



MORAL AGENCY IN CHALLENGING CONTEXTS: AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS' EXPERIENCES

Robby Effendi¹, Risydah Fadilah², Suaidah Lubis³, Juliana⁴, Dwi Putri⁵, Siti Sariah Bangun⁶, Fransisca Mularia Butar Butar⁷

^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7}Master of Psychology Program, Universitas Medan Area, Medan, Indonesia

Article Info

Keywords:

Electoral Integrity Interpretative,
Moral Agency,
Organizational Commitment,
Phenomenology,
Professional Identity

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the lived realities of election commissioners operating under persistent institutional constraints during a local electoral process. Contemporary electoral research frequently depicts election administrators merely as procedural agents, providing insufficient insight into their ethical and psychological dimensions. This inquiry seeks to elucidate how election commissioners perceive pressure, moral obligation, professional dedication, and self-identity within the context of their daily responsibilities. Employing an interpretative phenomenological framework, information was gathered from six local election commissioners through solicited written responses via electronic mail, facilitating profound contemplation on their professional encounters. The gathered data underwent analysis through reflective thematic evaluation. The outcomes unveil four interrelated themes: ongoing structural pressures necessitating ethical discretion, moral impetus extending beyond mere procedural adherence, organizational allegiance functioning as a psychological safeguard, and the continual evolution of professional identity through ethical introspection. These results suggest that electoral integrity arises from the dynamic interplay between individual values and institutional expectations rather than solely from formal regulations. The study enhances psychological insights into moral agency within public service and underscores the necessity for institutional backing, ethical resilience training, and psychosocial support for election officials.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.



Corresponding Author:

Suaidah Lubis
Master of Psychology Program
Universitas Medan Area, Indonesia
suaidah@staff.uma.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

The management of regional electoral processes serves as a fundamental pillar for the reinforcement of democracy in Indonesia, as it actualizes the principle of popular sovereignty at the grassroots level (Undang-Undang No. 7 Tahun 2017 jo. UU No. 10/2016). The credibility of this procedure is contingent not solely upon established regulations and institutional frameworks. Scott (2014, p. 45) but also on the capability of electoral officials to execute their duties with professionalism, ethical integrity, and autonomy (Barus, 2020). Election commissioners, as pivotal figures within electoral frameworks, bear obligations that transcend mere technical management to encompass the protection of public confidence, impartiality, and the legitimacy of democratic processes (DKPP, 2025).

In reality, nonetheless, these duties are executed within contexts marked by political rivalry. Manik (2025), institutional pressure, Herd & Moynihan (2019), and heightened public scrutiny, Erniyanti (2024). In the course of the concurrent municipal elections of 2024, the intricacies associated with the management of electoral processes escalated within diverse local environments Sawir (2024). The electoral mechanisms were influenced not solely by procedural and administrative requirements delineated by PKPU but also by ethical dilemmas, legal conflicts, and challenges to the legitimacy of institutions (DKPP, 2025). These circumstances positioned election officials in significantly constrained professional environments, necessitating their adept management of conflicting interests, ethical quandaries, and institutional ambiguities (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012). These circumstances indicate that the viability of democratic mechanisms cannot be comprehensively grasped solely through the lens of regulatory structures Nord (2024). However, it is imperative to take into account the psychological experiences of individuals tasked with their execution (Perry & Wise, 1996).

The current body of scholarly work concerning elections and electoral governance has predominantly focused on normative frameworks, institutional configurations, and adherence to procedural standards (Nord, 2024). Although this collection of research has yielded significant understandings regarding the formulation and governance of electoral frameworks (Nord, 2024), It has devoted relatively scant consideration to the personal experiences of the election officials themselves (Manik, 2025). Electoral commissioners are frequently depicted as impartial agents of procedure (Barus, 2020), with little exploration of how they experience pressure Herd dan Moynihan (Herd & Moynihan, 2024), interpret moral responsibility (Perry & Wise, 1996), or sustain professional commitment under challenging conditions (J. P. Meyer & Allen, 2002). This disparity is especially noteworthy in situations where political dynamics are geographically concentrated, and institutional influences are felt directly and persistently (Erniyanti, 2024; Sawir, 2024).

