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Hegemony of Political Parties and Regional Political Oligarchy

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Abstract

This study aims to delve into the prevalence of single candidates participating in regional elections across various regions following the Constitutional Court Decision Number 100/PUU-XIII/2015. It explores how political party elites and oligarchs strategically maneuver to either maintain or acquire power. Specifically focusing on Boyolali Reg, this research employs a qualitative descriptive approach to uncover the underlying causes behind the emergence of a single candidate. The findings reveal the significant influence of hegemonic forces wielded by major political parties over smaller ones, orchestrated by oligarchs. Importantly, the study highlights that this hegemonic dominance is not driven by factors such as religious majority affiliations with political parties but rather emerges as a purely oligarchic endeavor aimed at controlling both the nomination process and victory outcomes of single candidates.

Keywords; Regional Elections, Single Candidate, Oligarchy, Democracy, Political Party

Abstrak

Tujuan Studi ini adalah menggali prevalensi kandidat tunggal yang berpartisipasi dalam pemilihan umum di berbagai wilayah menyusul Keputusan Mahkamah Konstitusi Nomor 100/PUU-XIII/2015. Studi ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana elit partai politik dan oligarki secara strategis bergerak untuk mempertahankan atau memperoleh kekuasaan. Dengan fokus khusus pada Kabupaten Boyolali, penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif untuk mengungkap penyebab munculnya kandidat tunggal. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan pengaruh signifikan dari kekuatan hegemonik yang dipegang oleh partai politik besar terhadap yang lebih kecil, yang diorganisir oleh oligarki. Studi ini juga menyoroti bahwa dominasi hegemonik ini tidak dipicu oleh faktor seperti afiliasi mayoritas agama dengan partai politik, tetapi muncul sebagai upaya oligarki yang murni bertujuan untuk mengendalikan baik proses nominasi maupun hasil kemenangan dari kandidat tunggal.

Kata Kunci: Pemilihan Umum Daerah, Kandidat Tunggal, Oligarki, Demokrasi, Partai Politik.

INTRODUCTION

The Constitutional Court Decision Number 100/PUU-XIII/2015, which permitted a single candidate to participate in regional elections (Pilkada), rendered the democratic process unfair. The concept of democracy necessitates granting the freedom to make diverse choices by the mandate of Law Number 02 of 2011 regarding political parties; all political parties must groom their cadres for regional leadership positions.

Political parties are unable to groom their members to run as regional heads. The absence of alternative candidates diminishes the quality of democracy, as the public is only presented with one candidate (Salvadori, 2014). Allowing only a single candidate in local elections prompts party elites to strategize to either maintain or seize power in local politics by altering the composition of seats according to the minimum requirement of 9 seats, sometimes even by purchasing all political parties holding seats in parliament. The ostensibly democratic 2020 regional elections were solely enjoyed by the elite. The

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number of single candidates has increased rapidly. According to data from the General Elections Commission of the Republic of Indonesia (KPU), in the 2020 regional elections, there were 25 single candidates, a significant increase from the previous years: only 16 pairs of single candidates in 2018, 9 pairs in 2017, and 3 pairs in 2015. One of the districts contested by a single candidate is Boyolali since direct local elections were held.

Law No. 10 of 2016 concerning Regional Elections, requires 150 percent of seat owners in the DPR or 9 seats in the DPRD to carry their candidates. Supposedly, with the number of DPRD members totaling 45 people, the results of the 2019 Legislative Election, there are two pairs of regent candidates. PDIP has 35 seats, Golkar Party has 4 seats, PKS has 3 seats, PKB has 2 seats, and Gerindra has 1 seat. This composition, the coalition of non-PDIP parties each Golkar 4 seats, PKS 3 seats, PKB 2 seats, and Gerindra 1 seat must be able to carry candidates for regent and deputy regent, the facts on the ground, actually join PDIP without wanting to carry their candidates.

The results of observations in the field show that there are factors of control of large parties over small parties, one of which is the role of oligarchs. There are many ways oligarchs smooth out a single candidate according to the Constitutional Court decision Number 100/PUU-XIII/2015, including controlling all political parties into one network by providing political "dowry" to target one candidate (Arlen & Rossi, 2021; Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019).

