

Prices Never Lie: Political Parties' Contribution to High Cost of Election in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia has been transformed in developing more inclusive and participatory electoral mechanisms. However, the high cost of organizing elections has been a necessity. This article aims to explain the increase in electoral costs in periodic elections. The discussion focuses on the influence of political parties in increasing the political costs of elections, given that parties require costs for planning, campaigning and internal operations. This research uses a qualitative-explanatory approach, through data collection of official documents and media reports. The data that has been coded is then analyzed interactively, with the Nvivo 12 application. The results show that there is an increasing trend in the election budget, from the 2004 election to the last election in 2024. The increased costs follow the design of organizing elections and the response of political parties to the increase in campaign operational costs. The increase in electoral political costs is not followed by the structuring of the political financing system, proper supervision of party revenue sources, and rigorous transparency and accountability mechanisms. This article contributes to explaining the complexities and dynamics of electoral financing, focusing on the contribution of political parties in institutionalizing high-cost elections in Indonesia.

Keywords: elections, political parties and high cost

INTRODUCTION

General elections are an essential milestone in Indonesia's political system (Ufen, 2008; Tan, 2015; Junaidi, 2022). Since the 1998 reforms, Indonesia has undergone a major transformation in developing more inclusive and participatory electoral mechanisms (Winter, 2013; Mangkurat and Mirajiaha 2021; Prianto 2024). However, behind these democratic achievements, there are increasingly evident challenges related to the high costs required to organize elections (Kotakorpi & Poutvaara, 2011; Kenig &

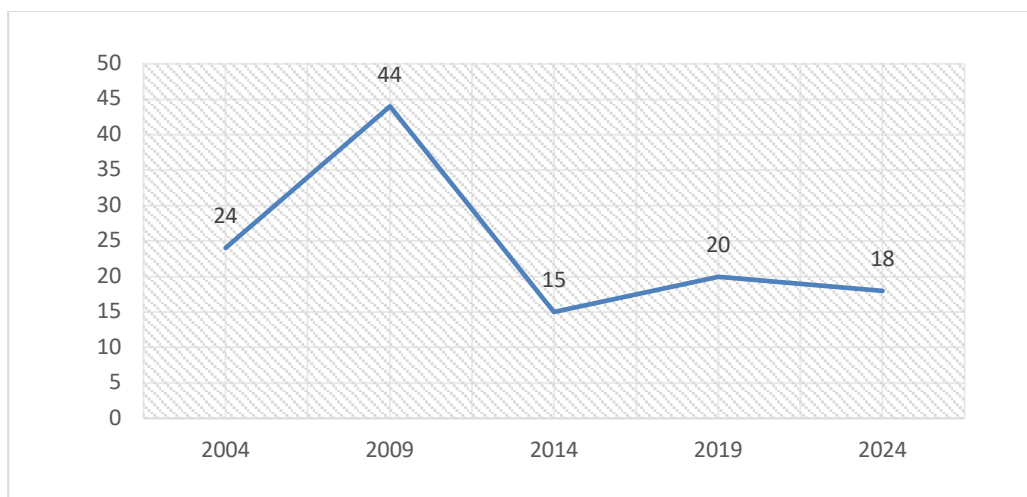
Atmor, 2019; Prianto, et al., 2022). Democratic and transparent elections require substantial resources, including sufficient funds to support various aspects, such as planning, logistics, campaigning, monitoring, and organizing voting (Rahmiz and Yasin 2021; Jubba et al, 2022). In recent decades, the cost of elections in Indonesia has seen a significant increase, raising serious questions about the efficiency and sustainability of democratic processes (Rahmatullah 2021; Syafhendry et al, 2023). Electoral activities involve various stages that require substantial financial resources, including planning, logistics implementation, campaigning, monitoring, and vote counting (Rahmayani, et al, 2019; Prianto, et al, 2021; Fauziah et al. 2023).

The role of political parties cannot be ignored in contributing to the high cost of elections in Indonesia (Hidayat, Harahap, and Purba 2021). Political parties are a central element in the democratic process, responsible for nominating candidates, delivering political visions and programs, and communicating with voters (Tomsa, 2014; Lovenduski, 2016; Rahat G. & O. Kenig, 2018; Hendrawan, et al., 2021). However, political parties also require substantial funding to achieve these goals, especially in the course of campaigns that tend to be intensive and competitive. In the Indonesian context, the high cost of elections is often attributed to various factors. First, Indonesia's vast geography, with thousands of islands and remote areas, makes campaigning a challenging task (Lumban Gaol, Muryanto, and Kusmanto 2022). Political candidates must travel to different regions, hold meetings, and organize campaign events to reach potential voters. All of this requires significant transportation, accommodation, and logistics costs (Elsa and Kosandi 2021). This includes the use of mass media, television and radio advertisements, social media, and even significant events to attract voters' attention. All of these forms of campaigns require substantial investment in terms of planning, content production, and dissemination (Prianto, 2012; Eka Patrisia and Yuliani 2020; Khaerah et al, 2021; Younus et. al, 2024).

