

Ethical Violations by Election Administrators and The Impact on Democracy

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Abstract

Ethical violations committed by election administrators have become a serious issue in the implementation of democratic governance because they directly affect public trust, electoral legitimacy, and the quality of democracy itself. This study aims to analyze the forms of ethical violations by election administrators and examine their impact on democratic consolidation and public confidence in electoral institutions. The research applies a normative and qualitative approach through literature review and analysis of scholarly journals related to election ethics, governance, and democratic institutions. The findings indicate that violations of ethical principles such as impartiality, integrity, professionalism, transparency, and accountability weaken the credibility of election management bodies and create delegitimization of electoral outcomes. Ethical misconduct by election administrators may also trigger political conflicts, public distrust, and perceptions of unfair elections, thereby undermining democratic stability. Furthermore, the study highlights that effective enforcement of codes of ethics and institutional supervision are essential to maintaining free and fair elections. Ethical governance in electoral administration is closely related to the broader concept of good governance and democratic legitimacy, where transparency and accountability become

key indicators of democratic quality. Therefore, strengthening ethical standards, improving oversight mechanisms, and increasing public participation are necessary to preserve the integrity of elections and reinforce democracy in Indonesia.

Keywords: election ethics, democracy, good governance.

A. Introduction

Democracy is widely recognized as a political system that places sovereignty in the hands of the people, where citizens are given the right and opportunity to participate in determining the direction of government through regular elections. In this context, elections are not merely procedural activities to elect political leaders, but also represent the application of democratic values such as equality, participation, transparency, accountability, and Justice. The success of democratic elections is highly dependent on the integrity and professionalism of election organizers who are responsible for conducting every election process fairly and impartially. The Election Management Agency is expected to maintain neutrality, independence, and ethical standards in carrying out its duties because it serves as a guardian of election legitimacy and democratic credibility. A democratic system can only function effectively if public trust in electoral institutions is maintained, and this trust is closely related to the ethical behavior exhibited by election organizers.

However, in practice, ethical violations committed by election officials continue to emerge and become one of the main challenges in strengthening democracy, especially in developing democratic countries such as Indonesia. Ethical violations can take many forms, including abuse of authority, lack of neutrality, conflicts of interest, manipulation of procedures, non-transparent decision-making, and partisanship toward certain political actors or candidates. These actions not only violate the code of professional ethics but also undermine the principles of free and fair elections that are the foundation of democratic government. The study of electoral ethics emphasizes that even minor ethical errors by election officials can significantly affect public perceptions regarding the credibility and legitimacy of election results. In many cases, public suspicion of election organizers can lead to political polarization, protests, social instability, and delegitimization of

democratic institutions. Therefore, ethical violations represent not only personal offenses, but rather institutional problems capable of undermining democratic consolidation and weakening citizens' confidence in the electoral system.

The importance of ethics in public administration and governance has long been emphasized in the concept of good governance, which puts forward accountability, transparency, responsiveness, professionalism, and integrity as fundamental principles in the management of Public Affairs. Ethical behavior among public officials is considered important in ensuring that state institutions operate in accordance with the public interest rather than private or political interests. Research on bureaucratic ethics and governance shows that ethical violations often lead to corruption, abuse of power, and poor public services, all of which negatively impact institutional performance and the quality of democracy. Ethical values serve as moral guidelines for public officials in carrying out their responsibilities and protecting institutions from misconduct that can damage public trust.

The importance of ethical governance in the administration of elections is also closely linked to the global commitments contained in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular goal 16: Peace, Justice and strong institutions. SDG 16 emphasizes the need to build effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels while promoting the rule of law, reducing corruption, and ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making. The governing body for elections is one of the most important democratic institutions because it is trusted to safeguard the political rights of citizens and ensure that elections are conducted in a fair, transparent and impartial manner. Consequently, ethical behavior among election organizers directly contributes to the achievement of SDG 16 by strengthening institutional integrity, strengthening public accountability, and increasing citizen confidence in the democratic process. On the contrary, ethical violations committed by election officials undermine institutional credibility, undermine democratic legitimacy, and hinder the realization of sustainable governance envisioned in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Therefore, the strengthening of ethical standards within electoral

institutions not only represents a national Democratic need but also an important contribution to the achievement of Sustainable Development at the global level.

In the electoral context, the ethical standards imposed on election organizers are very important because elections directly determine political representation, government legitimacy, and the realization of democratic sovereignty. As a result, maintaining ethical behavior within electoral institutions is an essential requirement for building credible democratic governments.