Oligarchs have greater political power in determining current political and economic institutions in democratic and non-democratic countries, this mastery shows concrete evidence during local elections at the local level (Bozóki, 2017; Kioukiolis, 2018). These political investment returns vividly illustrate how changes in certain political institutions can give full power to oligarchs with greater use of political power derived from financial power (Laksana & Abduh, 2023). Even with its political control, it has implications for economic outcomes by influencing tax incentives imposed on oligarchs over time and in various regimes in power. The implication is that political and economic exchanges in the process require financial assistance in the political process (Lees, 2014).

Today's oligarchy makes it very difficult for scientists and political observers to access their political preferences. Different views in politics, by oligarchic groups are not known to the public because of their careful systems to ensure certain groups do not benefit systematically (Donoghue, 2018; Morse, 2014). The concept of oligarchic control of large political parties over small parties is reminiscent of Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony which was originally the control of the upper class over the lower class. Class domination began with the workers' social movement in Italy gaining political legitimacy on the national scene, at which time the workers were always controlled by the working class and there was no political movement (Fadakinte, 2019; Musgrave, 2019).

The mastery of class strata in society eventually developed in the local political scene in Boyolali. Political parties that have a strong mass base buy small parties by giving money or political dowry (patronage), seduction and threats, and regional politics (mass base). Political class control will be the subject of research conducted by PDIP against Golkar, PKB, and Gerindra. Only PKS was not successfully controlled by the oligarchy and chose not to enter a coalition with PDIP. This research will focus on examining why there is control of large parties over small parties, and why political party elites in this case leaders and administrators of non-PDIP political parties choose one of the candidates in the regional elections in Boyolali. Researchers will answer the problem from the perspective of hegemony theory on a single candidate that makes democracy not work, and the stronger power of the oligarchy that triggers the cause of that candidate. This research uses the basis of Elitism theory as an analytical tool. Elitism theory emphasizes political domination by a small group of elites who have significant power and influence in

controlling political structures and political decisions. This research focuses on political party hegemony and regional political oligarchy, reflecting an examination of the role of elite power in influencing political dynamics at the regional level.

This research has never been examined before in a similar context in this region, with a particular focus on the relationship between political party hegemony and regional political oligarchy. This research also complements previous research which has examined the role of political parties and political oligarchy in a broader context, by exploring the concrete implications of political hegemony at the regional level. This research makes a significant contribution to the understanding of political dynamics in Indonesia, especially in the context of local and regional politics. It is hoped that this research will provide deeper and more nuanced insight into the challenges faced by Indonesian democracy and provide a strong foundation for more inclusive and sustainable political reform efforts through an emphasis on the phenomenon of political hegemony at the regional level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Political Party Hegemony

Political party hegemony reflects a condition where one or several political parties control substantially all aspects of political life in a particular country or region. This concept describes the strong dominance of one party in the political landscape, decision-making process, and political life as a whole. It includes strong control over government institutions, including parliament, and the executive and administrative bodies (Brancati, 2014; Gans-Morse et al., 2014). These dominating parties often have greater access to political and financial resources, as well as the ability to influence political processes, including elections and policy formation, they are also able to dictate the direction of the dominant ideology in society through control of the media and education. Political party hegemony can bring political stability in some cases, but it also has the potential to undermine democratic principles, such as free and fair political participation, and the protection of minority rights. Therefore, it is important to understand the impact and consequences of political party hegemony in the context of a country's political life (Asrinaldi et al., 2022; Boswell & Corbett, 2021).

One of the relevant previous studies is the work of (Cinar, 2016) who studied the hegemony of political parties in Turkey. This research highlights how dominant political parties in the region have strong control over political and economic institutions and their impact on democratic development in these countries.

Research by (Charalambous, 2019) examined the phenomenon of political party hegemony in several Latin American countries. They found that dominant political parties often have close ties to political and economic elites, allowing them to maintain power in the long term. This research also highlights how political party hegemony can cause political and economic inequality in society.

A study by (Vera & Azmi, 2019) explored the relationship between political party hegemony and corruption in several Asian countries. They found that political party dominance is often associated with high levels of corruption, due to a lack of accountability and transparency in political systems dominated by one party. Research conducted by (Whitfield, 2022) investigated the hegemony of political parties in several Eastern European countries after the fall of the communist regime. They show how political parties that dominated in the past still retained their influence after the transition to democracy, and how this influenced the process of democratic consolidation in the region.

