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## Employee Empowerment in Order to Increase the Professionalism Index

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### Abstract

Law Number 5 of 2014 regulates the management of Civil Servants (*Aparatur Sipil Negara*/ASN), with the principle of professionalism serving as one of the foundations of public service effectiveness. Professionalism is defined as the reliability in task execution, ensuring high-quality performance that is timely, precise, and appropriate for the public. In simpler terms, professionalism is the behaviour, methods, and qualities that characterize a profession. Data shows that the effectiveness of the Indonesian government, including the professionalism of its civil servants, still needs improvement. According to the National Civil Service Agency (*Badan Kepegawaian Negara*/BKN), the measurement of the ASN Professionalism Index (*Indeks profesionalitas Aparatur Sipil Negara*/IPASN) is based on four dimensions: educational qualifications, competencies, performance, and discipline. Nationally, the IPASN score remains in the low-to-medium range. As a government institution, the Center for Drug and Food Control in Semarang (*Balai Besar Pengawas Obat dan Makanan*/BBPOM in Semarang) has a strong interest in improving its organizational IPASN score. This study uses a qualitative approach to examine BBPOM in Semarang's success in enhancing its IPASN score by empowering civil servants in the areas of educational qualifications, competencies, performance, and discipline. The success of BBPOM in Semarang can serve as a practical reference for empowering civil servants to improve their IPASN

### Keywords

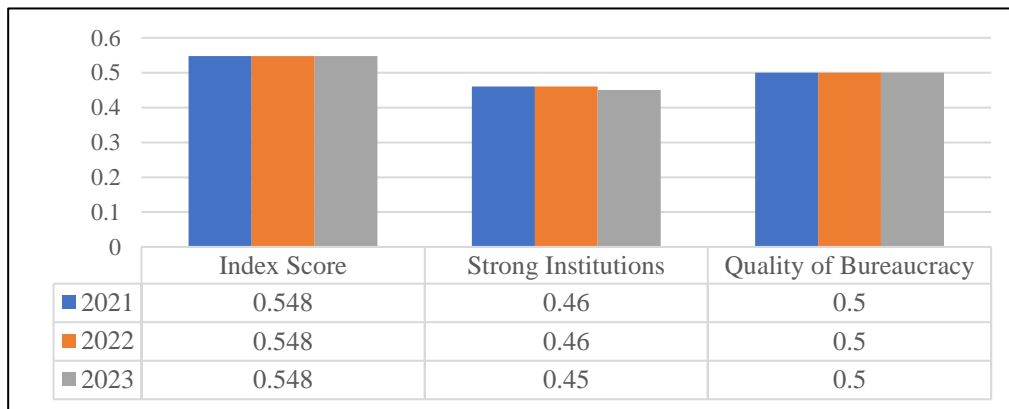
Empowerment, Professionalism, Professionalism Index, Government

### 1. Introduction

A professional government can be seen in the performance, efficiency, and responsiveness of its apparatus to meet the evolving needs of society. A professional government is marked by formal rules, a hierarchy of authority, clear division of tasks, a focus on innovation, and an orientation toward public satisfaction in performing duties. Along with societal and technological developments, a professional government is not only about rules and hierarchy but also about the ability to adapt to changes and continuously enhance professionalism in every line of public service (Panjaitan & Yuliati, 2016).

The role of Civil Servants (*Aparatur Sipil Negara/ ASN*) as actors in a professional government to serve the public becomes highly strategic and essential (Jumia et al., 2024). The Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (Kemenpan RB) established the ASN Professionalism Index (*Indeks profesionalitas Aparatur Sipil Negara/IPASN*) as a crucial indicator to measure ASN professionalism under Regulation No. 38 of 2018. IPASN covers four main dimensions: educational qualifications, competence, performance, and discipline. A higher index score not only reflects the capabilities of ASN within the organization but also represents good governance and empowerment in each government agency.

