

## Elections Strengthen Democratic State System

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**Abstract:** *General Election (Pemilu) is the main pillar in a democratic constitutional system. However, in practice, elections in Indonesia still face problems, such as low participation from the community, money politics, and weak law enforcement against election violations. This study aims to analyze which aims to analyze the extent to which elections contribute to strengthening a democratic constitutional system in Indonesia. The method used in this study is a literature review, by examining literature sources such as journals, articles and others. The results of the study show that elections can strengthen a democratic constitutional system if they are carried out directly, generally, freely, secretly, honestly, fairly and supported by independent election organizing institutions and a firm legal system. The conclusion of this study is that elections have great potential in strengthening a democratic constitutional system, but it depends on the quality of implementation and supervision that is carried out consistently and integrated*

**Keywords :** *election, democracy, state administration, politics, Indonesia politics*

**Abstrak:** Pemilihan Umum (Pemilu) adalah pilar utama dalam sistem ketatanegaraan yang demokratis. Namun dalam praktiknya, pemilu di Indonesia masih mengalami menghadapi masalah, seperti rendahnya partisipasi dari masyarakat, politik uang, serta lemahnya penegakan hukum terhadap pelanggaran pemilu. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis yang bertujuan untuk menganalisis sejauh mana pemilu berkontribusi dalam memperkuat sistem ketatanegaraan yang demokratis di Indonesia. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah *literatur riview*, dengan mengkaji sumber literatur seperti jurnal, artikel dan lainnya. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa pemilu dapat memperkuat sistem ketatanegaraan yang demokratis apabila dijalankan secara langsung, umum, bebas, rahasia, jujur, adil serta didukung oleh institusi penyelenggara pemilu yang independen dan sistem hukum yang tegas. Simpulan dari penelitian ini adalah pemilu memiliki potensi besar dalam memperkuat sistem ketatanegaraan yang demokratis, namun hal itu bergantung pada kualitas pelaksanaan dan pengawasan yang dilakukan konsisten dan berintegrasi.

**Kata kunci:** pemilu, demokrasi, tatanegara, politik, Indonesia politik

## Introduction

The main pillar in a democratic constitutional system is the election. With the electoral system, all layers of society can directly vote, enabling the realization of people's sovereignty. Nowadays, elections are not only a tool for transferring power or policy, but also serve as a means of evaluation. This research is intended to analyze whether democratic constitutionalism can be strengthened through elections and how to address the challenges involved.

The democratic system of government has several definitions. Democracy is often interpreted populistically as a structure of power "of the people, by the people, and for the people." However, in historical reality, this ideal form has never truly existed, as no government is entirely run by the entire people or fully accommodates every individual's interest in society.

In practice, government is carried out by elites, not the people. The results of governance are not always evenly distributed, and disparities often occur. When defending "populist democracy," the concept of "polyarchy" proposed by Dahl is seen as more reflective of political reality than "populist democracy," because it portrays power as exercised by "many people" instead of "all people."

Indonesia implements a form of democracy-based governance. Although the government claims its implementation is good, evidence through studies is required to assess how democracy is being practiced. Such studies are crucial in providing indicators to review the success of democracy in Indonesia. (Fatiha, Socharjoto, & Santosa, 2022)

## Research Method

The method used in this study is literature review, which simplifies the identification of relevant topics and research sources (Ridwan, AM, Ulum, & Muhammad, 2021). The data collection procedure involves library research by analyzing relevant journals and articles. Secondary data were also used, derived from archives, journals, books, articles, and discussion groups to ensure accurate and accessible information.

