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ARTICLE

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**The Role of Malay Culture in Maintaining the Neutrality of the Civil Servants: A Case Study of Local Election in Riau, Indonesia**

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**ABSTRACT**

Local election contestation has caused various problems of violating the neutrality of the bureaucracy in the public domain. Multiple types of regulations have proved unable to comprehensively maintain the principle of neutrality. Thus, it is necessary to instill a bureaucratic character supported by local values so that the Civil Servants can carry out their primary duties and functions optimally. This study aims to explain the role of Malay culture in maintaining the neutrality of the bureaucracy in the local election in Riau Province. This study uses a qualitative research method that explores various phenomena of violations of the neutrality of the bureaucracy in the 2018 Riau Governor Election. Data analysis was carried out through the Nvivo 12 Plus software sourced from the online news media content and interviews with Riau Province figures. The study found several causes influencing non-neutral Civil Servants in the Riau Governor election. They are dominated by personal closeness (21.74%), primordial relationship factors (20.29%), society passivity (18.84%), weak law enforcement (11.59%), regulatory ambiguity (11.59%), lack of understanding of regulations (8.70%), and job ambition (7.25%). Then to minimize the various factors of violations that occur, Malay cultural values can be an additional guideline in dealing with various dynamics that occur in political contestation in Riau Province. Every civil servant at the local level must recognize and understand the important principles of Malay culture, namely principles of justice, courage, shame, hard work, self-sacrifice, and honesty.

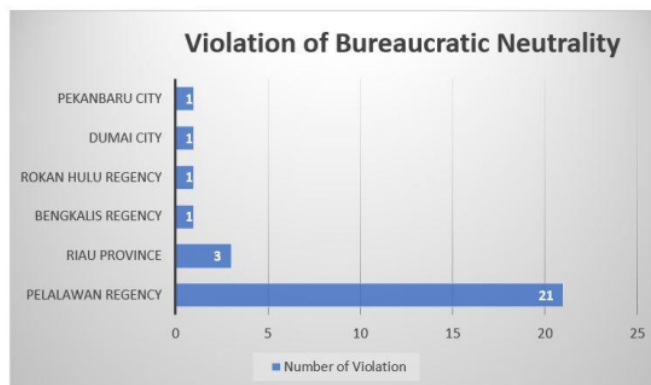
**A. INTRODUCTION**

In Indonesia's implementation of local democracy, bureaucratic neutrality has always been a topic of conversation (Sacipto, Handitya, & Lestari, 2021; Suwitri et al., 2019). This local political contestation will undoubtedly significantly impact society and the bureaucracy in determining the best choice (Cochrane, 2018). Law Number 5 of 2014 concerning State Civil Apparatus (Civil Service) is considered to have the potential to minimize abuse of authority (Mubin & Roziqin, 2018). Despite high hopes for these reforms, almost nothing has worked comprehensively (Nugroho et al., 2019). The reason is, in local democracy contestation, some interests connect voters (bureaucracy) with those who are elected (political officials) so that it

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has an impact on the increasing number of violations of bureaucratic neutrality that have occurred significantly (Carey et al., 2020; Porter & Rogowski, 2018). Of course, this is a complicated issue regarding bureaucratic ethics and worrying because state administrators should be professional (Bach & Wegrich, 2019). Therefore, to guarantee the implementation of local democracy based on justice and honesty, the Civil Service neutrality must run comprehensively on local political contestation in each region in Indonesia (Gaus, Sultan, & Basri, 2017).

One of the provinces in Indonesia that is so synonymous with Malay culture is Riau Province which has a vision of "The realization of Riau Province as the Center for the Economy and Malay Culture in a religious, physically and mentally prosperous society in Southeast Asia in 2025" (Riau.go.id, 2019). "The Malay Cultural Teaching Guidelines" contains the application of local values such as the principles of honesty, justice, courage, shame, hard work, and self-sacrifice. This guideline is believed to be very important to be applied to government officials in carrying out their main duties and functions professionally to maintain the neutrality of the State Civil Apparatus (Effendy, 2013; Ramli, 2016). It is said to be necessary because the principles taught are focused on the Malay Civil Service character and aim to become ethical guidelines for officials from other ethnic groups (Awang, Maros, & Ibrahim, 2012). Then, in the context of the 2018 Riau gubernatorial election, the Riau Provincial Election Supervisory Agency explained that 28 civil servants were involved in violations of campaign implementation in the Riau gubernatorial election (Detik.com, 2018). The number of violations of the neutrality of the Civil Servants in Riau Province can be seen in Figure 1.



