



Oligarchy and Elite Politics in the 2020 Local Election: Short Review

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INFO ARTIKEL

Dikirim: Mei 03, 2023

Diterima: Jun 26, 2023

Dipublikasi: Jul 04, 2023

KATA KUNCI:

Covid-19; Elite; Oligarchy;
Local Election;

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SITASI CANTUMAN:

Faedlulloh, D., Sulistiowati, R.,
Apandi, & Karmilasari, V. (2023).
Oligarchy and Elite Politics in the
2020 Local Election: Short Review.
Journal of Political Issues. 5(1); 1-
15,
<https://doi.org/10.33019/jpi.v5i1.113>



DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.33019/jpi.v5i1.113>

LISENSI:



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ABSTRAK

Abstract This article analyzes the political practices of oligarchy and elite politics in the context of the 2020 local elections in Indonesia. Despite the high number of Covid-19 cases, Indonesia continued to hold simultaneous local elections, making the regional elections even more controversial. The significance of this research lies in understanding the existence of oligarchic and elite political practices in Indonesia's election administration. The article employs a qualitative method using desk study by analyzing relevant literature to answer the research problem. The novelty of this research is in providing an analysis of the political practices of oligarchy and elite politics in the context of the 2020 local election. The findings indicate that the 2020 local elections were characterized by the re-strengthening of kinship politics, high single candidates, and the involvement of actors with oligarchic interests. These are indications that oligarchic and elite politics are returning to dominate election administration in Indonesia. The implications of this research are essential for understanding the challenges of democratization in Indonesia and the need to strengthen democratic institutions and practices.

Abstrak Artikel ini berfokus pada analisis praktik politik oligarki dan politik elit dalam konteks pilkada serentak 2020 di Indonesia. Di tengah tingginya angka kasus Covid-19, Indonesia tetap menyelenggarakan pilkada serentak, sehingga pilkada menjadi semakin kontroversial. Pentingnya penelitian ini adalah untuk memahami keberadaan praktik oligarki dan politik elit dalam penyelenggaraan pilkada di Indonesia. Artikel ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan menggunakan studi kepustakaan dengan menganalisis literatur yang relevan untuk menjawab permasalahan penelitian. Kebaruan dari penelitian ini adalah dalam memberikan analisis terhadap praktik politik oligarki dan politik elit dalam konteks pilkada 2020. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pilkada 2020 diwarnai dengan menguatnya kembali politik kekerabatan, tingginya calon tunggal, dan keterlibatan aktor-aktor yang memiliki kepentingan oligarki. Hal ini menjadi indikasi bahwa politik oligarki dan politik elit kembali mendominasi penyelenggaraan pemilu di Indonesia. Implikasi dari penelitian ini penting untuk memahami tantangan demokratisasi di Indonesia dan kebutuhan untuk memperkuat institusi dan praktik demokrasi.

TENTANG PENULIS:

Dodi Faedlulloh completed his undergraduate studies in the Department of Public Administration at Universitas Jenderal Soedirman in 2011. Subsequently, he pursued a Master of Administration degree at the same institution in 2014. His academic background has equipped him with a comprehensive understanding of administrative reform, public policy, political economy, and economic democracy. Dodi Faedlulloh actively engages with various stakeholders, including local and national government bodies and numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Indonesia. Furthermore, he contributes to the academic community by publishing articles in international and national journals and sharing his insights through various mass media outlets and publications.

Rahayu Sulistiowati specializes in organizational management, bureaucracy, organizational behavior, and development. She has a wealth of experience, having served as the Head of the State Administration Department from 2007 to 2013. In addition to her academic pursuits, Rahayu Sulistiowati actively contributes to the community as an administrator of the Communication Forum

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Apandi is a faculty member at the Public Administration Department of Universitas Lampung and brings valuable practical experience as a former civil service employee. His professional background in human resources has honed his expertise in this field. In recognition of his knowledge and skills, Apandi obtained certification in his area of specialization in 2022. He completed his undergraduate studies at Bandar Lampung University in 1993 and earned his master's degree at Lampung University in 2015.

Vina Karmilasari completed her undergraduate studies in the Department of Language, Indonesian, and Regional Literature Education at Mulamawarman University 2013. She subsequently pursued a Master of State Administration degree at the same institution in 2014. Her academic focus revolves primarily around public management, emphasizing Public Bureaucracy, SOE Management, and Public Management. Vina Karmilasari actively contributes to the field by teaching and disseminating knowledge in these areas.