Research by (Zigerell, 2019) looked at the impact of political party hegemony on the protection of human rights in several African countries. They found that dominant political parties often use their power to suppress political opposition and limit civil liberties, which hurts human rights protections in the region.

Regional Political Oligarchy

Regional political oligarchy refers to a situation where a small number of individuals or groups hold absolute control over political power in a particular region, oligarchy refers to the dominance held by a small number of political or economic elites who have complete control over political processes and key decisions at the regional level. Factors that support the development of regional political oligarchies include concentration of power, where a few individuals or groups have significant control over government institutions and economic resources; and the close connection between political and economic interests, which allows a small elite to strengthen their political position through control over economic resources.

Unequal access to political and economic power and ¹⁰ a lack of transparency and accountability in the political process are also factors that facilitate the development of regional political oligarchies. The impacts of regional political oligarchies include greater political and economic inequality, a lack of representation and political participation of citizens, and restrictions on the development of local democracy (Mares et al., 2017; Nasution et al., 2023).

Previous research has deepened our understanding of the phenomenon of regional political oligarchy from various contexts and perspectives. A study conducted by (Cinar, 2016) explored the connections between regional political oligarchy and economic inequality and corruption. Their findings show that regional political oligarchies are often entwined in a network of powerful economic connections, which gives them the power to monopolize key resources and decisions at the regional level, while also increasing levels of corruption in the political process.

Research by (Thompson, 2020) in Southeast Asia highlights how regional political oligarchy can influence political stability and economic growth in the region. Through empirical analysis, this research finds that regional political oligarchies tend to hinder the development of democracy and create political instability which can hamper long-term economic growth.

A study by (Riedl, 2016) explores the relationship between regional political oligarchies and European integration processes. They found that political oligarchies in several Eastern European countries have exploited the process of European integration to strengthen their dominance, using access to EU funds to enrich themselves and maintain their control over political and economic resources at the regional level.

Research by (Reitz & Jörke, 2021) deepens understanding of regional political oligarchy and socio-economic inequality. This study reveals how regional political oligarchy is often closely linked to high economic inequality and political conflict, which hurts regional stability and development.

Another study by (Fukuoka & Djani, 2016) explores how regional political oligarchy can influence regional development policies. Their findings show that political oligarchs often prioritize infrastructure projects that benefit elite groups while ignoring the needs of the wider society, which can increase economic and social inequality at the regional level. Our understanding of the complexity and impact of regional political oligarchies has been expanded through these studies, providing valuable insights for efforts to build more inclusive and just political systems in regions around the world.

The Ties between Political Party Hegemony and Regional Political Oligarchy

The link between political party hegemony and regional political oligarchy reflects the close relationship between political domination by one or several political parties and economic domination and power by a handful of elites in a particular region. Political party hegemony is often a factor that supports or even creates regional political oligarchies, and conversely, regional political oligarchies can strengthen political party hegemony.

Political party hegemony can create an environment that supports the growth of regional political oligarchy. Dominant political parties have strong control over government institutions, economic resources, and political processes at the regional level. This power is often exploited by a handful of political or economic elites to strengthen their position, monopolize resources, and maintain their dominance in the region (Frye et al., 2019).

Regional political oligarchies can also strengthen political party hegemony by providing financial and political support to existing political parties, as well as exploiting their connections and influence to maintain the party's political dominance. Political or economic elites who are part of an oligarchy often have close ties to the dominant political party, and the two support each other to maintain their interests and power at the regional level (Alava & Ssentongo, 2018; Alcantud, 2020). The ties between political party hegemony and regional political oligarchy create a mutually reinforcing political and economic environment. Political domination by certain political parties allows regional political oligarchies to grow and develop, while regional political oligarchies can also strengthen the dominant position of the political parties that support them. In many cases, the close relationship between the two creates political dynamics that are difficult to change and can hinder the development of inclusive democracy at the regional level (D'Anieri, 2022).

