of professionalism, proportionality, accountability, and neutrality. These principles position ASN as human resources who are required to possess appropriate qualifications, competencies, and performance levels corresponding to their respective positions. Accordingly, professionalism functions as a key instrument to ensure that public services are delivered in an effective, efficient, and equitable manner.

Within the perspective of public administration, ASN professionalism is assessed not only through service outcomes but also through the service delivery process itself. A professional service process is characterized by procedural certainty, timeliness, transparency of information, and fair, non-discriminatory treatment of service users (Dwiyanto, 2021). Public services that focus merely on administrative completion without attention to process quality may lead to public dissatisfaction and erode trust in bureaucratic institutions.

Furthermore, ASN professionalism is closely associated with the principles of good governance. Professional civil servants are expected to apply transparency, accountability, public participation, and the rule of law in every aspect of public service delivery. Low levels of professionalism among civil servants often result in maladministration, such as complicated procedures, poor responsiveness, and limited innovation. This condition demonstrates that professionalism is not merely a normative requirement, but a practical necessity for achieving sound governance practices.

Another essential dimension of ASN professionalism lies in work ethics. Ethical conduct reflects the moral values that guide civil servants in serving the public. Civil servants who uphold strong work ethics are more likely to perform their duties with honesty, responsibility, and integrity, while avoiding abuses of authority. Messe and Pangkey (2020) emphasize that public service ethics constitute a foundational element in the development of ASN professionalism, as technical competence alone is insufficient to produce public services characterized by integrity without ethical grounding.

In addition, ASN professionalism requires a sustained commitment to continuous self-development. The evolving and increasingly complex needs of society demand that civil servants remain adaptive to changes in regulations, technology, and service delivery models. Professional civil servants do not adopt a static approach, but instead proactively enhance their knowledge and skills in order to provide public services that are responsive, relevant, and solution-oriented.

### **Competence as the Foundation of State Civil Apparatus Professionalism**

The competence of the State Civil Apparatus (Aparatur Sipil Negara/ASN) constitutes a fundamental element in fostering professionalism within public service delivery. Competence may be understood as a combination of knowledge, skills, and work-related attitudes that civil servants must possess in order to perform their duties and responsibilities effectively in accordance with established position standards. In the context of public services, ASN competence functions as a critical asset to ensure that services are delivered accurately, efficiently, and in line with the needs and expectations of the community (Komara, 2019).

Conceptually, ASN competence extends beyond technical expertise alone and encompasses managerial as well as socio-cultural competencies. Technical competence relates to mastery of job-specific knowledge, including an understanding of relevant regulations, service procedures, and operational standards. Managerial competence involves the ability to plan, make informed decisions, and manage resources effectively. Meanwhile, socio-cultural competence refers to the capacity of civil servants to communicate effectively, interact constructively, and understand the diverse social and cultural backgrounds of the citizens they serve (Ramadhani, 2025).

The enhancement of ASN competence is closely linked to the professionalism of public service delivery. Civil servants with adequate competence tend to perform their tasks in a systematic, responsive, and problem-solving manner when addressing service-related challenges. Empirical studies indicate that competency development through continuous education and training programs contributes significantly to improved ASN performance and the cultivation of professional attitudes in public service provision. In the absence of strong competence, public services risk becoming routine and procedural, with limited attention to service quality and user satisfaction.

In practice, the demand for higher levels of ASN competence has increased in parallel with the growing complexity of public issues and rapid advancements in information technology. Citizens no longer expect services to be merely fast, but also accurate, transparent, and solution-oriented. This condition requires civil servants to possess analytical abilities, adaptability, and digital skills to effectively manage technology-based public services. Civil servants who lack relevant competencies face the risk of a mismatch between service demands and institutional capacity, which may ultimately undermine the quality of public service delivery.

Furthermore, ASN competence is intrinsically related to the principles of accountability and bureaucratic effectiveness. Competent civil servants are better equipped to justify and be accountable for their service-related actions in a professional manner and in compliance with applicable legal provisions. This view aligns with Dwiyanto's (2021) argument that the quality of public services is strongly influenced by the capacity and competence of civil servants as policy implementers. Therefore, the systematic development of ASN competence should be positioned as a strategic priority within the broader agenda of bureaucratic reform.

### **Ethics and Work Culture in the Professionalism of the State Civil Apparatus**

Ethics and work culture constitute essential components in shaping the professionalism of the State Civil Apparatus (Aparatur Sipil Negara/ASN) in public service delivery. Work ethics refer to a set of moral values and norms that guide the behavior of civil servants in exercising their duties and authority. These values include integrity, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and a strong commitment to serving public interests. Civil servants who adhere to ethical principles consistently prioritize societal interests over personal or group interests, enabling them to perform public service functions in an objective and equitable manner (Supratman, 2018).

Within the context of public services, ASN ethics play a strategic role in preventing abuses of power and maladministration. Unethical practices—such as discriminatory service delivery, illegal levies, or misuse of official positions—often stem from weak internalization of ethical values within the bureaucracy. Empirical studies indicate that low ethical awareness among civil servants has a direct negative impact on public service quality and contributes to declining public trust in government institutions. Therefore, ethics in the ASN framework function not only as normative guidelines but also as behavioral control mechanisms in public service delivery.

