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### ELECTION SUPERVISORY AGENCY (BAWASLU) AND INTEGRITY OF LOCAL DEMOCRACY: A CASE STUDY OF 2019 GENERAL ELECTION IN NORTH JAKARTA

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study concludes that strengthening institutional integrity requires improving capacity of election supervisors, ethical training, legal protection for whistleblowers, and collaborative engagement with public as co-supervisors.

**Keywords:** Bawaslu, integrity, ethics, election violations, supervision

#### **Abstract**

This research aims to examine institutional integrity of Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu) in addressing electoral violations during 2019 General Election in North Jakarta. The study applies a library research method with a qualitative approach, using deductive and inductive analysis of various literature sources, official Bawaslu documents, and previous research findings. The results indicate that North Jakarta recorded the highest number of election violations in the DKI Jakarta region, dominated by vote buying, off-schedule campaigns, and the involvement of civil servants. These findings reflect a weak institutional integrity within Bawaslu, characterized by the lack of assertiveness in law enforcement, a procedural and formalistic culture, and limited transparency and public participation. Bawaslu is assessed to be suboptimal in carrying out its substantive supervisory role and is still facing challenges from structural, social, and political dimensions. The

## 1. Introduction

General elections (pemilu) are a primary instrument for realizing popular sovereignty and a legitimate mechanism in a country's democratization process. In the Indonesian constitutional system, elections serve not only as a means for the people to elect their representatives in legislative and executive bodies, but also as an indicator of the quality of democratic governance. Article 22E paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution stipulates that elections must be held directly, universally, freely, secretly, honestly, and fairly every five years. Therefore, the quality of elections represents the quality of democracy itself.

However, the implementation of elections in Indonesia still faces various challenges, one of which is violations of the basic principles of election integrity. Elections rife with fraudulent practices such as money politics, vote manipulation, administrative violations, and weak oversight not only threaten the legitimacy of election results but also undermine public trust in democratic institutions (Rahmatunnisa, 2017; Silalahi, 2022).

In efforts to maintain election integrity, the existence of a supervisory body is crucial. The Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), as mandated by Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections, has the function of overseeing all stages of the election process to prevent and prosecute any form of electoral violations. Normatively, Bawaslu's existence is an integral part of the checks and balances mechanism in Indonesia's electoral democracy system. However, in practice, the effectiveness of Bawaslu's oversight often faces a number of problems, ranging from limited human resources, political pressure, to weak legal awareness among voters and election participants (Hayckel et al., 2024). Existing

literature reviews indicate that election integrity is significantly influenced by the professionalism and independence of election organizers (Silalahi, 2022), as well as the supervisory institution's ability to uphold democratic election principles (Ahmad et al., 2025; Ja'far, 2018). However, there are few in-depth studies examining election violations at the local level, focusing on Bawaslu's response and institutional capacity. This research focuses on election violations in North Jakarta during the 2019 Election, given that this region recorded the highest number of violations in Jakarta Province during that period.

The scientific novelty offered lies in the study's focus on the Bawaslu's institutional capacity to respond to election violations in urban areas with high levels of political complexity. By highlighting this local context, it is hoped that it will provide a more concrete picture of election oversight practices and the reality of institutional integrity on the ground. Meanwhile, the purpose of this study is to identify and assess the effectiveness of Bawaslu's oversight in maintaining election integrity and to assess the extent of Bawaslu's institutional capacity and strategies in preventing and addressing election violations.

## 2. Literature Review

General elections are the primary instrument for realizing popular sovereignty and serve as an indicator of the quality of a country's democracy. From a procedural democratic perspective, elections serve as a mechanism for the legitimate circulation of power through popular participation (Schumpeter, 1942). In Indonesia, elections have a strong constitutional basis, as stipulated in Article 22E paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution, which affirms the principles of direct, general, free, secret, honest, and fair elections as the foundation of election administration.

The quality of elections is largely determined by the integrity of the electoral process. Norris (2014) emphasized that election integrity encompasses adherence to democratic norms, from the pre-election to the post-election stages. In the Indonesian context, various studies have shown that election violations such as money politics, vote manipulation, and administrative violations remain serious issues that threaten the legitimacy of election results (Rahmatunnisa, 2017; Silalahi, 2022).

To ensure election integrity, the existence of a supervisory body is a crucial element in the system of checks and balances of electoral democracy. According to institutional theory, an institution's effectiveness is largely determined by the capacity, independence, and professionalism of its personnel (North, 1990). In Indonesia, the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) was established as an election supervisory body authorized to oversee all stages of the election and take action against violations in accordance with Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning Elections.

However, the effectiveness of Bawaslu's oversight still faces various challenges. Studies by Ja'far (2018) and Ahmad et al. (2025) show that limited resources, political pressure, and low public legal awareness impact the performance of election supervision at the local level. This aligns with Diamond's (1999) view, which asserts that weak supervisory institutions can hinder democratic consolidation.