From an academic standpoint, investigations into public service motivation (PSM) provide a significant framework for comprehending how public administrators manage challenging professional settings (Perry & Wise, 1996). PSM highlights the role of intrinsic values such as (Cooper, 2015) ethical accountability, dedication to societal welfare, and principled orientation in directing conduct, whereas organizational dedication underscores emotional connection, congruence of values, and steadfastness within institutional responsibilities (G. Meyer, 1994).

Nonetheless, a significant portion of this scholarly work has depended on quantitative methodologies (J. P. Meyer & Maltin, 2010), emphasizing the quantification of metrics and results instead of examining the subjective experiences and interpretations of motivation and commitment in practical applications. Consequently, the experiential, ethical, and contemplative aspects of public service endeavors remain insufficiently examined (Bae, Son, & Song, 2013; Folke, Rickne, & Smith, 2018).

This research seeks to fill this void by employing an interpretative phenomenological methodology (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ehrenberg & Smith, 2016) to examine the lived experiences of election commissioners involved in the 2024 local elections (DKPP, 2025). Rather than treating motivation and commitment as static variables (Perry, 2016), the research delineates them as fluid, significance-oriented processes influenced by continuous interaction with institutional requirements (Thornton et al., 2012), ethical challenges (Husserl, 2012), and personal values (Mezirow, 2000). By foregrounding commissioners' narratives and reflections (Braun & Clarke, 2021), This study provides a comprehensive psychological insight into the mechanisms through which moral agency is exercised within the framework of electoral administration (Meho, 2006).

The uniqueness of this research is rooted in its utilization of interpretative phenomenology, marking a pioneering approach for Indonesian electoral commissioners (Creswell & Poth, 2018) to investigate ethical and cognitive phenomena within the framework of local electoral settings marked by continuous scrutiny and societal oversight (Erniyanti, 2024). Thus far, a limited number of investigations have explored the domain of election administration through this lens (Manik, 2025; Nord, 2024), especially in contexts characterized by significant stress. By emphasizing experiential reality (J. K. Smith, 1983) This research transcends procedural examinations (PKPU No. 8/2024) and introduces a human-centric viewpoint to the psychology underlying public service. (Bae et al., 2013; Perry, 2016).

Accordingly, the objective of this study is to explore how election commissioners interpret their work motivation and organizational commitment while operating under conditions of institutional and political pressure (Herd & Moynihan, 2024). Specifically, the study seeks to understand how commissioners make sense of moral responsibility (Perry & Wise, 1996), sustain professional commitment (J. P. Meyer & Allen, 2002), and construct their professional identities within the context of local election administration (Sawir, 2024). Through this approach, the study aims to contribute to psychological scholarship on moral agency in public service (J. A. Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) while offering insights relevant to the strengthening of institutional integrity (DKPP, 2025) and support for election administrators (Barus, 2020).

2. RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design and Approach

This investigation utilized a qualitative research framework underscored by an interpretative phenomenological methodology to explore the ethical and psychological experiences of election commissioners during the 2024 local elections (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2020; Weyant, 2022). This methodological choice was intended to elucidate how participants personally construed institutional pressures, moral obligations, and professional dedication in their routine responsibilities. Instead of examining causal links, the research concentrated on elucidating the processes of meaning-making and lived experiences within an actual institutional framework.

Conceptual Focus

Consistent with qualitative research norms, the investigation did not quantify variables in a statistical manner. Rather, the inquiry centered on significant psychological constructs that directed data collection and examination. These constructs encompassed moral agency, work motivation, organizational commitment, institutional pressure, and professional identity. These conceptual frameworks served as sensitizing concepts that informed the interview prompts and analytical schema, facilitating a thorough investigation of participants' experiences rather than comparisons based on measurement.

Research Subjects

The subjects of this research comprised six local-level election commissioners who played a direct role in managing the 2024 local elections. Participants were chosen through purposive sampling based on specific criteria: (1) active engagement as an election commissioner during the electoral period, (2) direct participation in decision-making processes amid institutional and political pressures, (3) a minimum of two years of experience in election management, and (4) a willingness to provide reflective written narratives regarding their professional experiences. The number of participants was determined by data saturation, identified as the juncture at which no new significant meanings or themes were revealed.

