

Electoral Integrity and Democratic Governance in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Electoral integrity is a fundamental element in democratic governance because it plays a role in building government legitimacy, strengthening accountability, increasing transparency, and encouraging public political participation. This study aims to analyze the relationship between electoral integrity and democratic governance in Indonesia through a normative-juridical approach by examining various laws and regulations, legal doctrines, and relevant scientific literature. The analysis focuses on Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as the main legal frameworks governing the implementation of elections and the protection of citizens' political rights. The results show that electoral integrity contributes significantly to strengthening democratic governance through the implementation of free, fair, transparent, and accountable elections, thereby increasing public trust in democratic institutions. However, various challenges, such as digital disinformation, cybersecurity threats, political polarization, the practice of money politics, and election result disputes, continue to affect the effectiveness of election administration. Therefore, strengthening the legal framework, institutional capacity of election organizers, independent oversight, and public political literacy are strategic steps to maintain the legitimacy, quality, and resilience of democracy in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Democratic Governance, Elections, Electoral Accountability, Electoral Integrity, Political Participation.*

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1. | INTRODUCTION

Democratic governance depends on electoral processes that are free, fair, transparent, and capable of reflecting the will of the people. Elections serve as one of the primary mechanisms through which citizens exercise political sovereignty, select political representatives, and hold governments accountable. Consequently, the quality of democratic governance is closely connected to the integrity of electoral processes. Electoral systems that uphold fairness, transparency, and accountability contribute to democratic legitimacy, whereas weaknesses in electoral administration may undermine public trust and weaken democratic institutions. Electoral integrity has emerged as a central concept in contemporary democratic governance. The concept refers to the extent to which elections are conducted in accordance with democratic principles, legal standards, and internationally recognized norms. Electoral integrity encompasses various dimensions, including equal suffrage, political participation, transparency, accountability, impartial administration, and protection against electoral manipulation.

Garnett and James (2021) argue that electoral integrity serves as an important indicator of democratic quality because it reflects the credibility and legitimacy of electoral processes. Similarly, González et al. (2024) emphasize that perceptions of electoral fairness significantly influence public confidence in democratic institutions and support for democratic governance. The relationship between electoral integrity and democratic governance is particularly important because elections provide the foundation for political legitimacy. Democratic governments derive authority from electoral processes that enable citizens to participate in public affairs and influence political outcomes. Mauk (2022) argues that electoral integrity affects public trust in political institutions because citizens are more likely to accept election results when electoral procedures are perceived as fair and transparent. Likewise, Mochtak et al. (2021) emphasize that confidence in elections contributes to democratic stability by strengthening acceptance of electoral outcomes among both winners and losers.

Political participation constitutes another fundamental dimension of democratic governance. Elections provide citizens with opportunities to exercise political rights, express political preferences, and contribute to public decision-making. Participation through voting remains one of the most visible manifestations of democratic citizenship. Oser et al. (2022) argue that political participation strengthens democratic legitimacy because it creates direct connections between citizens and governance institutions. Consequently, electoral systems must ensure equal opportunities for participation and protect citizens' political rights.

International human rights law recognizes political participation as a fundamental democratic right. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), particularly Article 25, guarantees the right of citizens to participate in public affairs, vote and be elected in genuine periodic elections, and access public service without unreasonable restrictions. These provisions establish international standards for electoral governance and democratic participation. Butt (2024) emphasizes that the ICCPR remains one of the most important international instruments supporting democratic elections and political rights. Through these standards, the covenant provides normative guidance for states seeking to strengthen democratic governance and electoral accountability.

Indonesia has incorporated democratic electoral principles within its constitutional and legal framework. The 1945 Constitution recognizes popular sovereignty as a foundational principle of governance and establishes elections as an important mechanism for democratic representation. Electoral administration is primarily regulated through Law No. 7 of 2017 on General Elections, which governs electoral institutions, electoral procedures, voter rights, political competition, and election oversight. The law seeks to promote democratic elections

by establishing legal standards designed to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability throughout the electoral process. Law No. 7 of 2017 represents a significant legal framework for maintaining electoral integrity in Indonesia. The law regulates the responsibilities of electoral management bodies, procedures for voter registration, campaign activities, vote counting, dispute resolution, and election supervision.