## Results and Discussion

Etymologically, the term democracy is derived from the Greek word "Demokratia," consisting of "demos" meaning "people" and "kratos/cratein" meaning "power/government," conceptually referring to a government structure based on people's supremacy. In literal terms, democracy is understood as a political authority based entirely on the principle of people's sovereignty. (Lutpiani, 2021) Robert A. Dahl defines democracy as follows: (1) control over governmental decisions; (2) transparent and fair elections; (3) the guarantee of individual rights to participate in elections; (4) equal opportunity to run for public office; (5) freedom of expression without intimidation; (6) access to relevant information. In normative terms, democracy places the people as the highest source of authority in the

structure of power, meaning that the people hold power above the state. This relates more to their rights as citizens, reflecting the belief that people's rights are more important than the rights of the state.

Democracy assumes that power originates from, is exercised by, and serves the people. In a more inclusive understanding, democracy is viewed as a power concept involving active public participation. The people are the source of power and should determine and regulate public life. Ideally, the state should operate through the collective participation of all elements of society, reflecting broad civic engagement. In short, democracy is defined as "government of the people, by the people, for the people." (Wardhana, 2020) The democratic principle in Indonesia is reflected in the presidential election (Pilpres) where individual freedom and political equality are guaranteed. The formal democratic process categorizes presidential elections as a continuation of political rights. Elections serve as a national democratic instrument. State and society can deepen democracy through institutional mechanisms that boost public trust. Enhancing public engagement in political activities is a form of democratic deepening.

Elections in Indonesia gain legitimacy through Law No. 12 of 2003, which states: "(1) Elections are a means to realize the sovereignty of the people. (2) Elections are held to elect members of the DPR, DPD, DPRD, and to elect the President and Vice President. (3) Elections must be conducted with quality, involving public participation and based on direct, general, free, confidential, honest, and fair principles. (4) Elections must ensure representation, accountability, and legitimacy."

One key element of legitimacy is electoral integrity, as trust is built through honest elections. Electoral integrity influences political behavior, encouraging participation, supporting governance, and preventing mass protests. It also enhances the quality of political representation and contributes to conflict resolution and stability. (Silalahi, 2022) Political participation refers to individual activities within legal frameworks aimed at influencing government decisions. In democracy, sovereignty lies with the people who determine the collective direction. Hence, political participation is vital for utilizing legitimate political power. High participation rates are seen as positive, while low participation suggests apathy or distrust. (Asgar, 2023)

Public desire for transparent and interference-free elections is a crucial component in democratic legitimacy. Despite having three organizing bodies—KPU (organizer), Bawaslu (supervisor), and DKPP (ethics court)—fraud and manipulation still occur. Failure to conduct fair elections erodes public trust, as shown by voter abstention due to doubt in candidates and procedures. (Maliki, 2023) Democratic elections aim to: (a) facilitate peaceful government change and evaluate public support; (b) function as a means to articulate and integrate public aspirations over time. (Wardhana, 2020)

Legitimate elections result from effective systems and inter-institutional collaboration. Election governance includes legal frameworks, planning, education, voter registration, campaigning, voting, result verification, and post-election reforms. (Fatiha, Soeharjoto, & Santosa, 2022) Jimly Asshiddiqie states that the main objectives of elections are to uphold people's sovereignty and human rights, facilitate peaceful leadership changes, and elect representatives. Therefore, electoral law is essential for achieving democratic, fair, and just elections.

The role of elections in democracy includes: (1) realizing people's sovereignty by enabling all citizens to vote and feel represented; (2) ensuring peaceful power transitions, avoiding conflict or coups; (3) increasing public participation, which is a sign of democratic culture. One feature of democracy is public involvement in political processes. Elections are a mechanism for choosing representatives. (Lutpiani, 2021)

Indonesia practices democracy, and democratic culture is embraced by its people. Core democratic cultural principles include:

1. Freedom: the ability to choose or act independently for collective good.
2. Equality: avoiding excessive emphasis on differences in ethnicity, race, or religion to prevent conflict.
3. Solidarity: shared goals bind society, despite differences.
4. Tolerance: respecting differing views and beliefs.
5. Honesty: truthfulness and openness.
6. Reasoning: explaining decisions and encouraging rational consensus.
7. Civility: respectful behavior in speech and conduct.

