

Implementation and violations of election principles in the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential elections of the Republic of Indonesia

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation of electoral principles mandated in Article 22E of the 1945 Constitution—direct, universal, free, confidential, honest, and fair elections—in the 2024 Indonesian presidential and vice-presidential elections, which were marked by legal controversy following Constitutional Court Decision Number 90/PUU-XXI/2023. A socio-legal approach was employed, combining document analysis, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions with election organisers and supervisory bodies. Data were analysed qualitatively using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana interactive model, involving data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. The principles of direct and universal suffrage were generally upheld. However, the principles of free, confidential, honest, and fair elections were only partially implemented. Violations identified include money politics, lack of institutional neutrality, power intervention, and vote mobilisation practices. These findings indicate persistent structural weaknesses in Indonesia's electoral democracy, particularly in the 2024 elections. The study highlights the urgent need for strengthening institutional integrity, improving coordination among supervisory bodies, and enforcing election law more effectively. Enhancing public participation and oversight mechanisms is essential to ensure the full realisation of democratic electoral principles in future elections.

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Introduction

General elections are a fundamental instrument in modern democratic life, held periodically as an expression of the people's sovereignty in determining the nation's leaders (Sunarso, 2021). This is in line with the view of Dahl (1989) that elections in a democratic system must guarantee free and equal participation by the people in determining their leaders (Dahl, 1998, 2007). In Indonesia, general elections are part of the state cycle, held every five years. One form of election is the election of the president and vice president, which has undergone significant changes since the constitutional reform (Asfar et al., 2025; Salahudin et al., 2020; Subekti et al., 2025). Previously, the election of the president and vice president was conducted by the Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly (MPR RI). However, with the amendment to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, this mechanism was changed so that the president and vice president are elected directly by the people through general elections (1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Article 22E, paragraph (1)). This change, as explained by Kusdarini (2018), is a form of constitutional reform aimed at strengthening the people's direct sovereignty, replacing the representative system previously used in the election of the president and vice president in Indonesia (Kusdarini, 2018).

This change to the electoral system was an important milestone in Indonesia's democratisation process. Direct elections by the people not only strengthen a leader's political legitimacy but also broaden community participation. The success of direct elections is not only measured by the election procedures but also by the system's ability to ensure integrity, political freedom, and a balance of power (Baker, 2023; Diamond, 2015; Paskarina et al., 2025). This is in line with the idea of Weber et al. (1947), which emphasises that the legitimacy of modern government stems from a legal-rational process, in which free and fair elections are the foundation of the legitimacy of power. Since the introduction of the direct election system in the 2004 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections, it has continued to evolve in subsequent election periods (Sunarso, 2021). However, in practice, the implementation of electoral principles, particularly those of direct, public, free, confidential, honest, and fair elections, is still often marred by challenges such as money politics, the non-neutrality of organisers, and power interference. This phenomenon indicates that the implementation of democratic election principles in Indonesia has not been fully optimised (Simanjuntak et al., 2024). Empirical evidence suggests that while Indonesia has formally institutionalised democratic electoral mechanisms, their implementation remains suboptimal due to weak party institutionalization, declining democratic contestation, and persistent governance challenges that undermine electoral integrity and rational voter participation (Kristiyanto et al., 2023; Mulya & Pertiwi, 2025; Susanti & Khu, 2025).

Historically, the fair principles have played a crucial role in Indonesian democracy, especially after the reform era, as an effort to rehabilitate elections from manipulative practices during the New Order era. The implementation of elections without pressure, fraud, or influence from those in power has become a societal demand following the authoritarian regime (Trihartono & Patriadi, 2016). However, the problems of non-neutrality and violations of electoral principles remain recurring issues in every national election, including the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections (Belinda et al., 2024). This fact provides important background for this study's analysis of the implementation of electoral principles in the last election.