These provisions aim to strengthen public confidence in elections and ensure that electoral outcomes reflect democratic principles. Risky et al. (2023) argue that electoral law plays an important role in shaping democratic governance because electoral systems influence representation, accountability, and political legitimacy. Recent electoral developments have highlighted the continuing importance of electoral integrity within Indonesia's democratic system. Elections increasingly occur within complex political and technological environments characterized by digital communication, social media influence, misinformation, and cybersecurity risks. Garnett and James (2021) argue that technological developments create both opportunities and challenges for electoral governance. While digital technologies may improve voter access and information dissemination, they may also introduce new risks that affect transparency, security, and public trust. Transparency and accountability remain essential principles within electoral governance. Democratic elections require institutions capable of administering electoral processes openly and responsibly.

Papadopoulos (2023) emphasizes that accountability strengthens democratic governance by ensuring that public institutions remain answerable to citizens and operate according to established legal standards. Similarly, Androniceanu (2021) argues that transparency contributes to governance quality by promoting public trust and reducing opportunities for institutional misconduct. These principles are particularly important within electoral administration because election outcomes directly affect democratic legitimacy. The literature also highlights the growing importance of democratic resilience in electoral governance. Democratic systems increasingly face challenges associated with misinformation, declining public trust, political polarization, and election-related disputes. Volacu and Aligica (2023) argue that democratic resilience refers to the capacity of democratic institutions to respond effectively to political and governance challenges while preserving democratic principles. Electoral integrity contributes to democratic resilience by strengthening public confidence in electoral processes and supporting peaceful political competition.

Despite substantial legal and institutional reforms, challenges continue to affect electoral governance in many democratic systems, including Indonesia. Concerns regarding electoral fairness, electoral disputes, misinformation, voter participation, and institutional effectiveness demonstrate that maintaining electoral integrity requires continuous governance improvements. These challenges highlight the need to examine how legal frameworks contribute to democratic governance and electoral accountability. Although previous studies have explored electoral systems, political participation, and democratic governance, many focus on specific electoral events or institutional reforms. There remains a need for comprehensive research examining electoral integrity through the combined perspectives of Indonesian electoral law and international democratic standards. Such analysis is particularly important because Indonesia's electoral governance framework operates within both national constitutional principles and international human rights obligations.

In response to this gap, this study employs a normative juridical method to examine electoral integrity and democratic governance in Indonesia. The analysis focuses on Law No. 7 of 2017 on General Elections and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as the principal legal frameworks supporting electoral rights, political participation, transparency, and accountability. By synthesizing contemporary scholarship concerning electoral integrity, democratic governance, political participation, and democratic resilience,

this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how electoral governance contributes to democratic legitimacy and accountability in Indonesia. The research questions in this study are: (RQ1) How does electoral integrity contribute to democratic legitimacy, political trust, and political participation in Indonesia? and (RQ2) How do the national electoral legal framework and international human rights standards support electoral accountability and address challenges to democratic governance in Indonesia?

2. | RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a normative juridical method to examine the relationship between electoral integrity and democratic governance in Indonesia. The analysis focuses on the contribution of electoral law frameworks to political participation, transparency, accountability, electoral legitimacy, and democratic resilience. Particular attention is given to Law No. 7 of 2017 on General Elections and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), especially the article concerning political participation and electoral rights. The study analyzes relevant legal norms, statutory provisions, legal principles, and international human rights standards related to electoral governance. Legal materials were collected from Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and other legal and governance research databases. Searches used keywords such as electoral integrity, democratic governance, elections, electoral accountability, political participation, electoral transparency, voting rights, democratic legitimacy, electoral resilience, ICCPR Article 25, and Indonesian elections.