Source: (Detik.com, 2018).

Figure 1. Violation of Bureaucratic Neutrality in the 2018 Riau Gubernatorial Election

In Figure 1, there are 28 (twenty-eight) civil servant's neutrality violations at the Riau gubernatorial election campaign stages. Consists of 21 (twenty-one) from Pelalawan Regency Government, three from Riau Provincial Government Civil Servants and one other each from Pekanbaru City Government, Dumai City Government, Rokan Hulu Regency Government, and Bengkalis Regency Government.

The form of the violations is their actions such as taking a photo with one of the candidate pairs and uploading it to social media, giving likes and comments on one of the candidates' posts, and also attending to the declaration and campaign of one of the candidates (Halloriau.com, 2018). From the results of investigations conducted by the Election Supervisory Agency of Riau Province, it was found that there were civil servants who committed violations at the election implementation stage and were classified as breaches of the political aspect (Detik.com, 2018).

According to Pribadi & Kim (2021), cultural aspects are important in determining civil servants' professional and independent character. Next, the research of Rafi, Suswanta, & Wicaksono (2021) also explains that the cultural aspect has an important dimension in maintaining the neutrality of the Civil Servants when every bureaucrat and government has high awareness and commitment to make it happen. Based on this phenomenon, this research needs to be carried out. Riau Province has a vision and mission as the centre of Malay culture and has local values in “*Malay Cultural Teaching Guidelines*” which must be able to encourage the Civil Servants to remain neutral and not be influenced by political interests. The various violation issues described above are of particular concern to Riau Province, which is very synonymous with Malay culture with integrity and contrary to the provisions of the Civil Service neutrality. Thus, various phenomena of civil servants' neutrality violations have reflected Malay cultural values' existence as local values that are inconsistent with the neutrality index of the Civil Service in Riau Province. Therefore, it is necessary to know how the role of Malay culture in responding to and anticipating various phenomena of neutrality violations, so that this research is expected to be used as a scientific reference in dealing with various dynamics of local political contestation as well as providing positive and alternative contributions related to the ideal way for bureaucrats to act on the momentum of local democracy.

## B. LITERATURE REVIEW

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### The neutrality of Civil Servants

Based on Article 9 paragraph 2 of Law Number 5 the Year 2014 concerning Civil Service, it has emphasized the obligation of each government bureaucracy to avoid all forms of influence and intervention by each group, be it the interests of political parties and also other interests (Sudrajat & Karsona, 2016). According to Riwanto (2019), neutrality is an act of not participating in any schedule prohibited in the regulation. According to Utomo (2018), a neutral bureaucracy can be interpreted as an action that does not show partiality to group interests, does not follow the orientation of the parts of political actors, and does not discriminate when carrying out its primary duties and functions. Furthermore, according to Thoha (2012), the neutrality of the bureaucracy is a guideline made so that the civil servants can provide services based on professionalism and not on the political sector's interests. Thus, the understanding of the neutrality of the bureaucracy in Indonesia is dominated by the desire for the neutrality of Civil Servants that is not in favour of group interests and must be oriented to the public interest (Cochrane, 2018; Hadiyantina, 2020; Sapiro, Handitya, & Lestari, 2021).