There are several previous studies that discuss similar matters and the author used them as a reference for this research. The research is explained in the following paragraph:

1. Research by Lisstitsa (2021) highlights how dominant political parties can influence the policy-making process and power structure in a country. Lisstitsa might conduct historical or comparative analysis to show how particular political parties consistently maintain their dominant positions in national politics, and how this influences policy dynamics and the distribution of power among other political actors.
2. Flint & Zhu (2019) examined the relationship between political party hegemony and community political participation. Jones may conduct surveys or analysis of empirical data to show how the dominance of a particular party can reduce the level of political participation of citizens, whether in elections, local political activities, or social movements.
3. Research by Fidmuc & Gundacker (2017) focuses on how political party hegemony can influence the political system as a whole, it is possible to conduct comparative analyzes or case studies to illustrate how a particular political party's control of political institutions, mass media, or other sectors can shape political dynamics and policy direction.
4. Grydehoj et al. (2021) explores the impact of political party hegemony on democratic development and the quality of government at the local and national levels. This research may include case studies in different countries or regions to understand how political party dominance can affect the democratization process, including political freedom, government accountability, and public participation.
5. Research by Jeon & Hwang (2022) focuses on the strategies used by dominant political parties to maintain power and face challenges from political opposition. Wang might conduct in-depth

interviews with political figures or content analysis to identify strategies such as media control, election manipulation, or the formation of political alliances used by the dominant party to maintain its power.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this study is qualitative descriptive to explore and understand the meaning of individuals and groups of social problems that exist in society. This research was conducted by interviewing informants who knew the occurrence of a single candidate in the 2020 regional elections. The sample in this research is informants who have knowledge about the events of a single candidate in the 2020 Regional Head Election. The research informants used were administrators and members of political parties in Boyolali Regency consisting of PDIP political party officials, Golkar Party DPD Chairman, PKB DPC Chairman, Gerindra DPC Deputy Secretary, and PKS Secretary and community leaders. Data was collected through interviews with informants who had knowledge of the single candidate in the 2020 Regional Head Election. Supporting data was also obtained through field observations, use of documents and news on the internet,

The use of primary data is also supported by other supporting data, namely; Field observation, use of documents and news on the Internet. Data analysis is done by data triangulation, i.e. data is processed, presented, and inferred. Data processing is carried out after researchers get interview results from the field and other data such as books, and journal literature that support and strengthen this research. The results of data processing are presented for transcripts and sorted to answer the problems studied (Dodgson, 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research begins with observing the hegemony of political parties over other parties to form a grand coalition and reject potential opposition party competitors. Incorporating religious hegemony into the political scene. The finding about Uganda's majority religion controlled by political parties in one country. Reflecting on Uganda, Law No. 2 of 2011 on Political Parties Article 29 (1) is the obligation of political parties to recruit Indonesian citizens as local and national leaders.

Democratic Elections

Regional elections make electoral competition not only free and fair but also substantially meaningful referring to constitutional, judicial, and legislative provisions surrounding the inclusion, rights, and freedoms of citizens as formal democratic institutions (Riedl, 2016). The meaning of this democracy that is currently lost in local elections at the local level, and turned into a democracy that is not substantive gives birth to leaders who do not have competition and opposition. The existence of a single candidate in Boyolali Regency proves that the democratic process is not working as it should and political parties are failing to recruit candidates.

The existence of a single candidate with the strength of the incumbent party will set new rules in the electoral competition, especially around the rules of party registration and candidate eligibility does not occur. This regulation serves as an entry point for incumbents to hinder opposition groups in the election of leaders, and it was proven in the Boyolali district elections that the threshold issue is a problem for small parties in the local scene. This view is similar to the emergence of the decision of the Constitutional Court judge regarding the legality of a single candidate. Law No. 10 of 2016 stipulates that

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to run as a candidate for regent, at least 20 percent of the total seats in the DPRD must be supported. This threshold is a problem considering that small parties in the local arena find it very difficult to carry candidates for regent.

This threshold also made Golkar, PKB, and Gerindra fail to carry their candidates after Golkar joined PDIP and agreed to carry a single candidate. After Golkar joined PDIP, Gerindra, and PKB were docked. The closure of the Golkar party occurred because there had been a political 'dowry' of the PDIP party against Golkar. The requirement for local elections is 9 seats, PDIP gets 35 seats while other parties get 10 seats. There was lobbying and political matches for "dowry" Golkar docked to PDIP and the regional elections were over after PDIP gave "dowry".

The interview provided evidence of political party hegemony in the form of major party control over small parties in Boyolali Regency supported by wealth.

Democracy at a Crossroads

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Democracy appears to be at a crossroads, beset by a crisis of party identity, populism, and nationhood. The statement is in line with what happened in Boyolali. Interviews with Golkar officials found that non-PDIP parties failed to bring themselves due to limited popular figures, as well as strong economic support. This economic inequality magnifies electoral imbalances because the resources needed to compete are not evenly distributed, and controlled by a handful of groups. Economic and political control in Boyolali led to brothers Seno Kusumoarjo and Seno Samudro being behind the scenes of PDIP. Both of these figures had abundant wealth and strong Boyolali mass support.