Research Instruments

Data collection was executed through a semi-structured written interview guide disseminated via email. The instrument comprised 12 open-ended prompts crafted to elicit reflective narratives concerning participants' encounters with institutional pressure, sources of moral motivation, expressions of organizational commitment, and the evolution of professional identity. As this constituted a qualitative study, the instrument did not include item scoring or reliability metrics. Instead, trustworthiness was upheld through meticulous instrument formulation, iterative enhancement of prompts, and uniformity across participant responses (Flick, 2022; Takona, 2024).

Data Collection Procedure

Participants were solicited to submit written replies via email to afford adequate time for contemplation and to mitigate social desirability bias. The average length of each response was approximately 2,147 words. Selective follow-up communication was conducted to clarify or elaborate on specific responses when required.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was performed using reflective thematic analysis (Gleeson, 2021). This process entailed repeated familiarization with the data, initial coding, the formulation of candidate themes, thematic refinement, and integrative interpretation across cases. The analysis prioritized reflexivity, with the researcher maintaining analytic memos to document interpretive choices and evolving insights.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To ensure methodological integrity, credibility was bolstered through member checking and the upkeep of an audit trail. Ethical considerations encompassed informed consent, voluntary engagement, and rigorous anonymization of all identifying details to safeguard participants from potential institutional or political repercussions.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

This section presents the research findings derived from participants' written accounts. Within phenomenological qualitative research, results are not generated through statistical validation or hypothesis testing. Instead, analytical rigor is established through careful theme development, internal coherence across participants' narratives, and transparency in linking the data to interpretive processes. The findings were

developed thematically and directly correspond to the research questions concerning work motivation, organizational commitment, and the psychological experience of institutional pressure among election commissioners.

Overview of the Data

The dataset consisted of six written narratives produced by local election commissioners, with an average length of approximately 2,147 words per participant. These narratives provided comprehensive descriptions of professional experiences, ethical dilemmas, emotional strain, and reflective meaning-making processes during the 2024 election. Across accounts, participants consistently articulated that they operated within environments characterized by sustained pressure, moral tension, and significant responsibility. Through reflective thematic analysis, four interconnected themes were identified. These themes are elaborated in the following subsections, accompanied by illustrative quotations that demonstrate how participants articulated their lived experiences.

Overview of the Data and Experiential Orientation

The dataset comprised six written narratives produced by local election commissioners, each reflecting sustained engagement with ethically demanding situations during the 2024 local elections. Rather than merely describing procedural responsibilities, participants articulated their experiences through reflections on persistent pressure, moral tension, emotional strain, and ongoing self-evaluation. Across narratives, election administration was consistently experienced not as a neutral technical function, but as a morally charged professional practice embedded within continuous institutional scrutiny and public contestation.

Participants described their work as unfolding within conditions that required constant ethical attentiveness, particularly when procedural guidance was perceived as insufficient to address situational complexity. Through reflective thematic analysis, four interrelated experiential themes were identified. These themes illuminate how commissioners made sense of institutional pressure, moral motivation, organizational commitment, and professional identity in the course of their daily responsibilities.

Theme 1: Institutional Pressure Experienced as a Sustained Moral Condition

Participants consistently described institutional pressure as an enduring condition rather than a series of isolated incidents. Pressure was experienced as something that accompanied their role throughout the electoral process, shaping daily decision-making, emotional responses, and ethical awareness. Rather than anticipating moments of relief between electoral stages, commissioners narrated pressure as a persistent background against which their professional responsibilities were carried out. One participant reflected on how pressure gradually became internalized as part of everyday work, rather than experienced only during critical moments:

“At first, I thought pressure would only come at certain stages, but over time it became something that followed us every day. Even when there was no direct confrontation, the sense of being watched and judged was always there.” (P1)

Another participant emphasized how pressure originated from multiple actors and appeared repeatedly throughout the nomination process:

“As the nomination stage progressed, pressure did not only come from political actors but also from various factions with different interests. There were phone calls, requests to withdraw names, and even the Commission office became directly engaged with the public to advocate changes in decisions. Situations like this happened continuously, not just occasionally.” (P6)

Pressure was also experienced in more tangible and physically demanding forms. One participant described how institutional responsibilities were accompanied by mass mobilization and emotional exhaustion:

“There was pressure... at certain points we were surrounded by the masses... almost two thousand people... and we as the KPU at that time were only at the stage of receiving documents, not yet at the verification phase... my fellow commissioners and I could only leave the office at dawn.” (P4)

These accounts indicate that institutional pressure was experienced not merely as an external constraint, but as a psychological burden requiring sustained moral vigilance. Pressure was narrated as an intrinsic element of professional life, rather than a temporary disturbance.