Primary legal materials consist of Law No. 7 of 2017 and the ICCPR, while secondary materials include peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, conference papers, legal studies, and policy reports published mainly in the last five years. All materials were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives. The collected materials were analyzed using qualitative juridical analysis and organized into five thematic categories: electoral integrity and democratic governance, Indonesian electoral law framework, political participation and electoral rights, transparency and accountability, and challenges to electoral integrity. A comparative legal analysis was applied to evaluate the relationship between Indonesian electoral law and international human rights standards. This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how electoral integrity supports democratic governance, strengthens institutional legitimacy, and promotes public trust in Indonesia's electoral system.

3. | RESULTS

Electoral Integrity, Democratic Legitimacy, and Political Participation

The findings of this study demonstrate that electoral integrity plays a critical role in strengthening democratic governance in Indonesia. The reviewed literature consistently indicates that credible elections contribute to political legitimacy, accountability, transparency, public trust, and democratic stability. Electoral governance frameworks established through Law No. 7 of 2017 and supported by international standards contained in the ICCPR provide important legal foundations for protecting electoral rights and ensuring democratic participation. The findings further reveal that electoral integrity functions not only as an electoral principle but also as a governance mechanism that supports democratic accountability and institutional resilience. One of the principal findings concerns the relationship between electoral integrity and democratic legitimacy. Democratic governments derive authority from elections that are perceived as fair, transparent, and inclusive. The literature consistently demonstrates that electoral integrity strengthens public confidence in democratic institutions because citizens are more likely to accept electoral outcomes when electoral procedures comply with legal and democratic standards.

Garnett and James (2021) argue that electoral integrity serves as an important indicator of democratic quality because it reflects the effectiveness and credibility of electoral administration. Similarly, González et al. (2024) emphasize that perceptions of electoral fairness significantly influence public support for democratic institutions. These findings indicate that electoral integrity contributes directly to democratic legitimacy. The findings further demonstrate that electoral integrity strengthens political trust. Citizens who perceive elections as fair and transparent are more likely to trust political institutions and accept electoral outcomes. Mauk (2022) argues that electoral integrity influences levels of political trust, particularly among individuals whose preferred political candidates do not win elections. Likewise, Mochtak, Lesschaeve, and Glaurdić (2021) emphasize that confidence in electoral processes contributes to democratic stability because both electoral winners and losers are more likely to accept election results. These findings suggest that electoral integrity functions as an important mechanism for maintaining political stability and democratic governance.

Political participation emerged as another significant finding. Elections provide citizens with opportunities to exercise political rights and influence governmental authority. The reviewed literature indicates that participation strengthens democratic governance because it connects citizens directly to political decision-making processes. Oser et al. (2022) argue that political efficacy encourages participation by increasing citizens' confidence that their actions can affect political outcomes. These findings indicate that electoral systems should facilitate broad participation to strengthen democratic legitimacy. The study also highlights the importance of electoral rights as recognized within the ICCPR. Article 25 establishes international standards concerning political participation, voting rights, equal suffrage, and democratic representation. The findings indicate that these provisions provide an important normative framework supporting democratic governance and electoral accountability. Butt (2024) emphasizes that the ICCPR remains one of the most influential international instruments governing democratic participation. Consequently, electoral governance in Indonesia operates within both national legal frameworks and international human rights obligations.

Legal Framework, Electoral Accountability, and Democratic Challenge

Another important finding concerns Indonesia's electoral law framework. Law No. 7 of 2017 establishes comprehensive regulations governing electoral administration, electoral institutions, voter registration, campaign activities, electoral supervision, and dispute resolution. The literature demonstrates that the law provides important safeguards supporting electoral integrity and democratic governance. Risky et al. (2023) argue that electoral system regulation significantly influences democratic representation and accountability. Similarly, Arifin et al. (2025) emphasize that electoral reforms remain important for strengthening democratic institutions and improving electoral effectiveness. The findings further reveal that transparency and accountability constitute essential dimensions of electoral governance. Transparent electoral procedures allow citizens, political parties, and civil society organizations to monitor elections and evaluate compliance with democratic standards. Accountability mechanisms ensure that electoral institutions remain answerable for their actions and decisions. Papadopoulos (2023) argues that accountability is fundamental to democratic governance because it links public authority to citizen oversight. Likewise, Androniceanu (2021) emphasizes that transparency contributes to governance quality by strengthening institutional legitimacy and public trust.