Benefiting from his ten-year tenure as Regent of Boyolali from 2009 to 2014 and 2014 to 2019, coupled with five years as Vice Regent from 2004 to 2009, Seno Samudro successfully solidified his foothold in the political arena. His alliance with his elder brother, Seno Kusumoarjo, a prominent national businessman, further bolstered his influence. The prevalence of 20 political and economic disparities, alongside the absence of opposition oversight in electoral practices, paved the way for the emergence of authoritarian regimes. These regimes utilize formal institutions to suppress dissenting voices challenging their authority. Seno Samudro's tactics exemplify this approach; upon assuming office in 2010, he executed a massive rotation of approximately 1000 government employees within Boyolali Regency to consolidate his power and fortify the position of the PDIP party.

Mutations have exceeded 1000 since you took office. The question remains: how many more individuals are willing to be transferred? Until when? It seems even the staff are affected. After the new organizational structure and job descriptions (SOTK) have been aligned, it's considered settled. It was finalized last January. The harsh rhetoric from Seno or his "Pilkada" heroics has subsided. Any further transfers will be handled professionally. Compared to the previous year, we now have the right people in the right positions. I assure you, it's more appropriate now. Those fearing transfers are likely politically inclined; neutrals need not worry. The show must go on.

The policies of Regent Seno Samudro, which bolstered the position of PDIP and its politics, were validated in the 2019 regional elections, where a single candidate prevailed in Boyolali Regency, garnering 96% of the votes and dominating the majority of voters. Elections where leaders win by substantial margins suggest opposition arises not due to lack of popularity or legitimacy, but because of perceived bribery, intimidation, threats, or coercion to secure votes.

It can be inferred that this electoral model violates the constitutional principles of local elections: direct, general, free, secret, honest, and fair. Elected officials may not necessarily represent the people's choice; instead, they tend to align with or refrain from challenging the incumbent government. The

inclusion of all parties in a government endorsing a single candidate presents a significant challenge to democracy in Indonesia. While a robust government may favor such a grand coalition, opposition groups and critics argue against its compatibility with Indonesian democracy. A well-functioning democracy requires an effective "checks and balances" role played by parliament. A grand coalition involving numerous parties brings inherent risks and complications, particularly in decision-making processes within the cabinet, where leaders must strive to maintain broad consensus, potentially hindering government effectiveness.

Oligarki Practitioner

The positive image that Seno Samudro built to continue his political power through his successor M.Said Hidayat against a single candidate managed to win him. Ten years leading Boyolali Regency made Seno Samudro respected both by friends and opponents in politics and in the community. In addition, the strong support from his older brother Seno Kusumoarjo, or Seno "Gedhe" made PDIP stronger and more rooted in Boyolali.

The nomination process of M. Said Hidayat did not take long in the 2020 regional elections after the Golkar Party was "bought" to join PDIP. In government practice, oligarchs control the performance of the government and legislature in making political compromises of any legislative policy with the government to facilitate oligarchic transactions with parties that are also members of the governing coalition. This concept occurred when Seno Samudro became the Regent of Boyolali for the first period of 2005-2010, at that time his brother Seno Kusumoarjo who helped lead him to become the Regent of Boyolali participated in Seno Samudro's policy in governing Boyolali Regency.

Sosok Sena Samaodra selama ini lekat dengan Kakak Anda, Seno Kusumo.
Bahkan muncul anggapan Seno gede (Kusumo-read) berperan besar dalam kebijakan-kebijakan yang anda ambil?
Selain AD 1 dan AD 2, AD 0 juga dibutuhkan. Realistis saja, saya menang Pemilu karena ada sokongan dana dari keluarga salah satunya Seno Kusumo, Jadi tidak ada salahnya kalau beliau ikut memberikan masukan terhadap kebijakan-kebijakan untuk Boyolali. Apalagi Konsep yang disampaikan juga cocok dengan prinsip dan keinginan saya. Jadi apa salahnya?

