



## Weber's Ideal Bureaucracy Implementation in the Secretariat Bureau of Headship at the Secretariat General of the Regional Representative Council

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### ABSTRACT

*This study analyzes the implementation of Max Weber's ideal bureaucracy in the Bureau of Headship within the Secretariat General of the Regional Representative Council (DPD) of the Republic of Indonesia. Weber defines ideal bureaucracy as an organizational system governed by five core principles: legal-rational authority, hierarchical structure, technical competence, impersonality, and a merit-based career system. This research adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing literature review, direct qualitative observation, and in-depth interviews with three informants: two civil servants from the DPD Secretariat (one an IPDN graduate, the other a non-IPDN official), and a governance scholar. The findings reveal that efficiency and rationality are generally well-applied through structured task distribution and formal procedures. However, patron-client relationships among IPDN alumni pose challenges to impersonality and meritocracy. To enhance the validity of the findings, data triangulation was conducted through cross-verification of interviews, field observations, and official bureaucratic documents. Strengthening reform through transparent recruitment, performance-based promotion, and institutional oversight is essential. With these measures, the Bureau of Headship has the potential to become a model of effective, accountable, and professional governance within Indonesia's public sector.*

### ABSTRAK

### Kata Kunci:

*Birokrasi Ideal, Patron-Klien, Meritokrasi, Reformasi Birokrasi, Biro Sekretariat Pimpinan.*

Studi ini menganalisis penerapan kebijakan ideal Max Weber di Biro Kesekretariatan Pimpinan, Sekretariat Jenderal DPD RI. Weber mendefinisikan birokrasi ideal sebagai sistem organisasi yang dijalankan berdasarkan lima prinsip utama: otoritas hukum-rasional, hierarki struktural, kompetensi teknis berbasis kualifikasi, impersonalisme, dan sistem karir berbasis meritokrasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif melalui studi literatur, observasi kualitatif langsung, dan wawancara mendalam dengan tiga informan, yaitu dua ASN Sekretariat Jenderal DPD RI (satu lulusan IPDN, satu non-IPDN), serta seorang

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dosen ahli di bidang ilmu pemerintahan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa efisiensi dan rasionalitas telah cukup diterapkan melalui pembagian tugas dan prosedur kerja berdasarkan aturan formal dan struktur hierarkis yang jelas. Namun, hubungan patron-klien antar alumni IPDN menciptakan tantangan terhadap prinsip impersonalisme dan meritokrasi. Untuk memastikan validitas, triangulasi dilakukan dengan menggabungkan data dari wawancara, observasi lapangan, serta dokumen resmi birokrasi terkait. Reformasi birokrasi yang menekankan meritokrasi, rekrutmen transparan, dan pengawasan ketat perlu diperkuat agar Biro Kesekretariatan Pimpinan dapat menjadi model tata kelola yang efektif dan profesional dalam sistem pemerintahan Indonesia.

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## **A. INTRODUCTION**

Bureaucracy is a fundamental mechanism employed by governments to operate and deliver public services. In modern governance, bureaucracy functions as a bridge between state actors and society, ensuring administrative consistency, accountability, and rule-based decision-making. One of the most influential frameworks for understanding bureaucratic structures is Max Weber's concept of the ideal bureaucracy, which emphasizes five key principles: legal-rational authority, a clear hierarchical structure, technical competence, impersonality, and a merit-based career system.

Weber's ideal bureaucracy describes an organizational system that operates through formal written rules, systematic division of labor, and rational coordination within a well-established hierarchy (Haveman & Klutetz, 2016:1). He also highlights the importance of technical dedication by full-time bureaucrats who serve institutional goals, making efficiency dependent on impersonality and professional qualifications (Serpa & Ferreira, 2019:13).

In Indonesia, these principles are echoed in several regulatory frameworks, most notably Law No. 30 of 2014 on Government Administration, which promotes legality, accountability, and transparency in administrative processes. This law aims to improve the quality of public services and foster a professional and systematic bureaucracy. It closely aligns with Weberian ideals by emphasizing formal procedures, structured delegation of duties, and technically competent civil servants in policy formulation (Dwijayanti, 2021:153).

However, several challenges continue to hinder the realization of ideal bureaucracy in Indonesia. Bureaucracy remains deeply rooted in paternalistic culture, where officials often act more as rulers than as public servants (Dwiyanto, 2021). Practices such as corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN) persist and erode public trust (Rahman, 2022). Rigid hierarchies, slow decision-making processes, and a lack of innovation incentives also remain major obstacles to responsive public service (Sandy, 2021; Iriawan & Edyanto, 2024).

