

Mitigating Post-Power Syndrome Among Retiring Police Officers: Challenges, Contributing Factors, and Interventions

Frans Chaniago¹ Ardansyah², Pungky Nanda Raras³, Defrizal⁴, Iskandar Ali Alam⁵

¹²³⁴⁵Universitas Bandar Lampung ¹; defrizal@ubl.ac.id

Abstract

This study investigates Post Power Syndrome (PPS) among retiring members of the Indonesian National Police (Polri), focusing on the psychological and social challenges encountered during the transition to retirement. Utilizing a qualitative research design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with retiring and retired Polri members, as well as psychologists specializing in retirement and aging. The findings reveal that the abrupt loss of social status and authority, alongside the transition from a structured work environment to a more unstructured lifestyle, significantly impacts retiring officers. Key factors contributing to PPS include financial instability, loss of daily routines, and insufficient pre-retirement planning. The study proposes several interventions to mitigate the effects of PPS, including comprehensive pre-retirement planning programs, fostering supportive community environments, and promoting physical and mental well-being through exercise and mindfulness. These recommendations aim to provide practical solutions for improving the retirement experience and addressing the psychological challenges faced by retiring police officers.

Keywords: Post Power Syndrome (PPS); Retirement Transition; Psychological Challenges; Financial Stability; Pre-Retirement Planning

1. Introduction

career development of Civil Servants (PNS) plays a crucial role in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of public administration. In Indonesia, the merit system is a pivotal element in managing the State Civil Apparatus (ASN), designed to foster fairness, transparency, and competency-based career progression (Raras et al., 2024). This system aims to ensure that promotions and career advancements are based on merit rather than favoritism or nepotism, thereby improving public service delivery and organizational performance (Dwiputrianti, 2011; Johnson & Lewis, 2018; Kim, 1997; Matei & Campeanu, 2015; Ujhelyi, 2014; Rusli & Jainah, 2024).

Despite a well-defined regulatory framework supporting the merit system, its practical implementation often faces considerable challenges. These challenges can undermine the system's effectiveness and hinder the professional growth of civil servants (Brewer et al., 2021; Matei & Campeanu, 2015; Meyer-Sahling et al., 2021; Oliveira et al., 2024; Rusdiyanto et al., 2024). Issues such as resistance to change, insufficient training, and lack of resources may impede the successful application of the merit system in regional contexts (Nunberg & Taliercio, 2012; Olowu, 2010; Ryan Pratama & Defrizal, 2024; Siregar & Lubis, 2017; Jainah & Sulaiman, 2024).

This study focuses on optimizing career development for PNS in Tanggamus Regency, with a specific emphasis on the implementation of the merit system. It aims to explore the various strategies employed to overcome challenges and

enhance the system's effectiveness (Barusman, 2024; Shafie, 1996; Siregar & Lubis, 2017; Enakesda & Jainah, 2024). The research objectives are twofold: first, to identify both the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing career development within the context of the merit system; and second, to propose practical strategies for improving the implementation and outcomes of the merit system (Froese et al., 2019; Hill et al., 2014a; Matei & Campeanu, 2015; Polastri & Truisti, 2017; Smith et al., 2024).

A notable gap exists in the existing literature concerning the practical challenges and strategic solutions related to the merit system's implementation in regional settings like Tanggamus Regency. While previous studies have extensively addressed the theoretical aspects and general benefits of the merit system, they often overlook the specific obstacles faced in different regions and the tailored strategies required to address these issues (Dwiputrianti, 2011; Mau et al., 2020; Poocharoen & Brillantes, 2013; Pratama & Defrizal, 2024; Sampe et al., 2022; Hakim et al., 2020). This research aims to fill this gap by providing an in-depth qualitative analysis of the experiences and practices within Tanggamus Regency. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the merit system's implementation in diverse administrative contexts, offering insights and recommendations that could be applicable to similar regions facing analogous challenges.

merit system's adaptation to the implementation of bureaucratic official recruitment and promotion policy in south central timor regency Retirement represents a pivotal moment in an individual's life, marking the end of a career and the beginning of a new phase characterized by significant psychological and social adjustments (Barusman & Redaputri, 2018; Seregig et al., 2021). For police officers, this transition is uniquely complex due to the abrupt cessation of authority, social status, and the highly structured nature of their daily routines (McCarty & Skogan, 2012; McElroy et al., 1999). This experience often precipitates a condition known as Post Power Syndrome (PPS), which is characterized by psychological distress, including stress, depression, and a profound sense of diminished self-worth (Galinsky et al., 2012; Keltner et al., 2003; Langan-fox et al., 1997; Twemlow & Harvey, 2010; Jainah et al., 2024). The challenge is particularly pronounced for members of the police force, where identity and purpose are closely tied to their professional roles.