Based on these studies, it can be concluded that election integrity is highly dependent on the institutional capacity of the supervisory body. However, empirical studies specifically examining Bawaslu's response and capacity to address election violations at the local level, particularly in urban

areas with high political complexity, are still limited. Therefore, this research is important to complement previous studies and strengthen understanding of election supervision practices in Indonesia.

### **3. Methodology**

The method used in this journal is library research, a method of collecting data by understanding and studying theories from various literature related to the research, which contains theories relevant to the research problems addressed by the researcher.

There are four stages of library research: preparing the necessary equipment, preparing a working bibliography, organizing time, and reading or recording research materials (Zed, 2004). Data collection involves searching for and constructing sources from various sources, such as books, journals, and previous research. The literature obtained from these various references is analyzed critically and in-depth to support the propositions and ideas.

The data analysis technique used in this study is qualitative analysis with a deductive approach, meaning that general facts or theories are drawn to specific conclusions. Inductive analysis is carried out using specific and concrete facts, then drawing conclusions from the specific to the general

### **4. Results and Discussion**

#### **High Number of Election Violations in North Jakarta and Their Implications for Election**

Integrity 2019 simultaneous elections recorded North Jakarta as the region with the highest number of reported election violations in Jakarta Province. This raises serious concerns about the quality and integrity of election administration in the region.

Based on data collected by the Jakarta Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), the most common violations included vote buying, campaigning

outside the scheduled time, the use of state facilities for campaigning, the involvement of civil servants (ASN) and children, and administrative violations such as the installation of campaign materials in prohibited areas or inconsistencies in campaign documents.

**Table 1. Types of Election Violations in North Jakarta 2019**

Type of Violation	Number of Cases	Description
Money politics	36 Cases	Mostly done before the quiet period
Off-schedule campaigns	22 Cases	Involving legislative candidates and parties
Involvement of civil servants and children in campaigns	14 Cases	Occurs at face-to-face events in the RT/RW environment
Campaign props in prohibited areas	27 Cases	Banners and billboards in places of worship, schools
Administrative violations	19 Cases	Does not include required information

Source: Processed by the author, 2025

Based on data collection and documentation from the Jakarta Provincial Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), election violations in North Jakarta during the 2019 Election demonstrated a high level of complexity and diversity. The most frequently reported violation was money politics, with 36 cases. This pattern of violations generally occurred during the quiet period, when election participants or campaign teams allegedly distributed money, basic necessities, and other essential goods to prospective voters. These actions were carried out behind closed doors and often involved local community leaders to avoid the scrutiny of election supervisors. This phenomenon indicates that transactional politics remains a dominant strategy for influencing voter preferences, while also reflecting low levels of democratic literacy and weak oversight on the ground.

The next most common type of violation was the installation of campaign materials (APK) in prohibited locations, with 27 cases. Banners, billboards, and posters were found installed in public facilities such as places of worship, schools, and government-owned facilities, which are explicitly prohibited by election regulations. This reflects a lack of discipline among election participants in adhering to campaign regulations and a weak oversight function from the early stages of the campaign. In addition, violations involving off-schedule campaigning were recorded in 22 cases, committed both openly and covertly. Several legislative candidates were found to have held meetings with residents, distributed social assistance, and similar activities with a veiled campaign narrative outside the designated campaign period. This practice not only violates campaign schedule regulations but also undermines equal opportunity among candidates.

Another crucial violation was the involvement of civil servants (ASN) and children in campaign activities, recorded in 14 cases. The involvement of ASN indicates bias by the bureaucracy, which should be neutral in political contests. The involvement of children is not only an administrative violation but also violates the principles of child protection and sound campaign ethics. Finally, other administrative violations were identified in 19 cases, primarily related to incomplete campaign documents, inaccurate campaign finance reports, and the use of symbols and narratives containing elements of ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations (SARA). These types of violations, while seemingly technical, have the potential to create inequality and horizontal conflict in a multicultural society like North Jakarta.

This high number illustrates that the election in North Jakarta remains vulnerable to various forms of manipulation and irregularities. This indicates that election integrity has not yet been fully realized. As explained by Rahmatunnisa (2017), election integrity is a fundamental pillar of democracy, and violations of election principles will directly impact the legitimacy of election results and public trust in democratic institutions.

### **Evaluation of Bawaslu's Institutional Integrity**

The integrity of an election oversight body like Bawaslu is not merely a matter of fulfilling administrative procedures, but rather concerns the institution's total performance in upholding democratic values: honesty, fairness, transparency, accountability, and independence. Within the framework of public sector integrity theory, integrity is understood not only as freedom from corruption or irregularities, but also as a strong commitment to acting based on moral principles, public ethics, and institutional responsibility to public trust (Huberts, 2014; Solihah et al., 2024).