In the Indonesian context, there is ample evidence that the patronage system still plays a significant role in the appointment and promotion of public officials. A study on "Meritocracy and Civil Servant Neutrality in the Context of Direct Regional Elections" shows that, despite regulations aimed at ensuring neutrality, patronage practices continue to dominate recruitment and promotion processes, particularly within political frameworks (Firman, 2017).

Within this context, the Bureau of Headship at the Secretariat General of the DPD RI plays a pivotal role in providing specific administrative support to the leadership of the DPD RI. The relationship between the Secretariat General and the Bureau of Headship represents an essential synergy in which the bureau is responsible for ensuring that the administrative needs of the leadership are met efficiently and in accordance with established governance standards. The leadership of the DPD RI, which holds strategic responsibilities in carrying out institutional functions, requires responsive and professional administrative support from the Bureau of

Headship to ensure effective policy execution and administrative coordination in line with formal rules and procedures.

Thus, the role of an ideal bureaucracy emerges in the delivery of administrative services that comply with regulations and emphasize efficiency. The Secretariat General of the DPD RI and the Bureau of Headship are expected to operate in a harmonious and sustainable manner, ensuring that the bureaucratic process functions efficiently and in line with the principles of good governance.

Given this background, the Bureau of Headship within the Secretariat General of the DPD RI emerges as a crucial unit of analysis. This bureau plays a strategic role in delivering administrative support to legislative leadership, and its performance directly reflects the bureaucratic efficiency at elite institutional levels. Understanding how Weberian principles are applied or challenged within this specific context is essential for evaluating the depth of bureaucratic reform in Indonesia.

This study is important not only for diagnosing institutional weaknesses in Indonesia's legislative bureaucracy but also for contributing to the broader theoretical discourse on Weberian ideal types in developing country settings. The findings aim to strengthen the institutional capacity of the DPD RI through evidence-based reforms and to enrich the application of classical bureaucratic theory in contemporary governance systems.

While previous studies have largely focused on bureaucratic reform within ministries or local governments, this research seeks to fill a gap in the literature by examining how informal organizational culture affects bureaucratic performance—for example, how *esprit de corps* among IPDN alumni interacts with formal bureaucratic structures in high-level public institutions. Furthermore, this study explores how patron-client practices can undermine core Weberian values such as impersonality and meritocracy.

Accordingly, this study seeks to address two primary research questions: (1) What are the main obstacles to realizing an ideal bureaucracy in the Bureau of Headship? and (2) In what ways are the principles of Weber's ideal bureaucracy implemented in the Bureau of Headship at the DPD RI?

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Bureaucracy**

Bureaucracy, according to Max Weber (1864–1921), was originally conceived as an ideal concept to describe how organizations could operate efficiently and rationally. Weber interpreted the meaning of bureaucracy based on everyday experiences he had observed. He depicted bureaucracy as an administrative system grounded in formal rules, a clear hierarchy, and specific task divisions. In his view, bureaucracy enables organizations to function objectively, not by relying on any individual, but by adhering to established procedures. Bureaucracy, in this sense, is built upon a foundation of clearly defined formal rules that stand independently of personal influence.

Weber's theory of ideal bureaucracy is considered one of the foundational concepts in organizational studies and public administration. He viewed bureaucracy as the most rational and efficient organizational form for handling complex tasks on a large scale. An ideal bureaucracy, according to Weber, is characterized by several core features: a well-defined hierarchy, specific division of labor, formal rules and procedures, and decision-making based on rational logic rather than personal or emotional connections. Weber also stressed the importance of impersonality, wherein decisions and actions are made objectively, based on rules rather than individual influence.

In line with Guy Peters (2001), bureaucracy is inseparable from both power and impersonality. Peters outlines six sources of power that influence the functioning of ideal

bureaucracy: state personification, control of information and expertise, decision-making authority, political support, social status, and a stable, permanent institutional framework.

Impersonality remains one of the key features in Weberian bureaucracy. In this context, decisions and actions are taken based on logic and objective rules—not personal relationships, individual preferences, or emotional influence. This aims to uphold neutrality and fairness, ensuring that decisions are rational and unbiased. In this way, bureaucracy is expected to function efficiently without being undermined by subjectivity.

In his seminal work, *The Theory of Economy and Social Organization*, Weber introduced the idea of “ideal types” of modern bureaucracy as a rational and essential part of modernity. He argued that rational bureaucracy plays a more significant role in shaping the modern world than many other social elements (Ngadisah, 2015:1.8). Bureaucracy, with its formal rules, structured task distribution, and logic-based decision-making, is seen by Weber as a cornerstone of modern governance. For Weber, bureaucracy is not merely one segment of society but a fundamental element that allows institutions and organizations to function efficiently amid the complexity of modern life.