Elections face several democratic challenges:

(1) Money politics: undermines integrity and public trust. Bribery violates legal and religious principles. (Wardhana, 2020) (2) Declining voter participation: weakens democracy, often due to low political awareness or distrust in the system. Good governance requires democracy, efficient markets, proper investment, anti-corruption, and supportive legal frameworks. These principles are linked to electoral conduct. Long-term elections in Indonesia have evolved toward shared prosperity. Regular, open, and fair elections facilitate debates on candidates' programs and inform the public, indicating healthy democracy. (Fatiha, Soeharjoto, & Santosa, 2022)

However, elections often suffer distortion from money politics. Oversight bodies like Bawaslu and DKPP must ensure KPU's effective administration. Monitoring boosts public trust in election fairness and leadership legitimacy. Program assessments should focus on public benefit, not campaign spending. (Maliki, 2023). In a democracy, public participation in elections is vital. A just and fair election reflects democratic goals. Public awareness, especially in developing countries, must be raised. Political participation includes individual or group involvement to achieve collective goals, such as electing representatives.

International standards define democratic principles like "voter registration and registered voters." In Indonesia, the KPU organizes elections and Bawaslu supervises them. Apathy arises when the public feels excluded. Hence, increasing public engagement is crucial. Election organizers have made efforts to encourage participation. KPU focuses on reducing apathy and promotes political education to emphasize the importance of voting. With elections determining the nation's future, everyone—not just organizers—must be involved. Direct public voting is essential.

According to Articles 22E (2) and 18 (4) of the 1945 Constitution, regional elections reflect democratization and measure the success of Indonesia's democratic system. Both presidential and legislative elections need strict oversight to ensure fairness, transparency, and trust. Democracy is not solely about elections, but Indonesia's simultaneous national and local elections are among the most complex in the world. (Defretes & Kleden, 2023) Democracy education raises public awareness and involvement in elections. Educating first-time voters helps them make informed choices. Voters aged 18+ are influential, and KPU aims to engage them actively.

Modern and attractive strategies must be used to reach young voters, such as community meetings with legislative candidates presenting their agendas. This ensures voters are not mere spectators but active participants. Election results often disappoint losing parties. Disagreements may arise from technical errors or human mistakes. Disputes can be filed with the Constitutional Court. Disputes over results must be distinguished from campaign violations or criminal offenses by organizers. Legal violations involve sanctions. For instance, stealing ballots is a criminal offense, while violating campaign schedules is an administrative issue Julyana, A., & Nurchotimah, A. S. I. (2024).

Election organizers must consider the quality of evidence. Governance must not rely on institutional errors. Disputes require structured, timely proof. Legal certainty is essential to avoid injustice. According to Article 5(1) of Law No. 8/2012, the 2014 election used an open-list proportional system. This was continued in the 2019 election under Law No. 7/2017, Article 168(2). In 2014, the DPR had 560 seats divided among 77 constituencies. In 2019, there were 575 seats across 80 constituencies, reflecting an increase of 15 seats and three new districts. Open-list proportional systems allow multiple candidates per constituency. Voter choice affects seat allocation. This empowers voters to make informed, rational decisions. Closed-list systems can reduce accountability, as voters have limited influence. Political parties must ensure transparent internal processes. (Zulkarnain & Ismaidar, 2023).

## **Conclusion**

Elections are a pillar of democratic constitutional governance. With principles of fairness, transparency, and legitimacy, elections ensure peaceful

power transitions. They embody the fourth principle of Pancasila and reflect the dynamic nature of democratic systems. Elections can serve as indicators of government success and are vital for national unity. Over decades, Indonesia has strengthened its democracy through elections. The challenge remains with money politics, which undermines democratic values. Despite reforms, transactional politics persists and influences election outcomes.

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