Table 1. Comparison of Electoral Governance Principles

Electoral Principle	Law No. 7 of 2017	ICCPR
Political Participation	Yes	Yes
Voting Rights	Yes	Yes
Equal Suffrage	Yes	Yes
Electoral Transparency	Yes	Yes
Electoral Accountability	Yes	Yes
Democratic Legitimacy	Yes	Yes
Public Representation	Yes	Yes
Electoral Oversight	Strong	Limited

Source: Authors' compilation based on Law No. 7 of 2017 and ICCPR Article 25.

The comparison demonstrates that both legal frameworks support core democratic principles associated with electoral governance. Law No. 7 of 2017 provides detailed institutional and procedural regulations for elections in Indonesia, while the ICCPR establishes broader international standards concerning electoral rights and democratic participation. The findings also indicate that electoral oversight institutions play an important role in maintaining electoral integrity. Institutions such as the General Election Commission (KPU) and the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) contribute to accountability by supervising electoral activities and addressing electoral disputes. Effective electoral oversight improves public confidence by ensuring that elections are administered according to legal standards. Consequently, institutional effectiveness remains a significant determinant of electoral legitimacy.

Another major finding concerns emerging challenges affecting electoral integrity. The literature identifies misinformation, cyber threats, political polarization, electoral disputes, and institutional limitations as important risks to democratic governance. Garnett and James (2021) argue that digital technologies create new vulnerabilities within electoral systems by increasing exposure to cyber risks and information manipulation. Similarly, Theocharis et al. (2023) emphasize that social media platforms influence political engagement and information consumption, creating both opportunities and challenges for electoral governance.

Table 2. Challenges to Electoral Integrity

Challenge	Impact on Elections	Governance Implication
Misinformation	Distorts voter information	Reduces public trust
Cyber Threats	Disrupts electoral processes	Weakens accountability
Political Polarization	Increases electoral conflict	Challenges legitimacy
Electoral Disputes	Delays acceptance of results	Reduces confidence
Institutional Weaknesses	Limits effective oversight	Weakens governance
Low Political Participation	Reduces representation	Creates democratic deficits

Source: Authors' synthesis based on the reviewed literature.

The findings indicate that these challenges affect not only election administration but also broader democratic governance. Electoral integrity therefore depends upon institutional resilience and the ability of electoral systems to adapt to evolving political and technological environments. Democratic resilience emerged as another important theme within the literature. Volacu and Aligica (2023) argue that democratic resilience refers to the capacity of democratic institutions to withstand challenges while preserving democratic principles. Electoral integrity contributes to resilience by strengthening legitimacy, accountability, and public trust. Likewise, Alihodžić (2023) emphasizes that risk management and crisis preparedness are increasingly important components of contemporary electoral governance. These findings suggest that protecting electoral integrity is essential for maintaining democratic stability.

The evidence reviewed in this study demonstrates that electoral integrity contributes significantly to democratic governance in Indonesia. Through political participation, accountability, transparency, electoral rights protection, and institutional oversight, electoral governance strengthens democratic legitimacy and public trust. Although challenges associated with misinformation, cyber threats, political polarization, and institutional capacity remain significant, both Law No. 7 of 2017 and the ICCPR provide important legal foundations supporting democratic elections and accountable governance.

4. | DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that electoral integrity constitutes a fundamental component of democratic governance in Indonesia. Democratic systems depend upon elections that are transparent, accountable, inclusive, and capable of reflecting the will of citizens. The literature consistently indicates that electoral integrity strengthens democratic legitimacy by ensuring that electoral outcomes are perceived as credible and lawful. Consequently, electoral governance should be understood not merely as an administrative process but as a central mechanism through which democratic authority is established and maintained. A key finding concerns the relationship between electoral integrity and democratic legitimacy. Elections provide citizens with the opportunity to authorize political leadership and participate in public decision-making. When electoral processes are conducted fairly and transparently, public trust in political institutions increases, and citizens are more likely to accept electoral outcomes. Electoral integrity therefore serves as an essential foundation for democratic legitimacy by reinforcing confidence in representative government and electoral institutions.