Theme 2: Moral Motivation Experienced as an Ethical Obligation

Moral motivation emerged as a central psychological force sustaining participants' engagement in election administration. Commissioners consistently emphasized that their commitment to fairness, public trust, and democratic principles exceeded procedural compliance. Motivation was experienced as grounded in personal ethical convictions rather than external incentives or institutional surveillance.

One participant described motivation as an internal standard that constrained unethical choices, even when opportunities for manipulation were present:

“As an election organizer, I comply with the rules and uphold integrity. For me, it is better to accept my rights as they are than to manipulate documents or decisions for the benefit of certain parties.” (P6)

Another participant framed motivation explicitly in relation to public trust, positioning it as the core reason for enduring sustained pressure:

“If the public no longer trusts the KPU, then the local election loses its meaning. That is what makes me continue to do my best.” (P4)

Motivation was also experienced as a form of moral accountability toward the democratic process itself. One participant reflected on how this sense of responsibility shaped perseverance:

“Sometimes the workload feels overwhelming, but I keep reminding myself that this process affects many people. That awareness keeps me going.” (P1)

These narratives suggest that motivation functioned as an intrinsic ethical orientation, guiding action under conditions of uncertainty. Motivation was not experienced as a functional requirement of the role, but as a principled commitment shaping how decisions were evaluated and enacted.

Theme 3: Organizational Commitment as a Source of Psychological Endurance

Participants experienced organizational commitment as a stabilizing psychological resource that enabled them to endure prolonged stress and public criticism. Commitment was not articulated as blind loyalty to the institution, but as a sense of responsibility toward the integrity of the electoral process and the broader public good. One participant described commitment as a form of service within democratic practice:

“Being an election organizer, for me, means direct involvement in the democratic process. Even though there is a lot of pressure and harsh dynamics, I still see this as a responsibility and a form of service.” (P5)

Another participant emphasized that commitment functioned as a psychological anchor during moments of intense external attack:

“There are times when we are attacked by the public... but without commitment, no one would be able to survive in that position.” (P4)

Commitment was also experienced as an obligation to ensure institutional continuity, even when personal withdrawal might seem easier:

“If we easily step back because of pressure, then the institution cannot function. We realize that the local election must be completed, no matter the situation.” (P2)

These accounts illustrate that organizational commitment was experienced as a form of ethical perseverance, allowing commissioners to sustain engagement despite fatigue, uncertainty, and external hostility.

Theme 4: Professional Identity Formed Through Ongoing Ethical Deliberation

Professional identity was experienced as a dynamic and evolving process shaped through continuous engagement with ethical dilemmas and institutional expectations. Participants narrated their experiences as a process of becoming election commissioners, rather than simply occupying a formal role. One participant reflected on how involvement in electoral administration reshaped their understanding of responsibility and integrity:

“I believe there are still many people with integrity within the election management body. Our democracy is still in progress, and being part of that process makes me increasingly understand what responsibility as an election organizer really means.” (P6)

Another participant emphasized learning through moments of ethical uncertainty:

“What makes me learn are those dilemmas... when the rules are not enough to answer the situation... we have to decide what is right... that is when we truly become commissioners.” (P3)

Identity formation thus emerged from repeated confrontation with moral ambiguity and institutional pressure. Professional identity was not experienced as a static bureaucratic label, but as an expression of moral agency reinforced through lived experience.

Integrative Analysis Across Themes

The integrative analysis brings together the four experiential themes to illustrate how election commissioners' psychological experiences were not fragmented, but mutually constitutive. Rather than operating as discrete dimensions, institutional pressure, moral motivation, organizational commitment, and professional identity formed a coherent experiential configuration through which commissioners navigated their professional responsibilities. This section synthesizes how these themes interacted within participants lived experiences, highlighting the dynamic relationships that sustained ethical agency under conditions of persistent institutional constraint.

