

ANALYSIS OF THE INDONESIAN NATIONAL POLICE'S MERIT-BASED ASSESSMENT CENTER FOR THE POSITION OF HEAD OF SOCIETY GUIDANCE SECTION AT THE CENTRAL JAVA REGIONAL POLICE

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Abstract. The transformation of public sector human resource management requires the implementation of an objective and professional merit-based system; however, its implementation in Indonesia—particularly regarding the use of Assessment Centers—still faces various challenges. This study aims to analyze the implementation of a merit-based Assessment Center in the selection process for the position of Head of Community Relations (Kasat Binmas) at the Central Java Regional Police Headquarters and to identify the factors influencing it. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach through a literature review of relevant scientific sources and policy documents. The results indicate that, normatively, the Assessment Center has been conducted in accordance with meritocratic principles using comprehensive instruments; however, empirically, its effectiveness remains suboptimal, marked by a predominance of candidates in the intermediate competency category and a scarcity of candidates with outstanding qualifications. Major obstacles include low applicant interest, budget constraints, low assessor capacity, limited digital literacy among candidates, as well as potential bias and interference in the selection process. The implications of this study underscore the need for institutional capacity building, enhanced human resource competencies, and the optimization of transparent and accountable governance to realize an effective and sustainable merit-based system in the management of the Indonesian National Police's human resources.

Keywords: Merit System, Assessment Center, Public Human Resources Management, National Police, Bureaucratic Reform

I. INTRODUCTION

The transformation of human resource management (HRM) in the public sector in the contemporary era is marked by a paradigm shift from a procedural, administrative approach toward a strategic approach that emphasizes professionalism, accountability, and performance. Within this framework, public organizations are no longer required merely to perform administrative functions, but must also ensure that every individual filling a specific position possesses competencies aligned with the organization's interests (Irianto, et al., 2025). These changes are in line with global demands for good governance, which emphasizes transparency, effectiveness, and integrity in the management of public organizations. Therefore, human resources management reform has become a crucial aspect of efforts to improve the quality of public services and public trust in state institutions (Mozin, et al., 2025).

One of the key concepts underpinning human resource management reform in the public sector is the merit system. The merit system emphasizes that every decision regarding human resource management—particularly in selection, promotion, and job placement—must be based on an individual's qualifications, competencies, and performance,

rather than on non-objective factors such as personal connections, patronage, or other subjective considerations (Bewinda, Fauzy, & Daud, 2023). In this context, the merit system serves not only as a normative principle but also as an operational mechanism to ensure that public organizations are staffed by professionals of integrity. The effective implementation of the merit system is believed to improve organizational performance, strengthen accountability, and minimize practices that run counter to the principles of good governance (Annafi & Zandrato, 2025).

To implement a merit-based system, tools are needed that can objectively and comprehensively measure individual competencies. One method widely used in modern human resources management is the Assessment Center. An Assessment Center is an evaluation approach that employs various assessment methods to measure individual competencies against established standards (Assidiqie & Sakapumama, 2025). This method involves various techniques, such as job simulations, competency-based interviews, group discussions, and psychological tests, which are conducted by more than one assessor to ensure the objectivity of the assessment results (Rupp, et al., 2015). With these characteristics, the Assessment Center is able to provide

a more accurate picture of an individual's abilities and potential in performing a particular role.

The strength of the Assessment Center lies in its ability to integrate various dimensions of competence—cognitive, affective, and behavioral—into a single comprehensive assessment framework (Assidique & Sakapurnama, 2025). This makes the Assessment Center one of the most relevant tools for supporting the implementation of a merit-based system, particularly in the selection and placement of strategic positions. In practice, the use of the Assessment Center not only helps organizations select the best candidates but also provides a strong foundation for evidence-based decision-making (*evidence-based decision making*). Thus, the Assessment Center plays a crucial role in ensuring that the hiring process is conducted in a transparent, objective, and accountable manner.