The Chandler Good Government Index, an annual index compiled by government practitioners for government practitioners, measures the capability and effectiveness of 113 governments worldwide. Based on data released between 2021 and 2023, Indonesia's governance performance has yet to show remarkable progress, with the country still ranking in the mid-range compared to many other countries globally and holding a moderate index score.



**Figure 1.** Indonesian Good Government Index

The graph above shows Indonesia consecutively scored 0.548 (moderate) on the Good Governance Index from 2021 to 2023. Similarly, in terms of government institutional strength, Indonesia scored 0.46 in 2021 and 2022, but this score dropped to 0.45 in 2023. Finally, regarding the quality of governance in Indonesia from 2021 to 2023, the index score remained at 0.5 (moderate).

Data from the Chandler Good Government Index for the period of 2021–2023 underscores the reality that, nationally, the average IPASN score still faces challenges, with low ratings during the 2021–2023 period (as presented in the IPASN measurement dissemination). In contrast to the national IPASN index score, the Balai Besar POM (BBPOM) in Semarang, a technical implementing unit (UPT) under the Food and Drug Supervisory Agency (*Badan Pengawas Obat-Obatan dan Makanan/BPOM*) responsible for overseeing pharmaceutical and food products

across Central Java Province, achieved high to very high IPASN index scores from 2021 to 2023. This achievement reflects the strategies and innovations employed by BBPOM in Semarang to empower its ASN, aiming to improve employee professionalism and public service amid increasingly dynamic expectations. Continuous efforts in education qualification improvements, employee competency development, performance management, and discipline management are part of the empowerment initiatives BBPOM in Semarang has implemented.

This study aims to analyse in depth the empowerment strategies for ASN at BBPOM in Semarang to increase the IPASN score and to evaluate the factors influencing the success of this empowerment. Through these efforts, BBPOM in Semarang is expected to serve as a model for implementing human resource policies that support the development of professional and competitive ASN. Additionally, this article provides data-driven recommendations for similar agencies to design sustainable strategies to enhance ASN professionalism.

Previous studies discussed the empowerment and empowerment strategies of State Civil Apparatus (ASN) in the Tallo District Office, Makassar City, aimed at enhancing public services (Arifin, 2021). The study's findings indicate that the selected strategies, which included a clear vision, active communication, and team-building initiatives, were neither sufficient nor ideal. Therefore, employee training and development should be strengthened, with particular attention to innovative strategies, quality enhancement, and service cost reduction. According to a study conducted by Jumia et al. (2024), ASN empowerment at the BKPSDM Office in Tana Tidung Regency has proven effective in improving public services. This effectiveness is demonstrated by the work outputs of employees at the BKPSDM Office in Tana Tidung Regency, which meet the required quality and quantity standards to complete and adapt to tasks, often exceeding their assigned workload. One of the challenges in ASN empowerment at the BKPSDM Office in Tana Tidung Regency includes inadequate facilities, low discipline among civil servants, and an ineffective employee performance evaluation program. To improve public services, the BKPSDM Office in Tana Tidung Regency optimizes the use of technical guidance (Bimtek) and training, along with synchronizing and harmonizing the implementation of civil service regulations.