In Indonesia, the issue of ethical violations among election organizers is gaining public attention, especially following several controversial cases involving members of the General Election Commission (KPU) and other election bodies. The establishment of the election organizer Ethics Council (Dkpp) reflects the government's commitment to maintaining the integrity, independence, and professionalism of election organizing through ethical supervision and law enforcement mechanisms. Nevertheless, repeated violations committed by election officials show that the application of ethical sanctions and accountability mechanisms remains inconsistent. Several cases have shown that sanctions imposed on election organizers are sometimes perceived as inadequate or ambiguous, giving rise to public criticism regarding the seriousness of ethical enforcement within electoral institutions. Such conditions raise concerns that ethical violations may be tolerated or inadequately addressed, which may further reduce public confidence in the neutrality and fairness of election management bodies. The weakening of institutional integrity among election organizers can ultimately threaten the quality of democracy itself because the legitimacy of democracy depends on public acceptance of the election results and trust in the institutions responsible for organizing elections.

In addition, the increasing complexity of modern elections, coupled with intense political competition and technological developments, pose additional challenges for election organizers in maintaining ethical standards. Pressure exerted by political parties, candidates, interest groups, and public opinion can influence the

behavior and decisions of election officials, especially when institutional oversight mechanisms are weak or ineffective. Ethical issues such as political intervention, money politics, administrative manipulation, and biased decision-making can arise in various stages of the electoral process, including voter registration, campaign regulation, vote counting, and announcement of results. If these issues are not properly addressed, it can result in disputes, legal challenges, and a broader democratic crisis. Therefore, strengthening ethical awareness, institutional supervision, and public participation in monitoring the electoral process are becoming increasingly important to prevent violations and maintain the integrity of elections. Ethics enforcement should not only focus on punitive measures but also encourage prevention efforts such as ethics education, professional training, transparency mechanisms, and institutional reforms aimed at promoting accountability and democratic values.

Based on these considerations, this study seeks to examine ethical violations committed by election organizers and analyze their impact on democracy, especially related to election legitimacy, public trust, and democratic governance in Indonesia. This study also aims to explore the relationship between election ethics, institutional integrity, and democratic consolidation by examining theories of ethics, governance, and election administration. Through normative and qualitative approaches based on literature review and analysis of relevant scientific sources, this study is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the importance of ethical behavior in the conduct of elections and provide recommendations to strengthen democratic institutions through more effective ethical enforcement mechanisms. Ultimately, the preservation of ethical standards among election organizers is essential not only to ensure fair elections but also to protect the sustainability and credibility of democracy itself while contributing to the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and strong institutions.

B. Research Methods

This study employs a normative juridical research method with a qualitative approach to analyze ethical violations committed by election

administrators and their impact on democracy. Normative legal research is used because this study focuses on legal norms, ethical principles, regulations, and conceptual frameworks related to election administration and democratic governance.¹ The research examines the relationship between ethical standards, the conduct of election officials, and the legitimacy of democratic institutions through the analysis of legal documents, academic literature, and relevant theories concerning electoral ethics and good governance. The qualitative approach is applied to provide a deeper understanding of how ethical violations influence public trust, electoral integrity, and democratic consolidation.

The research uses a statute approach and a conceptual approach. The statute approach is conducted by examining laws and regulations related to elections, election administration, codes of ethics, and democratic governance in Indonesia, including constitutional provisions and regulations governing the duties and responsibilities of election management bodies such as the General Elections Commission (KPU) and the Election Organizer Ethics Council (DKPP). Meanwhile, the conceptual approach is used to analyze theories and concepts concerning ethics, democracy, electoral integrity, accountability, transparency, and good governance developed by legal scholars, political scientists, and governance experts.²

The data used in this research consist of secondary data obtained through literature study. Secondary data include primary legal materials, secondary legal materials, and tertiary legal materials. Primary legal materials consist of laws, regulations, and official decisions related to election ethics and election administration. Secondary legal materials include books, academic journals, research articles, legal commentaries, and previous studies discussing ethical violations, electoral integrity, and democratic governance. In addition, tertiary legal materials such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, and online references are used to support the understanding of legal and conceptual terms relevant to the research topic.

¹ Soerjono Soekanto dan Sri Mamudji, *Penelitian Hukum Normatif: Suatu Tinjauan Singkat* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2001).

² Mamudji.

Data collection techniques in this study are conducted through documentation and literature review by gathering and examining relevant legal documents, scholarly articles, journals, and previous research findings. The collected data are then analyzed qualitatively using descriptive-analytical methods. The analysis is carried out by identifying the forms of ethical violations committed by election administrators, examining their implications for democratic legitimacy and public trust, and evaluating the effectiveness of ethical enforcement mechanisms within electoral institutions. Through this method, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the importance of ethical standards in election administration and their role in strengthening democracy in Indonesia.