Weber’s ideal model of modern bureaucracy comprises several structural elements that define an efficient and well-organized system. First, a clear hierarchy ensures that each level of the organization possesses specific authority and responsibility, facilitating smooth decision-making and policy implementation. Second, a precise division of labor enables every individual within the bureaucracy to have a defined role and responsibilities, preventing overlap and confusion in execution.

Furthermore, Weber emphasized the importance of formal rules and procedures in bureaucracy. Every activity within the organization must be governed by strict and standardized regulations, ensuring actions are carried out according to established norms, free from personal or individual biases. The impersonal nature of bureaucracy is essential to making it a rational mechanism functioning like a machine that produces formally structured behavior. This allows for consistency and efficiency in task execution, although it can sometimes result in rigid and inflexible behavior (Hidayat, 2023). With established rules, bureaucracy achieves operational predictability, thus increasing its effectiveness in handling complex challenges and minimizing the potential for abuse of power.

Weber also regarded bureaucracy as a closed system, where external environments were seen as potential disruptors of organizational performance. For Weber, rules are the most important element of bureaucracy. According to Wakhid (2011), an ideal bureaucracy must be implemented through several mechanisms. First, officials must not use their position for personal gain, including family interests, and authority should be exercised in alignment with organizational objectives. The hierarchical structure must be clearly defined, with positions ranked from top to bottom and lateral relationships explicitly outlined. Each role should have a well-defined job description to avoid overlap and ensure accountability. Employment should be based on formal contracts that specify responsibilities and duties. Additionally, staff selection must be competitive and based on professional qualifications to ensure the appointment of the most capable individuals. Employees should receive remuneration according to their rank and be entitled to pension rights based on their position in the hierarchy. Career development should follow a transparent system, with promotions based on merit and performance. Furthermore, officials must not exploit their positions or organizational resources for private interests. Lastly, staff performance should be monitored through a strict disciplinary and control system to ensure adherence to rules and standards.

Weber believed that implementing this model of ideal bureaucracy would allow organizations to perform tasks efficiently and systematically, making them capable of addressing the complex demands of modern society—particularly in managing public administration and large institutions. His bureaucratic theory has significantly influenced

public administration studies and organizational management and has laid the foundation for modern management theories that emphasize formal structures, rules, and procedures. Although Weber's theory has often been criticized for being overly rigid and inflexible, it remains highly relevant for managing large, complex organizations.

Weber's concept of ideal bureaucracy offers a theoretical framework for a rational, impersonal, and professional public administration. However, its implementation is often hindered by political and cultural factors (Sager, 2021). In Indonesia, despite regulations that uphold meritocratic principles, political interference and patronage networks continue to obscure the objectivity of staff recruitment and promotion processes (Sabaruddin & Utomo, 2021).

## **Meritocracy**

Meritocracy is a system in which advancement and rewards are granted based on individual abilities, competencies, and achievements, regardless of social background or political affiliation (Castilla & Benard, 2010). This concept has been adopted to reduce reliance on traditional practices such as nepotism and patronage. In many organizations, the implementation of meritocracy is expected to produce more objective evaluations and a fair reward system.

According to the study *"Penerapan Kebijakan Sistem Merit"* (Implementation of the Merit System Policy) at the National Institute of Public Administration, the merit system refers to civil service policies and management that base promotion and recruitment on objective qualifications, competencies, and performance (Suryanto & Darto, 2020). This approach aims to create a professional work environment and encourage improved public service performance.

In the study *"The Paradox of Meritocracy in Organizations,"* it was found that while implementing a merit system can foster a belief in fairness, significant bias can still occur in performance evaluations. The study revealed a tendency for managers to unintentionally favor male employees, even when qualifications between men and women are comparable (Castilla & Benard, 2010). These findings highlight that although merit systems are designed to ensure equality, cultural factors and social perceptions can influence evaluation outcomes in practice.

Furthermore, observations on the application of meritocracy in the public sector show that although regulations support the principle of merit, selection and promotion practices are still influenced by political and kinship ties. For example, a study on job promotions in Kolaka Regency and Kendari City found that despite open recruitment processes, there were indications of non-transparent evaluations, in which subjective elements and "political payback" affected the final outcomes (Sabaruddin & Utomo, 2021).

