INTEGRITY AND ELECTION-WINNING IN INDONESIA: HOW TO CHALLENGE DEMOCRACY AMIDST THE OLIGARCHY?

Arlan Siddha¹ Lukman Munwar Fauzi²

1,2 Universitas Jenderal Achmad Yani Jalan Terusan Jend. Sudirman, Cibeber, Kec. Cimahi Selatan, Kota Cimahi, West Java, 40532, Indonesia

Correspondence Email: arlan.siddha@lecture.unjani.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to understand and analyze the importance of electoral integrity and explain the dynamics of electoral democracy in Indonesia amidst the firm grip of the oligarchy that controls the government. However, electoral integrity is essential to weaken the oligarchy and strengthen democracy. The research uses a qualitative method with data collection and analysis through a review of important and relevant literature. A thorough reading reveals that elections must be conducted fairly and free from fraud, malpractice, and administrative errors. In addition, political financing for political parties and increasing accountability for using more transparent and open funds are one of the main parts of preventing oligarchy. Finally, democracy requires broad public participation and involvement to oversee all processes of state administration by the government to be implemented properly.

Keywords: integrity; oligarchy; democracy; elections; Indonesia

ABSTRAK (in Bahasa)

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk memahami dan menganalisis pentingnya integritas pemilu dan menjelaskan dinamika demokrasi pemilu di Indonesia ditengah kuatnya cekraman oligarki yang menguasai pemerintahan Bagaimanapun, integritas pemilu menjadi syarat penting agar oligarki bisa didegradasi dan akan menjadi penguatan bagi demokrasi yang berlangsung. Riset menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pengambilan dan analisis data melalui telaah literatur yang penting dan relevan. Dari pembacaan yang menyeluruh dapat diperoleh hasil bahwa pemilu memang harus dilaksanakan secara adil dan bebas dari berbagai kecurangan dan malpraktik serta kesalahan administrasi. Selain itu, pembiayaan politik bagi partai politik dan meningkatkan akuntabilitas penggunaan dana yang lebih transparan dan terbuka merupakan salah satu bagian utama untuk mencegah terjadinya oligarki. Terakhir bahwa demokrasi membutuhkan partisipasi dan keterlibatan publik secara luas agar bisa mengawasi semua proses penyelenggaraan negara oleh pemerintah dapat dilaksanakan dengan baik.

Kata kunci: integritas; oligarki; demokrasi; pemilu; Indonesia.

BACKGROUND

Many people believe that the 2024 elections will determine the development of Indonesian democracy in the future. The dynamics leading up to the 2024 elections are interesting to discuss, especially in the context of how the 2024 elections will be

able to place political elites in national and regional leadership. The pessimistic and apathetic attitude that a democratic 2024 election can be achieved is increasingly prominent in society. The reason is that the 2024 elections will only legitimize the old

political elite to continue in power and further entrench the oligarchy of power.

This anxiety is not exaggerated, given that the 2019 elections have provided ample evidence of the existence of powerful oligarchs who vie for legitimacy from the public through elections. In reality, they are not the party that represents the ambitions and interests of the people as they profess. Ideally, elections should legitimize individuals entrusted with power for five years in a constitutional, professional, and honest manner (Daniller & Mutz, 2019; Frank & Coma, 2017; i Coma & Ham, 2015: Fortin-Rittberger et al.. 2017). However, oligarchy getting stronger and carrying the main agenda of becoming the dominant party in gaining power.

How oligarchic relations in Indonesia are formed can be seen from the mutualistic relationship between the elite or political parties and the business world. The power relations formed after the 1997 crisis were seen in the 2020 pandemic crisis in how political-business concerns handled the crisis by placing economic interests as the main agenda.

At least three forms of oligarchic power relations have adapted and evolved since the New Order. First, in contrast to the New Order era, when political-business partnerships were always "problematic" for the market economy, post-New Order oligarchic connections have adapted to the market's desires. This is illustrated, for instance, by the National Economic Recovery (PEN) policy's pro-business approach to pandemic management. Second, the decentralization agenda, as a potent prescription for the market following

the crisis of 1997, has made oligarchic linkages dispersed and consolidated at the local level. The nodes of political-business formations are created and maintained at all levels of government, from the federal to the local. In the post-New Order era, forming new "unique" institutions has become a new channel for oligarchic connections (Rainditya, 2022).

