

Dynamics of Political Contestation in the Tangerang Regency Pilkada: Reflections on the Quality of Local Democracy

Faradila Kamila Rery^{1*}, Jaliludin Muslim¹

¹Universitas Islam negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author E-mail: faradilarery@gmail.com

Abstract

This study explores the dynamics of political contestation in the Regional Head Election (Pilkada) of Tangerang Regency, with a focus on political participation, the role of political parties in democratic processes, and the competition among candidates in local political arenas. The primary aim is to analyze how these dynamics reflect the quality of democracy at the local level and to identify key challenges, including social issues that emerge throughout the election process. Employing a qualitative approach through literature study, the research draws on a range of relevant scholarly sources. The findings indicate that political contestation in the Tangerang Regency Pilkada significantly influences the trajectory of local democratic development. Political parties play a pivotal role in building coalitions and nominating candidates, often adopting a pragmatic strategy that prioritizes electoral success over ideological consistency. This reflects a transformation in the nature of local democratic engagement, where the public shifts from being passive recipients to active participants in shaping political leadership.

Keywords: Regional Elections, Political Contestation, Democracy, Tangerang Regency.

INTRODUCTION

Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) are an important part of the local democracy system in Indonesia. Pilkada is not only a means to elect regional leaders, but also functions as an indicator of the quality of democracy, political representation, and government effectiveness. Through Pilkada, the community is given space to actively participate in determining the direction of leadership and public policy in their respective regions (Suyatno, 2016). Thus, Pilkada is a concrete manifestation of the principles of democracy that guarantee the rights of citizens to vote and be elected directly. However, the implementation of Pilkada in Indonesia is still marked by various challenges that have the potential to disrupt the integrity of the democratic process.

* Copyright (c) 2025 **Faradila Kamila Rery and Jaliludin Muslim**

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

Received: December 16, 2024; Revised: April 19, 2025; Accepted: April 22, 2025

The practice of money politics, intervention by external forces, and low political participation of the community are some of the problems that often arise in every Pilkada implementation. These challenges can reduce the quality of election results, reduce public trust in the political system, and weaken the accountability of regional leadership. Tangerang Regency is one of the interesting areas to analyze in this context. Ahead of the 2024 Pilkada, the socio-political dynamics in this area show quite significant turmoil. Demonstrations by elements of society, such as the Indonesian National Student Movement (GMNI) and the Land Transportation Organization (Organda), indicate tensions between community expectations and the performance of local government. Agrarian issues, impartial public policies, and dissatisfaction with local government services are the background to the emergence of these protests (Teras Tangerang, 2023).

This phenomenon reflects that local political contestation does not only involve political elites, but is also influenced by the awareness and participation of the community as democratic actors. In the context of local democracy, the involvement of political parties is also an important aspect in the Pilkada contestation. Political parties play a role in forming coalitions and nominating regional head candidates. However, in practice, this process is often pragmatic and not based on a strong ideological platform. As a result, competition in the Pilkada is driven more by short-term electoral interests than efforts to build good governance. As expressed by (Ida farida, 2019), the practice of "political dowries" and high nomination costs can hinder the emergence of credible leaders, as well as harm the principle of justice in democracy. Previous research by Suyatno (2016) highlighted the changing role of society in the Pilkada, from previously only being an object of politics to a more active and critical subject. Public political awareness is increasing, as seen from their desire to assess candidates based on their vision, mission, and work programs, not just political affiliation or material enticements. The phenomenon of increasing numbers of abstainers is also an important indicator in measuring public satisfaction and trust in the local political system. Different from previous research, this study will specifically explore the dynamics of political contestation in Tangerang Regency by paying attention to unique local characteristics.

The main focus is to analyze how political contestation in the Pilkada reflects the quality of local democracy, by reviewing voter participation, the role of political parties, the campaign strategies of candidates, and the socio-political challenges that arise during the election