The 2024 presidential and vice-presidential elections will be held in February 2024 as part of the routine and constitutional state agenda. The political contest during this period attracted widespread public attention because President Joko Widodo's eldest son was running for vice president. His participation was made possible after the Constitutional Court changed the age limit for presidential and vice-presidential candidates through Decision Number 90/PUU-XXI/2023 (Ashari et al., 2024). This decision sparked controversy and debate among the public because it was rife with conflicts of interest and could undermine the principle of

neutrality in the conduct of elections (Kusdarini et al., 2022; Toha et al., 2021). This situation shows that the problems in the implementation of elections in Indonesia remain relevant for academic study, particularly in relation to the principles of elections as stipulated in the constitution (Rismayani et al., 2024).

One of the most crucial aspects of the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections is the involvement of Gibran Rakabuming Raka, the son of President Joko Widodo, which has sparked heated debate among the public, academics, and democracy observers. The controversy is not only related to Gibran's status as the son of the incumbent president, but also concerns the process of changing the regulations on candidacy requirements that was carried out before candidate registration (Al Izzati et al., 2024; Astuti & Setyarini, 2024; Firdaus et al., 2024). This event is an important note in the practice of democracy in Indonesia, particularly regarding potential conflicts of interest in legal decision-making that directly affect the implementation of elections (Pratama & Sa'adah, 2024).

The request to change the age limit for vice presidential candidates submitted by Almas Tsaqibbirru, a student from Surakarta, has raised strong suspicions of political manoeuvring based on electoral interests. Although, formally, the request appears to be a form of citizen participation, the substance of the request and the timing of its submission indicate that constitutional instruments have been strategically exploited by the political elite for power. This suspicion is reinforced by the close connection between the timing of the petition and Gibran's nomination process, who previously did not meet the age requirements in the legislation (Adji et al., 2024).

Constitutional Court Decision Number 90/PUU-XXI/2023 was then handed down by nine constitutional judges, namely Anwar Usman, Saldi Isra, Eny Nurbaningsih, Wahiduddin Adams, Suhartoyo, Arief Hidayat, Daniel Yusmic P. Foekh, Manahan MP. Sitompul, and Guntur Hamzah. This decision served as the legal basis for Gibran Rakabuming Raka to run for vice president. This event not only sparked public controversy but also academic discourse on the independence of Indonesia's judicial institutions within its democratic system (Jati et al., 2024). This dynamic is in line with the findings of Handoko et al. (2023), that electoral contests in post-reform Indonesia are still often marked by political patronage and tensions between national elites, which have the potential to weaken the quality of substantive democracy in Indonesia (Handoko et al., 2023).

In response to the alleged ethical violation, the Constitutional Court formed the Constitutional Court Honorary Council (MKMK) to examine Anwar Usman's ethical conduct. Based on judicial ethics provisions, judges who have a direct interest in parties that benefit or suffer losses from a ruling should not be allowed to examine or decide on related cases. The results of the MKMK investigation, led by Jimly Asshiddiqie, ultimately resulted in the dishonourable dismissal of Anwar Usman as Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court. This decision was made because it was established that there had been a serious ethical violation contrary to the principles of judicial independence and impartiality (Pirdaus et al., 2024).

However, Constitutional Court Decision Number 90/PUU-XXI/2023 remains valid, final, and binding in accordance with constitutional provisions. Constitutional Court decisions are final from the moment they are read out, with no legal mechanism to overturn them. Thus, Gibran Rakabuming Raka can still run as a vice-presidential candidate alongside Prabowo Subianto. This situation reflects a paradox in the Indonesian constitutional system, where the principle of legal formalism continues to apply despite ethical flaws in the decision-making process (Oktavianus et al., 2024).

Regarding the contest dynamics, there are three pairs of presidential and vice presidential candidates officially competing in the 2024 elections. Pair number 01 consists of Anies Rasyid Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar, pair number 02 consists of Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka, and pair number 03 consists of Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD. These

three pairs were officially registered with the General Elections Commission in accordance with the election schedule set out in KPU Regulation Number 3 of 2022 concerning the Stages and Schedule for the Implementation of the 2024 Elections (Sahl & Mauluddin, 2024).