After the New Order, political parties became strategic oligarchic vehicles since the electoral system became vital to the struggle for and maintenance of power. Political parties are also a means of integrating the influence of political and commercial interests. According to Koran Tempo, 262 or 45.5% of the 575 House of Representatives of the Republic Indonesia (DPR-RI) members for 2019-2024 are affiliated with at least one company or businessman. Almost half of Indonesia's political parties are owned by wealthy businessmen, including Surya Paloh (Nasdem), Harry Tanoesoedibjo (Perindo), Airlangga Hartarto (Golkar), Suharso Monoarfa (PPP), and Tommy Suharto (Berkarya Party).

What about the elections in 2024? Some believe that oligarchic interactions have stayed the same over time. Specifically, Tempo magazine's 25 June 2022 issue reported that this oligarchic alliance remains linked. The consolidation of Thomas Lembong (Jokowi's former Minister of Trade) and Sunny Tanuwidjaja (founder of the Indonesian Solidarity Party/PSI) with Anies Baswedan is evidence of this (Rainditya, 2022).

Integrity is the starting point for the critique of strengthening the electoral oligarchy in Indonesia. Integrity has been

one of the primary topics of discussion regarding the worldwide organization of elections to date (Levin & Alvarez, 2012), including in Indonesia because this is the origin of all election implementation and results principles. Continually linked with criticisms of the performance of Indonesian elections are concerns regarding the integrity of elections and election outcomes. In addition, criticism attacks election organizers' integrity and capacity to hold democratic elections and limits the consolidation of oligarchic authority.

What is the importance of election integrity? Then, what is the future of electoral democracy in Indonesia, given the oligarchs' apparent unwillingness to grant political opportunities to those who wish to fulfill their ideals? This essay attempts to answer the concerns, interprets election integrity, and analyses the challenges of democracy in the grasp of an oligarchy that is still powerful and has the potential to remain strong through the elections of 2024.

METHOD

In exploring the concerns highlighted, the author employs a qualitative strategy based on literature studies from numerous contemporary and relevant sources. These are compiled and examined further, making it easier for the author to interpret and form conclusions. By reviewing and critically analyzing the selected literary sources, dialectic is constructed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Election Integrity: Answering Doubts about Fraud

Electoral integrity is achieved using a universal method or specific criteria. According to Ham (2015), defining electoral integrity using a versatile technique refers to the concept's meaning based on universal democratic principles, such as democratic philosophy and international law. Meanwhile, criteria-based definitions of electoral integrity pertain to features of citizen and political party participation; specifically, the report by Pastor (1999) "uses the faulty term election to describe an election in which major political parties refuse to participate or reject the outcome.

In the context of specific criteria, Elklit and Reynolds (2005) Ham argues that The quality of an election can be conceptualized as the extent to which political actors at all levels and from various political factions perceive the electoral process to be legitimate and binding. Ham further argues that this view of electoral integrity based on specific criteria is favoured by many academics since diverse conditions make every election unique. Even if the election does not fulfill ideal democratic norms, domestic stakeholders can accept it; hence, the election is legitimate—field (Ham. 2015: Rahmatunnisa, 2017).

While Sahoo, in her review article of Pippa Norris' book "Why Electoral Integrity Matters," Electoral integrity is broadly defined as the process of conducting free and fair elections by addressing electoral fraud and malpractices, administrative errors, and violation of democratic values from the campaign

period to the counting of final results (Sahoo, 2015).

It is interesting what Sahoo said about electoral integrity. In this understanding, integrity relates to how an election can be carried out fairly and free from fraud, malpractice, and administrative errors. If electoral integrity cannot be maintained, this will significantly impact the failure to achieve democratic goals and weaken the legitimacy of elections.