In the context of public sector organizations in Indonesia, the implementation of a merit-based system and the use of Assessment Centers have become an integral part of the bureaucratic reform agenda. The Indonesian government has established various policies to promote the implementation of a merit-based system in the management of civil service human resources, with the aim of creating a professional, neutral bureaucracy free from political interference (Hasim, Asmadianto, & Edyanto, 2025). However, the implementation of this policy at the organizational level still faces various challenges, including structural, cultural, and technical ones. This indicates that although the merit system has been recognized as a key principle in public human resource management, its practical application still requires sustained and comprehensive efforts.

The Indonesian National Police (Polri), as a public institution, plays a strategic role in maintaining public safety and order. In carrying out its duties, Polri is required to have a professional, competent, and highly ethical workforce. Therefore, human resource management within Polri is a critical aspect in supporting the effective execution of police duties. In this context, the implementation of a merit-based system for filling structural positions within Polri is essential to ensure that every position is filled by individuals with the appropriate competencies.

One of the key positions within the organizational structure of the Indonesian National Police is the Head of the Community Development Unit. Article 10 of Police Regulation No. 23 of 2020 states that the Community Development Unit plays a vital role in carrying out its functions *community policing*, which aims to build partnerships between the National Police and the community in order to foster sustainable security and order. Consequently, the Head of Community Relations is not only required to possess technical skills in policing but must also demonstrate strong social, communication, and leadership competencies. Therefore, the selection and placement process for this position must be conducted meticulously and based on objective competency assessments.

In this context, a comprehensive analysis is needed to understand how the merit-based Assessment Center is implemented in the selection process for the position of Head of Community Relations (Kasat Binmas) at the Central Java

Regional Police Headquarters. This analysis focuses not only on procedural aspects but also encompasses the factors influencing its implementation and its implications for the quality of personnel placement. Through a holistic approach, this study is expected to provide a clearer picture of the actual conditions surrounding the application of the merit system within the Indonesian National Police.

Furthermore, optimizing the use of the Assessment Center as the basis for job placement is expected to strengthen the implementation of the merit system at the Central Java Regional Police. By making the results of the Assessment Center the primary reference in decision-making, the selection and placement process can be conducted more objectively, transparently, and accountably. This will not only improve the quality of human resources occupying strategic positions but will also strengthen public trust in the National Police as a professional and ethical organization.

From a broader perspective, the successful implementation of a merit system through Assessment Centers within the Indonesian National Police can make a significant contribution to bureaucratic reform efforts in Indonesia. Best practices resulting from the optimal implementation of the merit system can serve as a model for other public institutions in managing human resources professionally. Thus, this study is highly relevant not only from an academic perspective but also from practical and policy perspectives, in order to promote the realization of good and sustainable governance.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a literature review approach to analyze the implementation of a merit-based Assessment Center in the selection process for the position of Head of Community Relations at the Central Java Regional Police Headquarters. The data used consists of secondary data obtained from various sources, such as articles in reputable academic journals, official government publications, and documents and reports relevant to the research topic. Data collection was conducted through a systematic review of credible and up-to-date literature. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach, with the aim of comprehensively describing the concepts, practices, and factors influencing the implementation of the merit system within the context of public sector organizations.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Assessment Center and Merit System

A merit system is a method or approach to recruiting, assigning, and promoting employees that is not based on patronage or the spoils system (family, relatives, race, ethnicity, social group, religion, etc.), but rather on their knowledge, skills, abilities, experience, and competencies. (Liu & Meutia, 2019). By using this merit-based system, it is hoped that the individuals holding specific positions will be competent and professional in their respective fields.

Pursuant to Police Regulation No. 6 of 2016 on the Assessment Center of the Indonesian National Police, the

Assessment Center of the Indonesian National Police is conducted in accordance with the following guidelines:

- Objective, reflecting the assessee's actual abilities;
- Accountable, ensuring that the Assessment Center procedures are reliable or valid;
- Necessity: The Assessment Center is conducted based on existing needs;
- Independent, so that the Assessment Center process is not influenced by other parties.