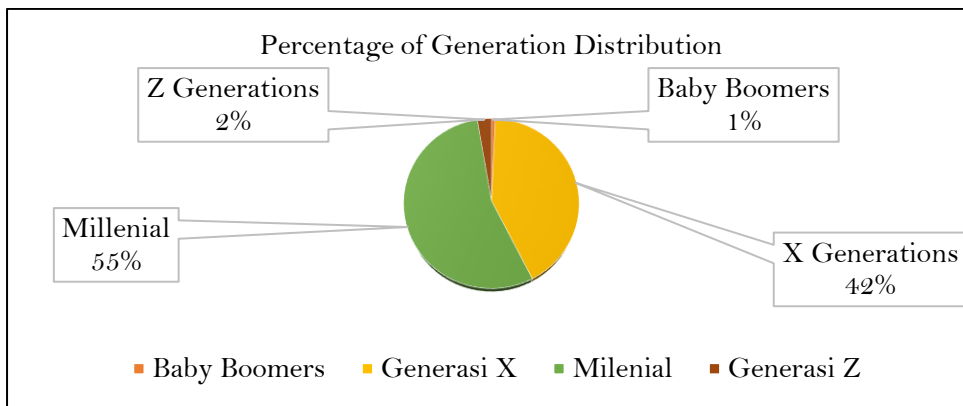
## **2. Methods**

The study uses a qualitative phenomenological approach, focusing on an in-depth exploration of the meanings and significance of individual experiences to reconstruct reality and understand its implications by closely examining processes, events, and authenticity. The aim is to provide a detailed and comprehensive description of ASN empowerment at BBPOM in Semarang to improve the ASN Professionalism Index score. Data collection was carried out through interviews with informants, archived documents, and documentation. Information sources included the Head of Administration, the Head of the Human Resource Management Work Team, members of the Human Resource Management Work Team, and BBPOM employees in Semarang, totaling 5 participants. Data analysis techniques involved conducting interviews, classifying data, analyzing data, and then testing validity through the member-checking method (Cresswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). After completing all stages, conclusions were drawn (Mulyana et al., 2022).

## **3. Results**

According to BPOM Regulation Number 22 of 2022 on the Organization and Operational Structure of Technical Implementation Units within the Food and Drug Supervisory Agency, the Balai Besar POM in Semarang is led by a Head at the Echelon II level with a well-structured organization covering various functions. The

Balai Besar POM in Semarang is tasked with carrying out technical and operational duties in the field of drug and food supervision within its respective work area, by regulatory provisions (Asif, 2021). The Human Resource (HR) data for the Balai Besar POM in Semarang indicates a current workforce of 140 ASN (civil servants), with 27 male and 113 female employees. In terms of generational distribution, the BBPOM in Semarang is highly diverse, with the following distribution details:



**Figure 2.** BBPOM Semarang performance report 2024

Referring to the information above, millennial employees dominate with a count of 77, followed by Generation X with 59 employees, Generation Z with 3 employees, and finally, 1 employee from the Baby Boomer generation (Putranti et al., 2020). To gain a deeper understanding of the ASN empowerment program at BBPOM Semarang, we conducted interviews with five key participants, each with a distinct but relevant role in the program's implementation. These interviews involved the Head of Administration, the Head and Members of the Human Resource Management Work Team, and BBPOM employees in Semarang. Regarding the empowerment of ASN at BBPOM Semarang to enhance the ASN professionalism index score, all participants—whom we will refer to as "reagents"—expressed consistent insights as follows:

"ASN professionalism is highly important; it's not just about working within one's competencies or completing job descriptions and performance targets as a responsibility. Every member of the organization should feel a sense of ownership and be able to contribute high-quality service to the public. Professionalism in ASN means always taking responsibility for each task, and reflecting appropriate work ethics and attitudes to build trust with the public, colleagues, and other stakeholders. This professionalism should be continuously cultivated through organizational empowerment programs."

Based on the interview results, ASN professionalism is crucial in public service. A highly professional ASN must exceed public expectations as stakeholders. This aligns with view that ASN professionalism extends beyond fulfilling job descriptions; ASNs should strive to improve across all service areas. Organizational support is essential for fostering this professionalism. As regulated the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform Regulation No. 38 of 2018, ASN professionalism is measured by the IPASN index, which includes four dimensions: educational qualifications, competence, performance, and discipline.

"The organization, through the HR work team, continuously encourages and supports all ASN employees by sharing information about the proposal openings for study assignments (CPTB) through the office's WhatsApp group and directly

approaching employees. The organization also conducts coaching, mentoring, and counselling (CMC) sessions to help employees pursue higher educational qualifications, either through scholarships or self-funding. However, some employees still prioritize other career development paths, thus not fully optimizing the opportunities provided by the organization."

Interview results show that BBPOM Semarang has empowered ASN employees by promoting further education through study assignments, motivating and encouraging them to continue their academic pursuits. This approach aligns with findings by Jumia et al. (2024), which highlight that ASN empowerment efforts are significantly enhanced through initiatives that foster continued education and professional growth within the organization (Kurniadi et al., 2024).