In his work, Norris discusses the significance of election integrity from multiple perspectives, including legitimacy. Integrity in elections fosters confidence in various political institutions. Similarly, electoral integrity can improve public participation in elections (voter turnout) and community involvement in and decrease government significant protests in the context of widespread political behavior. Additionally, Norris stated that election integrity could enhance political representation. In addition to other political system benefits, dispute resolution and security result from the electoral integrity (Rahmatunnisa, 2017).

To realize elections with integrity, there are at least eight criteria that must be met (Surbakti, 2016; Nurrahmawati, 2017), namely:

- 1. Electoral law and legal certainty.
- Equality among citizens, voting and counting votes, allocating DPR/DPRD seats, and forming electoral districts.
- 3. Free and fair competition.
- 4. Voter participation in elections.
- 5. Independent election organizers, competence, integrity, efficiency, and effective leadership.

- Voting and counting processes are based on democratic election principles and election integrity principles.
- 7. Electoral justice.
- There is no violence in the electoral process. Electoral violence is any act of harm to persons or threat of harm to persons or property in connection with an election.

Upon reflection on the 2019 elections, a number of electoral integrity-related facts are readily apparent. The data indicate that 6,649 violations occurred during the 2019 election, where the breaches were registered. Then there were 548 criminal violations, 107 ethical violations, 656 other legal violations, and 4,759 administrative infractions. The most severe breaches are money politics, document falsification, and campaign law infractions (Bawaslu, 2019).

In the meantime, the percentage of voters interested in money politics during the 2019 elections ranged from 19.4% to 33.1%. By international standards, this breadth of money politics positions Indonesia as the third-largest country in the world in terms of money politics. In other words, the acceptance of money politics in Indonesian elections is now widespread (Mutahdi, 2019; Delmana et al., 2020), but it threatens the integrity of election administration.

Therefore, it is essential to thoroughly analyze how the organization of elections remains within acceptable parameters. In that manner, the people would no longer dispute the results of the polls, which were widely asked and doubted in some earlier election experiences. As a

result, it is relatively uncommon for people to feel dissatisfied with the elites and political parties that attain power.

Without electoral integrity, leaders and officials lack public accountability and faith in election results, and the government loses its legitimacy. Election integrity permits leaders and the public to engage in resolution, conflict peaceful communication, debate, and information exchange. Integrity is based upon public faith in the election and political procedures. Reforming institutions is insufficient; citizens must be persuaded that the reforms are genuine and deserving of their confidence. To ensure the integrity of elections, it is necessary to consider and strengthen factors outside of electoral institutions. Politicians must respect the autonomy of election officials, judges, and courts.

In addition, election integrity requires a legislative and institutional framework that supports and protects fair and equitable elections the implementation of specific measures to maintain electoral integrity by democratic election norms and best practices. The appropriate measures must be customized to each country's socioeconomic and political conditions. However, the underlying objectives remain the same and stem from the necessity of promoting honest and credible elections. Among the guiding principles that can contribute to a fair election are: 1) respect for democratic electoral ideals; 2) ethical behaviour; 3) professionalism and accuracy; 4) institutional safeguards; 5) oversight and enforcement; and 6) transparency and accountability (Aceproject.org, 2012).

While electoral quality has been under the spotlight for many years, citizens' perceptions of electoral integrity still need to be widely debated. Public evaluations often need to get mainstream attention to reinforce how crucial electoral integrity is. Due to inadequate knowledge, citizens their (mainly laypersons) need more capacity to evaluate elections. However, electoral integrity will only be effectively implemented with systematic evaluation. It is crucial to discuss electoral integrity, primarily to address failures and mistakes in the administration of elections and to degrade fraud (Mochtak et al., 2021).

Oligarchy: Could it End?

terminology of political corruption encompasses electoral corruption. Therefore, the two terms, frequently used interchangeably, must be differently, despite understood similarities. Regarding the perpetrators, Philp in Heidenheimer & Johnston (2017) defines political corruption as the actions of public officials who deny the trust of constituents or harm the public interest by abusing office for their benefit or by giving access to resources to third parties that they should not have obtained through means that violate the rule of law.