The various dynamics surrounding the 2024 presidential and vice-presidential elections have raised widespread public concerns about the potential for government bias in the electoral process. One contributing factor is the involvement of the incumbent president's son in national politics (Murary, 2024). These concerns are reinforced by President Joko Widodo's statements, in which he has repeatedly expressed his desire to "*cawe-cawe*" or interfere in the electoral process, particularly in the presidential and vice-presidential elections. These statements were conveyed through the national media and were considered capable of influencing the democratic process, which should be independent and free from executive pressure (Hakim & Koh, 2024).

The vote count results announced by the General Election Commission show Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka winning with over 50% of the vote. This victory reinforces suspicions among some circles that there are still problems with the implementation of the principles of elections that should be upheld in Indonesia's democratic system. A number of indicators show that the implementation of elections in Indonesia from the New Order era to the present still leaves unresolved issues of money politics, power intervention, and the lack of neutrality among election organisers (Kusdarini, 2018).

To analyse these issues, this study draws on several theoretical frameworks commonly used to assess electoral integrity. The *first* is Norris's electoral integrity theory, which explains how deviations from procedural and substantive standards can undermine democratic legitimacy (Norris, 2014). *Second*, Diamond's concept of democratic backsliding is used to understand how weakened electoral institutions and power intervention erode democratic quality (Diamond, 2008, 2015). In addition, theories of clientelism and vote buying, as described by Aspinall and Berenschot (2019) and Stokes (2009), are employed to interpret practices of money politics, vote steering, and patronage networks that influence voter behaviour and the neutrality of election organisers (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019; Stokes, 2009). These theoretical perspectives serve as an analytical lens for interpreting this study's findings.

Based on these conditions, a comprehensive academic analysis of the implementation of electoral principles in Indonesia is necessary, particularly in relation to the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections. These principles, as stipulated in Article 22E of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections, namely the principles of direct, public, free, confidential, honest, and fair elections, form the main foundation for the implementation of democratic elections (Sony, 2024). However, as revealed by Mukhlis et al. (2024), election practices in Indonesia are still influenced by the interests of political elites who often disregard substantive democratic values (Mukhlis et al., 2024). Therefore, this article was written to analyse in depth the forms of violations of election principles and the extent to which these principles were implemented in the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections.

Method

The research method used in this study is legal research with a socio-legal approach. This approach was chosen to identify and analyse the implementation of legal principles in the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections in the Republic of Indonesia. The socio-legal approach allows researchers to not only examine legal norms doctrinally, but also to assess how these norms are applied and influenced by social conditions in society (Cotterrell, 1984; Tamanaha, 2001). Thus, this approach can reveal the gap between written law and its implementation in practice.

The research approach used is the case approach, focusing on the 2024 Indonesian presidential and vice-presidential election. This case was selected for academic reasons and constitutional urgency, given that the 2024 elections were marked by various issues related to the implementation of electoral principles, particularly those of direct, public, free, confidential, honest, and fair elections. The case approach is used to examine in depth the implementation of these electoral principles in the context of the presidential and vice-presidential elections held in February 2024.

The research subjects were selected using a purposive sampling technique, which involves selecting participants based on specific considerations relevant to the research objectives. The criteria for selecting the subjects in this study were election supervisory agencies with the authority to oversee the implementation of the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections in Indonesia. Based on these criteria, the General Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) was selected as the research subject because it has the duty, authority, and responsibility to oversee the implementation of election principles. This research examined the implementation of the principles of fairness in the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections and identified various forms of violations of these principles that occurred during the election process.