In addition, administrative costs must be addressed. Political parties need to run their internal operations, such as paying staff salaries, renting

offices, and organizing party events. This entire infrastructure requires substantial financial resources. However, it is essential to remember that this financial involvement also carries potential risks (Jubba et al, 2022; Nurcahyanti 2023; Luhur Prianto & Yუსlaini, 2024;). reliance on external funding can lead to a dependency that potentially undermines the independence of political parties and raises questions about the influence that donors may exert (Susanti 2021). Thus, while political parties play an essential role in maintaining the health of democracy in Indonesia, the cost challenges they face must be addressed wisely. Reforms to the political funding system, strict oversight of party revenue sources, and the implementation of transparency mechanisms can help reduce financial burdens and ensure the integrity of a more sustainable democratic process (Sukma 2021).

Figure 1. Number of political parties involved in each election



Source : General Election Comission, 2024

The development of the number of political parties involved in each election over the past few years reflects the political dynamics in society (Habib 2020). 24 political parties participated in the electoral process, showing the diversity of political options that existed at that time. Then, in 2009, the number of political parties increased to 44, reflecting the increasingly open political space for various groups and views. However, this trend changed in 2014, when the number of participating political parties dropped dramatically to 15 (Silitonga 2022). This may indicate political

consolidation or a shift in focus to larger and more powerful groups. In 2019, although there were still fluctuations, 20 political parties participated in the election (Putri and Qodir 2017). This may reflect efforts by some parties to return to an active role in the political arena, given the projections for 2024, which saw the number of political parties participating fall to 18. This may reflect an attempt to maintain political stability and avoid too much fragmentation. Overall, changes in the number of political parties involved in each election reflect the social and political dynamics in society and the strategies taken by political parties to adapt to these changes (Susanti 2017).

This study differs from several studies conducted by (Suhartono and Sahlan 2023) which focus on the high cost of politics, especially political dowry, as one of the main components in election funding. Political dowry refers to under-the-table financial transactions involving large sums of money for candidates in elections or local elections to gain the support of political parties. In addition, the study also highlighted the practice of inter-party negotiations in forming coalitions, which often results in the escalation of election costs and potentially violates democratic principles. Meanwhile, this study offers a new perspective by evaluating in more detail the role of political parties in contributing to the high cost of elections in Indonesia. It discusses the phenomenon of political dowry and explores how political parties' internal strategies, funding policies, and campaign mechanisms contribute to the escalation of election costs. This approach enriches previous studies by examining various aspects of political financing that have not been studied in depth. Furthermore, this study extends the findings of (Nilam Satma 2019) by analyzing inter-party differences in influencing the escalation of election costs. Using election budget data from 2004 to 2024, this study provides an overview of the patterns of election cost increases in various periods and the political factors contributing to these trends. In addition, this study adopts the approach of (Wulandari, Rahmawati, and Rosdiana 2023) by investigating the extent to which particular parties have an impact on increasing election costs and whether there are significant differences between parties in their

spending patterns. By understanding each party's ideological factors, organizational structure, and campaign strategies, this research can provide deeper insights into the variations in political financing patterns in Indonesia. Therefore, this research not only fills a gap in the study of election costs but also provides strategic input for policymakers in designing more efficient, transparent, and sustainable political financing reforms in Indonesia's democratic system.

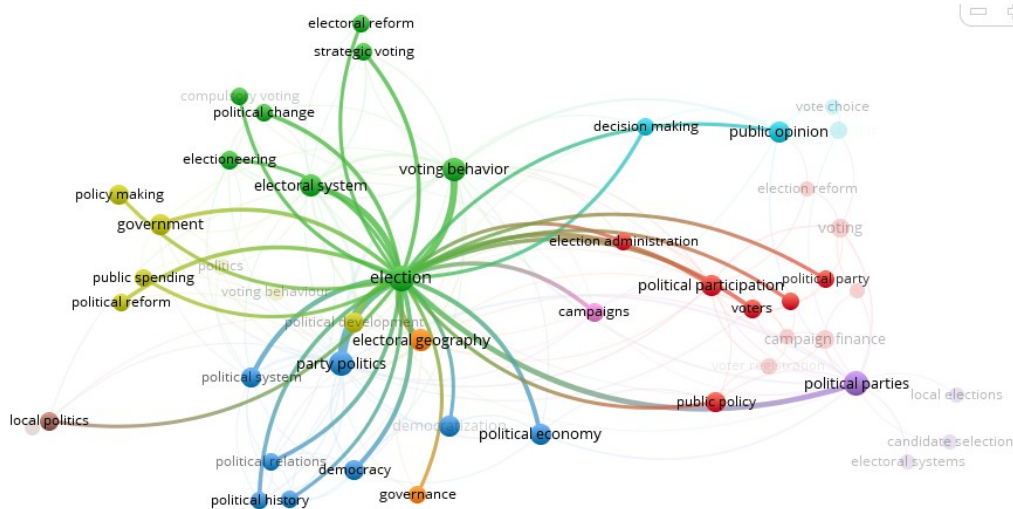
Law Number, 2 Year 2011 on Political Parties states that a political party is an organization that is national and formed by a group of Indonesian citizens voluntarily on the basis of a common will and ideals to fight for and defend the political interests of members, society, nation, and State, and maintain the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (Prayitno and Ishaq 2022).