Table 1. Integrative Mapping of Experiential Themes

| Experiential Dimension | Core Lived Experience | Psychological Function | Illustrative Meaning for Participants |
|---------------------------|--|---|--|
| Institutional Pressure | Pressure experienced as continuous and inescapable | Heightened ethical vigilance | Work perceived as morally exposed rather than procedurally neutral |
| Moral Motivation | Commitment to fairness and public trust | Ethical orientation of action | Decisions guided by conscience rather than formal compliance |
| Organizational Commitment | Sense of responsibility toward the electoral process | Psychological endurance and stability | Persistence despite criticism, fatigue, and uncertainty |
| Professional Identity | Identity formed through ethical dilemmas | Integration of experience into self-concept | Becoming a commissioner understood as moral becoming |

As summarized in Table 1, institutional pressure constituted the experiential backdrop of participants' daily work, shaping how commissioners perceived their professional environment as persistently demanding ethical attentiveness. Pressure was not experienced as an episodic disruption, but as a condition that rendered decision-making morally consequential even in routine administrative stages.

Within this context, moral motivation functioned as an internal compass orienting participants' action. Rather than neutralizing pressure, moral motivation transformed it into a site of ethical responsibility, allowing commissioners to frame their work in terms of public trust and democratic legitimacy. Motivation thus operated as a meaning-making resource that counterbalanced uncertainty and external demands.

Organizational commitment emerged as a stabilizing psychological force that enabled commissioners to endure sustained pressure without disengaging from their roles. Commitment was experienced not merely as institutional loyalty, but as perseverance grounded in responsibility toward the electoral process. This commitment sustained professional functioning when external conditions threatened emotional and cognitive depletion.

Professional identity integrated these experiences into a coherent sense of self. Through repeated engagement with ethical dilemmas and institutional expectations, commissioners came to understand their roles as processes of becoming rather than static positions. Identity formation thus synthesized pressure, motivation, and commitment into a moral self-concept that reinforced continued engagement.

Collectively, the integrative analysis demonstrates that ethical agency among election commissioners was enacted through the dynamic interplay of these experiential dimensions. Institutional pressure intensified ethical awareness, moral motivation-oriented decision-making, organizational commitment sustained endurance, and professional identity provided coherence across experiences. This configuration underscores how integrity in electoral administration was lived and maintained through psychological processes embedded in everyday practice

Discussion

This investigation aimed to comprehend how election commissioners perceive and interpret institutional pressures, ethical incentives, and organizational allegiance within the framework of local electoral management (Perry & Wise, 1996). The results yield a valuable understanding regarding the cognitive mechanisms by which public servants uphold integrity and maintain professional involvement amidst persistent stressors (Tummers & Knies, 2023). By employing an interpretative phenomenological framework, this research advances the current body of knowledge beyond mere procedural and institutional examinations, emphasizing the experiential, ethical, and contemplative aspects of public service employment (Finlay, 2013).

A pivotal conclusion of this investigation is that institutional pressure was perceived as a continuous and ingrained condition instead of a sporadic challenge (Herd & Moynihan, 2024; Lipsky, 1980). This observation aligns with scholarship on administrative burdens and institutional intricacies, underscoring how intersecting regulations, political strife, and public oversight influence the daily experiences of public officials (Barnes, 2020).

Nevertheless, this study enhances the existing literature by illustrating that such pressures are not merely structural but also psychological, necessitating that commissioners engage in continual ethical deliberation and emotional management (Christensen, Lægreid, & Rykkja, 2021; Gross, 2015). Rather than depending exclusively on formal regulations, respondents articulated the necessity to exercise moral discretion in navigating ambiguous or conflicting demands (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Tummers & Knies, 2023).

The significance of moral motivation in respondents' narratives corresponds with public service motivation theory, which underscores intrinsic values such as dedication to the public good, ethical accountability, and integrity as pivotal influences on public sector conduct (Mantello, 2021; Perry, 2016). In accordance with prior studies, participants in this inquiry depicted motivation as grounded in moral purpose rather than material

incentives or external oversight (Vandenabeele, 2016). Crucially, this study contributes a phenomenological aspect to the existing theory by demonstrating how moral motivation is experienced and enacted in practice (Wens, Mwangi, van Loon, & Aerts, 2021). Moral motivation emerged not as an abstract principle but as a reflective disposition continuously negotiated in response to institutional pressures and ethical quandaries (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999).