Meanwhile, the characteristics of the Assessment Center at the Indonesian National Police can be described as follows:

- Specifically designed for certain positions or roles;
- Using a variety of assessment methods;
- Each evaluation group consists of a minimum of 5 (five) examinees and a maximum of 6 (six) evaluators;
- During the assessment process, there is a ratio of 2 (two) assessors to 1 (one) assessee;
- Candidates are evaluated based on the criteria established for the position;
- The assessment results are derived from observations and other information gathered during the Assessment Center;
- The final assessment is determined by combining the information/data discussed at the Assessor Meeting;
- The results of the Assessment Center are valid for 2 (two) years from the date they are issued;
- The results of the Assessment Center can be used to provide feedback to the participants.

According to a study by (Assidiqie & Sakapumama, 2025), has conducted a SWOT analysis of the implementation of the Assessment Center within the Indonesian National Police, as illustrated in the table below:

Table 1. SWOT Analysis of the Implementation of the Assessment Center in the Indonesian National Police

Strength	Weakness
- Assessment Centers are based on formal regulations - AC instruments are standardized - There are AC centers at the National Police Headquarters	- Limited number of competent and trained assessors - Personal bias in the observation and group discussion processes - Reliance on central government funding, coupled with a lack of innovation at the local level.
Opportunities	Threat
- Benchmarking against other countries, such as China and Singapore - Support from digital technologies - Potential for collaboration with external organizations	- An organizational culture based on seniority that hinders objective promotion decisions - Internal resistance to the results of the assessment, which are viewed as a mere formality - Insufficient budgetary support, which hinders the equitable implementation of assessment activities

Conduct of the Community Relations Division Chief Assessment Center at the Central Java Regional Police Headquarters

The Assessment Center activity was conducted to provide input to leadership for determining human resources development measures within the Indonesian National Police based on the results of the Assessment Center for the position of Head of Community Relations, as well as for formulating strategic policies in other human resources areas. Furthermore, the objective of conducting this Assessment Center activity is to establish a sound career development system and to identify police personnel who possess the necessary competencies to serve as Head of Community Relations, within the jurisdiction of the Central Java Regional Police.

The implementation mechanism for the AC is as follows:

- Coordinate the implementation of the Assessment Center to determine the required competencies and levels
- Inviting Assessment Center participants;
- Conducting an Assessment Center for the position of Head of Community Relations;
- Collecting data from the Assessment Center for the position of Head of Community Relations, including the following data:
 - Cognitive;
 - Personality;
 - In-Tray;
 - Discussion;
 - Interview.
- Managing data from the Assessment Center for the position of Head of Community Relations;
- Calculate the percentage and then analyze and evaluate the results.

Pursuant to Police Regulation No. 6 of 2015 on the Indonesian National Police Assessment Center, there are several competency profiles for the Assessment Center regarding the position of Head of Community Relations, namely:

a. Analytical thinking

This can be defined as the ability to think in a structured manner, beginning with identifying and separating the elements that make up a situation and understanding the relationships between those elements. In addition, this ability also involves understanding cause-and-effect relationships to identify the key elements that make up a situation.

b. Integrity

This can be defined as the ability to act and behave honestly and openly while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with the values and work ethics that apply within the institution. This includes firmness in applying existing principles and values as a form of consistency in attitude and behavior toward beliefs that align with the organization's values.

c. Service-oriented

It can be defined as a desire to help and serve others in order to meet their needs. It emphasizes the importance of understanding those needs and making a greater effort to provide service with a long-term focus. The customers in question can be either external or internal.

d. Leadership

It is the ability to flexibly develop and apply various leadership roles and styles, adapting to work situations and conditions as well as the development of subordinates, so that organizational goals can be achieved.

