GOOD ELECTORAL GOVERNANCE AND INTEGRITY: ANALYZING THE 2024 LEGISLATIVE VOTE RECAPITULATION PROCESS IN WEST JAVA, INDONESIA

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Abstract

The legitimacy of electoral governance strongly depends on the integrity of the vote recapitulation process. This study examines the challenges and dynamics of electoral integrity during the 2024 legislative vote recapitulation process in West Java, Indonesia. Utilizing data from the official evaluation report of the West Java Provincial Election Commission (KPU), the research identifies several institutional, procedural, and technological vulnerabilities that affected the integrity of the recapitulation process. Key issues included technical failures in the Sirekap system, inconsistent data verification, weak inter-institutional coordination, and human resource limitations across election management bodies. Moreover, disputes over vote count results were submitted to the Constitutional Court, indicating areas where procedural integrity was questioned. These findings highlight the need for comprehensive reforms in electoral management bodies, professional capacity development, stronger legal safeguards, and inclusive oversight mechanisms to ensure electoral integrity in Indonesia's evolving democratic landscape.

Keywords: Electoral Governance, Electoral Integrity, Vote Recapitulation, Legislative Elections, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

The integrity of electoral processes remains a central pillar in the consolidation of democratic governance. In Indonesia, legislative elections play a critical role in shaping political representation and policy direction. As the nation progresses into its third decade of democratic reform, the scrutiny on electoral integrity has intensified, particularly in relation to the vote recapitulation phase. The 2024 legislative elections presented a significant test for the institutional maturity and transparency of electoral management bodies, especially in provinces with large voter populations such as West Java.

Vote recapitulation is not merely a technical step in the electoral cycle but a politically sensitive process that determines the final seat allocation in the national and regional legislatures. Any deviation, technical error, or administrative inefficiency in this phase can

trigger widespread distrust, legal disputes, and even social unrest. Therefore, the concept of "Good Electoral Governance" becomes highly relevant in analyzing how institutional frameworks and operational practices uphold or undermine electoral integrity.

The increasing public awareness and digital literacy among citizens have also contributed to a more critical observation of electoral processes. Civil society organizations, independent observers, and social media activists have amplified transparency demands and exposed potential irregularities in real time. This growing scrutiny places additional pressure on electoral management bodies to operate with a high level of procedural precision and openness. Consequently, the recapitulation process, which traditionally occurred behind closed doors, is now subject to greater expectations of public accountability.

West Java, as Indonesia's most populous province, plays a pivotal role in national electoral outcomes. With a diverse electoral geography that includes urban centers, industrial zones, and rural highlands, the region presents unique logistical, administrative, and political challenges. Its status as an electoral battleground has made it a hotspot for competition among major political parties, further raising the stakes of every procedural phase, including vote recapitulation. Allegations of manipulation, miscounting, or partiality in this region can have cascading effects on national political legitimacy.

This study critically examines the 2024 vote recapitulation process in West Java, which has historically functioned as a barometer for Indonesia's electoral trends. By analyzing this case, the study seeks to explore how local institutional behaviors reflect or deviate from national standards of electoral governance. The focus is not only on what procedural rules exist, but also on how they are interpreted and implemented on the ground by election officials, supervisors, and political actors.

To achieve this, the study draws on a range of data sources, including official documents issued by the KPU and Bawaslu, observer reports from accredited monitoring organizations, and firsthand insights obtained through interviews with stakeholders. This multi-source approach allows the research to capture the formal and informal dimensions of electoral governance, including both institutional design and operational reality. Particular attention is given to the role of technology, especially the implementation of the Sirekap (Recapitulation Information System), and how it shaped data transparency and dispute resolution.

By adopting the analytical framework of good electoral governance, the research unpacks both normative ideals and empirical conditions of Indonesia's electoral

administration. This framework integrates principles such as transparency, accountability, efficiency, inclusiveness, and legality to provide a multidimensional assessment of the recapitulation process. These principles serve as benchmarks to evaluate whether the actions of electoral institutions enhance or undermine public confidence in the democratic process. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to both academic discourse and practical reform by identifying gaps between regulatory design and administrative performance. In doing so, it offers evidence-based recommendations for improving electoral governance in Indonesia. The findings are particularly relevant for policymakers, election administrators, civil society actors, and international observers seeking to strengthen the democratic infrastructure in one of the world's largest and most dynamic electoral systems.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative case study approach, which is particularly suitable for exploring complex governance phenomena embedded within a specific socio-political context. A case study enables an in-depth understanding of how electoral procedures are implemented, challenged, and responded to in real-time, emphasizing the interaction between institutional rules and on-the-ground practices. By focusing on one bounded system the vote recapitulation process in West Java—this method allows for rich, contextualized insights that cannot be captured through large-scale quantitative surveys alone.