In the implementation of 2019 Election supervision in North Jakarta, several indicators indicate that Bawaslu's institutional integrity remains problematic. Based on field findings and official reports, the large number and variety of election violations that occurred were not fully addressed with robust and accountable handling mechanisms. Many public reports went unfollowed, the verification process was slow, and legal actions tended to be symbolic. This phenomenon demonstrates a gap between the normative ideals of integrity and the practical reality on the ground.

One indicator of the weak institutional integrity of the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) in North Jakarta can be seen in their response to the numerous violations that occurred. Based on reports collected, violations such as money politics, off-schedule campaigning, civil servant

involvement, the installation of campaign materials in prohibited areas, and other administrative violations occurred significantly. However, Bawaslu's response to these violations remained minimal and administrative, often stopping at the appeal or clarification stage. This suggests that Bawaslu tends to position its role narrowly as a reporting institution, rather than as an active and courageous strategic actor substantively upholding election integrity. An over-reliance on formal evidence and a rigid legalistic approach renders election oversight insensitive to evolving socio-political dynamics. Many violations, even though they are clearly visible and systematic, are not processed further because they are deemed not to meet formal requirements. This overly procedural approach is a major obstacle to effective and meaningful election oversight.

Furthermore, Bawaslu's integrity is also being tested in terms of its institutional courage. Numerous findings indicate that when violations are committed by candidates from major parties or influential political figures, Bawaslu's actions become less decisive. Some cases result in only light sanctions or no action at all. This reflects fear or structural pressure that causes Bawaslu to lose its independence as an oversight institution. When political pressure outweighs ethical commitment, the oversight institution becomes merely a symbolic institution with no real influence.

In such circumstances, institutional integrity not only erodes but also sets a bad precedent for democracy. If violations are allowed or tolerated because they are committed by powerful parties, public trust in elections will be eroded. Furthermore, the lack of transparency in handling reports also exacerbates public perceptions of Bawaslu's integrity. In many cases, the results of follow-up actions on public reports are not publicly

announced. This lack of public involvement in the oversight process creates the impression that Bawaslu is closed, elitist, and unresponsive to public aspirations. However, within the framework of public sector institutional integrity, transparency is a crucial pillar that ensures accountability and prevents abuses of power. When the public is denied adequate access to information, the space for correction and participation is limited, and trust in the institution declines. Furthermore, the lack of effective public communication channels hinders collaborative oversight between the state and citizens.

The integrity of the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) is also not supported by a robust internal evaluation system. Oversight of the work of election supervisors tends to be conducted vertically and based on administrative reports, rather than quality and ethics evaluations. The absence of a reflective system that evaluates decisions, responses, and organizational culture has led to the repetition of many errors from one election to the next. Institutional learning can only occur if an organization has the ability to self-criticize and build capacity from past experiences. This demonstrates that strengthening integrity is not sufficient with regulations or instructions alone; it must be accompanied by a vibrant organizational culture that is responsive to democratic values.

Furthermore, true integrity in an institution like Bawaslu must be built not only through adherence to procedures but also through the internalization of ethical values into daily work practices. Bawaslu requires a strengthened organizational culture that places integrity as the foundation of institutional morality. This means that every decision, every oversight action, and every interaction with the public must be based on honesty, courage, and a sense of responsibility for the quality of democracy. Without these values, Bawaslu will become merely a procedural institution that merely carries out its

duties based on the text of the law, rather than a democratic institution that upholds ethics and substantive justice.

### **Structural and Social Challenges in Achieving Integrity-Based Oversight**

The various integrity challenges faced by the North Jakarta Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) are not isolated but intertwined with structural, social, and cultural issues.

#### **a. Limited Human Resources and Logistics**

The number of election supervisors is disproportionate to the size and complexity of the election. In one case, one village supervisor had to oversee more than 15 polling stations (TPS). This reduced the intensity and quality of supervision and increased the likelihood of violations. A study by Hayckel et al. (2024) confirmed that weaknesses in institutional capacity are a major obstacle to promoting Bawaslu's integrity.

#### **b. Low Public Legal Awareness**

Public participation in election supervision remains low. The public tends to be permissive towards the practice of money politics, viewing it as commonplace or even as a form of "sharing one's fortune." This indicates a gap between Bawaslu's outreach efforts and public acceptance of integrity values.

#### **c. Political Pressure on Bawaslu**

Bawaslu at the local level often finds itself in a dilemma when facing election participants with significant political influence. Firmness in addressing violations can lead to horizontal conflict and vertical pressure, both internally and externally. This impacts the courage and objectivity of supervisors.