Political parties are a mirror of freedom of association and freedom of expression. The constitution protects their existence in a constitutional democracy (Al Izzati et al. 2024). Political parties are also an essential element in the formation of a democratic rule of law (Ademi and Kimya 2024). In the preventive representation of politics in formal state institutions, parties have a strategic role and position. Procedural and substantial democracy will always place the main political actors, namely political parties, as instruments that determine the course of general elections (Nurbayev, Sultangazy, and Serikbayev 2024). The function of political parties is mentioned in Law Number 2/2011, precisely in Article 11 paragraph (1). The existence of political parties is essential in supporting the running of a democratic government (Ivan Agusta and Retno Mawarini Sukmariningsih 2023). Political parties are one of the parties that can bridge the gap between the government and the community. This is in accordance with what is stated in the 1945 Constitution, namely in Article 6 Paragraph (2), namely the President and Vice President candidates are proposed by a political party or a coalition of political parties participating in the general election before the implementation of the general

election (Erita 2022).

According to several countries that adhere to the understanding of modern democracies, Political Parties, General Elections (elections), and the House of Representatives are three institutions that cannot be separated from one another (Bannerman et al. 2022). Political party will always try to gain the support of many and large people during the General Election so that the people's representative body can be dominated by the political party concerned or the political party that has the most votes (Harada & Smith, 2014; Kenig & Atmor, 2019; Flinders and Hinterleitner 2022). Elections as a manifestation of the principle of popular sovereignty, at that time, the people were given the freedom to determine candidates for representatives of the people who were members of political parties. Therefore, the term The will of the people is the basis of government power (Passarelli 2022).

Figure 2. Literature Analysis



Source: Processed by authors using VOSviewer, 2024

Figure 2 above depicts a complex network illustrating the close relationship between various concepts related to elections, political parties, and public policy, which is highly relevant to the previous research discussed. The figure shows that "election" is at the center of various important topics such as "voting behavior," "electoral system," and "political participation," all

of which are closely related to how public policies are formed and implemented. Furthermore, this figure shows how political parties and elections are closely interconnected, with "political parties," "campaigns," and "voters" being the key elements that interact with each other to influence election outcomes and public policies, in line with the views of (Nurbayev, Sultangazy, and Serikbayev 2024) and (Ivan Agusta and Retno Mawarini Sukmariningsih 2023) on the strategic role of political parties in democracy. Figure 2 reinforces the findings of this study by showing that political parties not only play a role in electoral competition but also directly influence public policy formation through the electoral process. For example, in Indonesian elections, political parties have great control over candidate nominations and campaign strategies, ultimately determining how public interests are articulated in post-election government policies. This network structure also shows that the stronger the dominance of political parties in the electoral process, the greater their influence in the resulting public policies, which has implications for the rising costs of politics due to inter-party competition for power.

This relationship also supports the role of political parties as a bridge between the government and society, as stated in Article 6A paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution, where the President and Vice President candidates are proposed by a political party or a coalition of political parties participating in the general election (Erita 2022). However, in the context of broader electoral dynamics, this article regulates the nomination mechanism and shows how political parties play a central role in Indonesia's democratic process. In practice, this regulation impacts the high cost of politics because parties have great authority in determining the candidates to be nominated, often through mechanisms that are not transparent and full of elite interests. This can be compared to electoral systems in other countries, such as the United States, where selecting candidates through primary elections allows for wider public participation, thus reducing candidates' dependence on political parties in nomination. Therefore, this study highlights that in addition to legal

regulations, internal political party factors and the prevailing electoral system are important determinants in the escalation of election costs in Indonesia.

In the context of evaluating the role of political parties in contributing to the high cost of elections in Indonesia, it is essential to recognize that active community participation and independent institutions have a crucial role to play in maintaining integrity and transparency in the use of election funds. Proactive public participation in monitoring the flow of campaign and election funds can be a crucial pillar in minimizing the risk of corruption and misuse of funds. When the public has greater access to information on the sources and uses of funds, they can act as effective watchdogs over the financial activities of political parties. Thus, not only should political parties be responsible for the management of election funds, but it is also essential for the public and independent institutions to participate in ensuring accountability and transparency in the use of these funds. With the active involvement of various parties, including the community and independent institutions, the management of election funds will be more open, responsible, and accessible from corrupt practices. Therefore, political parties need to support efforts to encourage community participation and support the role of independent institutions in overseeing the use of election funds in order to create a cleaner and more transparent political environment. Therefore, the purpose of this research is how the contribution of political parties in contributing to the high cost of elections in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research method with qualitative data analysis (QDA) and a descriptive approach. Qualitative research aims to describe or reconstruct complex reality through in-depth data analysis (Yusanto, 2020). This method is used to describe data systematically, factually, and accurately, especially in identifying patterns and trends in online news texts, websites, and previous research related to the contribution of political parties to the high cost of elections in Indonesia. Data sources in this research

include online media, official websites of related institutions, and previous research relevant to the research topic. Data selection criteria are based on the credibility of the source, relevance to the subject, and data accessibility. In data analysis, the author used Nvivo 12 Plus with the Crosstab Query feature to see the percentage of data that had been coded and visualize the relationship between variables. This research also used Word Cloud to identify words or concepts that frequently appear in the data, providing an overview of the dominant themes in the research. The analysis began with importing the data into Nvivo 12 Plus and then coding to identify the main themes. The data was analyzed using Crosstab Query, Word Cloud, and other analysis features. This approach provides deeper insights into the factors that influence the high cost of elections and enables the formulation of more evidence-based policy recommendations to improve the transparency and efficiency of Indonesia's electoral budget.