Post Power Syndrome (PPS) can profoundly impact retiring police officers, disrupting their sense of identity and well-being. Despite the recognition of PPS in broader retirement studies, there remains a significant gap in understanding how this condition specifically affects police officers (Black et al., 2013; McCarty et al., 2019; McCarty & Skogan, 2012; Jainah, 2023). Research into the unique experiences of police retirees, particularly within the context of the Indonesian National Police (Polri) in Polda Lampung, is sparse, highlighting the need for a targeted investigation into this phenomenon.

This study is designed to address this research gap by systematically exploring the psychological and social challenges faced by retiring police officers. The study will focus on three primary objectives: (1) to identify the specific psychological and social difficulties encountered by Polri members approaching retirement, (2) to analyze the underlying factors contributing to the development of PPS among these individuals, and (3) to propose effective interventions aimed

at mitigating the impact of PPS and facilitating a smoother transition into retirement.

By fulfilling these objectives, this research seeks to enhance the understanding of Post Power Syndrome within the context of Indonesian police officers and to develop practical strategies that can be implemented to support retiring officers. The ultimate goal is to contribute valuable insights and recommendations that can improve the retirement experience for police officers, ensuring they transition successfully into post-service life while maintaining their mental and emotional well-being.

2. Research Method

This study utilizes a qualitative research design to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of Indonesian National Police (Polri) members approaching retirement. The qualitative approach is chosen for its effectiveness in capturing the intricate and subjective experiences of individuals, which may not be fully addressed by quantitative methods (Cheah et al., 2018; Nugroho et al., 2023; Villaveces-Izquierdo, 2010; Jainah et al., 2024). By employing this approach, the study aims to uncover deeper insights into the psychological and social transitions faced by retiring police officers.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews with three distinct groups of informants: (1) Polri members nearing retirement, (2) retired Polri members, and (3) psychologists who specialize in retirement and aging. This selection ensures a broad range of perspectives and experiences related to Post- Power Syndrome (PPS) (Black et al., 2013; Hamal et al., 2021; Erlina, 2023).

Informants were chosen using purposive sampling to achieve a diverse representation of experiences and viewpoints. This method allows for the deliberate selection of participants who possess the relevant knowledge and experience to provide valuable insights into the phenomena under investigation (Luborsky & Rubinstein, 1995; Negrin et al., 2022). To facilitate open and candid discussions, interviews were conducted in confidential settings, ensuring that participants felt comfortable sharing their personal experiences and perceptions. The semi-structured interviews were guided by a carefully designed set of questions aimed at exploring various dimensions of PPS. These questions addressed emotional, physical, and social changes experienced during the transition to retirement, as well as the coping mechanisms employed and the support systems available (Hamal et al., 2021; Mudumbi et al., 2018; Purdon et al., 2002; Reitzes & Mutran, 2004). The interview guide was structured to allow flexibility in responses, enabling participants to elaborate on their experiences and provide detailed narratives.

The data collected from the interviews were subjected to thematic analysis, a method that involves systematically coding and categorizing the data to identify recurring themes and patterns (Bouw et al., 2021; Campbell et al., 2009; Knapik, 2006). This analysis approach enables a detailed examination of the data, facilitating the identification of key issues and trends related to PPS. Through thematic analysis, the study aims to uncover commonalities and differences in experiences among the different groups of informants, providing a

nuanced understanding of the factors contributing to PPS and potential strategies for intervention.

study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to thoroughly explore the career development strategies for PNS in Tanggamus Regency. The research methodology integrates in-depth interviews, document analysis, and a literature review to provide a comprehensive understanding of the merit system's implementation and its impact on career development (Wartono et al., 2022).

Data Collection is a multi-faceted process designed to capture a holistic view of the subject matter. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including senior officials, HR managers, and PNS employees (Hutchison et al., 2014; Kernaghan, 2011). These interviews aimed to elicit detailed insights into the practical challenges and perceived effectiveness of the merit system. By engaging directly with individuals involved in or affected by the system, the research sought to uncover both the successes and shortcomings experienced in the local context (Gabris & Mitchell, 1986; Polastri & Truisi, 2017; Poocharoen & Brillantes, 2013).