INTRODUCTION

Oligarchy and elite politics follow a cyclical pattern whereby their power is always dominant during every election. The oligarchy and elite often lead to the occurrence of kinship politics. Although kinship politics does not guarantee absolute victory in elections, it is not healthy for Indonesia's democratization process because it weakens government control. Consequently, the opportunity for the arbitrary exercise of power increases (Mietzner, 2009). Political parties only pay attention to the people during elections when they need their votes. However, afterward, they tend to neglect the people's rights and sovereignty (Zuhro, 2019).

The objective of this article is to comprehensively analyze the phenomenon of oligarchic politics and elite politics in the 2020 Regional Head Election and its impact on strengthening the practice of kinship politics in the context of democracy in Indonesia. The 2020 simultaneous regional elections were held in 270 regions, comprising nine provinces, 224 regencies, and 37 cities, with 105 million eligible voters. It was the third time the Government Regulation instead of Law (Perppu) Number 2 of 2020 was enacted. However, the massive spread of Covid-19 in Indonesia forced the government to reformulate the schedule for simultaneous regional elections. The government prepared at least three rescheduling schemes. From the three schemes, the government, DPR, and election organizers agreed to hold the elections on December 9, 2020. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2020 simultaneous regional head elections were held, generating controversy due to Indonesia's high number of positive Covid-19 cases (Setyowati, 2020). The government justified the elections with economic factors, estimating that up to twenty-six trillion rupiahs would circulate, stimulating the Indonesian economy, which was struggling due to the pandemic (Kusuma, 2020). However, this economic rationale was accompanied by a narrative that the implementation of the Regional Head Election is evidence of efforts to fulfill the democratic and constitutional rights of the people (Purnamasari, 2020). Despite this, many parties, including health experts, rejected the holding of the local election and recommended postponing it for public health reasons to prevent the spread of the virus and not create new clusters at election locations (Hakim, 2020).

In the 2017 local election, Susanti (2018) discovered that a minimum of 12 candidates for regional head positions in 11 different regions were affiliated with kinship politics. Similarly, in the 2019 legislative election, the media extensively deliberated on kinship politics through the involvement of former Banten Governor Ratu Atut Chosiyah. This condition was evident in the candidacy of Tubagus Haerul Jaman, the governor's half-brother above. Tubagus Haerul Jaman competed against his brother-in-law, Ade Rossi Chaerunnisa, who is the wife of Banten's Deputy Governor, Andika Hazrumy. Once again, kinship politics was apparent in the

2020 local election, with the emergence of Ratu Tatu Chasanah, the younger brother of former Governor Ratu Atut Chosiyah. Throughout the electoral process, the prevalence of kinship politics has been observed as an inherent phenomenon, seemingly following a recurring pattern.

The emergence of oligarchic, elite, and kinship politics in Indonesia can be traced back to the country's implementation of a decentralized system. Following the 1998 Reformation, decentralization was perceived as a catalyst for political transformation in Indonesia (Talitha et al., 2020). The objective of decentralization was primarily to enhance democratization and the efficacy of local governance. By granting local governments the autonomy to develop policies tailored to regional requirements, decentralization aimed to improve procedural quality and yield benefits for the community. The proximity between leaders and the local population is expected to enhance the accountability of local governments (Suwondo, 2020).

The idealization of the implementation of decentralization is inversely proportional to its application in the practical world. The practice of regional power in the shadow of decentralization gave birth to monopolistic power. The existence of full regional power through decentralization gives rise to oligarchs and local political elites to control sources of income in certain areas. This of course raises new problems in the political level of decentralization in the regions (Chalik, 2017). The hope to have a good impact on the community due to the birth of decentralization did not materialize. Decentralization has actually become a new arena that replicates the patronage system and predatory practices at the local level (Hadiz, 2010). Decentralization, together with electoral reform, has created a new arena for exercising power, control, and even predatory practices. Decentralization has become a way for money politics, patronage politics, and the formation of "little kings" in the regions (Diprose et al., 2019).

The local level oligarchy emerged based on implementing the decentralized system in Indonesia after the 1998 reformation. The emergence of the oligarchy was of course, caused by the transformation of local institutions that was not accompanied by the change of the order of the previous regime so that the oligarchs could enter the local level. This certainly provides new opportunities for old oligarchs at the national level who can survive to build new oligarchic networks in the local order (Hadiz & Robison, 2014).

Two essential things emerge from the dynamics of local politics in Indonesia: first, central control over local politics caused by the interest in access to extensive local resources; second, the birth of local strongmen due to the first reason (Agustino & Yusoff, 2010). However, these two things do not positively impact the community's survival because of their elite character. Several contexts always surround local politics, namely the subordination and domination of local elites and even the agency of oligarchs.