process. With a qualitative approach based on literature studies, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the development of local democracy in Tangerang Regency. The results of this analysis are expected to enrich the treasury of political science and local government, as well as become a consideration in designing policies that support the strengthening of participatory, inclusive, and equitable democracy.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a library research approach. This approach was chosen to gain a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of democracy in the context of local political contestation in the Regional Head Election (Pilkada) in Tangerang Regency. Through library research, researchers can explore secondary data from various reliable sources, such as scientific journal articles, academic books, previous research reports, news from credible media, and official documents related to Pilkada regulations and local democracy policies. Data collection was carried out by reviewing and examining in depth relevant literature, especially those discussing local democracy, political participation, the role of political parties, and the dynamics of Pilkada contestation. This process involves selecting literature that has a direct relationship to the focus of the research, namely the Pilkada in Tangerang Regency. In addition, researchers also review contextual data on regional socio-political conditions to enrich the analysis. The population in this study includes all scientific works and literature sources that discuss Pilkada and local democracy in Indonesia. The sampling technique was carried out purposively, namely selecting sources that are relevant, actual, and have high academic value. The sample selection criteria include the relationship to the research topic, the quality of the substance, and the credibility of the publisher or author. To analyze the data, the content analysis method was used, which allows researchers to identify and interpret the main themes that emerge in the literature. The analysis was carried out systematically by mapping important issues such as local democratic practices, voter participation, candidate political strategies, the role of political parties, and challenges and obstacles in the implementation of the Pilkada. Thus, this study aims to present a comprehensive and critical picture of the dynamics of local politics in Tangerang Regency. The results of this method are expected to contribute to the development of political science

studies, especially in understanding the dynamics of democracy at the local level through theoretical and empirical approaches that are sourced from valid and relevant literature.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Political Party Involvement in the Dynamics of Local Democracy

The problems that arise in the Pilkada reflect the political configuration and quality of democracy in the practice of political power at the local level that are not yet mature (Ristian, 2016). Of the many candidate pairs participating in the contest, most of them come from political parties or coalitions of parties formed through agreements between parties. The formation of this coalition focuses more on mutual agreements, without highlighting the differences in each ideology. The coalitions that are formed also appear quite flexible and not clearly structured. Religious-based parties do not always form coalitions with other religious-based parties, although there are coalitions that are formed. Sometimes, even though they have different ideologies, political parties sometimes join the same coalition. This happens because the parties participating in the election try to attract votes from various groups, with the main goal of winning as many votes as possible for victory (Ekowati, 2019). See figure 1.



Figure 1. Political Parties Participating in the Election

Source: Litbang Kompas (2023)

The nomination of regional head candidate pairs by political parties begins with designing a strategy to achieve victory (Fatkhi et al., 2025). One important step in this strategy is determining the coalition map in the contest and choosing the candidate pairs to be nominated. Political parties often use a pragmatic approach to achieve their goals. Coalitions between parties are formed flexibly and unstructured in each region, thus providing greater opportunities for parties to compete and achieve greater victories. The coalition ignores differences in ideology and the party's vision and mission. Political parties have the freedom to join any party, either through compromise or transactional agreements (Yuli, 2019).

Every regional election in Indonesia often raises various problems that seem endless to discuss (Hargono et al., 2024). Starting from actions that do not reflect the principles of democracy that are often shown by elites at the pre-election stage, to the emergence of money politics practices during the campaign. These problems also have an impact on the performance of regional heads who are elected five years later. When discussing democracy with an institutionalist approach, the main focus is how institutional structures can function effectively in implementing a democratic system.

Referring to the theory of political systems by Gabriel Almond (1956), the political system can function optimally through the elements of structure and function that support it, which form a pattern of relationships that form a close relationship between elements. The elements in this political system are explained based on the views of democracy researchers with an institutionalist approach. One of the issues that has received a lot of public attention is the role of political parties in the Regional Head Election contestation. Using a structural function framework, political parties play a crucial role in forming patterns of power, both in presidential and parliamentary systems. Therefore, political parties are the main focus in studies on strengthening democracy and the system of government. In short, the future of democracy depends greatly on the extent to which political parties can strengthen their institutions (Fadlurrohman, 2017).

Political Participation in Regional Elections

As an important part of a democratic state system, political participation is also a sign of political modernization. National development is influenced by people's participation in politics. In addition, the emergence of democracy provides hope for people's sovereignty, which is able to change the political system in Indonesia (Fadli, 2024). The goal is that the

General Election, which is organized by the state institution of the General Election Commission (KPU), aims to improve the quality of life of the people, nation, and state. Every year, Indonesia continues to experience fluctuations in the level of political participation of the community, both increasing and decreasing. Public trust in the government is a key factor in determining the level of political participation of the community. The public's perspective on government performance, especially in policy making and implementing promised programs, can influence the extent to which they give trust to regional heads and regional head candidates who are given the mandate (Ritonga, 2020). Lack of trust in the performance of the Regional Head causes the public to lose interest and orientation to participate in the Regional Head Election (Aminah, 2020). In the context of democracy, political participation plays an important role in building government legitimacy. For example, in elections, the level of political participation of the community will affect the legitimacy of the elected candidate pair in the eyes of the public. Each level of society has different interests and preferences in choosing (Subekti, 2014).