According to Amundsen (1999), the defining characteristic of political corruption, which he refers to as big crime, is that it always involves political policymakers. He thinks political corruption happens at the highest levels of a nation's political structure. Amundsen continued by stating that standard forms of political corruption include the misuse of political power to divert state resources to enrich

themselves and the behaviour of policymakers who systematically seek to manipulate the law and circumvent the mechanisms of political institutions to legitimize actions that benefit themselves or their groups.

According to Kurer in Field Heywood (2015), Corruption is the misuse of function, authority, and power in politics. Political corruption undermines social, political, and cultural standards by misusing official authority, power, or mandate. When Kurer links political corruption to the behaviour of politicians and voters, the proposed definition becomes intriguing. He opposes the Weberian assumption that political corruption is only possible through official government posts. According to Kurer, political corruption committed by anyone who can violate public promises and authority. Due to Kurer's idea, voters, i.e., those who do not hold positions as officials but have the knowledge and ability to elect a public official, can become political corruptors. This is because a politician's corruption is typically a response to the activities of his supporters (Disyacitta, 2019).

Political corruption is viewed as a result of the expansion of the power elite. The conceptual definition of oligarchy, particularly in Indonesian political studies, can be seen from the statement of Robison & Hadiz (2014) and Winters (2014). Robison and Hadiz define oligarchy in Indonesia as a structure of power relations that collectively enables the concentration of money and authority and the system's defence. Winters describes oligarchy as actors who command and manage huge concentrations of material resources that can

be employed to defend or enhance their riches or exclusive social status [by] the politics of wealth defence by the materially endowed.

According to Winters, an oligarchy is not simply a group of powerful elites or a minority that rules the majority. Oligarchies vary from other minorities because their authority is based on their difficult-to-divide and-balance material wealth. Despite being a minority in a community, the oligarchic rule is difficult to dismantle and has systemic influence. In contrast, Hadiz and Robison assert that oligarchy can be founded on tangible (economic) resources and power relationships (political power).

According to Hadiz and Robison, an oligarchy is a structure of power relations that permits the concentration of money and authority and the collective defense of both. In other words, oligarchy is characterized by an extensive accumulation of material (economic) resources and political control. According to Hadiz and Robison, the critical characteristics of oligarchy are its collective nature and the relationship between conflicts over wealth and political power.

Thus, while their focus on subjectivity differs, these two perspectives highlight that the democratization process in Indonesia has not caused oligarchs to lose influence and that they continue to play a crucial role in the country (Suryani et al., 2021).

Eliminating oligarchy is the most difficult challenge we have today. This is the most significant concern when political parties and leaders continue to include financiers (donors) in attaining electoral victory. Elections increase the cost of political parties in order to acquire more

votes. Similarly, political party ideology is waning, and political links with party members are eroding, which has repercussions for the fragility of organizational networks (Junaidi et al., 2011).

In other words, the influence of funders can alter the nature of political parties, notably their commitment to fighting for the interests of members, voters, and the public. Donors' influx of enormous sums of money to political parties is a typical donation with conditions. The donors hope that political parties will gain from policymaking or using other authorities held by legislative or executive party cadres.

Following the example of several nations in Western Europe, this is accomplished in part by providing financial help or subsidies to political parties to finance their operational and campaign activities. The grants are deducted from the state budget, and the amount tends to increase with time. In many countries with established democracies, however, political party operations rely on individual and corporate contributions. Therefore, number of political party donations must be restricted to preserve the political parties' independence to fight for the people's interests, not the donors (Junaidi et al., 2011; Biezen, 2003).

Therefore, ending an oligarchy necessitates state engagement, particularly in financing political parties. Some have contended that oligarchy can be eliminated by increasing the state's contribution to funding political parties and elections. This money will affect political party administration.

Consequently,

accountability is necessary, as is the case with other public groups receiving state financing. Thus, responsibility is crucial to a governmental sponsorship of political campaigns. (Syawawi, 2021). However, of course, this still raises debates, significantly about whether the existence of state funding for political parties can immediately eliminate the problem of corruption. Then, can this also encourage political parties to work better while still prioritizing the interests of the people rather than their interests and groups?