Table 1. Comparative Table: Characteristics of Meritocracy

Aspect	Description	Implementation Example
<b>Emphasis on Performance</b>	Awards are given based on measurable achievements and achievements.	Use of performance indicators and objective evaluation
<b>Objectivity</b>	The selection process is carried out transparently and fairly without taking sides with political background.	Competency tests and open selection
<b>Fairness</b>	Guarantee equality of opportunity for all individuals without discrimination.	Use of established standards



<b>Cultural Challenges</b>	Cultural perceptions and stereotypical biases can hinder the implementation of a fair merit system.	Gender bias in performance evaluation
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Source: Processed by Authors (2025)

### Patron–client

Meritocracy is a system in which individuals obtain positions, promotions, or benefits through personal relationships or political support rather than purely through qualifications or achievements (Firman, 2017). Patronage practices generally evolve as a result of a country's political culture and bureaucratic history. While patronage may initially serve as a mechanism for building loyalty and work networks, in many cases, it distorts institutional function and contributes to the growth of corruption.

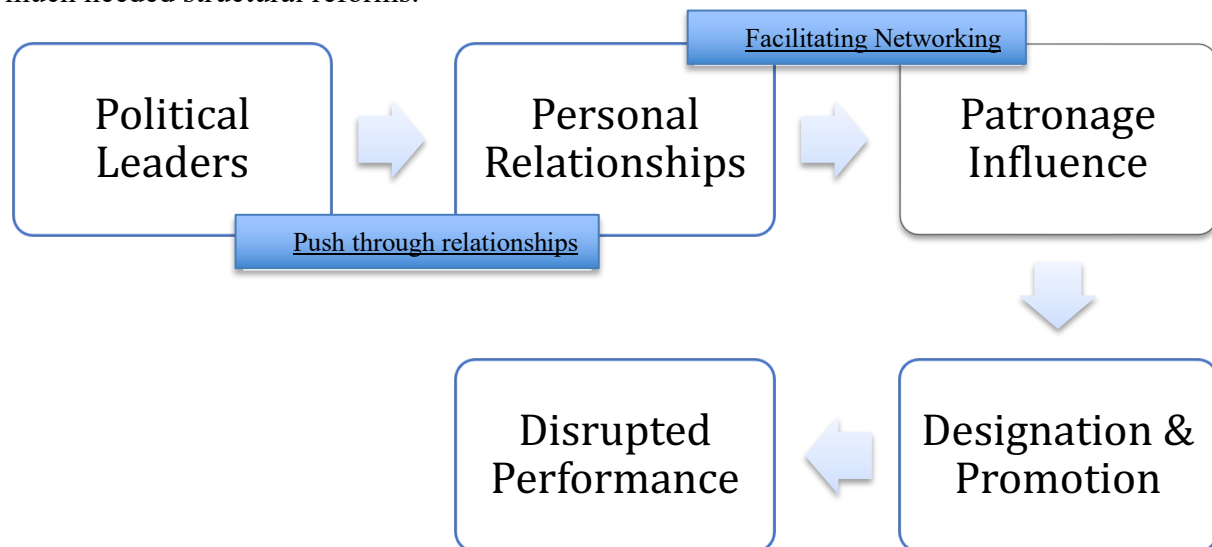
Patron-client relationships refer to reciprocal exchanges between two parties with different levels of power, social status, or resources, in which one party acts as the “patron” (protector) and the other as the “client.” The patron provides support, protection, or resources to the client such as wealth, employment, or political backing. In return, the client offers loyalty, political support, or other services to the patron. These relationships are often personal and informal, based on mutual trust and moral obligation. Patron-client relations are structured around the exchange of benefits, with a core criterion often summarized as “*Will you support me?*” (Stokes, 2011).

According to Rakhmawanto (2020), there are five forms of bureaucratic politicization, one of which involves the recruitment of civil servants (ASN). In this process, hidden agreements frequently occur between political elites or officeholders and political parties during recruitment. The politicization of civil service hiring can have a detrimental impact on bureaucratic performance. When recruitment is based on political agreements rather than competence, the result is often unqualified personnel, decreased efficiency, and lower-quality public service. Moreover, such individuals tend to be more loyal to their political patron than to bureaucratic rules and procedures.

The patron-client phenomenon arises when patrons need individuals who are loyal to them, while clients need someone who can offer protection or support (Stokes, 2011). The long-term impact of bureaucratic politicization may erode government integrity, create structural corruption, and weaken accountability. When decisions are no longer based on merit, public trust in state institutions declines. In addition, politicized bureaucracies are more vulnerable to being misused for personal or group interests, often continuing across political regimes. In such cases, patrons seek internal bureaucratic support to exploit bureaucratic positions for their own gain (Kholda et al., 2024).