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### Factors Causing Violation of the Neutrality of Civil Servants

Historically, the violation of civil servants' neutrality in Indonesia was caused by several factors. *First* is the personal closeness factor, where this aspect significantly affected the partiality of civil servants due to the authority of regional heads in determining structural and functional positions. Regional leaders who participate in local political contestations then always promise strategic positions ahead of regional head elections to control bureaucratic loyalty within the local government. *The second* is the Primordial Relationship Factor. This aspect within the government bureaucracy framework will also affect the bureaucratic attitude in organizing the Local Election because Civil Servants who have relatives who are involved in Local Election contestation will support their families secretly or openly during the process. This is done to help their relatives become regents/mayors and governors. *Third*, the Position Ambition Factor will influence the neutrality of the bureaucracy because, in the process, civil servants will tend to support one of the candidates who are considered to have great potential

in winning the election. They will attempt to provide services to the candidate to place a strategic position and secure the current position. *Fourth*, the factor that fails to understand the regulations can be found in several civil servants who admit that they do not understand the neutrality regulation substance because it is no longer disseminated internally in their respective agencies. *Fifth*, there is regulatory ambiguity. This aspect is one of the causes for the emergence of an exceptionally severe problem. As an Officer for Guidance for Civil Servants, the regional head can decide on the transfer of office, promotion, and dismissal of civil servants in their jurisdiction. The Civil Servants then take on a non-neutral role due to this clause. *Sixth*, Weak law enforcement. This aspect also impacts the difficulty of maintaining neutrality by civil servants. The tendency between institutions to be less alert to their duties and responsibilities when a violation occurs and the mechanisms for handling neutrality violations that are still not fully regulated make civil servants who violate the neutrality principle have no deterrent effect. *Seventh*, Society Passivity. This aspect also tends to influence neutrality violations. Reality shows that people's mindsets think the reporting process is complicated with all kinds of evidence. Such as photos, videos, and others. This makes them indifferent to the various frauds that occur in the public sphere.

Reality shows that the public mindset considers the reporting process to be so complicated with all kinds of evidence. Such as photos, videos, and others. This makes them not care about the various frauds that occur in the public space (Civil Service Commission of the Republic of Indonesia, 2018; Sutrisno, 2019).

### 5 The Neutrality of Civil Servants in the Perspective of Malay Culture

There are several reasons local elections hold a crucial position in a democratic country, namely because these elections allow specific political communities to transfer power peacefully and enable institutional conflicts to occur (Malik, Supriyono & Mindarti, 2020). From this perspective, two mechanisms can be applied to organize an independent and fair local election. *First*, a set of methods and regulations must be designed not to allow each stakeholder to commit violations. *Second*, the principle of democracy must look at equal rights supported by relevant local cultures (Hadiyantina, 2020). As a maritime-based civilization, Malay culture is known to have an open, flexible, and elegant nature (Albintani & Ishak, 2020; Syamsuadi, 2018). In the perspective of Malay culture, the ideal bureaucrats are those committed to serving society optimally without being based on personal interests (Anatassia, Milla, & El Hafiz, 2015; Effendy, 2013). The facts regarding various bureaucratic neutrality problems are based on state administrators' absence of good ethics (Sumarno, 2019). Therefore, several principles of Malay culture are considered relevant in maintaining the neutrality of Civil Servants, namely: *First*, honesty is an attitude that must always be rooted in the spirit of the Malay community's aspirations. In this attitude, the civil servants must treat everyone based on honesty in every holding local election. *Second*, the Principle of Justice is the main foundation for maintaining the nation's ethics and dignity, preserving the spirit of peace and integrity, and the right path for upholding a just law. *Third*, Sincerity and Willingness to Sacrifice is a sense of social solidarity that forms a brotherly bond to feel easy to work without any reward. *Fourth*, Hard Work is a principle that teaches that every Bureaucrat must be a strong person and not easily give up. When carrying out their duties, the civil servants must be objective and professional and no discrimination against certain groups. *Fifth*, the Shame Principle is an attitude that always puts forward guilt when making mistakes and tries to be a barrier when you want to do things that are against the rules, religions, laws, and social norms. *Sixth*, the Principle of Courage is a soul-based attitude that always dares to reject practical political activities and promises from political parties (Budiman, 2018; Effendy, 2013; M. Rafi et al., 2021).