Yus Mei Sawitri

Figure 1. Yus Mei Sawitri's writing
Source: Solopos, 10/10/2011

Translation Figure 1 :

The figure of Sena Samaodra has always been close to your older brother, Seno Kusumo.
There is even an opinion that Seno Gede (Kusumo-read) plays a big role in the policies you take?

Apart from AD 1 and AD 2, AD 0 is also required. Let's be realistic, I won the election because of financial support from the family of one of them, Seno Kusumo, so there's nothing wrong with him providing input on policies for Boyolali. Moreover, the concept presented also matches my principles and desires. So what's the harm?

Yus Mei Sawitri

The practice of oligarchy occurs to secure the power and interests of their respective groups, including establishing the dominance of major parties so that they can control the central and local government. The oligarchy is rewarded with power in the cabinet and central to local government positions. This pragmatic strategy is very profitable, especially if the major parties consider it beneficial to their interests.

Oligarchic groups have different categories of influence on public policy. There are five domains which private access to large amounts of concentrated wealth can be used to influence public policy: (1) Occupying formally elected office or serving as a designated office holder, (2) Lobbying candidates and office holders directly through interest group activities, (3) Lobbying candidates indirectly, (4) Influencing public policy through mass media ownership, and (5) influence public policy through elite philanthropic activities. Efforts to reduce the influence of oligarchs in democratic countries require aggressive democratic innovation and are supported by many political theorists.

The Emergence of a Single Candidate in Regional Elections

The strength of PDIP in Boyolali Regency is so strong that it cannot be separated from the influence of Regent Seno Samudro who has raised PDIP, especially during the last 10 years or two periods. Seno Samudro served as regent. PDIP is strong in Boyolali, all methods are carried out in a structured, systemic, massive (TSM) manner by involving all communities such as RTs, village officials, and village heads spread across various regions. 10 years is not a small amount of time to move politics in society, various efforts were made including pressuring citizens to support the candidate carried by PDIP.

The absence of a single candidate carried by PDIP shows that non-PDIP parties, namely the Golkar Party, PKB, Gerindra Party, and PKS, do not carry rival candidate pairs to fight against PDIP candidate pairs. Local elections are the basis of democracy because elections can symbolize the sovereignty of the people, to advance local democracy. Regional elections and political party decisions often tend to be influenced by early factors, including religion, blood relations, regional equality, and aspects of loyalty and closeness to party leader. These factors are sometimes used as the choice of political elites in conducting electoral processes at the local level, to the exclusion of the public interest and fair democratic processes.

The dominance of PDIP DPRD seats in Boyolali makes it difficult for non-PDIP parties to resist. The victory of the most votes in the 2019 election made PDIP control the seats in the DPRD, with 35 seats in the DPRD owned by PDIP, leaving only 10 seats for other parties. The increase in the number of single candidates is a unique event because the trend of single candidates is increasing, which can be a positive or negative indicator of Indonesian democracy.

Constitutional Court Decision Number 100/PUU-XIII/2015 is a solution to the democratic deadlock that occurs in several regions in Indonesia. It was never expected that there would be a single candidate appearing in the regional elections in Indonesia. This phenomenon can be seen in the contestation of democracy in Indonesia due to the failure of political parties to carry out their duties as a means of political regeneration, in addition to the Constitutional Court ruling on the existence of a single candidate. Of course,

the resilience of Indonesian democracy and the constitutional structure of the country are negatively affected by this situation.

Regional elections are a form of democracy so that government leaders follow the wishes of the people. Regional elections were held directly and democratically. There are eight characteristics of democratic elections, namely: regular elections, meaningful choices, freedom to nominate candidates, freedom to know and discuss choices, universal adult suffrage, equal weight of votes, free registration to vote and counting of choices, and accurate reporting of results.

The availability of significant choices indicates that there is a choice for the public so that voters can make the best choice. Substantively there are values and principles in elections, namely the principles of free, open, honest, fair, competitive, direct, public, free, and secret. Democracy can function as a system of electing leaders conducted by the people through competitive elections. The selection system, not just one candidate to be chosen in a competitive election, gives voters many alternatives to choose a political party, either by using open or closed selection (Brancati, 2014).

Expensive Local Elections on the Local Stage

Political clientelism is a common feature of electoral politics in many contemporary elections in emerging democracies as well as in established democracies. Politicians not only attract voters through the promise of programmatic elections, but also through other strategies that include promises of monetary rewards, offers of administrative assistance, and/or preferential access to the state bureaucracy. Client relations and registered elections are characterized by political relief transactions. Politicians offer direct material incentives to citizens or groups in exchange for support in elections. Voice buying, which is one of the practices of clientelism, involves exchanging goods or money for votes at the individual level.