The data obtained in this study were analysed using qualitative analysis techniques following the Miles et al. (2020) model, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. All data derived from document studies—such as laws and regulations, decisions of the Constitutional Court, Bawaslu reports, KPU regulations, and academic literature—were analysed together with empirical data obtained through interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with officials of the Yogyakarta Special Region Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu). In the data reduction stage, all information was selected and categorised based on key themes related to the principles of direct, public, free, confidential, honest, and fair elections. The data display stage involved organising the findings into thematic matrices that connected normative legal provisions with empirical findings from the field. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verifying them through source triangulation between document analysis, official institutional reports, interview data, and FGD results. This analytical process allowed the researcher to identify gaps between legal norms and their implementation in the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections (Miles et al., 2014).

Results and Discussion

Implementation of Election Principles in the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections in Indonesia

In the implementation of elections in Indonesia, the constitution explicitly sets out the principles that must be applied at every stage of the election. Article 22E paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, as amended, states that general elections shall be held directly, publicly, freely, confidentially, honestly, and fairly, and shall be held every five years (Mutawalli et al., 2023). These provisions serve as guidelines for election organisers, election participants, and all Indonesian citizens eligible to vote. These principles, namely direct, public, free, confidential, honest, and fair, are the basic principles of democracy that must be upheld in every election. As emphasised by Asshiddiqie (2005), the principles of elections are not only normative but also a key requirement for the establishment of substantial democracy and the legitimacy of government power (Asshiddiqie, 2005). Emphasis on these basic principles aligns with Norris (2014) theory of electoral integrity, which holds that the quality of elections is largely determined by the consistent application of procedural and substantive standards at every stage of the electoral process. This study specifically analyses the implementation of these principles in the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections, starting with the principles of direct, universal, free, confidential, honest, and fair elections.

Based on research conducted through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with officials from the Special Region of Yogyakarta Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) on August 16, 2024, as well as document searches, it was found that some principles of general elections in Indonesia have been well implemented. However, some others still face problems in their implementation, particularly in the context of the 2024 presidential and vice-presidential elections. This study found differences in the quality of implementation of election principles across regions and community groups, which require special attention from election organisers and supervisors in the future. These regional differences in implementation quality reflect the phenomenon of democratic backsliding, as described by Diamond (2015), in which institutional inconsistency in the implementation of electoral principles indicates a decline in the quality of democracy.

The direct and universal principles in the implementation of the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections have been carried out in accordance with the provisions. The direct principle is realised through the participation of voters registered in the final voter list who come to the polling stations prepared by the general election committee. At polling stations, voters enter the voting booth directly to cast their votes without intermediaries. This process proves that the direct principle has been properly implemented in the 2024 elections (Wibowo et al., 2024). However, according to Norris (2015), the successful implementation of procedural principles, such as the principle of direct voting, does not automatically guarantee the integrity of elections if substantive aspects, such as freedom of choice and voting secrecy, remain compromised.

Furthermore, the general principle that elections are held simultaneously for all Indonesian citizens without distinction based on ethnicity, religion, race, class, or social status has also been optimally implemented (Saritulawa et al., 2024). The presidential and vice-presidential elections are held simultaneously nationwide on the same day, as determined by the General Elections Commission of the Republic of Indonesia (KPU RI). The schedule has been determined through KPU Regulation Number 3 of 2022 concerning the Stages and Schedule for the Implementation of the 2024 Elections (KPU, 2022). The implementation of this general principle ensures equal opportunities for all voters throughout Indonesia. This condition is consistent with Norris's view that equal access to voting is a key component in maintaining the integrity of inclusive and fair elections.

Based on field data obtained, the 2024 presidential and vice-presidential elections generally applied the principles of direct and universal suffrage. The majority of Indonesians exercised their right to vote directly at the voting booths at each polling station. The results of the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections show that the Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka pair received the most votes, namely 58.59% of the total valid votes nationwide. The Anies Rasyid Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar pair received 24.95%, while the Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD pair received 16.47%. These results were then officially recorded in the Indonesian General Election Commission Decree Number 504 of 2024, concerning the Determination of the Elected Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidates in the 2024 General Election, enacted on April 24, 2024 (KPU, 2024). However, Diamond (2008) reminds us that procedural legitimacy, such as the determination of results, does not always reflect the quality of democracy when competitive conditions are imbalanced, and there is potential for power intervention in the electoral process.