e. Innovation

It involves the creation of innovative new solutions that contribute to improved performance, better results, and higher productivity.

f. Building relationships

efforts to develop, maintain, and leverage extensive relationships or networks (such as establishing partnerships with external parties) in order to achieve the organization's current and future goals, as well as to create business opportunities and overcome obstacles.

g. Planning and organizing

It can be defined as the ability to effectively plan and organize work in accordance with the organization's needs, by setting goals and anticipating needs and priorities.

h. Communication

It is the ability to convey opinions, ideas, or information in a way that is easy to understand.

Regarding the Assessment Center method used, data collection in particular is carried out in various ways, as follows:

a. Psychometrics

Psychometric testing is a type of assessment used to evaluate an individual's cognitive abilities and personality traits.

b. Behavior Event Interview

It is an interview process designed to gather data in the form of evidence of work behavior demonstrated by participants based on their work experience.

c. Inventory

d. It is a type of psychological test designed to measure behavior, habits, and norms with the aim of assessing and studying a person's personality (Zubaidah, Hatijah, Husna, & Sariyati, 2024).

e. In-Tray

An in-tray exercise is a structured simulation designed to reflect the real-life situations participants encounter in performing their daily tasks.

f. Leaderless Group Discussion

is a simulation in the form of a group discussion without a designated leader, with empirical evidence evident in the participants' behavior

g. Presentation

A presentation is a form of communication that uses various methods to convey ideas, concepts, or information—both verbally and in writing—on a topic that may or may not have been predetermined.

h. Games

A game is a simulation that uses group-based gameplay with established rules.

i. Fact Finding

Fact-finding is a process aimed at discovering information related to a particular fact.

j. Proposal Writing

Proposal writing is an exercise that requires participants to draft a written document and present the results in the form of a presentation.

k. Problem Analysis

A case study is a simulation designed to assess a person's ability to solve a problem.

l. Role Play

Role-playing is a simulation used to assess a person's ability to perform a specific role based on a scenario provided by the examiner.

Psychometric tests, in-tray exercises, personality tests, and case studies are administered using Computer-Assisted Testing (CAT). Meanwhile, behavior-based interviews (BEI), leaderless group discussions (LGD), presentations, games, fact-finding exercises, proposal writing, and role-playing are conducted in person.

Next, there are several stages in the Assessment Center process, including:

a. Preparation phase:

- 1) Developing and defining competency profiles;
- 2) Selecting the appropriate methods;
- 3) Scheduling activities;
- 4) Preparing facilities and equipment;
- 5) Appointing assessors; and
- 6) Inviting candidates;

b. Implementation phase:

- 1) Opening of the session;
- 2) Providing an explanation to the candidates;
- 3) Filling out the personal history form;
- 4) Conducting tests or exams;
- 5) Recording information or data;
- 6) Analyzing the data and evaluating the results by the assessors;
- 7) Assessors' meeting to consolidate or integrate the assessment results;

c. Final stage:

- 1) Prepare a report on the results of the activity;
- 2) Communicate the results of the Assessment Center;
- 3) Present the results of the Assessment Center (if necessary);
- 4) Provide feedback to the participants; and
- 5) Conduct an analysis and evaluation of the Assessment Center results.

Next, based on the methods employed, the scores/results were processed by the assessor according to predetermined weightings, resulting in scores reflecting each participant's (assessee's) competency level. Based on the competency levels of each assessee, criteria were then established according to the number of levels achieved. Participants falling under the first criterion (SMS) are those who have the highest number of required competency levels.