Government Regulation (PP) Number 11 of 2017 on Civil Servant Management demonstrates the government's commitment to transforming ASN competency development, particularly in the professional development of civil servants (PNS). This regulation stipulates that each civil servant must participate in at least 20 hours of competency development activities per year to meet competency standards and support career development (Panjaitan & Yuliati, 2016). Additionally, competency mastery is a prerequisite for career advancement, as highlighted in interviews with Regents 4 and 5 on October 25, 2024, and Reagent 2 on October 28, 2024, which provided the following insights:

"The head of the office, representing the organization, consistently promotes competency development for all ASN personnel, including ample opportunities for international competency development. Employee enthusiasm for these opportunities is notably high. The organization fosters innovation through its human resources division and the Agent of Change (AoC), which encourages employees to enhance their competencies (Abdillah et al., 2024). This process involves assessing competency development needs from organizational, employee GAP, and task-based perspectives across all substance groups, distributing the competency development calendar to all staff, offering development through the IDEAS Learning Management System (LMS), conducting post-training evaluations, and implementing 'padi manis' as a dissemination platform for all employees."

The interview findings highlight that competency development is essential. Organizational leaders ensure equal opportunities for all ASN personnel to participate in competency development. BBPOM in Semarang has implemented innovative measures to empower and facilitate employees in their competency enhancement. After completing competency development, employees are encouraged to disseminate and maximize the outcomes of their work. This approach aligns with the findings by Setioko (2017) and Jumia et al. (2024).

The Regulation of the Minister for Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (Permenpan RB) Number 6 of 2022 on the Management of ASN Performance governs the performance of State Civil Apparatus (ASN) in Indonesia. Each year, individual performance plans must include targets, performance indicators, and deadlines for achievement. ASN performance is evaluated both qualitatively and quantitatively, with ratings described as "very good," "good," "needs improvement," "poor," and "very poor." Based on interviews with Regents 4 and 5 on October 25, 2024, and Reagent 2 on October 28, 2024, the empowerment of ASN performance at BBPOM in Semarang is described as follows:

"The organization's leadership applies a Role and Outcome Matrix to all members down to the lowest level, cascading organizational targets

systematically. The human resources division provides full support in developing the Employee Performance Targets (SKP), ensuring each employee understands their responsibilities in terms of quantity, quality, and completion time. All ASN SKPs are developed using the SIMAKIN BPOM information system. Each team leader regularly monitors progress toward goals, providing performance guidance for employees whose quarterly targets have not yet been met. Performance progress is monitored communicatively, fostering strong emotional connections, which has resulted in all employees currently achieving a 'good' performance rating."

In general, based on the interview results, BBPOM in Semarang has implemented performance management in line with Permenpan RB Number 6 of 2022. Organizational performance goals have been effectively communicated to individual employees, who are well-informed of their responsibilities and able to complete tasks effectively. The human resources division optimally supports SKP development, and communication between supervisors and subordinates is effective in meeting performance targets. Similar findings were observed in studies by Prianka (2023) and Jumia et al. (2024).

Regarding the dimension of discipline, BBPOM in Semarang refers to Government Regulation (PP) Number 94 of 2021 on Civil Servant Discipline (PNS). This regulation provides guidance for the government in managing ASN discipline to ensure greater order and accountability (Mardhiyah & Safrin, 2023). Interviews were conducted with Reagents 4 and 5 on October 25, 2024, and Reagent 2 on October 28, 2024, to gain deeper insights into ASN empowerment, yielding the following findings:

"BBPOM in Semarang has made efforts to enhance discipline through various initiatives, such as holding a weekly discipline assembly every Monday, where attendance is reported by each division. During centralized national ceremonies and internal assemblies, electronic attendance tracking is consistently emphasized. Employee attendance is monitored during working hours, with a monthly accumulation of tardiness recapped and analysed for underlying causes (Handayani et al., 2024). The Head of Administrative Affairs conducts Corrective Monitoring and Counselling (CMC) for employees whose accumulated tardiness nears disciplinary thresholds. Each month, infographic reports are shared, highlighting employees with the most tardiness as well as those with exemplary discipline, serving as a moral incentive for improvement. Performance allowance verifiers validate attendance records to prevent fraud."