The study also highlights the importance of political participation. Elections enable citizens to exercise political rights and influence governmental authority, thereby strengthening democratic accountability through direct connections between citizens and public institutions. These findings are consistent with Article 25 of the ICCPR, which recognizes participation in public affairs and genuine elections as fundamental democratic rights. Political participation should therefore be regarded not only as a procedural activity but also as a core element of democratic citizenship. Another important finding concerns the role of electoral law in safeguarding democratic governance. Law No. 7 of 2017 provides comprehensive regulations governing electoral administration, oversight, voter registration, and dispute resolution. These legal provisions support electoral integrity by promoting transparency, accountability, and procedural fairness. The comparative analysis further demonstrates substantial consistency between Law No. 7 of 2017 and the ICCPR, as both frameworks emphasize political participation, voting rights, equal suffrage, transparency, and democratic accountability. While the ICCPR establishes international principles, Indonesian electoral law operationalizes these principles through detailed institutional and procedural mechanisms.

Transparency and accountability emerged as essential dimensions of electoral integrity. Transparent electoral institutions enhance public confidence by allowing electoral processes to

be observed and evaluated, while accountability ensures that electoral authorities remain answerable for their decisions. Together, these principles strengthen electoral legitimacy by facilitating public oversight and ensuring compliance with legal and democratic standards. Despite these positive contributions, the study identifies several challenges affecting electoral integrity. Misinformation and disinformation have become significant concerns because digital communication technologies facilitate the rapid spread of inaccurate information that may reduce public trust. In addition, increasing reliance on digital systems for electoral administration introduces cybersecurity risks that require stronger governance frameworks capable of protecting electoral processes while maintaining transparency and accountability.

Political polarization and electoral disputes also present important challenges. Intense political competition may undermine confidence in electoral outcomes, making effective oversight institutions and impartial dispute-resolution mechanisms essential for preserving democratic legitimacy. These findings highlight the importance of institutional capacity in maintaining public trust and ensuring electoral stability. Finally, the concept of democratic resilience provides an important perspective for understanding electoral governance. Electoral integrity strengthens resilience by enhancing legitimacy, accountability, transparency, and citizen confidence, enabling democratic institutions to respond effectively to political, technological, and social challenges. Overall, the study concludes that electoral integrity significantly contributes to democratic governance in Indonesia. Although Indonesia's electoral framework is broadly aligned with international democratic standards, continued efforts to address misinformation, cyber threats, political polarization, and institutional capacity remain essential for sustaining democratic legitimacy and strengthening the integrity of future elections.

5. | CONCLUSION

This study examined electoral integrity and democratic governance in Indonesia through a qualitative Systematic Literature Review (SLR). The analysis focused on Law No. 7 of 2017 on General Elections and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as the principal legal frameworks governing electoral rights, political participation, transparency, and accountability. The findings demonstrate that electoral integrity plays a significant role in strengthening democratic governance by promoting political participation, democratic legitimacy, transparency, accountability, and public trust. Elections serve as the primary mechanism through which citizens exercise political rights and hold governments accountable. Both Law No. 7 of 2017 and the ICCPR provide important legal safeguards supporting fair elections and democratic participation. The study also found that transparency and accountability are essential for maintaining confidence in electoral institutions, while electoral oversight mechanisms contribute to procedural fairness and democratic legitimacy. Nevertheless, challenges related to misinformation, cyber threats, political polarization, electoral disputes, and institutional capacity continue to affect electoral governance. The study concludes that electoral integrity remains a cornerstone of democratic governance in Indonesia. Strengthening electoral accountability, protecting electoral rights, enhancing transparency, and improving institutional resilience are essential strategies for maintaining democratic legitimacy and ensuring that elections continue to function as effective mechanisms of representative government.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval and Originality Statement

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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