Organizational commitment was identified as a psychological safeguard that empowered commissioners to withstand prolonged pressure and uncertainty (J. P. Meyer & Allen, 2002). This discovery is in line with organizational psychology research, indicating that affective and normative commitment enhances resilience and persistence in challenging work environments (J. P. Meyer, 2002). However, this study refines this understanding by demonstrating that commitment among election commissioners is not solely directed toward the institution as a structure but toward the ethical purpose of the institution itself (Klein, Molloy, & Cooper, 2012; Riketta, 2002). Thus, commitment was experienced as a form of ethical grounding, reinforcing participants' sense of duty to democratic ideals and public trust (Brehm & Gates, 1999).

Another notable contribution of this study pertains to the development of professional identity (Ibarra, 1999). Participants' narratives revealed that professional identity was neither static nor predetermined but evolved through ongoing engagement with ethical challenges, institutional limitations, and public scrutiny (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). This process-oriented perspective of identity formation aligns with contemporary views in professional identity research, which conceptualize identity as a continuous process of becoming rather than a fixed role (Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006). In this study, identity formation served as an integrative mechanism through which moral motivation, commitment, and experiences coalesced into a coherent professional self-concept (Scheufele, 2014).

Collectively, these results indicate that the integrity of electoral administration cannot be solely attributed to regulatory adherence or institutional frameworks (O'Leary, 2013). Rather, it arises from intricate psychological mechanisms that encompass moral agency, reflective decision-making, and identity construction (Bandura, 1989; Jones, 2019). This revelation contributes to the current scholarship on electoral administration by underscoring the human-centric underpinnings of institutional integrity and by drawing attention to the psychological factors that are frequently neglected in analyses centered on governance (Macy, 1991; Nalbandian, 1991).

Implications

The results of this investigation possess both theoretical and practical significance (Lawrie Van de Ven, 2010). From a theoretical standpoint, this study enriches the existing body of knowledge on public service motivation and organizational commitment by integrating a phenomenological framework that emphasizes lived experiences, moral introspection, and the process of meaning-making. This perspective enhances psychological interpretations of public service by illustrating the manner in which motivation and commitment are expressed amidst real-life circumstances characterized by pressure and uncertainty (Tummers & Knies, 2023).

On a practical level, the results highlight the imperative for institutional support systems that mitigate the psychological and ethical challenges faced by election commissioners (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Apart from technical training and regulatory frameworks, institutions ought to contemplate the establishment of environments conducive to ethical contemplation, peer assistance, and psychosocial support (Palanski, Hochwarter, & Pearce, 2011). Initiatives aimed at cultivating ethical resilience and reflective capacity may prove beneficial in preserving professional integrity and mental well-being among election officials functioning in high-stress circumstances (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007).

Strengths and Limitations

A notable strength of this research is its application of interpretative phenomenology to investigate a field that has predominantly been scrutinized through normative or procedural frameworks. The employment of elicited written narratives facilitated participants in engaging in profound reflection and expressing complex experiences that may elude capture through formal interviews or surveys (Reissman, 2008).

However, several limitations must be recognized (Creswell & Miller, 2003). The qualitative and context-dependent nature of this study constrains the applicability of the findings to other institutional or national frameworks (Lincoln & Guba, 2023). Furthermore, dependence on self-reported accounts may introduce subjective bias, notwithstanding efforts to bolster credibility through reflexivity and member validation (Finlay, 2013). Subsequent research could expand upon these insights by incorporating comparative methodologies, longitudinal studies, or mixed-method approaches to further investigate the evolution of moral agency and professional identity over time across varied electoral contexts (Finlay, 2013; Guerrero-Solé, 2018; Lechner, Jacometti, McBean, & Mitchison, 2016).

4. CONCLUSION

This investigation explored the subjective experiences of election commissioners functioning under persistent institutional pressures during a local electoral process, with a specific emphasis on moral agency, job motivation, organizational allegiance, and professional identity. Employing an interpretative phenomenological methodology, the research transcended mere procedural and institutional descriptions of electoral administration, thereby shedding light on the psychological mechanisms through which public officials maintain integrity and professional involvement in challenging circumstances. The results indicate that institutional pressure is perceived not as a fleeting interruption but rather as a chronic aspect of professional existence (Lipsky, 1980). In this framework, election commissioners depend on moral motivation that transcends mere procedural adherence, invoking deeply ingrained values associated with responsibility, equity, and public trust. Organizational commitment surfaced as a stabilizing psychological asset that allowed participants to withstand sustained pressures while professional identity evolved through continuous contemplation of ethical dilemmas and institutional expectations. Collectively, these mechanisms illustrate that integrity in electoral administration is manifested through lived psychological experiences rather than assured by formal regulations alone.