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**C. METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach. According to Aspers & Corte (2019), qualitative research aims to collect data about a problem researched and then systematically analyzed. The data in this study came from primary and secondary data. The preliminary data in question is collected through interviews with Malay figures in Riau Province. Secondary data is obtained from the various online news media content, government websites, books, journals, reports, proceedings, and archives related to research. Data collection techniques in this study used documentation and interview techniques. The collection technique focuses on collecting news related to bureaucratic violations in the Riau Governor election and various views of Malay figures using the Ncapture feature on Chrome which is then inputted into the Nvivo 12 Plus application. The following is a schematic of the research flow, as shown in the Figure below:

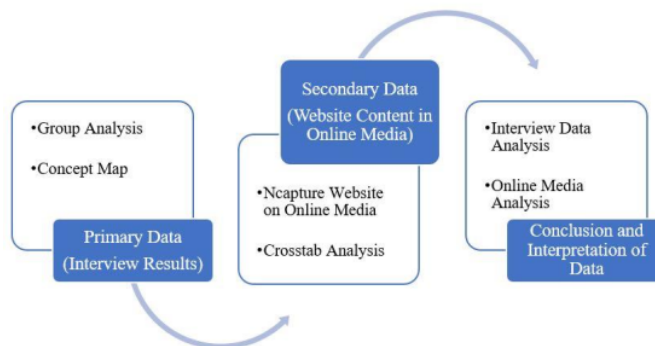


Figure 2. Research Flow and Data Analysis Using Nvivo 12 Plus

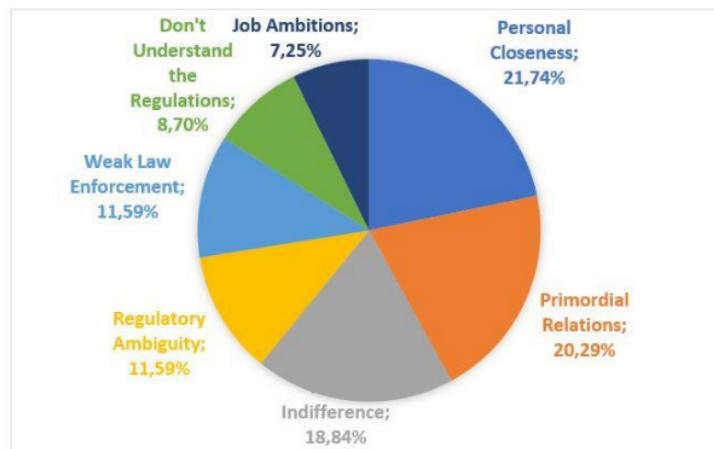
Figure 2 is an analysis scheme through Nvivo 12 plus using the features of group analysis, concept map analysis, and crosstab analysis (Jackson & Bailely, 2019; O'neill et al., 2018). The study is carried out in three stages: First, data analysis with the group analysis feature to determine the informants' perceptions of existing concepts (nodes) and conduct analysis through the concept map feature in mapping the informants' thoughts on concepts and propositions based on variables. The second step is to capture websites in reputable local and national media and analyze the data through the crosstab analysis feature to find the percentage of the concepts (nodes) used. The third step is to conclude and interpret the results of interviews and website content on online media that have been analyzed. Therefore, this study will systematically examine the role of Malay culture in maintaining the neutrality of civil servants in Riau Province.

**D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Riau Province is one of the provinces where the Malay culture grows. Malay is a significant word and is interpreted from various perspectives. The importance of Malay culture is also seen in the vision and mission of Riau 2020. To make Riau the centre of Malay culture in Southeast Asia, which includes religious practices, behaviour, language, cultural arts, artistic expressions, to Tourism that typically reflects Riau Malay (Alfarabi et al., 2019). Then, Riau Province has various ethnic, namely Malay (37.74%), Javanese (25.05%), Minangkabau (11.26%), and Batak (7.31%), Banjar (3.78%). Chinese (3.72%), Bumis (2.27%), and Sundanese (1.6%) (Rafi et al., 2020). An important aspect of the study of the role of Malay culture in maintaining bureaucratic neutrality is to explain the importance of Malay cultural principles for government officials in dealing with political contestations at the local level.