Through this method, the author seeks to conduct a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the Constitutional Court's authority in resolving disputes based on positive legal rulings in Indonesia.³ This analysis involves examining the alignment between applicable legal norms and existing dispute resolution practices, thereby revealing the extent of the effectiveness and relevance of the Constitutional Court's authority in addressing the ever-evolving constitutional dynamics. Therefore, the normative legal method is expected to yield a deep understanding and strong legal arguments regarding the issues under study.⁴

C. Result and Discussion

Ethical Violations by Election Administrators in Democratic Governance

Ethics constitutes one of the fundamental pillars in the implementation of democratic governance, particularly within electoral institutions responsible

³ Iskandar Muda, Bintan R Saragih, and Ferry Edwar, "Constitutional Authority Based on the Constitutional Court Decision in Indonesia A . Introduction The Constitutional Court of Indonesia Was Established in 2003 and Operates under the Framework Provided by the 1945 Constitution of the State VII / 2009 , Extended Its Constitutional Authority to Include Judicial Review of Government Regulations in Lieu of Law (Perppu). This Development Was Significant as Neither the 1945 Constitution nor Law No . 24 of 2003 Explicitly" 17, no. 3 (2023): 217–36, <https://doi.org/10.25041/fiatjustisia.v17no3.2636>.

⁴ Mamudji, *Penelitian Hukum Normatif: Suatu Tinjauan Singkat*.

for organizing elections fairly and transparently.⁵ Election administrators are entrusted with the responsibility to uphold democratic values through professional, impartial, and accountable conduct in every stage of the electoral process. Ethical standards function not only as moral guidelines for election officials but also as institutional safeguards designed to maintain public trust and ensure the legitimacy of election outcomes. In democratic systems, the integrity of election management bodies significantly influences the quality of democracy because elections serve as the principal mechanism through which citizens exercise sovereignty and political participation. Therefore, violations of ethical principles by election administrators can seriously threaten democratic stability and weaken the credibility of political institutions.⁶

The findings of this study indicate that ethical violations by election administrators generally involve breaches of neutrality, integrity, professionalism, transparency, and accountability. These violations may occur in various forms, such as abuse of authority, conflicts of interest, biased decision-making, non-transparent procedures, manipulation of administrative processes, and inappropriate interactions with political actors or election participants. Such actions directly contradict the principles of free and fair elections, which require election administrators to remain independent from political influence and prioritize the public interest above personal or institutional interests.⁷

In several cases in Indonesia, election administrators have been found guilty of violating ethical codes due to actions perceived as benefiting certain candidates or political groups, thereby raising public concerns regarding the impartiality of electoral institutions. Ethical misconduct among election officials demonstrates that legal regulations alone are insufficient without strong moral commitment and effective institutional supervision.⁸

⁵ Satibi and Bandung, “Etika Dan Perilaku Birokrasi Dalam Mendukung Penguatan Good Governance.”

⁶ Fu, “Implikasi Etika Penyelenggara Pemilihan Umum Terhadap Penegakan Demokrasi Di Indonesia : Sebuah Evaluasi.”

⁷ Ratnia Solihah, Arry Bainus, and dan Iding Rosyidin, “Pentingnya Pengawasan Partisipatif Dalam Mengawal Pemilihan Umum Yang Demokratis,” *Jurnal Wacana Politik - ISSN 2502 - 9185 : E-ISSN: 2549-2969* 3, no. 1 (2018): 14–28.

⁸ Muda, Saragih, and Edwar, “Constitutional Authority Based on the Constitutional Court Decision in Indonesia A . Introduction The Constitutional Court of Indonesia Was Established in 2003 and Operates under the Framework Provided by the 1945 Constitution of the State VII / 2009 , Extended Its Constitutional Authority to

One important aspect identified in this research is that ethical violations by election administrators often emerge from weak institutional control and inconsistent enforcement of ethical sanctions. The existence of supervisory bodies such as the Election Organizer Ethics Council (DKPP) reflects the state's effort to preserve electoral integrity through ethical oversight mechanisms.

However, several controversial decisions regarding sanctions imposed on election officials have generated criticism from the public and academics because the punishments were considered ambiguous or inadequate compared to the seriousness of the violations committed. The inconsistency in ethical law enforcement creates the perception that election administrators may avoid strict accountability, thereby reducing public confidence in the effectiveness of supervisory institutions. In democratic governance, accountability and transparency are essential principles that ensure public officials remain responsible for their actions. Therefore, weak enforcement of ethical standards may encourage repeated violations and gradually erode institutional legitimacy.⁹

Moreover, the study finds that ethical violations committed by election administrators have significant implications for democratic legitimacy and public trust. Elections are considered legitimate when citizens believe that the electoral process is conducted honestly, transparently, and fairly.¹⁰ However, when election administrators engage in unethical conduct, public perceptions regarding the credibility of election results become increasingly negative. Delegitimization of elections can occur when citizens suspect that electoral institutions are influenced by political interests or fail to maintain neutrality.