Although the principles of direct and universal suffrage have been well implemented in the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections, the principles of free and confidential voting continue to pose problems in various regions. Based on this study's results, the implementation of the principles of free and confidential voting has not been fully optimised. This is reinforced by data from the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), which states that as of the 2024 elections, 1,023 findings and reports of alleged election violations had been registered, of which 479 had been followed up on as alleged violations (Bawaslu DIY, 2024).

Although not all of these violations are directly related to the principles of freedom and secrecy in voting, this data shows that violations continue to occur and require serious attention to ensure the integrity of democratic and fair elections (Bawaslu, 2024). These data indicate the existence of an integrity gap, as described by Norris (2014), namely, the gap between normative electoral standards and their implementation in practice.

The implementation of the principle of freedom in the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections is still questionable. Based on information from the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), there are indications that some voters are being directed to vote for certain candidates. For example, in Islamic boarding schools, there is a tendency for clerics to influence students' political choices to support candidates they approve of. Research by Zahro & Saputri (2024) shows that before the official campaign period began, various political party elements had been actively visiting Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia to seek support from clerics, kiai, and students, turning the boarding schools into a political battleground ahead of the elections (Zahro & Saputri, 2024). This practice has the potential to cause political polarisation in *pesantren* environments, leading to internal fragmentation, political exploitation, and a decline in the quality of democracy. In addition, within families, there is also a tendency for the head of the family or dominant family members to influence the political choices of other family members. This phenomenon shows that, even in the absence of direct coercion, social and cultural pressure can influence an individual's freedom to make political choices. Similarly, in markets, certain candidates distribute basic food supplies or envelopes containing money as a form of money politics to influence people's choices. Although this practice is difficult to prove legally, it is recognised that it still occurs in various regions (Adawiyah et al., 2024). The phenomena of vote steering, social pressure, and political aid distribution reflect the practice of clientelism as described by Aspinall & Berenschot (2019), in which patron-client relationships reduce voters' political autonomy and undermine the principle of freedom of choice.

The principle of secrecy has not been fully implemented in the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections. Based on the research team's findings and information from the DIY Bawaslu, it is known that although voters are prohibited from bringing mobile phones into the voting booths, many still do so in practice. This could be used to document choices or to exert social-political pressure on voters. In addition, Bawaslu reports that some election organisers at polling stations were not neutral and were suspected of directing voters to vote for certain candidates. The influence of money, politics, and local political elites on election organisers at the polling station level remains a challenge in implementing this principle of secrecy, although proving this remains a challenge for election monitoring (Bawaslu DIY, 2024). This weak condition of voting secrecy aligns with Stokes' (2009) findings that social supervision and political pressure on voters enhance the effectiveness of vote-buying practices, as voters' choices can be monitored directly or indirectly by political actors.

Violations of the Principles of the 2024 General Election in Indonesia

General elections are one of the instruments of democracy whose values and principles are widely recognised and form an important part of the administration of a democratic state (Kristianita & Najicha, 2022). Normatively, democracy means that the highest power lies with the people, not with state authorities. This is in line with the principle of people's sovereignty as reflected in Article 1, Paragraph 2 of the 1945 Constitution, which states that "sovereignty is in the hands of the people and is exercised in accordance with the Constitution." In this context, general elections (elections) are the main means of exercising people's sovereignty, where the people directly elect their representatives to hold public office (Wicaksono, 2023). Democratic elections must fulfil the principles of direct, public, free, confidential, honest, and fair (LUBER and JURDIL), as stipulated in laws and regulations (Sugiharto & Riyanti, 2020). However, in practice, Indonesia's electoral system still faces various challenges, including violations of these principles.