Beyond individual ethics, organizational work culture exerts a significant influence on ASN professionalism. Work culture may be understood as the shared values, norms, and behavioral patterns that develop within bureaucratic organizations. A work culture that supports professionalism encourages discipline, accountability, and a strong orientation toward performance and service quality. Conversely, a permissive organizational culture that tolerates ethical violations tends to perpetuate unprofessional service practices.

A professional work culture within the bureaucracy also shapes civil servants' attitudes toward citizens as service users. ASN operating in environments characterized by strong integrity and ethical standards are more likely to demonstrate sensitivity to public needs, responsiveness to complaints, and openness to feedback and evaluation. Ethics and work culture are therefore closely intertwined with the

principles of good governance. Transparency, accountability, and public participation can only be effectively realized when civil servants possess a firm ethical commitment in carrying out their responsibilities. Strong ethical values and a supportive work culture enhance governmental legitimacy in the eyes of the public, as public services are perceived as fair, honest, and accountable (Arnanda & Reviandani, 2024).

### **Merit System and Digital Transformation in Promoting the Professionalism of the State Civil Apparatus**

The merit system and digital transformation function as two complementary strategic instruments in advancing the professionalism of the State Civil Apparatus (Aparatur Sipil Negara/ASN) within public service delivery. While the merit system emphasizes objectivity, competence, and performance as the primary foundations of ASN management, digital transformation serves as a mechanism for enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency of public services. Both elements constitute integral components of bureaucratic reform aimed at developing a professional civil service that is responsive to public interests.

The implementation of the merit system in ASN management is intended to ensure that recruitment, placement, promotion, and career development processes are conducted based on qualifications, competencies, and performance achievements, rather than political affiliations or particularistic interests. Research by Ismail (2022) demonstrates that consistent application of the merit system contributes to improved ASN professionalism, as civil servants are encouraged to continuously enhance their capacity and work performance. An effective merit-based system also reduces the prevalence of nepotism, patronage, and politicization of positions, which have long been recognized as major obstacles to professional bureaucracy.

In addition to fostering objectivity in human resource management, the merit system plays a crucial role in creating a fair and competitive working environment. Civil servants who perceive career development processes as transparent and equitable are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of commitment and integrity in performing public service duties. This perspective aligns with Bhakti (2015), who argues that the merit system constitutes a fundamental pillar in establishing a professional and competitive bureaucracy.

Conversely, digital transformation has emerged as a key factor in strengthening ASN professionalism in the era of modern governance. The utilization of information technology in public service delivery, including e-government platforms and digital-based services, has reshaped bureaucratic work patterns toward faster, more accurate, and more transparent systems. Digitalization not only enhances service quality but also requires civil servants to possess adequate digital competencies and adaptive work attitudes. In this regard, digital transformation acts as a catalyst that encourages ASN to adopt professional and innovative approaches to public service provision.

Moreover, digital transformation contributes significantly to improving accountability and oversight of ASN performance. Technology-based service systems enable more systematic documentation of service processes, thereby facilitating performance evaluation and monitoring of civil servants. This mechanism helps to minimize opportunities for irregularities in public service delivery and strengthens public trust in government institutions. Nevertheless, the success of digital transformation depends heavily on the readiness of human resources and the presence of an organizational culture that supports innovation and continuous improvement.

### **CONCLUSION**

The principle of professionalism of the State Civil Apparatus (Aparatur Sipil Negara/ASN) constitutes a fundamental foundation for the delivery of public services that are high in quality, equitable, and accountable. ASN professionalism extends beyond technical administrative skills and encompasses broader dimensions, including competence, ethics, work culture, and an institutional management system that supports objective and sustainable performance. Accordingly, professionalism serves as an essential prerequisite for public service delivery that is oriented toward public interest and citizen satisfaction.

The findings of this study indicate that ASN competence represents the core foundation of professionalism, as adequate knowledge, skills, and work attitudes enable civil servants to provide services effectively and respond adaptively to the evolving needs of the public. Furthermore, ethics and work culture play a strategic role in shaping professional conduct among ASN, particularly in upholding values of integrity, fairness, and responsibility in public service delivery. Without strong ethical standards and a supportive work culture, improvements in technical competence alone are insufficient to produce public services that are credible and trustworthy.

In addition, the implementation of the merit system and digital transformation has proven to be instrumental in strengthening ASN professionalism. The merit system promotes fairness and objectivity in ASN management, while digital transformation enhances the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of public services. The synergy between competency development, ethical reinforcement, merit-based management, and the utilization of digital technology is therefore critical in cultivating a professional civil service that is capable of adapting to change.

Consequently, efforts to strengthen ASN professionalism must be carried out in a comprehensive and sustainable manner through policies focused on human resource development, ethical and work culture reinforcement, and consistent bureaucratic reform. With a high level of professionalism among ASN, public service delivery in Indonesia is expected to better meet societal demands and contribute to the realization of good governance.

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