Decentralization in addition to generating oligarchy at the local level can also bring up elite domination at both the local and national levels. The emergence of decentralization is able to strengthen the power of local and national elites in the form of kinship politics. Call it the big three kinship politics in the regions, namely South Sulawesi, North Sulawesi, and South Sumatra (Aristama, 2020).

The rejection of the political power of kinship in Indonesia is exemplified by the emergence of regulations prohibiting candidates for regional heads who have a kinship with the incumbent, as stipulated in Article 7 of Law No. 8 of 2015 concerning Regional Head Elections. Unfortunately, this rule was later annulled by the Constitutional Court through a judicial review. In the context of the 2020 local election, the political interests of oligarchs and elites have again been revealed, as they aim to maintain their wealth resources through political channels. This can be achieved by directly participating in the contestation to become candidates for regional leaders or by voting behind the scenes.

Elections in Indonesia present strategic opportunities for influential politicians. To be nominated as a regional head from a political party, one must secure at least 20 percent of the

seats or 25 percent of the valid votes obtained in the previous DPRD elections—additionally, the regulations and requirements for independent candidates seeking nomination as regional heads are costly. Conversely, the internal governance of political parties is often criticized for its undemocratic nature, as decision-making processes tend to be dominated by elites.

Previous research by Hanafi (2014) has revealed that recruiting regional head candidates requires significant improvement. Political parties are often viewed merely as vehicles for power, disregarding concerns regarding kinship politics and corruption within regional contexts. The study highlights the elitist nature of political parties, identifying them as one of the underlying causes of kinship politics issues in Indonesia. Political parties tend to focus more on legal thresholds for eligibility and legitimacy, neglecting to accompany their discussions with concrete ideas and programs that offer solutions to societal challenges.

Furthermore, empirical research conducted by Nurhasim (2018) demonstrates that the 2018 regional elections resulted in coalitions formed based on experience, incorporating a mix of various ideologies. This study reveals that political parties need a coherent ideology, as their primary goal is solely winning. In the context of this article, the research is relevant in explaining the phenomenon of non-ideological political parties engaging in electoral contests in Indonesia.

Ananta's study (2016) on the practice of oligarchic politics in Karawang Regency illustrates that oligarchic politics frequently intertwine with predatory power networks, evident through the presence of politico-business parties. These groups exploit state power to amass wealth, engage in patronage politics, partake in transactional politics, employ non-state violent organizations to enforce control and preserve material wealth, and weaken any social forces outside the oligarchic power network. Similarly, Susanti's study (2018), which examined the context of the 2017 local election, revealed that consolidating political networks based on kinship politics has limited political recruitment to relatives. The practice of kinship politics is suspected of undermining checks and balances, thus contributing to corruption.

These four previous studies contribute to conceptual and theoretical explanations of elite, oligarchic, and kinship politics. Nonetheless, these studies have certain limitations, particularly in the research context. Therefore, this article is crucial in discussing the politics of kinship, as it focuses on the impact of the political cycle of oligarchy and elite politics in Indonesia. With the context of the 2020 regional election, which is taking place amidst the Covid-19 pandemic and after the ratification of the omnibus law, this article provides a new context for examining the phenomenon of one of the impacts of oligarchic politics and elite politics, namely kinship politics.

METHOD

The present article adopts a qualitative research methodology, employing desk study as the primary means of data collection. The data and information were obtained through thorough secondary data analysis and an extensive literature review. By conducting the literature review, researchers could explore the interrelationship between the research problems, relevant studies, and contextual theories, thereby enriching the understanding of the subject matter. Additionally, the literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the problem under investigation and offers valuable conceptual and theoretical support (Fraenkel et al., 2012). The article is structured into three sections, each contributing to a comprehensive analysis. Firstly, it discusses the political conception of oligarchy and elite politics, providing a theoretical framework for understanding these phenomena. Secondly, it describes the actual practices of oligarchic and elite politics in the 2020 regional elections, providing insights into their manifestation in real-world scenarios. Lastly, the article analyzes the efforts made to challenge and break the patterns of oligarchic and elite politics. By incorporating these sections, the study aims to provide a well-rounded examination of the topic and explore potential strategies to address and mitigate these issues.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Unraveling Oligarchy Politics and Elite Politic

The existence of political and economic elites often determines the course of regional autonomy, as they transform into predatory oligarchs by using their involvement in business cliques to maintain and accumulate material wealth (Zuada et al., 2016). The oligarchy thesis offers an interesting analytical tool to understand the dominance of two macro institutions, namely the state and capital, in Indonesia's contemporary history (Achwan, 2013). In Indonesia, both the state and the market fail to deal with social injustice, creating an illiberal Indonesian political model with a populist face that serves the interests of the predatory elite (Hadiz, 2017).