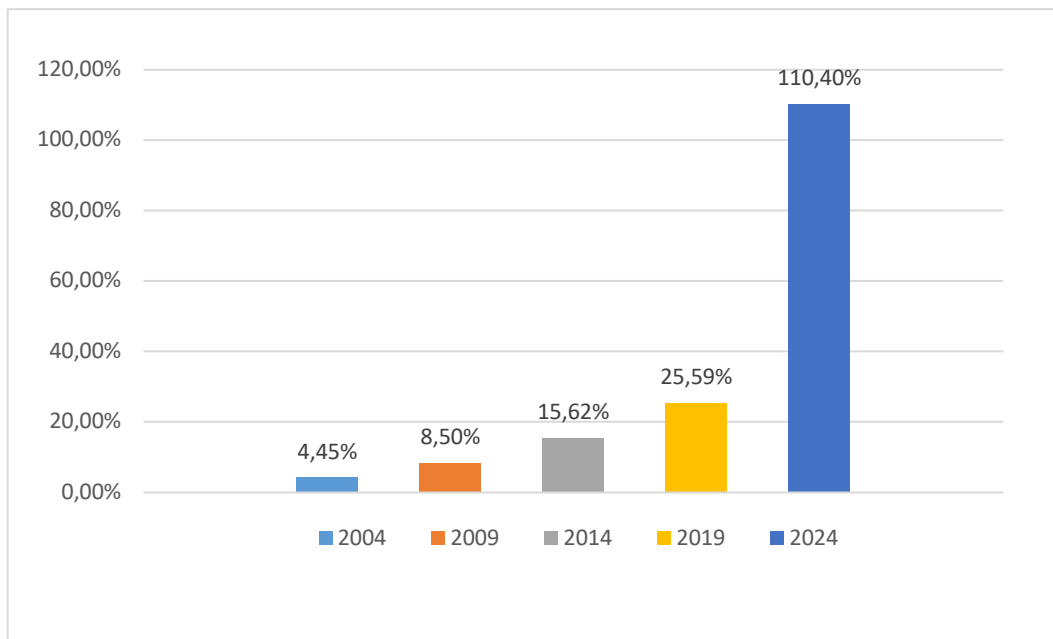
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Democracy is still the best model of government within the framework of nation-state life (Moch. Muwaffiqillah 2022). Its ability to uphold human values makes democracy the most widely practiced in the world. However, the practice of democracy anywhere is always full of twists and turns, many challenges and obstacles, so without the collective agreement of citizens to continuously fight for and defend it, democracy only becomes a set of values and norms (Rosyad and Indramayu 2020). Democracy is unimaginable without elections because elections are needed to form a "government of the people, by the people, and for the people." Elections need to be held periodically to ensure that the government can be controlled by citizens (Safira Yuristianti 2020). Elections must involve all citizens because, in a democracy, all citizens have equal status in law and politics; all citizens have the same right to elect and be elected as state officials. Because they involve all citizens, elections become an expensive political practice (Andika Adhyaksa 2023).

If democracy is inconceivable without elections, then elections are

impossible without money as a crucial aspect of the process. First of all, elections require substantial funds to organize and carry out the various stages of their implementation, from paying the salaries of election officials and printing ballots and equipment to publicizing the results to the public. In addition, a second aspect that is no less important is the need for substantial funds on the part of election participants to launch their campaigns. For the participants, campaigns are the primary means of convincing voters of their vision, mission, and commitment. Conversely, for voters, campaigns are an opportunity to understand the competing candidates better and make informed decisions in the electoral process. In this context, campaigns become an unavoidable necessity that requires a significant allocation of funds from the parties involved in the election. It is useful to look at election budget data from 2004 to 2024 to provide a more concrete picture.

Figure 3. Election Budget Data 2004-2024



Source: General Election Comission and processed by the authors, 2024

The figure discusses the upward trend in election budgets from 2004 to 2024. The figure shows that the election budget has increased significantly over this period. In 2004, the election budget was only 4.45%, but within five years, this figure increased dramatically to 8.50% in 2009. Then, there was a more significant spike in 2014, when the election budget reached 15.62%,

indicating a higher commitment to ensuring the smooth running of the democratic process. Not stopping there, in 2019, the election budget saw a significant increase to 25.59%. This reflects the recognition of the importance of transparent and effective elections in maintaining the integrity of democracy. The peak of the budget increase occurred in 2024, when the election budget jumped sharply to 110.40%. This phenomenon may reflect changes in the scope, technology, and complexity of elections, which require more significant investments to ensure fair and accurate processes.