This study specifically examines the conduct of the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections as part of Indonesia's democratic system, highlighting the adherence to election principles and various violations that occurred during the process. This study is important to evaluate the extent to which elections in Indonesia reflect the principles of democracy and people's sovereignty, as explained by Norris (2014). Deviations from electoral procedural standards indicate "integrity deficits" that hinder the realisation of democratic elections.

The 2024 elections in Indonesia were held simultaneously throughout the country, except for elections abroad, which were scheduled separately. Legislative and executive elections, both for members of the House of Representatives (DPR), the Regional Representative Council (DPD), and the president and vice president, were held simultaneously on February 14, 2024. There were three pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates competing in the election. Pair number 01 was Anies Rasyid Baswedan, former Governor of DKI Jakarta, paired with Muhaimin Iskandar, Chairman of the National Awakening Party (PKB). The pair with number 02 is Prabowo Subianto, Chairman of the Gerindra Party and Minister of Defence in the Indonesia Onward Cabinet, paired with Gibran Rakabuming Raka, Mayor of Surakarta and son of President Joko Widodo. The pair with number 03 is Ganjar Pranowo, former Governor of Central Java, paired with Mahfud MD, Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs. After the voting and vote-counting, the Prabowo-Gibran pair was declared the winner by the General Elections Commission (KPU) during an Open Plenary Meeting in Jakarta on April 24, 2024 (KPU, 2024). However, as Diamond (2015) emphasises, procedural victories do not automatically guarantee the quality of democracy if the underlying process is marred by unequal competition or intervention by those in power.

In the conduct of elections in democratic countries, fraud and violations of electoral principles are common and have become a phenomenon not only in Indonesia but also in many other countries (Siregar, 2025; Sukartini et al., 2023). This phenomenon is in line with the theory of democratic backsliding presented by Diamond (2008), in which new democracies often experience a decline in the quality of democracy due to weak electoral integrity and rampant electoral manipulation practices. Mares (2022) argues that violations of electoral principles are a reality in electoral democracy. Various forms of violations, ranging from vote manipulation, money politics, the non-neutrality of organisers, to voter intimidation, occur in various countries (Mares, 2022). Norris et al. (2014) also note that many elections end in disputes over results that lead to social conflict, even in several developing countries such as Caracas, Harare, Kabul, and Kuala Lumpur (Norris et al., 2014). These irregularities create public distrust in the integrity of election organisers, which affects the legitimacy of the election results; thus, this global picture reinforces the notion that what is happening in Indonesia is part of a broader pattern of weak electoral integrity in electoral democracies.

In Indonesia, violations of electoral principles in the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections were also found in various forms. Rahmatunnisa (2022) states that elections as a means of power struggle are often marred by various forms of violations, one of which is through the practice of vote trading. The term "vote trading" differs from "vote buying." Vote buying is the giving of money, goods, or other forms of compensation to voters to influence their choice, while vote trading involves illegal agreements between election organisers, political elites, and election participants to manipulate vote results through various means, including vote inflation and vote theft. In practice, vote trading can even involve election organisers at various levels. Suhariyanto et al. (2024) add that, based on the findings of the Election Organisers Honorary Council (DKPP), a number of election organisers in several regions were found to be involved in this practice, triggered by the weak integrity and professionalism of election organisers (Suhariyanto et al., 2024). In Norris's (2014) view, this is a form of electoral manipulation in which political actors exploit institutional loopholes to alter election results.

In addition to vote trading, another form of election fraud is vote inbuying, of which candidates directly buy votes from voters. This practice involves giving money or goods to voters to get them to vote for a particular candidate. This practice often involves election officials in the process of vote counting at various levels (Regif & Pribadi, 2024). Other forms of violations include patronage politics and clientelism. Patronage politics occurs when candidates or political elites distribute economic benefits, cash, goods, services, or public facilities, such as development projects, to certain individuals or communities in exchange for political support. This practice not only uses personal funds but also utilises state budgets that should be used for public interests (Aspinall et al., 2015). As Aspinall & Berenschot (2019) explain, patronage and clientelism are characteristics of weak electoral democracy because patron-client relationships replace political rationality and undermine the principles of freedom and fairness in elections.