The following table outlines the criteria for the Assessment Center that was conducted:

Table 2. Assessment Center Evaluation Criteria

NO	CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
1	Fully Qualified	Based on these criteria, the candidate possesses all the competencies required for the specified position
2	Eligible	Based on these criteria, the assessee possesses the competencies required for the specified position, with 1 or 2 areas for competency development
3	Satisfactory	Based on these criteria, the assessee possesses the competencies required for the specified position, with 3 or 4 areas for competency development
4	Still Eligible	Based on these criteria, the assessee possesses the competencies required for the specified position, with 5 or 6 areas for competency development
5	Does Not Meet the Requirements	Based on these criteria, the assessee possesses the competencies required for the specified position, with 7 or 8 areas for competency development

Based on the results of the Assessment Center for the position of Head of Community Relations (Kasat Binmas) conducted at the Central Java Regional Police Headquarters in 2024, the following results were obtained:

Table 3. Results of the 2024 Assessment Center for the Head of Community Relations at the Central Java Regional Police

CRITERIA	NUMBER OF ASSESSORS	PERCENTAGE
Fully Qualified	1	4%
Eligible	4	17%
Satisfactory	9	38%
Still Eligible	9	38%
Does Not Meet the Requirements	1	4%
TOTAL	24	100%

Based on the table of results from the Assessment Center above, only 1 (one) person was deemed Highly Qualified (HQ), possessing all the competencies required for the position of Head of Community Relations. Meanwhile, there were 4 (four) individuals meeting the “Qualified” criteria, 9 (nine) meeting the “Sufficiently Qualified” criteria, 9 (nine) meeting the “Still Qualified” criteria, and 1 (one) meeting the “Not Yet Qualified” criteria.

Challenges/Obstacles in the Implementation of the Assessment Center

When carrying out an activity, there are inevitably challenges and obstacles that affect it. Based on an interview with AKP Muhammad Gargarin Friyandi, S.I.K., M.H. (Head

of the Competency Subdivision, Personnel Development Division, Human Resources Directorate, Central Java Regional Police), there are several obstacles to the implementation of the Assessment Center, particularly for the position of Head of Community Relations at the Central Java Regional Police, as follows:

a. Low number of applicants (low interest).

low applicant pool The Assessment Center for the position of Head of Community Relations (Kasat Binmas) reflects issues regarding the perception of the strategic value and appeal of the position. From the perspective of merit-based human resource management, this situation indicates an imbalance between organizational needs and individual preferences regarding specific career paths. The Community Guidance position is often perceived as less prestigious compared to other operational functions, such as Criminal Investigation or Traffic, which are considered to offer greater visibility of performance and opportunities for career advancement (awards). Consequently, the number of personnel willing to compete in the Assessment Center is limited, which has the potential to lower the quality of the selection process due to a reduction in the variety and depth of available talent. In the long term, this situation could hinder the implementation of a merit-based system, which requires open and competency-based competition.

b. Limited budget

Budget constraints represent a significant structural obstacle to the implementation of comprehensive, high-standard Assessment Centers. Conceptually, the Assessment Center method requires relatively substantial resources, including the provision of facilities, the development of assessment instruments, the use of technology, and the involvement of competent assessors. Financial constraints result in a reduction in the number and variety of assessment methods used, and have the potential to lower the validity and reliability of assessment results. Furthermore, budget constraints can also hinder the implementation of quality assurance and continuous improvement within the assessment system. In the context of a merit-based system, this situation implies that the objectivity and accountability of the job selection process are not yet optimal.

c. The assessors' limited ability to use the tools.

The assessors' competence is a key factor in ensuring the quality of the Assessment Center process. Limitations in assessors' ability to operate and interpret various assessment tools—such as in-tray exercises, Leaderless Group Discussions (LGD), Behavioral Event Interviews (BEI), and presentations—indicate a gap in professional capacity. This issue is further exacerbated by the lack of specific, ongoing advanced training regarding the use of assessment instruments. From a methodological perspective, these limitations can reduce the accuracy of competency measurement, increase the potential for assessment bias, and lower inter-rater reliability. Thus, enhancing assessors' capacity through structured training and certification is an urgent need to strengthen the integrity of the merit system.

d. The assessee's limited ability to operate a computer.