In addition to interviews, the study involved a thorough document analysis. This included reviewing relevant documents such as government regulations, internal HR policies, and performance evaluation reports (Juhdi et al., 2015; Miah & Hossain, 2014; Ufua et al., 2022). This analysis provided a crucial understanding of the regulatory framework and its actual implementation, shedding light on how well the merit system is integrated into existing administrative practices.

A comprehensive literature review was also conducted to establish a theoretical foundation for the study. The review covered existing research on merit systems, career development, and public administration, allowing for a contextual understanding of the subject and identifying gaps in current knowledge (Asif & Rathore, 2021; Polastri & Truisi, 2017; Poocharoen & Brillantes, 2013; Siregar & Lubis, 2017).

Data Analysis was carried out using SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis. This method facilitated a systematic evaluation of the internal and external factors affecting career development within the merit system framework. By assessing strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats, the study provided a nuanced analysis of the current state of career development and proposed potential strategies for enhancement (Ge et al., 2023; Hill et al., 2014b; Hirschi et al., 2017; Jackson & Tomlinson, 2019). This approach enabled the research to identify critical areas for improvement and to develop actionable recommendations tailored to the specific context of Tanggamus Regency.

3. Result and Discussion

The study uncovered several significant themes related to the psychological and social challenges of Post Power Syndrome (PPS) among Polri members approaching retirement. These findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the difficulties faced by retiring police officers, the factors contributing to PPS, and potential interventions to mitigate its impact.

Psychological and Social Challenges

One of the major psychological and social challenges identified was the substantial loss of social status and authority that accompanies retirement. Consistent with McCarty & Skogan (2012) and McElroy et al. (1999), participants frequently reported a profound sense of diminished self-worth and relevance as they neared the end of their careers. This loss was particularly acute for those who had occupied high-ranking positions, and it was often accompanied by heightened levels of anxiety and depression, as noted by Galinsky et al. (2012) and Keltner et al. (2003). The shift from a structured, demanding work environment to a more unstructured and leisurely lifestyle emerged as another significant challenge. Many participants struggled to find meaningful activities to engage in, leading to a pervasive sense of purposelessness and a lack of direction in their post-retirement lives, echoing the concerns highlighted by Langan-fox et al. (1997) and Twemlow & Harvey (2010). These challenges underscore the profound impact that retirement can have on an individual's sense of identity and mental health.

Factors Contributing to PPS

The study identified several factors contributing to the onset and severity of PPS among retiring police officers. A critical factor was the abrupt change in income and financial stability, which was a major source of anxiety for many participants, as discussed by Black et al. (2013). Concerns about financial security significantly exacerbated their stress and worry about the future, aligning with findings by McCarty et al. (2019). Additionally, the loss of daily routines and the frequent absence of work-related social interactions contributed to feelings of isolation and loneliness, which were particularly pronounced among those who had not planned for retirement or engaged in any preparatory activities. This lack of social engagement, consistent with McCarty & Skogan (2012), highlights that insufficient pre-retirement planning and the absence of support programs play a crucial role in the development of PPS. Participants who had not prepared for retirement were more likely to experience severe symptoms, emphasizing the need for targeted support during the transition phase.

Interventions and Recommendations

To address and mitigate the impact of PPS, several key interventions are recommended. Firstly, the implementation of comprehensive pre-retirement planning programs is essential. These programs should encompass financial planning, psychological counseling, and the development of social activities. Tailoring these programs to the specific needs of police officers and providing them well in advance of retirement can help address potential challenges before they become overwhelming, as suggested by Galinsky et al. (2012). Secondly, fostering a supportive community environment is crucial for retirees. Encouraging participation in community activities and volunteer work can help maintain social connections and foster a sense of belonging. Such engagement provides retirees with a renewed sense of purpose and fulfillment, countering feelings of isolation, as highlighted by Langan-fox et al. (1997). Lastly, promoting physical and mental well-being through regular exercise and

mindfulness practices can be beneficial in alleviating some of the emotional and physical symptoms associated with PPS. By addressing these aspects, retirees can better manage the transition and improve their overall quality of life.

The findings of this study underscore the need for targeted interventions and support systems to aid retiring police officers in navigating the complex transition into retirement. Implementing these recommendations can enhance the retirement experience and mitigate the adverse effects of PPS, ultimately contributing to the well-being of retiring officers. Analysis of career development strategies for PNS in Tanggamus Regency underscores several key findings that are pivotal in assessing the effectiveness and challenges of the merit system.