Various factors influence this increase in the election budget. One of them is the increase in the number of voters, political parties, and candidates participating in elections, which results in increased logistical needs, ballot printing, and campaign organization. In addition, the use of technology in elections, such as electronic vote recapitulation systems and online voter registration, also requires a larger allocation of funds to procure equipment and train human resources. Election security is also a major factor driving the budget increase, given the increasingly complex challenges, such as the threat of cyberattacks, vote manipulation, and potential social conflicts that must be anticipated. Compared to other countries, Indonesia shows a similar pattern of budget increase to several major democracies. The United States, for example, has also experienced a significant increase in its election budget, especially for political campaigns and cybersecurity systems. Meanwhile, India, as the world's largest democracy, faces challenges similar to those faced by Indonesia regarding its size and electoral complexity. As such, it has seen its election budget increase year-on-year. However, some other countries have implemented efficiency strategies, such as Estonia adopting an e-voting system and Brazil using an electronic voting system to reduce the cost of printing and distributing ballots.

Several strategic measures can be implemented to control the surge in Indonesia's election budget. Optimizing digital technology, such as e-voting, can help reduce logistics and ballot distribution costs. Efficiency in the procurement and distribution of election logistics must also be improved to

avoid budget waste. Strengthening the audit system and budget transparency should be a priority to make the use of funds more accountable. In addition, increasing the capacity of human resources to manage election technology will help reduce the potential for errors that can lead to additional costs. The government can also collaborate with the private sector and international institutions to support certain aspects of elections, such as socialization and the development of electoral technology.

Election budgets also differ depending on the type of election (e.g. presidential, legislative, local), the scale of the election (national or local), technological developments, voter turnout levels, and economic and political factors prevailing at any given time. Increases in election budgets quite often reflect a commitment to ensuring transparency, fairness and integrity in elections. Campaign finance limitations need to be set to ensure fair competition among election participants. These limitations include the amount of donations, the source of donations, and the amount of campaign expenditure. These restrictions are also needed to prevent the use of illegal funds for campaigns. Second, campaign fund management arrangements need to be made so that political parties, candidates and success teams do not abuse the use of campaign funds for other interests outside of winning elections. Third, campaign fund reporting arrangements need to be made so that voters know the source, amount and allocation of campaign funds so that voters get to know and control the relations between political parties and candidates (elected) in making post-election policies.

Table 1. Political Party Campaign Funds

Political Party	Election 2004	Election 2009	Election 2014	Election 2019	Election 2024
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Partai Golkar	112.791.035.149	145.583.002.911	247.210.439.672	307.638.877.704	45.219.158.648.00
PDI Perjuangan	111.435.731.096	38.944.436.113	221.482.089.325	345.025.077.817	173.221.200.996.00
PKB	7.223.761.480	3.609.500.000	150.623.459.898	142.322.647.279	800.505.963.46
PPP	-	18.338.239.000	96.771.177.018	76.551.752.526	20.013.294.563
Partai Demokrat	9.040.910.780	235.168.086.289	268.099.467.953	189.732.633.608	72.273.700.282
PAN	27.342.426.509	17.858.157.150	170.939.767.964	169.048.328.526	25.618.525.000.00
PKS	29.795.410.385	36.521.468.175	82.362.404.293	150.042.753.916	16.703.608.199.00
PBB	-	10.953.625.927	47.985.689.151	117.857.534.724	27.760.541.659
Partai Gerindra	-	300.344.193.985	491.044.921.309	134.721.849.581	92.839.827.846.61
Partai Hanura	-	19.235.371.037	241.829.580.965	49.498.116.814	5.022.556.573.60
Partai Nasdem	-	-	139.577.604.863	259.474.071.714	9.165.517.417.00
PKPI	-	-	34.301.854.912	6.291.747.254	-
Partai Berkarya	-	-	-	107.164.300.058	-
Partai Garuda	-	-	-	3.475.515.041	5.497.684.500.00
Perindo	-	-	-	228.238.374.435	20.643.301.550
PSI	-	-	-	84.660.186.785	80.096.534.877
Total	297.629.275.399	834.982.809.927	2.192.228.457.323	2.371.743.787.782	594,856,065,229.97

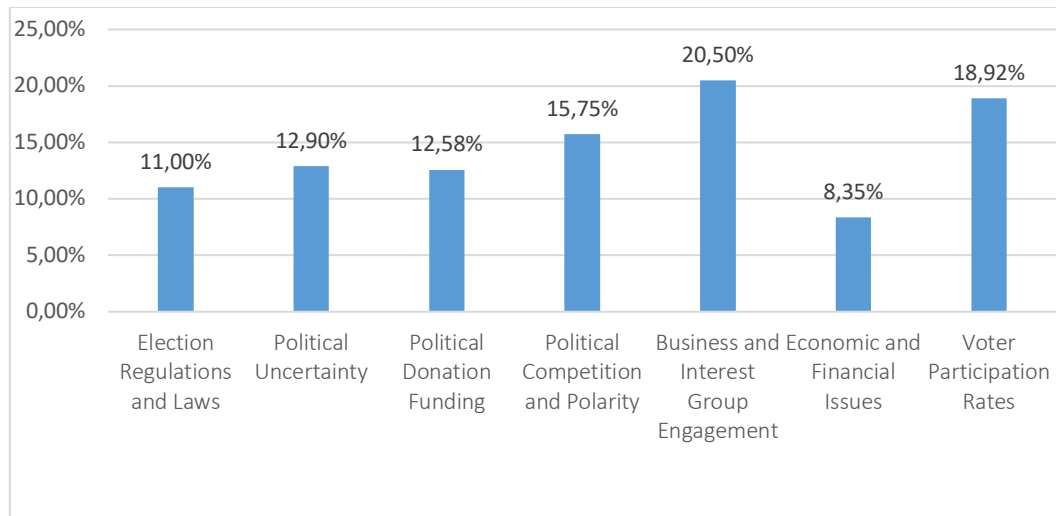
Source: Various reports and processed by the authors, 2024