In this context, patron-client ties further reinforce the politicization of the bureaucracy. Patrons in positions of power may use their authority to appoint loyal clients into the bureaucratic structure, with the expectation that these clients will support their policies or political agendas. This process not only undermines the principle of meritocracy but also creates a bureaucracy populated by individuals who are more loyal to their patrons than to institutional rules. This leads to disharmony and ambiguity in duties and functions, generating conflicts of interest between political officials and bureaucrats (Rakhmawanto, 2020). As a result, the quality of public services declines, and public dissatisfaction with government increases. When bureaucracy is more focused on political interests than on serving the public, the risk of structural corruption also increases. In the long term, such practices can weaken state institutions, reduce transparency, and hinder bureaucratic reforms intended to promote efficiency and professionalism in governance. Ultimately, this makes the government more prone to abuse of power and political instability.

Patron-client relations are based on exchanges of benefits, including political support, employment opportunities, protection, or various material resources (Husen, 2024). The main challenge is the bureaucracy's growing dependence on political patronage, which erodes the independence of public institutions. Bureaucracy, which should serve as the professional and effective engine of public policy implementation, instead becomes a tool for consolidating patronal power rather than serving the people's interests. This situation also leads to policy capture, where public policies that should benefit the general population are instead manipulated to serve narrow group interests. Such a condition creates a difficult to break cycle in which bureaucratic politicization increasingly undermines the state's capacity to undertake much needed structural reforms.



Source: Processed by Authors (2025)

Figure 1. Flow Diagram of Patronage Relations in Bureaucracy

### C. METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at systematically and concretely analyzing various phenomena related to the implementation of Weber's ideal bureaucracy in the Bureau of Headship at the DPD RI Secretariat General. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to deeply understand the social and political context surrounding the research subject (Raco, 2018). The paradigm used is interpretivism, which views social reality as a construct understood through interaction, meaning-making, and the experiences of subjects. Therefore, this study does not aim for statistical generalization but seeks to obtain rich contextual and narrative understanding. Data were collected through three primary methods:

1. In-depth interviews were conducted directly with three informants: two civil servants (ASNs) from the Secretariat General of DPD RI (one an IPDN graduate, and one non-IPDN), and one academic expert in the field of governance. This method was selected to explore the subjective understanding of bureaucratic actors concerning impersonality, meritocracy, and patronage dynamics (Rahardjo, 2011).

Table 2. List of Informants

No	Name	Position	Interview Date	Time
1.	Seprianus Frasawi	Head of the Secretariat Vice Chairman I (Period 2019–2024)	December 24, 2024	22.00 PM
2.	Rudi Ismanto	Expert Staff of the Secretariat of the Vice Chairman III of the Secretariat General of DPD RI	December 30, 2024	15.39 PM
3.	Dede Sri Kartini	Head of the S1 Government Science Study Program, Padjadjaran University	February 26, 2025	11:12 AM

Source: Processed by Authors (2025)

2. Direct qualitative observation was conducted on the work activities and interaction patterns of staff within the bureau. This observation was focused and structured, recording behaviors and organizational dynamics that could not be revealed through interviews or documents (Bogdan & Biklen, 2017; Hadi in Sugiyono, 2013).

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to identify patterns in the respondents' narratives and field observations. Data from interviews, observations, and documents were compared and integrated through triangulation to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings (Sugiyono, 2019). Triangulation was conducted by combining the results of in-depth interviews, direct observations, and official document analysis to ensure consistency and reduce the risk of single-source bias. Additionally, direct quotations from informants were used to present authentic representations of their perspectives (Rahardjo, 2011).

## D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Applying Weberian Bureaucratic Principles in the Secretariat Bureau of Leadership

Max Weber developed the concept of ideal bureaucracy as the most rational and efficient model of organization. According to Weber, an ideal bureaucracy is characterized by three core features: legal-rational authority, hierarchy, and technical competence. This concept aims to create a system of public administration that is efficient, accountable, and free from corrupt practices. In the context of Weber's theory, the implementation of a merit system is one manifestation of ideal bureaucracy, in which selection and promotion processes are based on objective competence. Therefore, based on the results of the interviews, this study will analyze the extent to which Weber's principles of ideal bureaucracy are applied in the Bureau of Headship at the DPD RI, using the framework of five main principles: legal-rational authority, hierarchy, technical competence, impersonality, and career orientation.