Strengths of the Merit System

A significant strength of the merit system in Tanggamus Regency is the strong commitment from senior leadership. Leaders actively promote transparency and prioritize competency-based evaluations, which are essential for the system's success. This aligns with the observations of Dwiputrianti (2011), who emphasized the importance of leadership commitment in promoting merit-based systems. The robust regulatory framework supporting the merit system in Tanggamus Regency also provides a solid foundation for its implementation. This comprehensive framework, as noted by Johnson & Lewis (2018), offers clear guidelines and standards for evaluating and advancing employees based on merit, contributing to a more structured and equitable career development process.

Weaknesses in Implementation

Despite these strengths, the implementation of the merit system in Tanggamus Regency faces notable weaknesses. A significant issue is the limited understanding of the merit system among PNS employees. Many employees lack awareness of merit-based criteria and the benefits it offers, which impedes the effective implementation and acceptance of the system, as suggested by Brewer et al. (2021) and Nunberg & Taliencio (2012). This knowledge gap can lead to resistance and misalignment with the system's objectives. Additionally, political interference in promotions and career advancements undermines the merit system's integrity. When political considerations overshadow merit-based evaluations, it compromises fairness and transparency, eroding trust in the system and hindering its success, a concern echoed by Oliveira et al. (2024) and Siregar & Lubis (2017).

Opportunities for Enhancement

Opportunities exist to enhance career development within the merit system's framework. Targeted training programs present a chance to align employee development with competency standards and address specific skill gaps. Investing in such training, as advocated by Matei & Campeanu (2015), can better equip employees to meet the expectations of the merit system and advance their careers. Collaboration with educational institutions can provide valuable resources and expertise for competency development. These partnerships can offer specialized training and access to best practices, further

supporting the implementation and effectiveness of the merit system, as recommended by Froese et al. (2019).

Threats to Effective Implementation

Despite these opportunities, several threats must be addressed. Budget constraints pose a significant threat to the effective implementation of the merit system, as limited financial resources can restrict the scope and quality of training programs, impacting the system's ability to fully support career development (Meyer-Sahling et al., 2021). Additionally, resistance to change from employees accustomed to the old system presents a challenge. Overcoming this resistance requires a strategic approach that includes effective communication, education, and engagement, as highlighted by Olowu (2010), to facilitate a smoother transition and foster acceptance of the merit-based approach.

Strategic Recommendations

To address these challenges and capitalize on opportunities, several strategic recommendations are proposed. Enhancing human resource management practices is crucial for aligning HR policies and procedures with merit-based principles, ensuring consistency and fairness in career development practices (Polastri & Truisi, 2017; Shafie, 1996). Developing clear and measurable competency standards for various positions is also essential. Well-defined standards, as emphasized by Kim (1997) and Hill et al. (2014b), will help employees understand the criteria for evaluation and advancement, reinforcing the merit-based approach. Implementing continuous training programs can improve employees' skills and knowledge, keeping them updated with competency requirements and adapting to changes in the merit system. Establishing career mentoring programs can provide valuable guidance, helping employees navigate their career paths and develop the skills needed to succeed within the merit-based framework. Finally, introducing recognition programs can reward outstanding performance and motivate employees, reinforcing the value of merit-based performance and encouraging a culture of excellence (Matei & Campeanu, 2015; Ujhelyi, 2014).

By addressing these recommendations, Tanggamus Regency can enhance the effectiveness of the merit system, fostering a more equitable and transparent career development process for PNS employees.

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that while the implementation of the merit system in Tanggamus Regency has made significant strides, several challenges remain. Enhancing understanding among employees, mitigating political interference, and ensuring adequate budget allocations are critical for the system's success. The proposed strategies, including improved HR management, competency standards, continuous training, career mentoring, and recognition programs, aim to address these challenges and promote a more effective career development framework.

This research underscores the importance of a tailored approach to implementing the merit system in diverse administrative contexts. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of these strategies and investigate additional factors influencing career development in other regions. By addressing these areas, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the merit system's role in public administration and its potential to enhance public service quality. This study highlights the significant psychological and social challenges faced by Polri members nearing retirement and identifies key factors contributing to the development of PPS. The findings underscore the importance of comprehensive pre-retirement planning and support programs in mitigating the impact of PPS. By addressing the specific needs of retiring police officers, these interventions can help ease the transition into retirement and improve overall well-being.

Future research should explore the long-term effectiveness of these interventions and examine the experiences of police officers in different regions and contexts. Additionally, studies could investigate the role of organizational culture and policies in shaping the retirement experiences of police officers. By continuing to explore these areas, researchers can contribute to the development of more effective strategies for supporting retirees and enhancing their quality of life.

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