Table 1. illustrates the budget data spent by various political parties in the general elections (elections) in 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019, and 2024. This data provides an overview of the spending patterns of political parties during different election periods. In general, there is an upward trend in political party budgets from year to year. The total overall budget of political parties increased significantly from 297.6 billion in 2004 to more than 594.8 trillion in 2024. PDI Perjuangan is one of the parties that has the largest budget in all the general elections exemplified. The party's budget increased significantly from 111 billion in 2004 to over 173 billion in 2024. This may reflect strong support for the party and its strategy. There are changes in budget patterns in some parties. For example, there are changes in budget patterns across several political parties during elections. For example, PDI Perjuangan saw a significant increase from 2009 to 2014 and 20204, which may reflect increased support or a greater focus on those elections. PKB shows budget fluctuations, with a low budget in 2009, a dramatic increase in 2014, then a decrease in 2019, and a significant spike in 2024. Parties such as PPP, Gerindra Party, and Nasdem Party show significant variations in their budgets from election to election. In addition, some new parties, such as the Berkarya Party, Garuda Party, Perindo, and PSI, emerged with significant budgets. However, it

remains to be seen how they will develop in the long term. The total overall budget of political parties increased rapidly from IDR 297.6 billion in 2004 to more than IDR 2.3 trillion in 2019, reflecting the high cost of campaigning and parties' efforts to win public support. However, it decreased in 2024 to around IDR 594.9 billion.

The high costs involved in political campaigns reflect the need for substantial financial resources to facilitate various aspects of the campaign, ranging from operational costs to marketing and promotional strategies. In this context, the costs of political campaigns do not only include expenditures for renting event venues or printing campaign materials but also include the costs of political consultants, media advertising, and campaign staff wages. All of these are integral parts of a strategy designed to influence public opinion, strengthen the image of a political party or candidate, and ultimately gain the required electoral support. However, the importance of financial resources in political campaigns also underscores the potential dependence of political parties on donations from external parties, such as corporations or special interest groups. While such donations can provide the necessary financial resources to launch a campaign, they can also raise concerns related to the possibility of unfair influence or conflicts of interest that could compromise the integrity of the political process. In addition, the high cost of political campaigns also highlights the challenges faced by political parties or candidates who need more financial resources. The inability to compete financially can result in inequality in access to political processes, with the potential to limit pluralism and representation in the political system.

Figure 4. Political Issues Affecting Election Costs in Indonesia



Source: *Processed by the authors, 2024*

The figure above reveals a number of issues that significantly affect the cost of elections in Indonesia. One issue that has a major impact is electoral law and regulation, which accounts for 11.00% of the total costs. The legal and regulatory provisions applicable to the conduct of elections play an important role in determining the expenditure required to run a democratic process fairly and transparently. Electoral regulations and laws play a role in protecting human rights, including the rights to speech, assembly, and expression. They ensure that political participation takes place in a safe and free atmosphere. Electoral regulatory and legal issues have a major impact on the cost of elections in Indonesia. It is important for the government, the EMB, and all relevant parties to ensure that regulations are well-designed, efficient, and transparent to maintain the integrity of elections while minimizing unnecessary cost burdens. In dealing with these issues, the government and EMB need to consider the balance between the regulations needed to maintain electoral integrity and the costs that may arise. Clear regulations, transparency in political financing, and efficient use of technology can help reduce the cost burden and maintain the quality of elections.

In addition, there is the issue of political uncertainty, which has a share of 12.90%. Uncertainty in political dynamics can affect political parties' budget planning and campaign strategies. This includes factors such as changes in

public views, potential opinion shifts, and unexpected political situations. Political uncertainty can arise from sudden changes in public views on certain issues. If public opinion changes dramatically, political parties and candidates may need to adapt their campaign platforms and messages to remain relevant and attract support. Sudden shifts in public opinion can also affect supporters who have previously committed to supporting a particular candidate. These changes in voter preferences can force political parties to revise their campaign strategies or even change their candidates. Changes in the direction of policies proposed by political parties or candidates can arise from political uncertainty. Political parties must be prepared to deal with changes in policy necessitated by the changing political situation. Political uncertainty can result in instability and necessary adjustments in campaign strategies and funding. This, in turn, can affect the cost of elections as political parties and candidates need to be prepared to adapt to possible changes. Implementing a flexible strategy, maintaining smooth communication within the campaign team, and having a backup plan in the face of uncertainty can help mitigate the financial impact of this issue.