### 5 Factors Causing the Non-neutrality of Civil Servants in the Riau Governor Election

The phenomenon of violating the neutrality of Civil Servants is currently an exciting discourse to observe because the pattern of political-bureaucratic relations is like two sides of a coin that cannot be separated but stand alone (Kartini, 2019; Rakhmawanto, 2020). Then, based on data from several online media that have been coded through the Nvivo 12 Plus software using the Crosstab Query feature, several factors caused violations of the neutrality of Civil Servants in the 2018 Riau governor election, as seen in Figure 3.



Source: Results of Analysis Using Nvivo 12 Plus, 2021.

Figure 3. Factors Causing Violation of Bureaucratic Neutrality in the Riau Election of Governor

Figure 3 shows that the factor that most influences the occurrence of non-neutral civil servants is the personal closeness factor (21.74%). When explored further, several online media such as news media *Riauonline.co.id*, *Detik.com*, *Tempo.com*, and *Halloriau.com* place the personal proximity factor in the dominant intensity in the context of the Riau Governor election. In 2018, Syamsuar-Edy Natar was determined the win the Riau Governor election. Various political dramas appeared dominant in the public sphere, where the determination of the new regional secretary of Riau Province was believed to be inseparable from the element of proximity to Syamsuar as the elected governor (*Riauonline.co.id*, 2019). Thus, this becomes empirical evidence of a causal relationship between the personal closeness of official political candidates with civil servants and their non-neutral attitude in local political cont<sup>5</sup>ations.

Second, the primordial relationship factor (20.29%) also influenced the non-neutrality of civil servants in the local election of Riau Province. This can be traced from hot issues related to the alleged practices of nepotism by the governor of Riau and the regional secretary of Riau Province. Four of 623 echelon III (Management Level) and IV (Guidance Level) officials who were inaugurated on January 7, 2020, are known to be the surnames of the Governor and Regional Secretary of the Riau Province (*Halloriau.com*, 2020). Based on this, it can be seen that this fact has confirmed the existence of primordial relations factors that can trigger a violation of the neutrality of the bureaucracy and can eliminate authentic values that should be upheld in implementing local democracy.

Next is the factor of public indifference (18.84%). As evidenced by the phenomenon of various appeals from the Riau election supervisory body to the public who witnessed violations of the Civil Servants to provide a report with the provision of completing supporting solid

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evidence such as photos and videos complete with time, place, and presence of witnesses. This seemingly complicated process has led to apathy from the public regarding the neutrality problems they encountered in the field because the public considers the reporting process complicated (Riauonline.co.id, 2018). Then the factor of weak law enforcement (11.59%) is proven by the existence of sanctions that have not been maximum. After being proven to have violated neutrality, the Regional Secretary of Pekanbaru City, who received moral sanctions, did not attend, and the reasons for his absence were unclear. This phenomenon is considered by many a law enforcement problem that needs to be taken seriously (Hallor Riau.com, 2018).

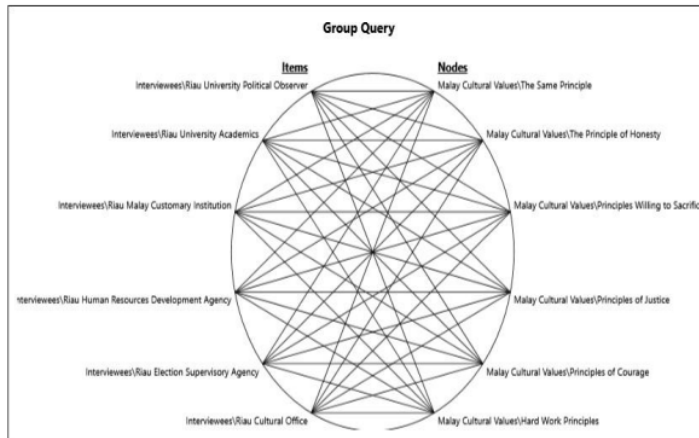
Next, the regulatory ambiguity factor (11.59%) is evidenced by regional heads' tendency as supervisory officials for local civil servants who are reluctant and less responsive in following up on recommendations for sanctions from the civil service commission of the Republic of Indonesia. In the 2018 Riau gubernatorial election, the Riau Provincial Election Supervisory Body noted that 28 civil servants were involved in violations of the campaign implementation. From several breaches of the neutrality of the civil servants, the execution of civil servant neutrality violations was only carried out on four civil servants and one of which was the Regional Secretary of the Pekanbaru City Government, who was given administrative sanctions in the form of moral sanctions (Detik.com, 2018). Thus, several regulations governing civil servants' neutrality in Indonesia have provided an opening for political officials (regional heads) to take advantage of their power and influence any neutrality violations by civil servants that occur on an ongoing basis.