The practices of patronage and clientelism pose a serious threat to the integrity of elections because they tend to weaken the political independence of the community and strengthen political dependence on the ruling elite. Candidates use promises of assistance for sports facilities, renovation of places of worship, and infrastructure projects to attract political support. This phenomenon not only undermines the principles of fairness and equality in elections but also damages the values of substantive democracy, which should be oriented towards rational and autonomous choices by the community (Mares, 2022). This finding is also in line with Stokes (2009), who refers to this phenomenon as a form of “reverse accountability,” in which voters feel indebted to repay gifts through political support, thereby weakening their freedom of choice.

The phenomenon of breaches of principles in Indonesia’s 2024 general election cannot be separated from the trend of democratic backsliding that has been gradually unfolding over the past decade. According to Marcus Mietzner, Indonesia exhibits symptoms of electoral narrowing, namely the narrowing of the electoral competitive space due to executive power intervention and the reinforcement of unhealthy identity politics. This situation has direct implications for the degradation of electoral principles, which should uphold the tenets of direct, universal, free, secret, honest, and fair (LUBER JURDIL). Aspinall and Berenschot (2019) assert that clientelism and patronage politics are dominant factors undermining electoral integrity in Indonesia. In the context of the 2024 General Election, this phenomenon manifests as the mobilisation of state resources, the politicisation of the bureaucracy, and the co-optation of political elites, all of which substantively violate the principles of fairness and equality in the electoral contest.

Power (2018) identifies a trend towards an authoritarian turn in contemporary governance, characterised by the weakening of democratic institutions and increasing consolidation of power. This is relevant to the dynamics of the 2024 General Election, particularly regarding the controversy surrounding the involvement of powerful actors in the electoral process, which risks undermining the principles of neutrality and independence of the electoral authorities.

From a more structural perspective, Hadiz (2017) explains that the decline of democracy in Indonesia is not an anomaly, but rather part of the restructuring of oligarchic power that has remained dominant since the reform era. This oligarchy operates through formal democratic mechanisms, but substantively undermines its principles, including in the conduct of elections. Consequently, violations of the principles of the 2024 elections must be understood not merely as procedural deviations but as manifestations of a structural crisis in Indonesian democracy. This demands serious institutional reform, the strengthening of electoral administrators’ independence, and the reconstruction of political ethics grounded in constitutional values and the Pancasila.

Evaluation of Election Law Enforcement and Recommendations for Improvement

One of the main problems in the implementation of elections in Indonesia is not only violations of principles, but also the weak law enforcement system that oversees them. Based on interviews with DIY Bawaslu officials, it was acknowledged that many violations, particularly money politics and vote rigging, take place in closed social spaces and are difficult to prove legally. The mechanism for proving election violations often faces serious obstacles, ranging from a lack of witnesses and weak visual evidence to law enforcement officials' hesitancy to take firm action against violators. This condition aligns with Norris's (2014) analysis, which finds that weak enforcement of electoral integrity (the electoral integrity enforcement gap) is one of the main factors enabling repeated electoral manipulation.

This situation directly undermines public trust in the integrity of the elections. When the public witnesses violations without clear sanctions, the legitimacy of the election results is called into question. In the context of the 2024 Presidential Election, even though it has been declared valid by the KPU, there is a strong narrative in the public sphere about powerful actors influencing the results. The practices of vote buying and vote trading documented in the DIY Bawaslu report, and the acknowledgements of informants from the FGD, show that violations occur not only at the voter level but also at the election organiser level. Suhariyanto et al. (2024) noted the direct involvement of election organisers in vote manipulation, both in the form of negligence and active participation, which indicates a crisis of structural integrity (Suhariyanto et al., 2024). In line with Diamond's (2015) framework on democratic backsliding, the intervention of powerful actors and weak institutional accountability accelerates the erosion of democratic quality by delegitimising election results.