Funding political donations is also a crucial issue, accounting for around 12.58% of total costs. Political parties require substantial financial support to organize effective campaigns and gain public support. This issue reflects how political parties obtain funds and how transparency and accountability in political funding are maintained. The amount of funding provided by donors can influence party or candidate policies and priorities. Large donors may have certain expectations regarding proposed policies or special interests that they wish to defend. The funding of political donations has the potential to affect the cost of elections in Indonesia significantly. Unstable or limited funding sources can hinder effective campaign planning. Competition for financial support and efforts to ensure regulatory compliance can increase spending. Political parties and governments need to consider sustainable funding alternatives and develop regulations that promote transparency and fairness in the political funding process.

Competition and political polarity have a share of 15.75%. Increased competition between political parties and candidates can encourage them to spend more in an effort to win voter support. The cost of advertising, promotional materials, and campaign events may increase as political parties want to ensure voters receive their messages well. Political parties need to raise funds to support their campaigns. Higher competition can force them to seek more and varied sources of funds, including individual donations, donations from interest groups, and party funding. Political competition refers to competition between political parties or candidates for voter support and to win political positions. It is at the core of the democratic process, where voters have the right to choose between different options. Healthy political competition can encourage political parties to improve the quality of their programs and policies and provide alternatives for voters. When intensified political competition is combined with increased polarity, the cost of elections may rise further. Political parties may find it necessary to adopt more aggressive and more extreme campaign strategies to win the support of a divided voter base. Therefore, in the face of issues of political competition and polarity, the government and relevant agencies need to ensure clear and transparent regulations are in place to govern campaign practices and political financing. Increasing public awareness of the impact of polarization can also help mitigate its negative effects on election costs.

The issue that has the most impact is the involvement of businesses and interest groups, with a contribution of 20.50%. The role of businesses and interest groups in elections often involves financial and campaign support that can influence political dynamics. This involvement can lead to increased campaign costs due to additional sources of funds from these parties. On the other hand, however, the impact of this financial support must also be carefully considered against the integrity and independence of the political process. To address these potential risks, strict regulation and transparency in campaign financing are key factors. Law No. 7/2017 on Elections and KPU Regulation No. 18/2003 have limited the sources of campaign funding, campaign fund

reporting, and auditing of political fund receipts and expenditures. These regulations ensure that political parties and candidates are not dependent on certain businesses or interest groups, reducing the possibility of external party intervention in post-election political policies. In addition, public awareness of funding sources and their potential influence can help maintain electoral integrity and increase public trust in the political process. With the implementation of strict regulations and disclosure of information related to campaign funding, it is hoped that a more transparent and accountable electoral system can be realized while optimizing election costs without compromising the quality of democracy.

On the other hand, economic and financial issues have a share of 8.35%. Fluctuating economic conditions can affect political parties' budget allocations and their campaigns. Poor or unstable economic conditions can impact the availability of election funding. The government may allocate a smaller budget for elections if the national budget is limited due to slow economic growth. In economically tight situations, election budgets may compete with budgets for other programs, such as education, health, and infrastructure. This can affect the level of funding that can be allocated to elections. Economic and financial issues can have a significant impact on the cost of elections in Indonesia. From limited budget allocations to fluctuations in operating costs, economic conditions can affect all aspects of organizing and conducting elections. The government and relevant agencies need to plan carefully, consider the possible economic impacts, and find innovative ways to overcome budgetary constraints in order to maintain the integrity and quality of the elections. Voter turnout is also an important issue, contributing 18.92%. Efforts to encourage higher participation from citizens, including socialization and voter education efforts, can require investment in the form of budgets. Voter turnout rates have direct implications for the cost of elections in Indonesia. Political parties and election administrators may have to allocate additional budgets to encourage higher participation through education campaigns, technology, and mobilization efforts. High levels of voter turnout can yield long-term benefits

funds and their management is a significant concern in political decision-making and policy-making. There are also other key concepts, such as "Government," which indicates that the data analysis includes the role and function of government in the political context being studied. The word "Participation" also appears, suggesting that people's involvement in the political process is also a concern in this analysis.

Through the analysis of mapping words and critical concepts generated from the data, we can gain a deep and holistic understanding of the various dimensions of politics involved in each context. The information contained in this mapping not only provides an overview of the role and dynamics of political parties, electoral processes, budget management, government functions, and the level of public participation in political processes but also reveals the broader political landscape that influences political policies and decisions. From this, an in-depth understanding of critical issues relating to resource allocation, political power distribution, public participation mechanisms, and policy implementation can be gained, providing a solid foundation for formulating effective political strategies and policies that are more oriented toward the needs of the people. It also indicates areas that require further attention in politics and governance research, such as the dynamics of interactions between political institutions, the influence of economic factors on public policy, and the challenges of encouraging sustained public participation in the political process. By better understanding the key concepts that emerge from this analysis, stakeholders can develop more holistic and sustainable strategies to improve political governance, enhance the quality of people's lives, and strengthen the democratic system.

Ensuring integrity and transparency in the political process requires tight regulation of political campaign financing. Effective regulation helps curb unbridled spending, promotes transparency in the sources and uses of campaign funds, and ensures that the public interest is prioritized in the political process. As such, an analysis of the costs involved in political

campaigns opens a window into a deeper understanding of the economic and political dynamics that drive the democratization process. Through understanding these complexities, the public and political stakeholders can work together towards creating a system that is more inclusive, transparent, and in line with fundamental democratic principles.