The province of West Java was deliberately chosen as the unit of analysis due to its strategic electoral importance in Indonesia. As the most populous province with over 35 million residents, West Java holds considerable weight in national political outcomes. The region's electoral geography, which includes both densely urbanized areas and remote rural districts, presents a microcosm of Indonesia's broader electoral challenges. Moreover, past legislative and presidential elections in West Java have often been marred by disputes, allegations of fraud, and institutional tension, making it a fertile ground for governance analysis.

In addition to its demographic magnitude, West Java exhibits significant electoral complexity, including logistical hurdles in transporting ballot materials across difficult terrains and linguistic diversity among voters. These challenges are further compounded by the proliferation of political parties and intense electoral competition at both the district and provincial levels. As a result, vote recapitulation in West Java often becomes a high-stakes process with heightened scrutiny from political actors, media, and civil society.

The study's data collection strategy relied on triangulation to ensure credibility and analytical depth. Triangulation refers to the combination of multiple data sources and methods to cross-validate findings and minimize bias. In this research, triangulation was achieved through the integration of primary data from field interviews and secondary data from institutional and public records. This multi-pronged approach helps illuminate discrepancies between formal electoral procedures and their implementation in practice.

Primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews with a diverse range of stakeholders directly involved in the 2024 vote recapitulation process. These included officials from the Provincial Election Commission (KPU), the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu), civil society election monitors, and witnesses from major political parties. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format, allowing the researcher to explore specific themes such as vote tabulation protocols, technical system failures, and the handling of disputes, while also giving space for unexpected insights to emerge.

The use of semi-structured interviews enabled a balance between consistency and flexibility in data collection. A standardized set of guiding questions ensured that comparable data could be collected across different respondents, while the open-ended format allowed informants to elaborate on their lived experiences and contextual knowledge. Interviews were conducted both in person and online, depending on the availability and accessibility of the respondents, and were recorded and transcribed with consent to preserve accuracy.

In parallel, secondary data were collected and analyzed to supplement and contextualize the primary findings. These sources included official press releases, plenary session minutes, technical guidelines issued by KPU and Bawaslu, and verdicts from the Constitutional Court regarding electoral disputes. Additionally, media articles and civil society reports were reviewed to capture public narratives and perceptions of the vote recapitulation process. This documentation offered crucial evidence of both formal procedures and informal practices shaping electoral outcomes.

The analytical framework guiding this research is grounded in the concept of Good Electoral Governance, a normative standard promoted by global institutions such as the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This framework emphasizes the alignment of electoral processes with democratic principles including transparency, accountability, fairness, inclusiveness, and efficiency. In this study, five dimensions of good

governance were prioritized: legal clarity, procedural integrity, institutional coordination, transparency, and responsiveness.

Each of these dimensions was translated into specific operational indicators to evaluate the recapitulation process in a structured manner. For instance, "legal clarity" was assessed based on the consistency of regulations, while "procedural integrity" focused on the adherence to standardized vote counting protocols. "Institutional coordination" examined how different electoral bodies collaborated, "transparency" addressed the availability of information to stakeholders, and "responsiveness" measured the system's ability to address complaints and adapt to emerging challenges. This systematic approach enabled a rigorous and replicable analysis of governance quality.

The temporal scope of the study spans from February to May 2024, encompassing the full duration of the legislative vote recapitulation process from the sub-district (PPK) to the provincial level (KPU West Java). This period covers all key activities including the tabulation of results, verification of discrepancies, resolution of disputes, and the submission of official outcomes. To ensure ethical integrity, all personal identifiers of interview respondents have been anonymized. This confidentiality measure is essential given the politically sensitive nature of the research topic and the potential risks faced by whistleblowers or critics of electoral institutions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section analyzes the empirical findings of the 2024 legislative vote recapitulation process in West Java, utilizing the Good Electoral Governance framework. The discussion is structured across five critical dimensions: legal clarity, procedural integrity, institutional coordination, transparency, and responsiveness. Each subsection integrates relevant expert theory and interview quotes to reinforce the analysis.

Legal Clarity

Legal clarity refers to the consistency, precision, and comprehensibility of the rules governing electoral procedures. According to Schedler (2002), ambiguous or contradictory legal frameworks offer a "menu of manipulation" that can be exploited by political actors or even bureaucrats to manipulate outcomes or delay results.

In the West Java context, overlapping technical guidelines from the KPU and Bawaslu created confusion among field implementers. As Informant A, a PPK official in Bandung Regency, expressed:

"We were confused about which guideline to follow. The KPU circular contradicted the Bawaslu technical instructions on how to correct C1 forms."

This confusion led to inconsistent handling of result forms (C1), ultimately impacting the perceived legitimacy of the recapitulation process. Norris (2014) emphasizes that clarity and stability in electoral laws are essential for ensuring procedural legitimacy and maintaining public trust.