Electoral Democracy: The Importance of Public Engagement

In the political domain, democracy represents the culmination of human moral development, which frequently dissatisfies voters and supporters. However, the essence of democracy comprises the following elements: popular sovereignty, majority rule, joy, legally secured independence, and participation at all levels with equal rights and responsibilities in policy development. The emblem of democracy was a kind of government that promised peaceful cohabitation between the government and the people.

As a dynamic political formation, the practice of democracy will be mainly determined by the extent to which the quality of human resources bureaucratic elites' election outcomes can provide meaningful and responsible roles and obligations to the majority of its citizens. Free and open access for the public to monitor and supervise the government's operations is necessary for the sovereign and balanced functioning of democratic practices within the law.

The nature of politics in a democratic system is complicated, as Stoker (2006) argues. With corruption and collusion, it is easier to reconcile divergent interests, handle talks, and communicate a consensus choice. Citizens are also referred to as political amateurs due to the complexity of the existing systems and institutions, as well as the fact that they participate in politics on a piecemeal basis with less capacity than political professionals or political actors such as lobbyists, activists, cadres of political parties, and council members (Karim, 2001).

An essential part of democracy is public engagement, and Milbrath (1981) in Djumadin (2021) Gives four causes for the difference in a person's political activity. First, in terms of accepting political incentives. Milbrath stated that a person's openness and receptivity to political stimuli through personal interactions, organizations, and the media would influence their political involvement. His transparency and sensitivity to receiving political inducements from the media will inspire someone to become politically active.

By actively following political happenings through the media, a person will have sufficient actual references to respond, which will ultimately serve as a component of his political engagement. Nevertheless, a person's knowledge, views, values, experiences, and personality unquestionably impact how they respond to political stimuli. According to Milbrath, the second explanation relates to a person's social qualities. Political engagement is influenced by socioeconomic class, ethnic background, age, gender, and religion.

Thirdly, it relates to the political and party structures that individuals inhabit. People in a democratic nation tend to participate in politics because political parties seek the support of the public and fight for the group's interests. In the meantime, Milbrath's fourth factor is geographical differences. This regional difference is an environmental factor promoting individual character and behaviour differences, encouraging political and participation differences.

The article from Arbi Sanit (2003) cites five elements supporting political participation. Initially, all areas, including politics, were open to competition. Second, a broad and open political reality existed. Thirdly, there was freedom of association, allowing community and party organizations to flourish. Fourth, the distribution of political resources throughout society. Fifth was allocating power in society, which created a power balance.

Public participation is present and well-implemented in Indonesia, despite the myriad difficulties that underpin the dynamics of the country's democracy. The public's involvement should not be limited to voting in elections but should also include monitoring and influencing the country's political dynamics. It must be noted that the public already possesses a high level of political awareness to execute the ideal voting process and dynamics. With substantial public participation, it may be possible to limit the growth of oligarchy in power and preserve high levels of political integrity.

CONCLUSION

Winning elections is indeed the biggest goal for political parties and political elites so that they can control and become holders of government control. For elections to be carried out correctly and fairly, integrity must be maintained. Sahoo's statement regarding a virtue related to the implementation of elections needs to be observed because elections should be carried out fairly and free from fraud, malpractices, and administrative errors.

This is because elections with integrity will determine how the elections are conducted and how this can prevent the oligarchy of power. As Robison and Hadiz state, oligarchs form a collaborative network with an abundant accumulation of material (economic) resources and political power.

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Therefore, to prevent this collaborative network from forming, there is a need for collective public awareness and state commitment to conduct elections with integrity. One is political financing for political parties and increasing accountability by using more transparent and open funds.

With all of this, the most significant outcome is, of course, the achievement of a more democratic state administration. Democracy requires broad public participation and involvement in order to oversee all processes of state administration by the government to be carried out properly, including elections as the main door for political parties and elites to exercise power.

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