This research explains that the high cost of elections in Indonesia is a complex issue with unique characteristics compared to global trends. One of the main factors affecting the size of election budgets is the large number of voters and the large geographical area requiring more complex and costly electoral infrastructure. In addition, competitive multiparty systems encourage political parties and candidates to spend significant funds on campaigns to gain wider support. Compared to countries such as Germany or the UK, campaign costs in Indonesia tend to be higher due to the strong practice of money politics and the high cost of voter mobilization. Another contributing factor is the need for high security, especially in areas with potential conflict during elections. Security measures, including deployment of security personnel, monitoring political activities, and mitigating cyber threats, require large budget allocations to ensure electoral stability. In addition, the use of technology in elections contributes to the size of the budget. While technology can increase transparency and efficiency, its implementation requires a large initial investment. Studies from Brazil and India show that electronic voting systems can reduce costs in the long run by reducing the need for ballot paper printing and distribution logistics. However, in Indonesia, the main challenge in implementing electoral technology is the digital infrastructure gap in various regions, especially in remote areas that still experience limited internet and electricity access. If not properly anticipated, this could increase the gap in voter participation and pose a risk of unfairness in the administration of elections. Therefore, a more in-depth study of the effectiveness of technology implementation in Indonesia's electoral system is needed, considering the readiness of infrastructure and the level of public acceptance of the new system.

As a policy recommendation, reforms are needed in the campaign funding system by strengthening the implementation of Law No. 7/2017 on Elections and KPU Regulation No. 18/2003 to increase the transparency and accountability of campaign funding. Currently, there are loopholes in the regulations that allow non-transparent campaign funding practices, such as the use of funds from interest groups that are not reported. The government and election organizers must implement a stricter financial reporting system and increase sanctions for parties violating campaign funding rules. In addition, optimizing technology in elections should also be a priority, for example, through electronic voting or blockchain-based technology, which can reduce distribution costs and improve election security. Furthermore, increasing efficiency in logistics can be a key strategy in reducing election operational costs, especially in remote areas that have faced obstacles in the distribution of election logistics. Collaboration with local governments and communities can effectively reduce the burden on the state budget. In addition, strengthening regulations against money politics must be a major concern through strict supervision and applying firmer sanctions for violators of campaign funding rules. In this case, the role of the Election Supervisory Agency and the active participation of the community in monitoring elections are important factors in ensuring the holding of elections that are clean and free from the intervention of certain interests. Finally, political education for the public needs to be strengthened so that voters are more critical in assessing the use of campaign funds and understanding the importance of fair and transparent elections. With these measures, it is hoped that the cost of elections in Indonesia can be controlled more effectively without compromising the transparency, fairness, and legitimacy of the democratic process. Along with these reform efforts, Indonesia can adopt best practices from other countries in reducing election costs without compromising the quality of elections and public participation in democracy. As such, an in-depth analysis of the high cost of elections highlights the complexities and challenges of organizing democratic and transparent elections. Only with a thorough

understanding of the factors affecting electoral costs and their implications can we develop effective strategies to improve political governance, strengthen democracy, and ensure inclusive participation in political processes.

CONCLUSION

General elections play an important role in Indonesia's political and democratic system, being an important milestone in the reform process that began in 1998. Since reform 1998, the country has endeavored to develop more inclusive and participatory electoral mechanisms, reflecting the spirit of strengthening democratic foundations in line with people's aspirations. However, in the midst of significant democratic achievements, real challenges have emerged related to the high costs required to organize elections effectively. A democratic and transparent electoral process requires substantial resources, including sufficient funds, to support aspects such as planning, logistics, campaigning, monitoring, and voting. The cost of elections in Indonesia has seen a significant increase in recent decades, creating an urgent need to evaluate the efficiency and sustainability of democratic processes. The question of how appropriate resource allocation can be achieved without compromising the integrity and transparency of elections is of the essence in meeting this challenge. By maintaining the right balance between the need for funds and the quality of the electoral process, Indonesia can continue to strengthen its solid democratic foundations and lend strong legitimacy to the resulting electoral outcomes.

The role of political parties is a crucial factor in contributing to the high cost of elections in Indonesia. Political parties have the responsibility to nominate candidates, deliver political visions and programs, and communicate with voters. However, political parties also require substantial funds to achieve these goals, especially in intensive and competitive campaigns. Indonesia's vast geography, innovative campaign strategies, and administrative costs also contribute to the high cost of elections. When

considering solutions to the electoral cost challenge, it is essential to reform the political funding system, implement strict oversight of political parties' sources of income, and maintain transparency. The participation of the public and independent institutions in monitoring the flow of campaign and election funds is also an important factor in minimizing the risk of corruption and misuse of funds. The findings of this study show that Indonesia's election budget has increased significantly from year to year, reflecting the government's commitment to supporting a robust and transparent democratic process.

However, there are still several issues that affect election costs, including electoral regulations and laws, political uncertainty, political donation funding, political competition and polarity, business, and interest group involvement, as well as economic factors and voter turnout. All of these issues interact with each other and affect the costs incurred by political parties in elections. Election costs are a complex and vital aspect of Indonesia's democratic system. Transparent management of campaign and election funds, as well as public support in monitoring and ensuring the integrity of the democratic process, are vital in maintaining a well-run electoral process.

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