After the Indonesian Reformation, local oligarchic politics became increasingly fertile by exploiting local political competition. The advent of oligarchic politics implies that individuals only exist and are required to fill the ballot box without producing political practices and policy formation that prioritize the welfare of the people. Ultimately, oligarchic politics highlights the challenges that must be addressed in the Indonesian practice of local democracy.

The current practice of local democracy strengthens and even gives birth to elite groups and oligarchs locally. As democracy develops, the oligarchy becomes stronger. A weak rule of law is a factor in strengthening the oligarchy. According to Winters (2011), the law enforcement process in Indonesia only functions when dealing with cases related to oligarchs. (Fitzpatrick, 2008) on human rights violations concludes that oligarchy has been the main obstacle in realizing human rights in post-New Order Indonesia. Oligarchy can also damage the quality of health care (Aspinall, 2014). When oligarchy plays a significant role in government, it can harm citizens' human rights and result in the neglect of fundamental rights that the community should obtain, such as inadequate health services, unequal access to education, numerous agrarian conflicts, natural resources, the environment, conflicts with indigenous peoples, vulnerable groups, labor, and the labor sector that involves local governments.

Elite and oligarchy are distinct concepts with differing characteristics. While not all elite members can be classified as oligarchs, oligarchs are indeed part of the elite group. While both elite and oligarchy rely on the exercise of power and influence by a minority, the basis of control they employ differs significantly, leading to potential variations in political outcomes. Elite politics is grounded in various forms of power, including formal political rights, official positions, coercive control, and the ability to mobilize resources.

On the other hand, economic wealth serves as the foundation of an oligarchy. In this context, the oligarchs possess an advantage over the elite, as their material riches can be converted into different forms of power (Winters, 2011). However, both entities share a fundamental characteristic: the practice of exerting dominance in politics. They are influential actors with substantial resources and often possess robust networks that provide mutual support and help maintain their power.

In the context of local politics, oligarchy thrives and takes part in the political system through direct involvement formal or informal power. The two groups support each other, with oligarchs providing support to the elites and the political leadership providing appropriate rewards, exceptional facilities, security guards, or projects that strengthen the oligarchs' wealth. Although formal structures of electoral democracy may exist, in certain situations, elites and oligarchs mix and overlap, with oligarchy power leading to elite force or vice versa and elite power encouraging the birth of oligarchic power. The possibility of oligarchs having only economic resources and elites being unable to accumulate economic resources that bring power cannot be ruled out. Oligarchy is not singular and has various forms and models, including Panglima oligarchy, characterized by the direct use of violence through coercion, collective

oligarchic model, individual rulers monopolizing instruments of coercion to create conditions for patron-client to individuals in power, and civil oligarchy (Fukuoka, 2013).

Winters (2011) provides an extensive and thorough analysis of these theoretical models, offering detailed insights into their respective frameworks. In contrast, Robinson & Hadiz (2004) present an alternative paradigm that challenges Winters' viewpoint. According to Robinson and Hadiz, oligarchy can be characterized as a political system that relies on power relations facilitating the accumulation of economic resources and power, resulting in the collective transformation of this concentration. They argue that oligarchy transcends the actions of individual actors and instead manifests as a complex network of interconnected power relations.

While Winters contests the notion of joint function within the oligarchy, asserting that it primarily hinges on the actions of individual agents, Robinson and Hadiz's explanation emphasizes the critical role of interdependent relationships in the operational dynamics of oligarchic systems. Their perspective sheds light on the intricate connections and interactions among various actors embedded within the oligarchic network.

The reformation in Indonesia has led to the reemergence of the oligarchy that thrived under the New Order regime. This resurgence is facilitated by the adaptability of a network of political power and commercial interests, which has become a defining characteristic of the oligarchic influence pervading state-owned institutions. In the aftermath of the New Order's oppressive administration, societal disorganization remains a lasting legacy, providing an opportunity for the oligarchs to regain their foothold. Taking advantage of the decentralization process, the oligarchic network in Indonesia utilizes various means, including political parties, transactional and monetary politics, and non-state violence, to further its objectives (Kusumaningtyas et al., 2017). The restructuring of the oligarchy in Indonesia has coincided in both the economic and political spheres, with the entrenched oligarchic network, backed by immense wealth, striving to maintain its influence at the local level.