#### **d. Ineffective Inter-Agency Coordination**

Although Bawaslu, the General Elections Commission (KPU), and the Elections Supervisory

Agency (DKPP) constitute a unified function of election management, in practice, disharmony and sectoral egos are common, weakening joint oversight efforts. Violations often become a hot potato between institutions without a clear resolution.

**Bawaslu Integrity Strengthening Strategy**

To strengthen the institutional integrity of the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), a comprehensive and systematic strategy is required that encompasses various aspects of the institution, ethics, personal protection, public participation, and the use of technology.

**Table 2. Types of Bawaslu Integrity Strengthening Strategies**

Strategic Area	Rekomendation
Institutional	Additional budget, human resource development, recruitment of professional supervisors
Ethics & Professionalism	Intensive training on integrity, public ethics, and conflict management
Supervisory Protection	Legal guarantees for supervisors who experience intimidation or political pressure
Public Participation	Voter education, anti-money politics campaign, civil society involvement
Technology and Innovation	Strengthening the online violation reporting system and data transparency

Source: Processed by the author, 2025

First, from an institutional perspective, strengthening the organizational structure and increasing budget allocations are crucial steps. Bawaslu (Elections Supervisory Agency) at the regional level, particularly in densely populated and complex areas like North Jakarta, requires additional personnel and logistics to ensure comprehensive oversight. Furthermore, the supervisor recruitment process must be geared toward identifying individuals who not only meet

administrative requirements but also possess professional capacity and a commitment to democratic ethics.

Second, in the area of ethics and professionalism, ongoing training is necessary to strengthen the integrity of individual supervisors. This training should be not only technical but also address normative aspects such as neutrality, moral courage, conflict of interest management, and strengthening anti-corruption values in election supervision. With ongoing training, it is hoped that election supervisors will not only understand their procedural duties but also be able to act decisively and with integrity in navigating the political dynamics on the ground.

Third, protection for supervisors is crucial, especially those at the village or sub-district level. Many election supervisors work under pressure, whether from campaign teams, election participants, or internal bureaucracy. Therefore, a strong legal protection and advocacy system is needed to ensure the safety and freedom of supervisors in carrying out their duties. Psychological support is also crucial for supervisors facing intense social and political pressure.

Fourth, public participation must be continuously expanded through public political education. Bawaslu cannot work alone. The public, as the holder of sovereignty, must be actively involved in the participatory oversight process. Anti-money politics campaigns, public awareness campaigns on forms of election violations, and empowering local communities as oversight partners can raise collective awareness and narrow the scope for violations. The public also needs to be encouraged to be more courageous in reporting and to become responsible reporters.

Fifth, the use of information technology is a crucial instrument in creating a transparent and accountable oversight system. Bawaslu can develop an online reporting system that is easily accessible to the public and guarantees the anonymity of reporters. Furthermore, transparency of public information regarding the results of violation handling is also crucial to bolster public trust in Bawaslu's performance. Digitizing oversight and reporting can also reduce manipulative practices that are often difficult to detect using conventional methods.

## 5. Conclusion

This study aims to assess the level of institutional integrity of the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) in addressing election violations, particularly in North Jakarta City during the 2019 Election. Based on an analysis of the types and number of violations that occurred, and how Bawaslu responded to these violations, it can be concluded that Bawaslu's institutional integrity in this context still faces serious challenges. Election violations occurred massively and diversely, but have not been addressed optimally, either in terms of legal certainty, timely handling, or process transparency.

Weaknesses in structural capacity, reliance on formal procedures, political pressure, and a low organizational culture of integrity are major obstacles to achieving effective oversight and public trust. Although Bawaslu has full authority to oversee and prosecute violations, practice in the field shows that the values of honesty, accountability, and courage have not been fully embedded in implementation of election oversight duties. Therefore, the hypothesis that

Bawaslu's integrity in election oversight in North Jakarta remains suboptimal is supported by these findings. This research also confirms that

strengthening Bawaslu's integrity cannot be achieved solely through regulations; it must be accompanied by cultural and professional transformation within the institution.

Several recommendations can be used as a reference for policy development and further research. First, Bawaslu needs to strengthen its information technology-based oversight system so that reporting and handling of violations can be carried out transparently, quickly, and accountably. Second, the human resource capacity of supervisors is needed through training in integrity, public ethics, and risk management so that supervisors are not only technically competent but also courageous and professional in carrying out their duties. Third, the government and Bawaslu need to develop a legal protection strategy for election supervisors to prevent them from being easily intimidated by political pressure, especially at the local level.

Fourth, strengthening public participation is key to establishing collaborative election supervision. Political education and outreach regarding types of violations must be promoted extensively, especially in areas prone to violations. Finally, this research recommends that further studies be conducted using a field research approach to obtain a more detailed picture of supervisor behavior, election participant responses, and public perceptions of Bawaslu's integrity. This will complement the academic understanding of how public sector integrity is implemented concretely in the electoral democracy process in Indonesia.

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