Based on the interview results, it is evident that BBPOM in Semarang has made substantial efforts to encourage greater discipline among ASN personnel. This is reflected in the implementation of innovative practices such as recognizing tardy employees and disciplined employees to promote improved discipline. These findings differ from those of (Jumia et al., 2024), which identified weaknesses in discipline empowerment within other government organizations. In general, ASN empowerment includes education and training, as noted by Mangkunegara (2013) and Setioko (2017). Regarding the educational dimension of ASN empowerment at BBPOM in Semarang, interviews with key informants, Reagents 1 and 3, on October 25, 2024, provided the following insights:

"ASN empowerment in terms of enhancing educational qualifications has been effectively implemented. The human resources division is highly communicative, sharing information on opportunities to further education. BBPOM in Semarang consistently encourages ASN personnel to pursue higher education, facilitates the

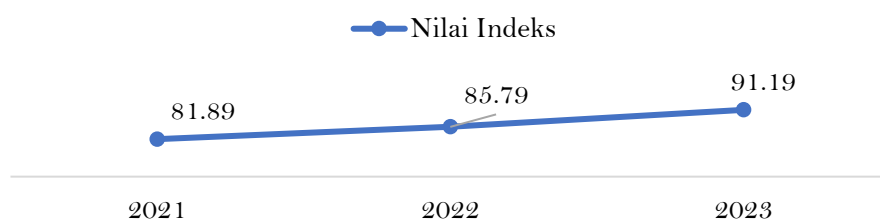
application process, provides guidance, and establishes partnerships with other ministries and institutions, such as Universitas Terbuka, to improve ASN educational qualifications. The organization also offers support in completing necessary documentation and enhancing foreign language skills for ASN who wish to study abroad.”

One form of employee empowerment in the office is to encourage employees/ASN to improve their educational qualifications. This aligns with the findings of (Dewi & Rahmawati, 2020), which show that career development through training positively impacts employee performance and enhances their achievements. The interview results regarding ASN empowerment at BBPOM in Semarang in terms of educational qualification improvements indicate that the human resources division has made optimal efforts to communicate opportunities to all organization members. These findings are consistent with the progressive increase in BBPOM’s IPASN index score for the educational qualifications dimension.

We conducted interviews with five key informants involved in implementing the ASN empowerment program at BBPOM Semarang. Each informant holds a distinct yet relevant role, providing insights into the effectiveness of BBPOM Semarang’s empowerment initiatives in enhancing the IPASN index score. The interviewees included the Head of Administrative Affairs, the Head of the HR Management Team, a member of the HR Management Team, and BBPOM Semarang employees. According to the following interview results, each participant offered comprehensive information based on their experiences:

“The IPASN index assessment tool developed by the government serves as a benchmark for measuring the professionalism of an ASN. By enhancing discipline, employees become more open-minded, and competency improvement enables them to better master their job responsibilities. The equitable distribution of role and outcome matrices down to the employee level significantly supports the achievement of performance targets, while discipline is essential for an ASN. The empowerment of ASN in terms of qualification improvement, competency development, performance, and discipline has been effectively implemented, with the human resources division providing optimal support. However, employee commitment is a critical factor that must be considered. Numerical index scores would be more meaningful if accompanied by a strong commitment from employees to realize concrete actions in their work. Additionally, enhancing employee awareness remains a priority.”

In Max Weber's book *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (first published in 1922), organizational effectiveness depends on how well an organization implements its structure and rules. Effectiveness is achieved when organizational goals are consistently met through structured methods and procedures. Secondary data analysis on the effectiveness of the ASN empowerment program at BBPOM in Semarang, specifically in increasing the ASN Professionalism Index (IPASN) score, shows progressive improvement from 2021 to 2023.