The uniqueness of this investigation resides in its contribution to psychological discourse regarding public service by emphasizing moral agency as an experiential and reflective phenomenon. By synthesizing phenomenological examination with frameworks from moral psychology and organizational psychology, the research offers a sophisticated comprehension of how motivation, commitment, and identity are dynamically shaped under pressure. This viewpoint enhances existing theories by prioritizing meaning-making, ethical consideration, and identity formation as crucial components of professional behavior within public institutions. From a practical perspective, the investigation highlights the necessity of institutional practices that recognize the psychological and moral aspects of electoral administration. Supporting election commissioners necessitates not only technical proficiency and regulatory structures but also avenues for ethical contemplation, psychosocial assistance, and the cultivation of moral resilience. Such initiatives may play a pivotal role in sustaining both individual well-being and institutional integrity in high-stress public service positions. In summary, this study accentuates the significance of a human-centered psychological perspective in comprehending public institutions. By foregrounding the narratives and experiences of election commissioners, it provides valuable insights into the psychological underpinnings of integrity in public service and lays the groundwork for future inquiries into moral agency and professional identity within intricate institutional settings.

5. REFERENCES

- [1] Ashforth, B. E., Harrison, S. H., & Corley, K. G. (2008). Identification in organizations: An examination of four fundamental questions. *Journal of Management*, 34(3), 325–374. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206308316059>
- [2] Bae, J.-H., Son, J. Y., & Song, M. (2013). Analysis of Twitter for 2012 South Korea Presidential Election by Text Mining Techniques. <https://doi.org/10.13088/JIIS.2013.19.3.141>
- [3] Bandura, A. (1989). Human agency in social cognitive theory. *American Psychologist*, 44(9), 1175–1184.
- [4] Barnes, C. Y. (2020). Administrative burden and the cost of compliance. *Public Administration Review*, 80(1), 78–86. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13129>
- [5] Barus, Y. (2020). Profesionalisme penyelenggara pemilu. *Jurnal Administrasi Publik*, 12(2), 45–60.
- [6] Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). Thematic analysis: A practical guide. In SAGE Publication. SAGE Publications.
- [7] Brehm, J., & Gates, S. (1999). Working, shirking, and sabotage: Bureaucratic response to a democratic public. University of Michigan Press.
- [8] Christensen, J., Læg Reid, P., & Rykkja, L. H. (2021). Administrative burden in public administration. *Policy & Society*, 40(2), 141–158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14494035.2021.1901567>
- [9] Cooper, T. L. (2015). The responsible administrator: An approach to ethics for the administrative role (6th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- [10] Creswell, J. W., & Miller, G. (2003). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 124–130. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2
- [11] Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. In SAGE Publication (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- [12] DKPP. (2025). Putusan perkara pelanggaran etik KPU Tapanuli Selatan dan Labuhanbatu Utara.
- [13] Edmonds, W. A., & Kennedy, T. D. (2020). An Applied Guide to Research Designs: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods. In An Applied Guide to Research Designs: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071802779>
- [14] Ehrenberg, R. G., & Smith, R. S. (2016). Modern labor economics: Theory and public policy. books.google.com.
- [15] Flick, U. (2022). Revitalising Triangulation for Designing Multi-perspective Qualitative Research. In The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research Design. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529770278.n40>
- [16] Folke, O., Rickne, J., & Smith, D. M. (2018). Gender and Dynastic Political Selection. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414020938089>
- [17] Gleeson, D. (2021). Research Questions and Research Design. In Educational Research and Inquiry. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781474243834.ch-005>
- [18] Gross, J. J. (2015). Emotion regulation: Current status and future prospects. In M. I. Lewis & J. M. Haviland-Jones (Eds.), *APA handbook of personality and social psychology* (Vol. 3, pp. 351–372). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/14343-016>
- [19] Guerrero-Solé, F. (2018). Interactive Behavior in Political Discussions on Twitter: Politicians, Media, and Citizens' Patterns of Interaction in the 2015 and 2016 Electoral Campaigns in Spain. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118808776>
- [20] Herd, P., & Moynihan, D. P. (2019). Administrative burdens: Policy design and implementation. In Russell Sage Foundation. Oxford University Press.
- [21] Herd, P., & Moynihan, D. P. (2024). Administrative burden: Policymaking by other means. Russell Sage Foundation. <https://doi.org/10.7758/9781610448519>
- [22] Husserl, E. (2012). Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology. Routledge.
- [23] Ibarra, H. (1999). Provisional selves: Experimenting with image and identity in professional adaptation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(4), 764–791. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2667055>
- [24] Jones, B. (2019). Public Service Chatbots: Automating Conversation with BBC News. *Digital Journalism*, 7(8), 1032–1053. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2019.1609371>
- [25] Klein, H. J., Molloy, J. C., & Cooper, J. T. (2012). Conceptual foundations of workplace commitments. In *Commitment in organizations* (pp. 30–51). Routledge.
- [26] Lawrie Van de Ven, K. (2010). Spectacular Paris: Representations of Nostalgia and Desire. *Paroles Gelées*, 26(1). <https://doi.org/10.5070/pg7261003200>
- [27] Lechner, S., Jacometti, J., McBean, G., & Mitchison, N. (2016). Resilience in a complex world – Avoiding cross-sector collapse. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 19, 84–91. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2016.08.006>
- [28] Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2023). Naturalistic inquiry. In Elsevier eBooks. SAGE Publications.