#### 1. Legal-Rational Authority

To determine whether the bureaucracy implemented in the Bureau of Headship at the DPD RI aligns with Max Weber's principles of ideal bureaucracy, several research methods were



employed, including literature review, observation, and direct interviews with relevant informants. The first informant was a civil servant (ASN) who graduated from the Institute of Public Administration (IPDN). The first interview focused on how Weber's bureaucratic principles are applied within the Bureau of Headship at the DPD RI.

The implementation of Weber's ideal bureaucratic principles in the Bureau of Headship at the DPD RI can be described as partial and layered, particularly regarding the principles of legal-rational authority, hierarchy, and technical competence. In terms of legal-rational authority, decision-making and task execution are governed by a formal legal framework such as Regulation of the Secretary General of the DPD RI No. 6 of 2017. This reflects a bureaucratic practice grounded in legality rather than subjectivity.

*"Every policy is based on the applicable regulations, regardless of educational background or personal affiliation."* (Interview with Seprianus Frasawi, December 24, 2024).

## **2. Hierarchy**

From a hierarchical perspective, the organizational structure within the Bureau of Headship demonstrates a clear division of labor and career levels. A well-defined career path and clearly assigned responsibilities at each level serve as a fundamental basis for ensuring smooth operations. This structure supports a rational distribution of authority and facilitates systematic decision-making, aligning with Max Weber's ideal bureaucracy.

*"In terms of technical competence, professional standards are applied in the execution of duties by civil servants. Therefore, regardless of their educational background, civil servants are expected to work in any environment, demonstrating high levels of adaptability and technical capacity."* (Interview with Seprianus Frasawi, December 24, 2024).

In practice, the Bureau of Headship reflects a coherent hierarchical system that enables each official to understand their scope of authority and responsibility. Rather than relying solely on written regulations, the implementation emphasizes role clarity, performance evaluation, and task delegation in accordance with employee level and competencies.

However, differences in leadership style across divisions may impact how this structure is executed. Some units apply a strict top-down style that encourages compliance but often limits innovation. Others adopt a more collaborative approach that enhances participation but may reduce uniformity in service execution.

*"A clear career path and well-defined responsibilities at each level are key foundations for ensuring smooth operations."* (Interview with Seprianus Frasawi, December 24, 2024).

Such variations pose challenges to accountability and administrative consistency. Weber proposed a clearly structured formal hierarchy designed to minimize individual discretion while maintaining rational control through a defined chain of authority (Kupiek, 2024). When this ideal is weakened by individual managerial discretion, coordination suffers, and disparity in public service outcomes may emerge.

*"Each leadership division within the Bureau applies a management style that reflects the character of its respective head."* (Interview with Rudi Ismanto, December 30, 2024).

To address these inconsistencies, the Bureau has begun integrating staff development initiatives, leadership training, and routine performance reviews. These interventions aim to align diverse leadership behaviors with institutional expectations, reinforcing hierarchical principles while enhancing adaptability.

Hierarchy in bureaucracy not only structures reporting lines but also organizes the distribution of authority and systemic decision-making. In Weber's conception, every bureaucratic position carries a legally defined scope of responsibility, ensuring functional clarity and avoiding overlaps. According to Max Weber's conception of bureaucracy, clearly established decision-making hierarchies promote rationality by ensuring that each role operates within its mandate (Lee, Kärkkäinen & Vehmas, 2025).

Despite the formal structure's strengths, cultural dynamics remain influential. Leadership behavior, often shaped by personal values, can override formal mechanisms. These cultural influences if left unaddressed can weaken legal certainty and erode internal accountability. As such, effective reforms must consider not only structural rules but also the behavioral dimensions of leadership that shape how hierarchy is practiced daily.

### 3. Technical Competence

Technical competence is a fundamental pillar of Max Weber's ideal bureaucracy. In the Weberian framework, bureaucratic positions should be granted to individuals with the technical qualifications and professional capacity to perform administrative tasks efficiently and rationally. Expertise serves as the basis for legitimate authority, replacing favoritism and patron-client relations. Weberian bureaucracy thus promotes professionalism not only in ethical behavior but also in functional proficiency (Davis, 2025).

In the Bureau of Headship, this principle is formalized through recruitment standards and position requirements that emphasize adaptability, rule compliance, and task-specific technical readiness. Civil servants (ASN) are expected to perform in various environments, including political institutions like the DPD RI. In addition to possessing the required technical skills, the ability to operate within a rule-bound environment is essential to bureaucratic legitimacy (Christensen et al., 2017).

Yet, in practice, this technical foundation is inconsistently applied. Although selection procedures formally prioritize merit, there is limited internal performance data or evaluation transparency to verify that appointments are truly based on measurable competence. Informal accounts indicate that in many promotions, educational qualifications and work outputs are outweighed by familiarity with decision-makers. This observation challenges the integrity of Weberian ideals.