Then, the regulatory incomprehension factor (8.70%) was evidenced by the socialization carried out by the Riau Provincial Election Supervisory Agency to civil servants in Riau Province regarding the substance of practical political prohibitions in the momentum of the elections (Riauonline.co.id, 2018). However, after the socialization was carried out, before entering the candidate's determination, eleven cases of violations were found ahead of the Governor Election in Riau Province (Riauonline.co.id, 2018). Next, the job ambition factor (7.25%) was evidenced by several phenomena of violations of the civil servants' neutrality in Riau Province throughout 2018. One of them was M. Noer (Regional Secretary of Pekanbaru City 2016-2020) at the mayor's residence with several City Government civil servants. Another, Pekanbaru at the thanksgiving event for Firdaus-Rusli Efendi (Candidate for Governor of Riau in 2018) who received a Decree of support from a coalition of political parties to advance to become a candidate for the 2018 Riau Governor Election (Jawapos.com, 2018). These various phenomena have shown that historically power and bureaucracy in government and political systems remain challenging separate and sometimes override government officials' ethical values (Abas, 2017).

### **The Role of Malay Cultural Values in Maintaining the Neutrality of Civil Servants**

To minimize the various violations of the Civil Servants that occurred in organizing the local election in Riau Province, the Malay actors of Riau Province who had been interviewed gave their views regarding several principles of Malay culture that must be adhered to by the Civil Servants in improving their professional character and providing the best possible service to the community can be seen in Figure 4.





Source: Analysis Results Using Nvivo 12 Plus, 2021.

Figure 4. Analysis of Group Query on the Malay Cultural Values For Civil Servants

Figure 4 is a group query analysis on the principle of Malay culture, which maps the perceptions of each stakeholder visualized on each connected line and node, where each actor believes that the six principles of Malay culture, namely *the principles of shame, honesty, sacrifice, justice, courage, and hard work* have a relatively equal level of urgency and are interrelated with one another. Then, based on the results of interviews with Malay figures in Riau Province, who were then coded through the Nvivo 12 Plus software using the Concept Map feature, there are several roles of Malay cultural values in maintaining the neutrality of the Civil Servants in Riau Province, which can be seen in Figure 5.



Source: Analysis Results Using Nvivo 12 Plus, 2021.

Figure 5. The Role of Malay Cultural Values in Maintaining the Neutrality of Civil Servants

Figure 5 is a visualization of the role of Malay culture according to the perceptions of each actor interviewed to maintain the neutrality of Civil Servants in Riau Province. Each factor that causes a violation of neutrality has an arrow area that shows recommendations from each actor regarding the importance of various Malay cultural principles that civil servants must understand and apply in the local election. This is due to the recommended principle, "Doesn't fade with heat, and doesn't fade with rain". Then in the process, various factors of

neutrality violations such as personal closeness, primordial relationships, public indifference, weak law enforcement, regulatory ambiguity, lack of understanding of regulations, and elements of office ambition are cultural transitions that can eliminate authentic values in the Concept of a Democracy State. Therefore, the various causes must be sought for prevention alternatives, both from the sector of regulatory changes and the cultivation of local cultural values.