Digital transformation in the assessment process, particularly through the use of Computer-Assisted Testing

(CAT), requires adequate digital literacy among assessment participants (assesseees). However, participants still face limitations in their technical ability to operate computer devices, especially when taking psychometric tests and participating in digital in-tray simulations. This situation has the potential to cause construct-irrelevant variance, where test results do not fully reflect the competencies being measured but are instead influenced by technical proficiency in using the technology. Consequently, the validity of the assessment results is compromised. Within the merit system framework, this issue poses a challenge to the principles of fairness and equal opportunity, necessitating interventions such as pre-assessment training or the provision of CAT system usage simulations for participants.

In addition to the challenges mentioned above, according to a study by (Liu & Meutia, 2019), There are two aspects that have not yet been fully optimized in the implementation of the Assessment Center at the Indonesian National Police, namely:

- a. Transparency regarding the conduct of Assessment Center activities is limited to internal police personnel, such as the assessors and assesseees involved in the process, while the public cannot ascertain the results obtained by the assesseees during the assessment process; consequently, the organization fails to fully uphold the principle of transparency in its dealings with the public.
- b. Assessment Center results cannot, in principle, be influenced by any party, including officials at the Provincial Police Headquarters. However, these results may first be reviewed by authorized officials—such as to verify any ineligible health records or prior disciplinary violations by the candidate—to ensure no issues arise should the individual assume office in the future. This is what can give rise to indications of corruption, where the results issued can be annulled by the Career Advisory Board if an appraisee who has taken office encounters problems. This can open up opportunities for the Career Advisory Board to trade available positions. As a recommendation, the Career Advisory Board should act as an advisor to the Assessment Center so that the center operates independently.

Meanwhile, according to a study by (Syahputra, Trijono, & Aminulloh, 2025) There are several obstacles to the implementation of the Indonesian National Police Assessment Center, as follows:

- a. A lack of understanding and awareness regarding Police Regulation No. 5 of 2016 on the Indonesian National Police Assessment Center, resulting in many officers being unaware of the importance of the Assessment Center for their career development.
- b. Limited resources, both in terms of budget and facilities needed to support the operation of the National Police Assessment Center, such as a lack of facilities to support simulation and assessment activities.
- c. Members of the Indonesian National Police tend to resist change and are accustomed to old ways of doing things; consequently, they feel uncomfortable with or reject the changes brought about by the implementation of the Indonesian National Police Assessment Center.

- d. The evaluations conducted during the activity were not objective or were inaccurate, thereby undermining the integrity of the National Police Assessment Center and the career development of its members.
- e. Members of the Indonesian National Police face challenges in balancing their operational duties with the time required for assessments, which often conflicts with their other duties.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results and discussion above, it can be concluded that the implementation of the merit-based Assessment Center for the position of Head of Community Relations at the Central Java Regional Police has, in theory, been designed in accordance with the principles of objectivity, accountability, transparency, and independence, and is supported by an adequate regulatory framework and relatively comprehensive assessment instruments. However, empirically, the effectiveness of its implementation has not been optimal, as reflected in the distribution of assessment results dominated by the “Sufficiently Qualified” and “Still Qualified” categories, as well as the very limited number of candidates meeting the optimal qualification standard (“Highly Qualified”). This situation indicates a gap between the required competency standards and the actual capacity of available human resources. Furthermore, various structural, technical, and cultural constraints—including low applicant interest, budget constraints, low assessor competency, limited digital literacy among assesseees, as well as potential bias and intervention in the post-assessment process—serve as determining factors hindering the optimization of the merit system’s implementation. Thus, although the Assessment Center has functioned as a strategic instrument in supporting competency-based talent management, its implementation still requires systemic strengthening to fully realize the principles of meritocracy in the management of the Indonesian National Police’s human resources.

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