While Wakhid (2011) stresses that merit-based selection systems embody Weberian governance, actual recruitment practices in the Bureau of Headship often reflect a hybrid logic—where technical requirements coexist with informal discretion. This results in inconsistent expectations regarding what constitutes "qualified" candidates.

*"Academic achievement and intelligence are not always the main factors determining career advancement."* (Interview with Dede Sri Kartini, February 26, 2025).

This insight reflects the enduring influence of social capital in career progression. When trust-based networks and affiliation take precedence over performance records, the professionalization of bureaucracy becomes compromised. Moreover, such informal dynamics

demotivate competent civil servants from pursuing further training, as career outcomes are perceived to be disconnected from effort or skill.

While the formal framework for technical competence exists, implementation remains constrained by structural opacity and cultural inertia. As noted by Shishir & Sakib (2025), informal patronage systems continue to distort recruitment logic, weakening the objectivity of merit-based governance.

To restore the bureaucratic promise of neutrality and expertise, stronger internal audit mechanisms, transparent scoring in promotions, and enforced linkage between performance evaluations and advancement are essential. Even within a formally merit-based system, informal patronage dynamics distort objective recruitment, undermining the very promise of the Weberian model (Berge & Stiansen, 2023).

In sum, Weberian competence cannot flourish in isolation from institutional reform. Professional development must be paired with reliable career incentives and robust insulation from informal favoritism so that the bureaucracy is truly managed by those best qualified to serve.

#### **4. Impersonality**

Impersonality is a fundamental principle in Weber's ideal bureaucracy, requiring all administrative processes to be governed by formal norms and written rules, not personal preferences or emotional connections. In an ideal bureaucracy, decisions are made objectively, based on formal logic and institutional regulations (Waters & Waters, 2015).

However, the practical implementation of impersonality within the Bureau of Headship at the DPD RI reveals nuanced challenges. Informal affiliations, such as *esprit de corps* among alumni from institutions like IPDN, continue to influence workplace dynamics. While such solidarity may enhance internal coordination, it raises critical concerns about neutrality and fairness in bureaucratic processes. The effectiveness of these affiliations in fostering task execution must be weighed against their potential to foster exclusivity or favoritism, which undermines Weberian impersonality.

*"The esprit de corps among alumni speeds up task execution due to strong emotional ties, but it does not lead to exclusivity."* (Interview with Seprianus Frasawi, December 24, 2024)

This statement indicates that *esprit de corps* may strengthen internal coordination but can violate the principle of impersonality if not managed properly. In contrast, Rudi Ismanto (2024) highlighted the dominance of personal loyalty:

*"Personal loyalty is prioritized over professionalism."* (Interview with Rudi Ismanto, December 24, 2024)

These contrasting perspectives highlight the delicate tension between loyalty to personal networks and the objective professional standards that Weberian bureaucracy demands. While *esprit de corps* may improve task efficiency, it risks evolving into a form of soft nepotism when left unregulated. Therefore, regulatory safeguards and organizational oversight such as transparent promotion criteria, staff rotation, and ethical training are essential to ensure that solidarity among peers does not erode the principle of impersonality or hinder equal opportunities within the public service.

This tension between personal relationships and impersonality poses a serious challenge to achieving a neutral and objective bureaucracy. If loyalty to alumni networks replaces

professional standards, Weberian neutrality is not only compromised but also at risk of erosion (Cochrane, 2018, Max Weber's Vision for Bureaucracy).

This phenomenon is consistent with Hannah Spector's (2019) findings in Curriculum Inquiry, where informal networks are often maintained as social capital, despite conceptually contradicting the principle of impersonality.

The emergence of esprit de corps often conflicts with the spirit of impersonality. In a meritocratic system, positions should be awarded based on professional capability—not personal relationships. When political closeness replaces technical competence as the basis for appointment, the principle of neutrality in Weberian bureaucracy is threatened (Rueschemeyer, 2005).

To address this, oversight policies and the strengthening of professional ethics must be developed to ensure esprit de corps does not override institutional function. As Ismanto (2024) explained, decision-making still refers to applicable regulations and is documented. However, if personal relationships are not strictly regulated, the bureaucracy risks becoming a form of "patrimonial bureaucracy"—precisely what Weber sought to avoid.

## 5. Career Orientation

The principle of career orientation in Weberian bureaucracy emphasizes the importance of a bureaucratic career built progressively and sustainably, based on a merit system. An ideal bureaucrat, according to Weber, is not a temporary employee but a professional whose work is a vocation supported by a clear career path founded on performance and competence (Albrow, 1970, Bureaucracy: Key Concepts in Political Science).