In Indonesia, allegations of electoral manipulation and ethical misconduct have frequently triggered political tensions, legal disputes, and social polarization. This condition demonstrates that ethical

Include Judicial Review of Government Regulations in Lieu of Law (Perppu). This Development Was Significant as Neither the 1945 Constitution nor Law No . 24 of 2003 Explicitly.”

⁹ Satibi and Bandung, “Etika Dan Perilaku Birokrasi Dalam Mendukung Penguatan Good Governance.”

¹⁰ Fu, “Implikasi Etika Penyelenggara Pemilihan Umum Terhadap Penegakan Demokrasi Di Indonesia : Sebuah Evaluasi.”

violations are not merely administrative problems but also political and democratic issues capable of affecting social stability and democratic consolidation.¹¹ Public distrust toward election institutions may reduce political participation, weaken democratic culture, and increase skepticism toward government legitimacy.

The relationship between ethical governance and democracy can also be understood through the concept of good governance, which emphasizes transparency, accountability, participation, responsiveness, and rule of law as the core principles of public administration. Ethical behavior among public officials is crucial in creating clean and trustworthy governance because unethical conduct often leads to corruption, abuse of power, and inefficiency. Studies concerning bureaucratic ethics highlight that public officials who neglect ethical values tend to prioritize personal or political interests over public welfare, resulting in poor institutional performance and declining public confidence. In the electoral context, unethical behavior among election administrators damages the credibility of democratic institutions because elections are directly linked to the exercise of political rights and the realization of popular sovereignty. Consequently, maintaining ethical standards among election officials is essential not only for ensuring fair elections but also for strengthening democratic governance and protecting constitutional values.

Another important finding of this study is that the increasing complexity of electoral competition creates additional challenges for maintaining ethical conduct among election administrators. Political pressure from parties, candidates, and interest groups may influence the objectivity of election officials, particularly when institutional safeguards are weak. The rapid development of media and information technology has also intensified public scrutiny toward election management bodies, making ethical violations more visible and politically sensitive.

In some cases, election administrators may face dilemmas between legal procedures, political interests, and public expectations, which can

¹¹ Soerjono Soekanto, *Faktor-Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Penegakan Hukum* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 1983).

create opportunities for ethical misconduct if not properly regulated. Furthermore, practices such as money politics, manipulation of voter data, and biased administrative decisions continue to threaten electoral integrity in Indonesia. These challenges indicate that strengthening legal regulations alone is insufficient without improving ethical awareness, institutional professionalism, and democratic culture among both election administrators and society.¹²

To address these problems, this study emphasizes the importance of strengthening ethical enforcement mechanisms and institutional accountability within election management bodies. Ethical education and professional training for election administrators should be continuously improved to ensure that officials understand their responsibilities and democratic obligations. In addition, supervisory institutions such as DKPP must apply ethical sanctions consistently and transparently to prevent perceptions of selective enforcement or institutional bias.

Public participation in monitoring electoral processes should also be encouraged because citizen oversight plays a significant role in maintaining accountability and transparency. Democratic consolidation requires not only strong legal institutions but also ethical political culture supported by active public involvement and credible governance mechanisms. Therefore, efforts to improve electoral integrity must involve collaboration between the government, electoral institutions, civil society organizations, academics, and the broader community.¹³

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that ethical violations by election administrators have substantial consequences for democracy, particularly in relation to public trust, electoral legitimacy, and democratic governance.¹⁴ Ethical misconduct undermines the credibility of election institutions and weakens citizens' confidence in democratic processes. The sustainability of democracy depends greatly

¹² Thoha Miftah, *Birokrasi Pemerintah Dan Kekuasaan Di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Thafa Media, 2012).

¹³ Joko Widodo, *Good Governance Telaah Dari Dimensi Akuntabilitas, Kontrol Birokrasi Pada Era Desentralisasi Dan Otonomi Daerah* (Surabaya: Insan Cendekia, 2001).

¹⁴ Widodo Ekatjahhana, *Lembaga Kepresidenan Dalam Sistem Ketatanegaraan Indonesia* (Bandung: Pustaka Sutra, 2008).

on the ability of electoral institutions to maintain integrity, neutrality, and accountability in carrying out their duties. Consequently, strengthening ethical standards, improving institutional supervision, and ensuring consistent law enforcement are necessary steps to preserve democratic values and maintain the integrity of elections in Indonesia.

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