*First*, the personal closeness factor between the regional head and the bureaucrats is triggered by the presence of dominant power by the regional authority as a political official in determining the positions of the civil servants, so that these bureaucrats must submit and be loyal to the rulers. In responding to and minimizing the culture of personal closeness, every bureaucrat must have the principles of shame, justice, courage, and hard work principles in the perspective of Malay culture. The principle of guilt is a fundamental cultural concept in Malay society. It is related to the social idea that everyone should feel guilty if their behaviour and actions have violated the rules and regulations, whether it is known or not known by others. The principle of shame must refer to the expression "*what is the sign of true Malay, ashamed to do what is not commendable, maintain shame wholeheartedly*".

This expression is aimed at the shame that civil servants must have when sitting in a strategic position based solely on their closeness to the employer (the ruler) and not because of their competence level. This should make civil servants feel guilty because, in essence, this contradicts various legal products concerning the civil service and does not reflect the principle of shame taught by the Malay culture. Then, the principles of justice and truth are aimed at the character of civil servants who must be fair in every decision and correct in determining every policy. Malay parents say it is a human character that "*Justice doesn't discriminate, and truth doesn't look at caste*". This expression means that every truth must be upheld firmly without discrimination. Suppose there is an error in the process of placing a position. In that case, civil servants should not hesitate to refuse the work assignment and convey and evaluate properly to the leadership that it is an act of error.

Then, the principle of courage for civil servants must refer to the expression, "*The custom of men dares to die, the custom of women defending honour*". This statement means that every civil servant must be oriented to the principle of courage in upholding the truth, rejects involvement in practical politics, and rejects giving positions based solely on personal closeness. Next, the principle of hard work is a personality form of a person who tirelessly rises from one failure and finally achieves success. In this principle, civil servants must refer to the phrase, "*If you want to become somebody, work hard diligently, make use of the age before dawn, bitter and bitter, do not abstain*". This expression teaches that every civil servant must be a tough person and not easily give up. A success that is obtained must go through a process that is carried out correctly and reasonably to increase the career ladder following the expertise as regulated in the merit system.

*Second*, in responding to the primordial relationship culture that connects local election contestants and the bureaucracy, every bureaucrat must adopt the Malay culture's principles of justice and shame. In the direction of justice, the civil servants must refer to the sentence, "*Only the just king will be worshipped, while the unjust king will be refuted*". This expression describes how civil servants should obey just and capable leaders. In contrast, unjust leaders must be denied or given warnings even though they are their own families. Then, the Principle of Shame needs to be instilled in civil servants. Because at this time, there have been many phenomena that show the loss of guilt in bureaucrats when they get a position only because of family factors and not because of their level of competence and always provide support for prospective contestants through social media.

Therefore, having “Malay Cultural Teaching Guidelines” is essential so that civil servants prioritize shame and spread the values of goodness in carrying out their duties. *Third*, addressing the public passiveness factor triggered by the civil servants' failure to demonstrate professionalism and the reporting process that is considered complicated. From the perspective of Malay culture, every bureaucrat must adhere to the principle of willingness to sacrifice to increase public awareness in responding to various phenomena of violations of the civil service in their environment. The principle of self-sacrifice in Malay culture is a value that teaches the importance of civil servants to serve the country, serve the community, and carry out government duties and functions. This principle must refer to the expression, "*What are the signs of traditional Malay? Sincerity becomes a trait. Sacrifice does not choose a place*". The above expression means that in delivering public services, a state official must implement existing regulatory provisions where service actions must consider the rules, religious values, and customs.

*Fourth*, in response to the weak law enforcement factor, the Malay culture puts the principle of justice as an essential principle that needs to be implanted by the civil servants to support the creation of law enforcement reasonably and minimize various phenomena of violations of neutrality. The guide of justice must refer to the expression "*what is the sign of Malay identity, fair and true identity, fair and right is held to death*". This expression explains that the principle of justice must be embedded in every civil servant. When a civil servant is identified as having committed a violation, the legal process must be on the right and fair path, with no discrimination against any group. The values of justice must be a principle that any interest or individual cannot negotiate. *Fifth*, it is necessary to reform regulatory provisions to address the regulatory ambiguity factor, which gives dominant power to regional heads in the placement of bureaucrats.