- [29] Lipsky, M. (1980). *Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public services*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- [30] Luthans, F., Youssef, C. M., & Avolio, B. J. (2007). *Psychological capital: Developing the human competitive edge*. Oxford University Press.
- [31] Maynard-Moody, S., & Musheno, M. (2003). *Cops, teachers, counselors: Stories from the front lines of public service*. University of Michigan Press.
- [32] Meho, I. (2006). Email interviewing in qualitative research: A methodological discussion. *Social Science Computer Review*, 24(1), 29-43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439305281305>
- [33] Meyer, G. (1994). Social Information Processing and Social Networks: A Test of Social Influence Mechanisms. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001872679404700901>
- [34] Meyer, J. P. (2002). Affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organization: A meta-analysis of antecedents, correlates, and consequences. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 61(1), 20-52. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.2001.1842>
- [35] Pratt, M. G., Rockmann, K. W., & Kaufmann, J. B. (2006). Constructing professional identity. *Academy of Management Review*, 31(2), 235-262. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2006.20786060>
- [36] Reissman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. SAGE Publications.
- [37] Rest, J., Narvaez, D., Bebeau, M., & Thoma, S. (1999). *Postconventional moral thinking: A neo-Kohlbergian approach*. Psychology Press.
- [38] Riketta, M. (2002). Attitudinal organizational commitment and job performance. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23(3), 257-266. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.145>
- [39] Sawir, M. (2024). Dinamika aspirasi politik Pilkada. *Jurnal Demokrasi Dan Otonomi Daerah*, 16(1), 25-42.
- [40] Takona, J. P. (2024). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches / sixth edition*. Quality and Quantity, Vol. 58. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-023-01798-2>
- [41] Thornton, P. H., Ocasio, W., & Lounsbury, M. (2012). *The institutional logics perspective: A new approach to culture, structure, and process*. Oxford University Press.
- [42] Tummers, L., & Knies, E. (2023). Public professionals and policy implementation. *Public Administration Review*, 76(4), 578-584. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12470>
- [43] Vandenaabeele, W. (2016). Toward a theory of public service motivation. *Public Management Review*, 9(4), 545-556. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719030701726697>
- [44] Wens, M. L. K., Mwangi, M. N., van Loon, A. F., & Aerts, J. C. J. H. (2021). Complexities of drought adaptive behaviour: Linking theory to data on smallholder farmer adaptation decisions. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 63. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2021.102435>
- [45] Weyant, E. (2022). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 5th Edition*. *Journal of Electronic Resources in Medical Libraries*, 19(1-2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/15424065.2022.2046231>