In the Bureau of Headship at the DPD RI, formal promotion systems follow the guidelines issued by staffing authorities such as the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (PAN-RB) and the National Civil Service Agency (BKN), which mandate that civil servants be evaluated based on their Work Performance Targets (SKP) and professional competencies. Seprianus Frasawi (2024) stated:

*"Promotions are conducted under strict regulations and are supervised by the Ministry of PAN-RB. There is no room for favoritism in this system."* (Interview with Seprianus Frasawi, December 24, 2024)

However, in practice, the merit-based career system is not entirely free from informal network influences. Dede Sri Kartini (2024) pointed out:

*"Personal connections are still heavily considered in determining someone's position."* (Interview with Dede Sri Kartini, February 26, 2025)

This statement indicates that loyalty to affiliations particularly among alumni networks such as IPDN continues to affect career mobility. This deviates from Weberian ideals, which call for career advancement to be neutral and performance-based. As noted by Berge & Stiansen (2023), in a system that upholds meritocracy, job placements should be based on competence not personal relationships. When political loyalty is prioritized over professional skill, the principle of neutrality at the core of Weberian bureaucracy is undermined.

Dede Sri Kartini's statement aligns with broader concerns in public administration regarding the influence of alumni networks particularly IPDN in bureaucratic appointment processes. As highlighted by Marthalina (2021), IPDN alumni often dominate strategic positions within regional bureaucracies and enjoy privileged access to promotions. Marthalina (2021) also emphasizes that institutional loyalty, rather than performance alone, frequently

determines the career trajectory of civil servants (ASN), contradicting the values of impersonality and neutrality central to the Weberian model of bureaucracy.

Recent media reports provide concrete examples of this structural concern. During the 2020 selection process for the Secretary General of the DPD RI, two out of the three shortlisted candidates were IPDN alumni (Kumparan, 2020). Even more critically, the selection committee (pansel) itself was dominated by individuals with direct ties to IPDN. For instance, Jufri Rahman is an IPDN alumnus, while Prof. Nurliah Nurdin, though originally from Unhas, has been a civil servant at STPDN/IPDN since 1997 and now serves as a professor there. These affiliations raise questions about neutrality in high-level recruitment and reinforce the notion that cultural and institutional loyalty continue to influence career mobility in Indonesia's bureaucracy (Kumparan, 2020).

To better understand these patterns, it is useful to adopt a discursive framing between the normative ideal of meritocracy and the embedded reality of alumni loyalty. While regulatory frameworks are built upon rational procedures and objective standards, actual career trajectories are often shaped by informal power structures and relational proximity challenging the realization of a truly merit based system.

Based on the second interview with Rudi Ismanto (2024), it can be concluded that the implementation of an ideal bureaucratic system remains suboptimal. The perceived advantage of IPDN alumni clearly contradicts Weber's concept of ideal bureaucracy, as it undermines the principle of impersonality. However, the values of efficiency and rationality have been successfully applied within the Bureau of Headship. According to the interview, the presence of many IPDN graduates has facilitated task execution through strong, fast, and responsive coordination. Moreover, the bureau has succeeded in applying rational bureaucracy focusing on clear regulations, systematic division of labor, and rule-based decision-making. As Rudi Ismanto (2024) stated, every decision is made according to established regulations, ensuring that all work processes are well-documented.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that the implementation of Max Weber's ideal bureaucracy in the Bureau of Headship at the DPD RI has been partially realized, particularly in legal-rational authority, hierarchical structure, and task division guided by formal rules (Haveman & Kluttz, 2016; Dwijayanti, 2021). However, significant limitations persist in upholding impersonality and merit-based career orientation, primarily due to informal patron–client networks, notably among IPDN alumni, which continue to influence career advancement and decision-making processes (Serpa & Ferreira, 2019; Kartini, 2024).

The study is limited by a small informant sample, institutional bias (two IPDN-affiliated respondents), and the absence of quantitative evidence, restricting broader generalizability. Future research should incorporate mixed methods and a more diverse respondent base.

To strengthen alignment with Weberian ideals, the study recommends implementing independent audits of promotion processes, anonymous digital recruitment systems, and enforcing internal anti-favoritism regulations. These reforms should be accompanied by a cultural shift that emphasizes professionalism over loyalty, echoing Kartini's (2024) call for a "mental revolution" in Indonesia's bureaucratic mindset. Only through structural and cultural reform can the Bureau become a truly accountable and effective model of public administration.



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