Political Impact of Oligarchy and Elite in 2020 Local Election

An anomaly emerged during the 2020 local election, characterized by the prevalence of single candidates in numerous regions. This phenomenon signifies a deterioration in the democratic quality of local politics. Specifically, during the election held on December 9, 2020, a total of 25 regions witnessed the presence of a sole candidate. Further details regarding this observation are provided in the following table:

Table 1 Single Candidate in 2020 General Election

No	Region	Single Candidate	Support Party
1	Humbang Hasundutan Regency	Dosmar Banjarnahor-Oloan P Nababan	Gerindra, PDI-P, Golkar, Nasdem, Hanura, Demokrat
2	Gunungsitoli City	Lakhomizaro Zebua-Sowa'a Laoli	PDI-P, Demokrat, Hanura, Gerindra, Golkar, Perindo, PKPI, PAN
3	Pematangsiantar City	Asner Silalahi-Susanti Dewayani	Gerindra, PDI-P, Golkar, Nasdem, PAN, Hanura, Demokrat, PKPI
4	Pasaman Regency	Benny Utama-Sabar AS	Golkar, Demokrat, PKS, PAN, PPP, PKB, Nasdem, PDI-P
5	Ogan Komering Ulu Regency	Kuryana Azis-Johan Anuar	PKB, Gerindra, Golkar, PDI-P, Nasdem, PKS, PPP, Hanura, Demokrat, PBB, PKPI.

6	Ogan Komering Ulu Selatan Regency	Popo Ali Martopo-Sholehien Abuasir	PKB, Gerindra, PDI-P, Golkar, Nasdem PKS, Perindo PPP, PAN Hanura, Demokrat, PBB
7	Bengkulu Utara Regency	Mian-Arie Saptia Hadinata	PKB Gerindra PDI-P Golkar Nasdem PKS PPP PAN Hanura PKPI
8	Boyolali Regency	Mohammad Said Hidayat - Wahyu Irawan	PDI-P
9	Grobogan Regency	Sri Sumarni-Bambang Pujiyanto	PDI-P, PKB, Gerindra, PPP, Hanura, GoLkar, PKS, Demokrat, PAN
10	Kebumen Regency	Arif Sugiyanto-Ristawati Purwaningsih	PKB, Gerindra, PDI-P, Golkar, Nasdem, PKS, PPP, PAN, Demokrat.
11	Semarang City	Hendrar Prihadi-Hevearita Gunaryanti Rahayu.	PDI-P, Gerindra, Demokrat, PKB, PAN, Nasdem, PSI, Golkar, PKS.
12	Sragen Regency	Kusdinar Untung Yuni Sukowati-Suroto	PDI-P, PKB, Golkar, PAN, Nasdem
13	Wonosobo Regency	Afif Nurhidayat- Muhammar Albar	PDI-P, PKB, Golkar, Demokrat, Nasdem, PAN, Hanura
14	Kediri Regency	Hanindhito Himawan Pramana-Dewi Mariya Ulfa	PKB, Gerindra, PDI-P, Golkar, Nasdem, PKS, PPP, PAN, Demokrat
15	Ngawi Regency	Ony Anwar Harsono-Dwi Rianto Jatmiko	Golkar, PKB, Gerindra, PKS, PAN, Nasdem, Demokrat, Hanura dan PPP
16	Badung Regency	Nyoman Giri Prasta-I Ketut Sulasa.	PDI-P, Golkar, Demokrat.
17	Sumbawa Barat Regency	W Musyafirin-Fud Syaifuddin	PKB, Gerindra, PDI-P, Golkar, Nasdem, PPP, PKS, PAN, PKPI.
18	Balikpapan City	Rahmad Mas'ud-Thohari Azis	Golkar, PDI-P, PKS, Gerindra, Demokrat, PKB, Perindo, PPP.
19	Kutai Kartanegara Regency	Edi Damansyah-Rendi Solihin	Golkar, PDI-P, Gerindra, PAN, PKS, Nasdem, PPP, Perindo, Hanura
20	Gowa Regency	Adnan Purichta Ichsan-Abdul Rauf Malaganni	PDI-P, Golkar, Nasdem, PKS, Perindo, PPP, PAN, Demokrat.
21	Soppeng Regency	HA Kaswadi Razak-Lutfi Halide	PKB, Gerindra, PDI-P, Golkar, Nasdem, PPP, Demokrat
22	Mamuju Tengah Regency	HM Aras T-H Muh Amin Jasa	PKB, Gerindra, PDI-P, Golkar, Nasdem, PKS, Perindo, PAN, Hanura Demokrat.
23	Manokwari Selatan Regency	Markus Waran-Wempie Welly Rungkung	PDI-P, Golkar, Nasdem, Perindo, Hanura, PKPI.
24	Arfak Regency	Yosias Saroy-Marinus Mandacan	PDI-P, PKB, Golkar, Nasdem, PKS Perindo, PPP, PAN, Hanura, PKPI.
25	Raja Ampat Regency	Abdul Faris Umlati-Orideko L Burdam	Gerindra, Golkar, Nasdem, PKS, PAN Demokrat.