**Figure 3.** BBPOM Semarang performance report 2024

Based on the graph above, it can be concluded that ASN empowerment at BBPOM in Semarang has been effectively implemented, with the IPASN index score successfully increasing each year. This indicates that the empowerment efforts carried out by the BBPOM in Semarang have yielded positive results, as evidenced by the yearly increase in the IPASN score, as depicted in the following graph:



**Figure 4.** IPASN score

Training and education are efforts aimed at enhancing employees' intellectual abilities in addition to improving their educational qualifications. According to Regents 1 and 3 in an interview on October 25, 2024, the implementation of ASN empowerment at BBPOM in Semarang is as follows:

"Various initiatives have been implemented to fulfil employee competency needs, including planning for competency development requirements. For example, on-the-job training (OJT) is conducted at the central office for laboratory instrument handling. Each year, employees complete their Performance Target (SKP), with one goal being to meet 20 training hours (JP) annually (Wahid & Sarfiah, 2021). There is also an online learning platform, IDEAS, which offers a wide range of competency development programs. These efforts have been highly effective in empowering the competencies of BBPOM Semarang employees."

The interview results are supported by the IPASN index scores for the competency dimension at BBPOM in Semarang, which have progressively increased. Both the interview findings and the IPASN index data demonstrate that the ASN empowerment efforts undertaken by BBPOM in Semarang in the competency dimension have been effective. According to research by Fairuzzahron & Gilang (2019), training also has a positive and significant impact on employee performance at PT. PLN (Persero) Transmisi Jawa Tengah. The study by Choiriyah & Riyanto (2020) found that competency development aids BP Jamsostek employees in achieving performance targets. Additionally, Esih & Rudiana (2023) found that training not only improves ASN competencies but also enhances ASN career advancement.

The performance of civil servants at the Regional House of Representatives Secretariat of Central Lampung Regency varies but is generally satisfactory. To support the institutional and personal performance of the Regional House of Representatives, a consistent empowerment model that aligns with job requirements and is implemented comprehensively is deemed appropriate (Sigit Setioko, 2017). Work quality can be defined as activities or behaviors that meet expectations and needs, which can be measured by the efficiency and effectiveness of tasks performed by employees to achieve established organizational goals or targets (Meianto et al., 2021). The research findings by Sudewo & Sulastrri (2022) indicate that the employee performance variable has an impact on organizational performance. Based on

interviews conducted with Respondents 1 and 3 on October 25, 2024, regarding civil servant empowerment, the following responses were obtained:

“To achieve perfection takes a process; however, what has been implemented thus far shows that task distribution is clear, and performance evaluation is now carried out more objectively. Evaluating employee performance is not easy, but it has been well-established and effective.”

The interviews yielded valuable insights regarding the empowerment of civil servants at the BBPOM in Semarang, particularly in terms of performance. Employees generally feel that task distribution is well-defined, and performance evaluations are perceived as fair and objective (Segarwati et al., 2022). This aligns with the idea that work quality is measurable through the efficiency and effectiveness of tasks performed by humans or other resources to achieve organizational goals effectively and efficiently (Prianka, 2023).

According to Reagents 1 and 3, the implementation of ASN empowerment related to discipline at BBPOM in Semarang is as follows:

“As far as I have experienced, the standards for discipline are clear. The regulations and enforcement of discipline at BBPOM in Semarang are well-established and effectively implemented. Discipline management at BBPOM in Semarang is thoroughly organized, with the human resources division strictly enforcing it. Work starts and end times are regulated, and if an employee needs to leave the office for specific reasons, they must use an exit form. An innovative system of rewards and penalties exists, recognizing the most punctual employees and sanctioning those who are late. Deductions are applied to allowances for tardiness. Fairness is strongly felt in the discipline management here.”

The interview results indicate that ASN empowerment in terms of discipline at BBPOM in Semarang has been implemented very effectively. Regulations are enforced in a way that upholds fairness for all employees. The human resources division clearly communicates and enforces discipline-related matters. This aligns with findings by Setioko (2017) and Alifbatatsarel et al. (2021), which reveal that employees' attitudes and productivity have notably improved after supervisors fulfil their obligations to address low performance or poor discipline.