One of the factors that drives the increase in political participation in Tangerang Regency is the development of political awareness in society, namely the awareness that they must play an active role in the election and not become golput (white group). This shows that society not only has the right to participate in the election, but also has the ability to influence their future through the process. Increasing political awareness in Indonesia has a positive impact on political knowledge, which in turn increases the level of political participation (Safitri et al., 2024).

Democracy should be realized concretely by directly involving the community in giving their votes or voting rights (Annisa & Nandy, 2024; Zilla, 2022). In the context of the Regional Head Election (Pilkada), this is a real form of instilling and implementing democracy at the local level. The regional election process reflects the dynamics of democracy at the local level, involving various aspects such as community participation, emerging issues, and evolving political challenges. In the 2024 Tangerang Regency Pilkada, there are three prospective Regent candidates with one independent candidate who is ready to take part in the local political contestation with two other candidates who are supported by several political parties. In this process, the community not only elects leaders, but also actively voices their hopes and dissatisfactions through various channels, including demonstrations. Issues such as

government transparency, social inequality, and environmental preservation are often the main focus. As previously discussed, this has sparked protests from several parties, even leading to demonstrations. The regional elections are also a moment for the community in the regions to demand the fulfillment of the candidates' campaign promises and to measure the extent to which they can manage strategic issues in Tangerang Regency.

Candidate Competition in Local Political Contests

The political contestation in the Tangerang Regency Pilkada has a significant impact on the dynamics of local democracy. This process can strengthen democracy if it reflects transparency, public participation, and healthy leadership rotation (Androniceanu, 2021). Simultaneous Pilkada, for example, is expected to be able to increase democratic consolidation by strengthening local government accountability. However, challenges such as dynasty politics, local bossism, and identity politics can actually weaken democracy if not addressed effectively (Raharusun, 2017).

Political dynasties and the dominance of certain groups can limit opportunities for independent candidates or new leaders, which ultimately hinders innovation and increases the risk of corruption (Kenawas, 2024). In addition, the increasing use of identity politics in the contestation has the potential to divide society and reduce the substance of democracy, making it only a competition between groups. Therefore, there needs to be a policy that strengthens the integrity of the Pilkada and supervision of undemocratic political practices to ensure that the Pilkada truly becomes an instrument for strengthening local democracy (Raharusun, 2017).

The 2024 Tangerang Regency Pilkada contest presents interesting dynamics with the emergence of independent candidates, Zulkarnain-Lerru Yustira, who passed verification as a candidate pair through the individual route. The pair stands out as the first candidates to successfully meet the requirements for public support, reaching more than 159,000 ID cards, exceeding the minimum limit set by the KPU. They will compete with two other candidate pairs supported by various major political parties, namely Maesyal Rasyid-Intan Nurul Hikmah who are supported by five parties, and Mad Romli-Irvansyah Asmat who are supported by four parties. This dynamic reflects changes in local politics in Tangerang Regency, where the community is starting to play a more active role in determining the direction of politics, with more and more candidates running independently. This shows an effort to reduce

dependence on political parties that have so far dominated the Indonesian political system. The presence of independent candidates such as Zulkarnain-Lerru reflects the increasingly rapid development of local democracy in Tangerang, where residents not only act as objects, but also as subjects who have a greater influence in determining their leaders. This change also poses a challenge for local democracy, because it requires political parties to pay more attention to the voices of the community who are more rational in choosing candidate leaders based on their vision and mission (Monitor Tangerang, 2023). This certainly creates quite strong competition from each candidate in the 2024 Pilkada contest.

CONCLUSION

The dynamics of political contestation in the Tangerang Regency Regional Head Election (Pilkada) reflect the importance of community political participation in strengthening the quality of local democracy. The community no longer only plays a role as passive voters, but also as active actors who voice their aspirations and dissatisfaction with regional leader candidates. Increasing political awareness is a positive indicator in the development of local democracy, although it still faces serious challenges such as the practice of money politics and external influences that can damage the integrity of the election process. In addition, the involvement of political parties in the Pilkada contestation is also a crucial element in the dynamics of democracy in Tangerang Regency. The role of parties in nominating candidates and shaping the direction of public policy is very significant. However, the practice of pragmatism that prioritizes victory over democratic principles is a challenge in itself that can hinder the creation of quality elections. Competition between candidates creates complex political dynamics, which require the delivery of clear visions, missions, and work programs that are relevant to the needs of the community. Therefore, to realize a healthy and democratic political contestation, increased transparency, accountability, and integrity are needed in all stages of the election process. Only then can the Pilkada produce leaders who are not only democratically elected, but also responsive, competent, and oriented towards the public interest.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Almond, G. A. (1956). Comparative political systems. *The Journal of Politics*, 18(3), 391-409.