The regional election was given IDR 75 thousand from the successful team to choose Said. For recommendations to come to the polling station, village offices carried out when socializing in residents' homes. This kind of exchange has been extensively studied in the existing literature on electoral clientelism in rubrics such as vote-buying, patronage, corruption, and irresponsible politics. Examples of negative inducements include threats to cut off access to benefits voters rely on, disrupt their work in the public or private sector, or impose election penalties for voters who make the 'wrong' political choices.

Campaigning is supposed to be a peaceful and open discourse of persuasion in a democracy. Candidates compete for popular support by providing reasonable arguments about why they are most eligible to be elected. In this context, voters choose among candidates not based on different policy positions, but rather based on the assumption of the candidate's worthiness and reliability as a protective candidate. Instead of providing an opportunity for public deliberation, election campaigns become a moment for politicians to engage in mass mobilization and manipulation of electoral rules. Often, campaign strategies feature material inducements and political intimidation. In its extreme form, unconventional modes of electoral practice are embodied in the explicit act of voting buying. This practice of buying and selling votes causes the costs to be incurred by candidates to be very expensive and beyond the reach of candidates who do not have adequate resources.

During elections in many countries, parties (or political machines) distribute benefits to citizens (vote buying) in exchange for direct political support. These parties not only compete based on policy platforms but also by material inducements given to individuals. These inducements often include food, drugs, and other forms of food. In contexts where citizens rely heavily on such assistance, including countries where the state fails to provide a social safety net, this pattern of political machinery can have a similar impact. consequences that are critical to accountability and democratic responsiveness (Cospito,

2016; Purwaningsih & Widodo, 2021). The implications of voter buying become more ambiguous because it can increase equality of political participation by encouraging people to vote but on the other hand, this condition gives rise to large electoral spending.

Implication of the Study

The results of this research have significant implications for local and regional politics in Indonesia. This research reveals that the dominance of political parties and regional political oligarchies has a disturbing impact on a healthy and inclusive democratic process. The implications are very relevant for the practice of democracy and improvement of the political system in Indonesia, and by highlighting the hegemony of political parties and political oligarchy, this study provides a deeper understanding of the challenges faced in achieving a more democratic and transparent political system.

The results of this research show that the political domination of a group of regional elites and oligarchs can dampen wider community political participation and limit possible political alternatives. These implications require more proactive action from the government and related institutions to strengthen democratic principles, promote political accountability, and increase people's access to the political process.

This research provides valuable insight for readers interested in politics and democracy issues regarding the dynamics of local and regional politics in Indonesia. Readers can be more sensitive to the challenges faced by the Indonesian political system and support reform efforts aimed at strengthening democracy by understanding the hegemony of political parties and political oligarchy, encouraging more inclusive political participation, and building a more transparent and accountable political system. This research not only provides a deeper understanding of Indonesian politics, but also provides inspiration to act in support of positive change in realizing a stronger and more just democracy.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the dominance of major parties over smaller ones in the Boyolali Regency, particularly the PDIP, resulted in the reluctance of non-PDIP parties like Golkar, PKS, PKB, and Gerindra to challenge PDIP's supremacy. This dominance was reinforced by powerful figures associated with PDIP, including Regent M. Said Hidayat, Vice Regent Wahyu Irawan, former Regent Seno Samudro, and party figure Seno Kusumoarjo, who wielded significant financial and mass support, making PDIP practically unbeatable. Additionally, the expensive nature of regional elections, political dowries from PDIP to Golkar, and vote-buying further cemented PDIP's success in fielding a single candidate in the 2020 elections. This phenomenon of a single candidate underscores the skepticism among non-PDIP parties, such as Golkar, who departed from the coalition after receiving PDIP's political dowry, finding it challenging to contest against PDIP. The study supports the theory that the hegemonic control of large parties over smaller ones, orchestrated by oligarchs, is the primary factor behind the emergence of a single candidate, rather than religious affiliations. This hegemony, initiated by the Constitutional Court decision Number 100/PUU-XIII/2015, underscores the significant control exerted by larger parties like PDIP over smaller ones, exploiting their lack of strong leadership and financial support in regional elections.

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