Source: Processed data (2022)

The data presented above at least demonstrates that the 2020 local election is dominated by the elite political role, such that there is only one candidate. There are multiple critiques of this anomaly candidate phenomenon. This phenomenon demonstrates that the local election is merely a matter of victory, so political parties are pragmatic by purchasing support and engaging in political bargaining to obtain future political benefits. The implication is that political parties are solely concerned with electoral victory. They hope to control all material power resources in the region if they achieve success (Hanafi, 2014).

In addition to the strength of single-pair politics, the 2020 local election demonstrates the power of kinship politics. There are 124 candidates for regional head positions with political kinship ties (Bayu, 2020). Gibran Rakabuming Raka in Surakarta, who is the son of President Jokowi, and Bobby Afif Nasution in Medan, who is Jokowi's son-in-law, are two examples. Pilar Saga Ichsan who is the son of Ratu Chasanah (Regent of Serang) in South Tangerang; Rezita Melyani in Indragiri Hulu, who is the wife of the Regent of Indragiri Hulu; Hanindhito Himawan in Kediri who is the son of Cabinet Secretary Pramono Agung; Eva Dwiana in Lampung who is the wife of the mayor of Bandar Lampung; Ipuk Fiestand Associated with the rise of regional head candidates with a political ancestry of kinship with officials because there is no regulation governing it.

The Constitutional Court (MK) decision in Number 100/PUU/XIII/2015 legitimized this single candidate based on the results of the judicial review. Previously, Law Number 8 of 2015 stipulated that the election would be postponed until the next wave of simultaneous regional elections if only one pair of candidates registered. The Constitutional Court decision is the weapon used by challengers who intentionally do not carry candidates to remove the incumbent from office. On the other hand, the Constitutional mentioned above Court decision is viewed as an opportunity to institutionalize oligarchic, elite, and kinship politics. Any family that maintains a relationship with the incumbent and is elected by the community through elections may become a regional head. Any oligarch who requires assistance to preserve material resources can concentrate on supporting potential candidates for office.

The single candidate in the regional elections has become quite widespread; the trend continues to climb and has increased from 2015 and reached its highest point in the 2020 elections. This phenomenon also shows the dullness of regeneration carried out by political parties. The recruitment of regional head candidates is carried out with minimal participation from members, administrators, or the public; therefore, it is not democratic, giving birth to elite politics and oligarchic politics in the local election.

As there are more and more political contestants, the public should be given many choices. But in fact, it is not so. The multi-party system that runs is not directly proportional to the number of options for regional leader candidates. Of course, this situation impacts the quality of ongoing democracy. If you pay attention, table 1 above informs that several single candidates are supported by the parties in power and the opposition parties simultaneously. The oligarchic tendency is supported by the character of local elites and political parties who are very pragmatic in providing political support, which also shows that the political party battles that appear to be asymmetrical in the 2019 election are in fact, not substantive and “ideological” struggles because the 2020 elections reflect that the election is about the interests of victory. The 2019 general election left the problem of polarization in democratization in Indonesia (Faedlulloh & Duadji, 2019). The 2019 election was marred by hoax attacks that created polarization in society. Indirectly, this condition illustrates that when at the bottom (the community), horizontal conflicts and social fragmentation collide; on the contrary, those above, namely the political parties that have contested, are actually “fine”.

The experience of the 2018 simultaneous regional elections shows a pattern of “nano-nano” coalitions that keeps repeating itself. This type of coalition is varied with a mixture of ideologies between nationalist and religious political parties with different contestations. This diverse coalition is not uniform between the local election levels (governor/deputy governor

with the mayor/regent and deputy mayor and deputy regent candidates), which results in unhealthy competition within the intra-coalition itself (Nurhasim, 2018). In this context, there are acute problems surrounding political parties and democracy in Indonesia. There is no significance in the party's vision, because when you are at the table of power, as long as you can share the political benefits, all steps are permissible.