The principle of justice in the view of Malay culture must be enforced comprehensively, both for the civil servants as career officials and regional heads as political officials. In this connection, the principle of justice must refer to the expression, "*What are the signs of a true Malay, properly reviewing and justly punishing*". This expression implies that the principle of justice must be carried out with proper study and analysis so that sanctions recommended by civil service management institutions can be optimized.

*Sixth*, in responding to the existence of civil servants who fail to understand the regulations governing neutrality provisions, in the perspective of Malay culture, every bureaucrat must adopt the principles of honesty and hard work to understand the substance of the rules that desire a professional character of the bureaucrat and be able to maintain the quality of democracy at the local level. In the view of Malay culture, the principle of honesty is a principle that must always be adhered to in all conditions and situations faced by the civil servants to maintain the principle of neutrality and provide optimal services to society. In addition, this principle must refer to the expression, "*What are the signs of a true Malay, straight and honest always in the heart, living honestly and defending the truth until death*".

The meaning of the above expression is related to the attitude of civil servants who must be honest in responding to the local elections' dynamics. Civil servants need not be afraid to admit that the substance of laws and regulations on prohibitions in political matters is still not fully understood. Besides, civil servants are also required not to discriminate against any groups, communities, and supporters of any candidates who must be served honestly, professionally, and responsibly. Then, with the principle of hard work in the view of Malay culture, it must be oriented to the expression, "*If you are ashamed of being humiliated by people, work hard in the morning until evening, use your mind to look for opportunities*". This expression explains that every civil servant must have the principle of hard work in studying matters relating to their obligations as a civil servant to become an individual who has the quality and capability to perform their duties as public servants. In carrying out their duties,

the civil servants must be based on a complete understanding of neutrality regulations and local values that they must uphold and serve as ethical guidelines when facing various challenges and problems in regional head elections.

*Seventh*, in responding to the dominant aspect of job ambition, it is carried out to violate regulatory provisions. From the perspective of Malay culture, every bureaucratic apparatus must adhere to justice and diligent work principles. The focus of justice must emphasize a system based on competence and good ethics by the bureaucracy. In essence, the desire for a strategic position in the government sector is common. However, it must still be based on the value of truth that is carried out so that in the future, it can realize that the implementation of development and governance is run optimally. Furthermore, concerning the principle of hard work, every civil servant must provide integrated services based on the principles of hard work and persistence in achieving the ambition of his position and not just being silent without any structured and systematic action.

In local political contestation, Malay culture as local culture is a supporting instrument and an important foundational principle for the local bureaucracy. This finding then strengthens the research of [Pribadi & Kim \(2021\)](#), which explains that cultural aspects can support a better bureaucratic character. Then this finding is also in line with the research of [Rafi et al. \(2021\)](#), which explains that Malay culture has an important contribution to maintaining bureaucratic neutrality. Thus, the role of Malay culture has reflected how the relationship between the bureaucracy and local culture requires reinforcement to support the creation of a professional civil service character. However, *this study has limitations because it only analyzes the six principles of Malay culture actors believe in Riau Province.* Further research related to the extent to which Malay culture contributes to minimizing the phenomenon of bureaucratic violations needs to be done so that the analysis can be more in-depth and can be used as an alternative for the government to overcome various phenomena in the local elections.

## E. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, several aspects that caused the civil servant to be non-neutral in the 2018 Riau Governor Election were influenced by personal closeness (21.74%), primordial relationships (20.29%), society passivity (18.84%), weak law enforcement (11.59%), regulatory ambiguity (11.59%), lack of understanding of civil servants towards regulations (8.70%), and ambition of office (7.25%). Malay cultural values as local values in Riau Province have provided guidelines and instructions on essential principles in minimizing various factors that cause neutrality violations, namely *the principles of justice and truth, courage, hard work, shame, willingness to sacrifice, and also honesty.* The role of Malay cultural values aims to support various statutory provisions that oblige the civil service character, which always maintains the principle of neutrality.

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