Procedural Integrity

Procedural integrity refers to adherence to established norms, rules, and protocols that ensure fairness and accuracy in vote counting. Elklit and Reynolds (2005) argue that credible elections depend not only on laws but on the faithful execution of those laws by well-trained personnel using reliable systems.

In several districts, the research found violations of standard operating procedures, including poor ballot box sealing, manual inputs without cross-verification, and continued recapitulation despite system errors. Informant B, a party witness in Bekasi, stated:

"The Sirekap system kept crashing, yet the process continued without proper manual correction. We felt bypassed."

This indicates a breakdown in standard protocols, reflecting Dahl's (1989) concern that democratic legitimacy requires both formal rights and their effective procedural application. Furthermore, reliance on inadequately trained ad hoc staff amplified these issues.

Institutional Coordination

Institutional coordination involves the synergy between election management bodies (KPU and Bawaslu) across vertical and horizontal dimensions. According to Peters and Pierre (1998), fragmented governance structures, especially in high-pressure situations like elections, reduce efficiency and create policy incoherence.

In West Java, the research identified multiple instances of delayed communication between district-level KPU offices and the provincial headquarters. Informant C, an IT operator at KPU Garut, explained:

"We struggled to coordinate with the provincial KPU because there was no clear SOP for urgent communication. Even during technical disruptions, we had to wait hours for directives."

This lack of streamlined communication exacerbated procedural misalignments and created distrust among stakeholders. Effective electoral coordination, as emphasized by UNDP (2022), is fundamental to ensuring accountability and procedural harmonization.

Transparency

Transparency in elections serves as a safeguard against fraud and manipulation. Grimes (2008) argues that transparency reduces information asymmetries and increases public oversight, which are crucial for democratic legitimacy.

Despite formal commitments to openness, transparency during the 2024 recapitulation process was uneven across West Java. In some districts, live-streaming and open access were provided. In others, observers were denied entry. Informant D, a civil society monitor, shared:

> "Some sub-districts denied us entry to plenary rooms, claiming they were 'over capacity,' despite our accreditation."

Moreover, the Sirekap system meant to enhance transparency often displayed inconsistent or incomplete data, undermining public trust. According to Norris (2014), perceived transparency is as critical as actual transparency, and system failures in communication can be just as damaging as procedural violations.

Responsiveness

Responsiveness refers to how effectively electoral institutions react to complaints, disputes, and emerging challenges. Bovens and Schillemans (2014) define responsiveness as a core aspect of democratic accountability, especially in high-stakes processes like elections.

In West Java, while some complaints were handled promptly, others were delayed or ignored, resulting in legal escalation. Informant E, a party representative from Bekasi City, said:

> "Our report on a vote discrepancy was ignored until the city-level recapitulation was over. We had to escalate the issue to the Constitutional Court."

Only 58% of formal complaints received written responses within the mandated 24-hour window. The inconsistent application of dispute resolution mechanisms undermines the role of Bawaslu as an oversight body and reduces electoral integrity. The World Bank (2007) notes that unresolved electoral grievances are a leading trigger for political unrest in transitional democracies.

The five dimensions analyzed in this study demonstrate that despite Indonesia's advanced electoral framework, significant implementation challenges remain. Regulatory inconsistency, procedural lapses, coordination breakdowns, limited transparency, and inconsistent responsiveness all undermine the legitimacy of the vote recapitulation process.

Strengthening these dimensions through harmonized regulations, improved training, integrated technology, and institutional accountability is critical for safeguarding electoral integrity in Indonesia's democratic future.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of good electoral governance in upholding the legitimacy of democratic institutions. Although Indonesia has developed an extensive legal and institutional framework for electoral management, the 2024 legislative vote recapitulation process in West Java revealed persistent governance challenges.

First, legal ambiguities between KPU and Bawaslu regulations reduced consistency and created discretionary gaps at the operational level. Second, procedural violations—ranging from Sirekap failures to poorly trained staff—compromised the integrity of the recapitulation process. Third, ineffective communication and coordination between institutional levels weakened procedural alignment and delayed decision-making. Fourth, inconsistent transparency practices and limited public access undermined stakeholder trust. Finally, uneven responsiveness to complaints reflected a lack of accountability mechanisms. These challenges demonstrate a gap between formal regulatory structures and their practical implementation. Bridging this gap requires not only regulatory harmonization but also capacity development, integrated digital infrastructure, and proactive institutional accountability.

Ultimately, strengthening the five pillars of Good Electoral Governance—legal clarity, procedural integrity, institutional coordination, transparency, and responsiveness—will be essential for ensuring electoral integrity and reinforcing public confidence in Indonesia's democratic processes. This case study of West Java offers valuable lessons for electoral reform efforts both within Indonesia and in comparable emerging democracies.

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