The essence of local elections is to manifest the spirit of decentralization, carried out after the reformation, by ensuring proportional power distribution between the center and the regions. However, the reality has yet to meet the expected ideal. For instance, the Nagara Institute's research Maharani (2020) found that 124 candidates for regional heads had political kinship backgrounds in the 2020 local elections, which included information on five governor candidates, four deputy governor candidates, fifty regent candidates, twenty mayoral candidates, thirty deputy regent candidates, and eight deputy mayor candidates. Moreover, according to Jaringan Advokasi Tambang (2020), of the 270 regions that conduct regional elections, 5,599 mining business permits are susceptible to becoming entangled in transactional politics that support political financing during elections. Furthermore, the report also shows that oligarchic interests dominate local politics, and local elections can be utilized to identify "potential operators" for omnibus legislation in the regions. This situation is complicated because several actors involved in formulating the omnibus law are also competing in the 2020 elections.

The previously submitted information and data indicate that oligarchic and elite politics will again dominate the 2020 regional elections, which will continue during this pandemic. For example, Supriatma (2020) explained that conspiracy between political parties and local business circles tainted the regional elections in numerous regions. Entrepreneurs who wish to secure their business's growth rate through political channels hope to obtain a "vehicle," i.e., to use political parties as their instruments to advance in elections. On the other hand, political parties assume the responsibility of establishing high fees to serve as vehicles for these candidates. This is always the case due to the increased political cost (Hermawan & Kurniawan, 2019). The oligarchs can then adapt to the expensive electoral system in Indonesia due to their extensive economic holdings. Reflections on the research of (Dalilah et al., 2019) indicate that becoming a mayor/regent costs Rp. 20 billion to Rp. 30 billion, while becoming a governor costs Rp. 20 billion to Rp. According to the State Administrators Assets and Wealth Report (LHKPN), the average wealth of regional head candidates in 2015 was only Rp 6,7 billion. However, the wealth of regional head candidates differ from the local elections' needs. The contestants are seeking sponsors and investors to cover expenses, which is viewed as an opportunity by the business community to ensure the security and continuity of their operations. According to Hidayaturrahman et al. (2020), these funders are political investors who expect future returns.

Table 2 Political investors' benefits after regional head election

Form	Operation pattern	Benefit
Affiliation	Looking for coalition partners who have a high chance of winning, and placing party cadres in the position of deputy candidate regent.	Strengthen the position of the party in the government. Facilitate access to religion-based voters.
Economic	Place trusted people in positions in BUMD	Facilitate access to obtain and manage economic benefits.
Political Economic	Place authorized officials in positions within the government at the level of office heads, section heads, sub-district heads, or others.	Facilitate access for the trustees who obtained the positions and projects.

Source: Hidayaturrahman et al. (2020)

Political investors are a common sight in regional elections, partly because so many candidates lack sufficient funds to finance their campaigns. Political investors regulate the process of obtaining potential winners, beginning with determining the supporting political parties, mobilizing formal and informal winning networks, recruiting survey institutions, establishing contact with village leaders, engaging in transactional politics, and buying and selling votes. Political investors gain from the support of regional head candidates in terms of consolidating political power and controlling resources, including bureaucratic and economic resources, through government and BUMD programs (Hidayaturrehman et al., 2020). The Political investor does not imply that all political connections are beneficial to business, as their efficacy depends on the actual distribution of power within the system (Grigoriev & Zhirkov, 2020).

The majority of candidates for regional heads/deputy heads will fulfill these expectations if they are elected regional heads/deputies. Businesses are incentivized to engage in secret or not-so-secret agreements with political candidates to obtain permits and avoid illegal levies (Kurniawan et al., 2019). Funders anticipate a return in business licenses, ease of participation in government project bids, and security in running a business.

Breaking the Cycle of Oligarchy and Elite?

The explanation above shows that oligarchs and elites have political interests in implementing the 2020 Local Elections. The elite politic and oligarchy politic are like a cycle because every time an election takes place, it can be co-opted by the interests of the oligarchs and elites, including in the context of the election. In this context, the researcher then analyzes the material conditions in which the oligarchic and elite cycles often occur in elections in Indonesia.

The most elementary thing is the condition of the existence of political parties and political figures who are too dominant. The implication is that power becomes elitist centralized. So that policies and political recruitment processes tend to be limited. Indonesia's political conditions in a procedural context have been regulated and controlled in such a way from above. Rationalization and legitimacy are built in such a way as to suit the wishes and interests of the oligarchs.