Weaknesses in oversight are also characterised by a lack of firmness in implementing oversight recommendations. In many cases, even after being determined to be ethical or administrative violations, no further action is taken. In fact, Bawaslu's recommendations to the KPU or DKPP are often non-binding, and not all of them are followed up on seriously. This is exacerbated by limited human resources for field supervision and a lack of legal literacy among the public, which means that violations are often not reported. As stated by Bawaslu DIY in a focus group discussion, most violations are only known about but cannot be brought to court due to a lack of supporting evidence or the courage of the reporter to appear before the law, and this condition shows a pattern as described by Aspinall and Berenschot (2019), that the weakness of supervisory institutions reinforces patronage practices and client networks that systematically obstruct the enforcement of sanctions and electoral accountability.

To address these challenges, systemic reforms are needed in election supervision and law enforcement. *First*, regulations need to be revised to clarify the boundaries of authority between election organising institutions and to give executive power to supervisory recommendations. *Second*, the capacity and integrity of supervisory officials at the lower levels need to be improved, including training based on ethics and institutional independence. *Third*, it is important to expand political and electoral law literacy among the voting public so that they can become part of a participatory oversight system. *Fourth*, digital-based rapid reporting technology can be developed to reduce barriers to complaints and speed up the process of addressing violations, according to Norris (2015). Increasing transparency and public reporting mechanisms is one of the most effective ways to close loopholes for manipulation and improve election integrity.

Another equally important recommendation is to strengthen Bawaslu's vertical institutional position, so it can follow up on violations without depending on other institutions' stances. In the long term, strengthening election laws must be directed towards establishing a system that not only promotes procedural fairness but also guarantees substantive justice and the integrity of the results. Thus, elections will not merely be a five-yearly routine but will truly reflect the sovereignty of the people, in line with Stokes' (2009) view that elections free from

pressure, patronage, and political transactions can only be achieved if law enforcement agencies have strong authority and are free from elite intervention.

Conclusion

Some of the principles in the implementation of the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections in Indonesia have been optimally implemented. The principles of direct and universal suffrage are the two principles that have been most consistently applied, as reflected in voters casting their ballots directly at polling stations and in the simultaneous, comprehensive implementation of elections across Indonesia on the same day. This shows that, technically and administratively, the elections have fulfilled the principles of universality and participation. However, the application of the principles of freedom, secrecy, honesty, and fairness still faces significant challenges in practice. This study found various violations of these principles, ranging from vote-trading practices involving election officials at various levels to vote-buying practices involving the giving of money or goods to voters to influence their political preferences. These phenomena did not occur sporadically but showed a systemic, widespread pattern across several regions. In addition, there were reports of non-neutrality by some election officials at the polling station level, who covertly directed voters towards certain candidates. The practice of political patronage by candidates or local elites who promise development projects or public facilities in exchange for political support is also part of a structural problem that undermines the principles of fairness and equality in elections. These practices are indeed difficult to prove legally, but their influence on election quality is significant and clearly felt on the ground. These findings show that the implementation of electoral principles in the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections does not yet fully reflect the principles of substantive democracy. Although the elections were conducted procedurally, there are still serious issues with guaranteeing freedom of choice, voting secrecy, and the honesty and fairness of competition among election participants. This has direct implications for the decline in the quality of electoral legitimacy and public trust in the implementation of elections. Thus, systemic improvements are needed, including strengthening oversight mechanisms, enhancing the integrity and professionalism of election organisers, and enforcing the law firmly and fairly. Without these improvements, it will be difficult to fully realise democratic and credible elections in the context of electoral democracy in Indonesia.

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Ethics Approval

This study is an observational and qualitative research project that does not involve human or animal experimentation. The authors confirm that the study did not require formal ethical approval, as it was conducted in accordance with academic standards and ethical research principles at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta.

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