-
- Aminah, S. (2020). The evaluation of regional head election: Developing synergy of regional autonomy and regional head election. *Jurnal Bina Praja*, 12(2), 137-151.
- Androniceanu, A. (2021). Transparency in public administration as a challenge for a good democratic governance. *Revista» Administratie Si Management Public «(RAMP)*, 36, 149-164.
- Annisa, N. N., & Nandy, D. (2024). Global Tax Trends and Transformations: A Literature Review on Change and Adaptation. *Jurnal Perpajakan Dan Keuangan Publik*, 3(1), 29-35.
- Ekowati, E. Y. (2019). Pragmatisme Politik: Antara Koalisi, Pencalonan, dan Calon Tunggal Dalam Pilkada. *Jurnal Transformative*, 5(1), 16-37.
- Fadli, Y. (2024). Strategi Komisi Pemilihan Umum (Kpu) Kabupaten Tangerang Dalam Meningkatkan Partisipasi Politik Masyarakat Pada Pemilihan Umum Legislatif Tahun 2024. *Jurnal Dinamika Pemerintahan*.
- Fadlurrohman, Z. A. (2017). Problem Pelembagaan Partai Politik Dalam Pilkada Serentak Di Jawa Timur. *Jurnal Transformative*, 17.
- Fatkhi, A. N., Sutjiatmi, S., & Sugiharto, U. (2025). Political Party Strategies in Recruiting Prospective Mayor and Deputy Mayor Candidates of Tegal 2024. *LEGAL BRIEF*, 13(6), 1423-1433.
- Hargono, H., Rustan, A., Jambak, F., Alba, L. O., & Rahman, R. A. (2024). Dynamics and Challenges of Democracy in Local Elections in Indonesia and the Netherlands. *SASI*, 30(1), 111-118.
- Ida farida. (2019). Mahar Politik Dalam Pandangan Politik Hukum Di Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmiah Galuh Justisi*, 7(1).
- Kenawas, Y. C. (2024). *Dynasty Inc.: The Emergence and Endurance of Political Dynasties in Indonesia*. Northwestern University.
- Litbang Kompas. (2023). *Pemilihan Umum 2024 dalam Angka*. <https://kompaspedia.kompas.id/baca/paparan-topik/pemilihan-umum-2024-dalam-angka>
- Monitor Tangerang. (2023). *Zulkarnain dan Lerru Yustira Lolos Verifikasi Sebagai Calon Independen*. <https://monitortangerang.com/zulkarnain-dan-lerru-yustira-lolos-verifikasi-sebagai-calon-independen/>
- Raharusun, A. (2017). Pilkada Serentak Dan Penguatan Demokrasi Dalam Sistem Ketatanegaraan Indonesia. *PERADI: Perhimpunan Advokat Indonesia*.
- Ristian, A. (2016). Demokrasi dan Kekuasaan Politik Calon Incumbent. *JIP (Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan): Kajian Ilmu Pemerintahan Dan Politik Daerah*, 1(1), 189-202.
- Ritonga, D. A. (2020). Menakar Partisipasi Politik Masyarakat Kota Medan Terhadap Pemilihan Walikota Medan Tahun 2020. *POLITEIA: Jurnal Ilmu Politik*.
- Subekti, T. (2014). Partisipasi Politik Masyarakat Dalam Pemilihan Umum (Studi Turn of Voter dalam Pemilihan Umum Kepala Daerah Kabupaten Magetan Tahun 2013). *Journal of Governance and Policy*.
- Suyatno, S. (2016). Pemilihan kepala daerah (pilkada) dan tantangan demokrasi lokal di Indonesia. *Politik Indonesia: Indonesian Political Science Review*, 1(2), 212-230.
- Teras Tangerang. (2023). *Jelang Pilkada Kabupaten Tangerang Dihujani Demonstrasi, Akademisi Menjadi Tantangan*. <https://www.terastangerang.com/jelang-pilkada-kabupaten-tangerang-dihujani-demonstrasi-akademisi-menjadi-tantangan/>
- Zilla, C. (2022). Defining democratic inclusion from the perspective of democracy and citizenship theory. *Democratization*, 29(8), 1518-1538.