As is well known, the government took the option to hold the 2020 Simultaneous local election again amid the Pandemic, with only three months away from the postponement of the 2020 Simultaneous local election, which was previously planned for September 2020 with various rationalizations. However, basically, the rationalization made to hold the 2020 regional election can be logically refuted. For example, the 2020 regional election is due to economic reasons, that the election can spur economic growth is not proven to be significant. The results of research by (The Indonesian Institute, 2018) show that the contribution of the local election to growth indicators is still low, which is below 1 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Currently, political parties are experiencing what is called de-institutionalization (Carothers, 2006). When a small circle of political elites dominates political parties, they use political parties as "vehicles that can be sold" before the election. In the end, political parties will only become vehicles for anyone with significant capital. This condition is like a regular cycle in election events in Indonesia. Local leaders with strong networks and resources are engaged in the struggle for regional leadership positions. Votes can only be cast at the ballot box, where voices are frequently conditioned beforehand.

Oligarchs and elites are consolidating to preserve their interests. The consolidation's outcomes may vary. It may produce a kinship policy, a single candidate, or candidates who can be "held" for as long as they can maintain oligarchic agendas in the future. When a candidate

is finally elected and assumes power, the first order of business is to consolidate the elite's power.

Indonesia is currently experiencing democratic regression (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019; Rüländ, 2021). The democratic deficit resulted from the fact that the post-reform political system became more representative of the political interests of oligarchs and elites. Therefore, whatever the product of democracy is, it will only represent the elite and oligarchs' interests, not the general public's. In this case, the instruments of democracy have been controlled by the elite through a democratic process rife with transactional politics. When democracy transforms into oligarchic politics, government affairs about public life become the responsibility of a select few parties. The public sphere is closed, and public-interest policies are decided through elitist negotiation. This indicates that finally, people's voices are being disregarded.

Drawing upon the analysis conducted by Hadiz & Robison (2014) it is evident that oligarchy is rooted in controlling and owning material resources. The emergence of an oligarchic political landscape can be attributed to the unequal distribution of resources within society. Notably, the influence and power wielded by oligarchs are not contingent upon the type of political system in place, as oligarchy can persist even within a democratic framework, owing to its substantial material strength. In such democratic settings characterized by a prevalence of formalism and proceduralism, conspiracy and transactional politics tend to proliferate.

Inequality in the distribution of society's material resources can perpetuate oligarchic politics. This condition can undermine local control and political equilibrium. To decide, or at least restrict the movement of oligarchs, the state must ensure that elections are inexpensive so that the oligarchs' influence can be minimized. Politics, or in this instance, costly elections, makes the existence of an oligarchy perpetually relevant. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of institutionalization of political parties and democratic institutions, which leads to a high degree of economic dependence and provides oligarchs with an excellent opportunity for political access.

Then, a plan for the redistribution of wealth to the larger community through various strategic policies is required. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) reported that the Gini ratio in Indonesia reached 0.381 in March 2020, which is greater than the ratio in September 2019 (0.380). This number indicates that inequality in Indonesia remains high. According to a report by the international research organization (Credit Suisse, 2019), 82 percent of Indonesia's 173 million adults have a net worth of less than \$10,000 USD. Well above the global average of 58 percent. In contrast, only 1.1% of adults have a net worth exceeding \$100,000 over the global average of 10.6 percent. The report highlighted that only 1% of the Indonesian population owns 45% of the country's wealth.

In addition, the state must determine whether the source of the wealth owned by a small number of political parties is legal by tracing their ownership of vast property. Through this investigation, the oligarchy can restrict movement. The alternative to oligarchy is the restoration of democracy in society. Therefore, it is necessary to consolidate the progressive movement of civil society to continue fighting the oligarchy and constructing an alternative political system.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this study indicate a substantial impact of oligarchic and elite politics on the 2020 Local Election in Indonesia, leading to the reemergence of kinship politics. The presence of 124 regional head candidates with familial connections to government officials, the formulation of the controversial omnibus law by individuals associated with the oligarchic network, and the prevalence of single candidates and simultaneous regional head elections collectively demonstrate the influence of oligarchic and elite politics within the

electoral process. Moreover, the study highlights the role of political bond transactions in supporting political financing for regional elections across the 270 regions participating in the 2020 local election.

This research significantly contributes to our understanding of the challenges faced by democratization in Indonesia and underscores the imperative to strengthen democratic institutions and practices. This research's theoretical and conceptual implications revolve around the detrimental impact of oligarchic and elite politics on local elections, which can undermine democratic processes and institutions. Further research is warranted to deepen our comprehension of the dynamics surrounding post-2020 regional elections, explicitly focusing on regional research loci. This will facilitate the development of more effective strategies to address the challenges posed by oligarchic and elite politics, ultimately bolstering democratic institutions in Indonesia.

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