To identify the factors that hinder the empowerment of employees at BBPOM in Semarang, as well as the factors that can further support the empowerment of ASN there, we conducted interviews with five key informants who hold diverse but relevant roles to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue. This is the second question to be addressed. Interviews with Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, conducted on October 25 and 28, 2024, revealed the following insights:

"First, there is a commitment from leadership to ensure fairness for all ASNs, implement innovations in employee empowerment, and communicate effectively, although some employees still lack awareness that organizational achievements reflect individual achievements. Additionally, there are challenges such as indifference and reluctance to engage in ASN empowerment programs. The HR department is very responsive and proactive in fostering employee empowerment; every program is data-driven and undergoes monitoring and evaluation. Another factor positively impacting ASN empowerment at BBPOM in Semarang is a strong culture of teamwork. Currently, the government is making some budget adjustments, which slightly affects employee empowerment programs. Strict and measurable discipline implementation will greatly support the success of ASN employee empowerment."

Based on the interview results above, several factors were identified that support and inhibit employee empowerment at BBPOM in Semarang. The leadership at the BBPOM in Semarang is highly committed to empowering ASNs to promote continuous improvement. The distribution of tasks is proportional and balanced, providing equal opportunities for further education, competency development, and implementing disciplinary regulations in a firm yet communicative manner. BBPOM in Semarang has introduced numerous innovations in ASN empowerment, including a competency development calendar to inform employees about training opportunities, the implementation of an LMS (Learning Management System) IDEAS to improve discipline, and regular monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, the HR department at BBPOM in Semarang effectively communicates ASN empowerment programs aimed at increasing the IPASN index, which employees find highly beneficial.

Despite strong leadership commitment, fairness, innovation, and communication strategies, there remains uneven awareness among employees. Some view participation in empowerment programs as merely a requirement rather than a development opportunity. Additionally, certain employees show a lack of enthusiasm or reluctance to participate in ASN empowerment programs, often citing age as a primary factor. Furthermore, some empowerment programs have faced budget cuts; however, efforts have been made to adapt by implementing non-budgetary activities.

Research findings indicate that ASN empowerment at BBPOM in Semarang has effectively improved the IPASN index. For instance, in empowerment programs related to educational qualifications, the organization has successfully encouraged employees to pursue further education. This is evident in the rising scores in the educational qualification dimension from 2021 to 2023. In terms of competency, all employees have equal access to competency development, with strong leadership commitment even supporting international training opportunities. As a result, between 2021 to 2023, no BBPOM Semarang employees fell below the minimum standard of 20 training hours per year. Regarding performance management, BBPOM Semarang has established a role and results matrix detailing performance targets from leadership to staff levels, ensuring that every employee has clear, measurable performance goals. From 2021 to 2023, all employees met their performance targets, with none receiving a rating below "good." Lastly, in the discipline dimension, effective communication of rules and firm enforcement by leadership meant that from 2021 to 2023, no employees faced disciplinary sanctions.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The key factors driving ASN empowerment at BBPOM in Semarang to improve the IPASN index include leadership commitment, a sense of fairness, program innovation, and effective communication between HR and employees. However, challenges remain, such as the varying levels of employee awareness, reluctance of some employees to participate, and budget cuts. To address these issues, a survey could be conducted to re-map the ASN empowerment program at BBPOM in Semarang, considering generational factors and personalized approaches to accommodate all ASN employee aspirations. Study Limitations, some limitations might have impacted the results. These include time constraints, as participants had busy work schedules, and organizational environment limitations; this study was conducted in the government sector, so the findings may only apply to similar sectors. Additionally, some participants may have struggled to understand all interview statements or may not have been fully open during interviews, potentially affecting result accuracy. The conclusions are based solely on data analysis, and further research is recommended to examine employee behavior changes following the empowerment program in greater depth.

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