

BUREAUCRATIC NEUTRALITY IN THE 2024 REGIONAL HEAD ELECTIONS IN SERANG REGENCY

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Abstract

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji dinamika sengketa Pilkada di Kabupaten Serang yang dipicu oleh dugaan keterlibatan pejabat negara dalam memenangkan salah satu pasangan calon, khususnya dalam konteks pelanggaran prinsip netralitas birokrasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode pengumpulan data berupa wawancara mendalam terhadap pihak Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU), partai pengusung pasangan calon, dan para pemangku kepentingan terkait. Data juga diperkuat melalui analisis dokumen putusan Mahkamah Konstitusi (MK) dan regulasi pemilu yang berlaku. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa putusan MK yang memerintahkan pemungutan suara ulang (PSU) di sejumlah TPS merupakan respons terhadap pelanggaran yang bersifat terstruktur, sistematis, dan masif (TSM), di mana Menteri Desa Yandri Susanto terbukti mengarahkan kepala desa untuk mendukung istrinya, calon petahana. Meski demikian, tidak terdapat sanksi langsung terhadap pejabat negara yang terlibat. KPU Kabupaten Serang mengonfirmasi telah menjalankan fungsi teknis sesuai regulasi dan menyerahkan pengawasan serta penindakan atas pelanggaran kampanye kepada Bawaslu. Partai pengusung pasangan yang menggugat menilai pelanggaran tersebut merusak prinsip demokrasi dan berupaya mengembalikan kepercayaan publik melalui jalur konstitusional. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya penguatan regulasi dan penegakan hukum terhadap pelanggaran netralitas, serta perlunya peningkatan kualitas pendidikan politik untuk mencegah instrumentalitas birokrasi dalam kontestasi elektoral.

Keywords : Pilkada; netralitas birokrasi; sengketa pemilu.

Abstract

This study aims to examine the dynamics of electoral disputes in the 2024 Serang Regency local election, specifically focusing on the alleged involvement of state officials in supporting one of the candidate pairs, thus violating the principle of bureaucratic neutrality. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the research collected data through in-depth interviews with the General Elections Commission (KPU), political parties backing the candidates, and other relevant stakeholders. The data were further strengthened by analyzing the Constitutional Court (MK) verdict and relevant electoral regulations. The findings reveal that the Constitutional Court's decision to mandate a revote (PSU) in several polling stations was based on proven structured, systematic, and massive (TSM) violations, particularly involving Minister of Villages Yandri Susanto's directive to village heads to support his wife, the incumbent candidate. However, no direct legal sanctions were imposed on the state officials involved. The Serang KPU emphasized its role as a technical executor of national regulations and noted that enforcement against violations falls under the authority of Bawaslu. The political party that filed the dispute viewed the violations as detrimental to democratic integrity and pursued the legal process to restore public trust. This study highlights the urgent need for stricter enforcement of regulations on bureaucratic neutrality and the importance of political education to prevent the instrumentalization of state apparatus in electoral contests.

Keywords: local elections; bureaucratic neutrality; electoral dispute.

INTRODUCTION

Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) are a crucial mechanism in Indonesia's democratic system, enabling the people to directly elect governors, regents, and mayors. Pilkada symbolize popular sovereignty and serve as a vehicle for strengthening democracy and regional autonomy in the post-reform era. However, the implementation of Pilkada at the regional level still faces serious challenges in realizing substantive democracy. The democratic process is often purely procedural, with electoral contestation exploited by local elites and oligarchic groups to secure power and gain political legitimacy. Rather than providing a fair and participatory arena for public competition, Pilkada is often manipulated through undemocratic practices (Ladiqi et al., 2017).

Local political actors frequently use economic resources and kinship networks to win political contests. The practice of money politics, interference with election organizers like the General Elections Commission (KPU) and the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), and intimidation of opponents are recurring patterns.

While regional elections should ideally uphold the principles of direct, general, free, confidential, honest, and fair elections, the reality is that the involvement of state officials in practical politics often violates the principles of neutrality and justice. The principle of neutrality for state officials is a key pillar of a democratic government system with integrity and professionalism. This principle emphasizes that administrative and executive officials at all levels must be independent, impartial, and not actively involved in political activities while in office.

The primary objective of the principle of neutrality is to maintain

professionalism and public trust in government institutions and prevent conflicts of interest that could undermine the integrity of public services. Active involvement of state officials in political activities, such as participating in campaigns, providing open support, or engaging in partisan actions, constitutes a violation of this principle and has the potential to undermine the independence of government institutions. Such violations not only undermine fairness in elections but also undermine public trust in the democratic process. This is in line with the provisions of Law Number 10 of 2016 concerning Regional Head Elections, specifically Article 71 paragraphs (1) and (2), which stipulate that state officials, regional officials, and civil servants are prohibited from engaging in actions that could lead to bias or influence the outcome of regional elections. Violations of these provisions may be subject to administrative, disciplinary, or criminal sanctions in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

In practice, violations of the principle of neutrality by state officials in regional elections often trigger legal disputes, both administrative and constitutional. Such disputes can disrupt local political stability, weaken the rule of law, and undermine public confidence in electoral democracy. The involvement of state officials in supporting certain candidates, either directly or through bureaucratic mobilization, is one factor contributing to injustice and conflict in the regional election process (Amir & Hertanto, 2023). In the context of national politics, the non-neutrality of high-ranking state officials, such as the president's involvement in supporting certain candidate pairs in the 2024 election, raises serious concerns regarding the principle of political justice. This type of partisanship not only creates perceptions of injustice but also has the

potential to trigger post-election conflict and deepen social polarization (Millah et al., 2024).

From a legal and human rights perspective, the lack of impartiality of state officials threatens the integrity of the election system because it can lead to conflicts of interest, abuse of office, and manipulation of administrative processes (Luhukay, 2024). One case that attracted public attention, particularly in Banten Province, was the Serang Regency Pilkada, which was marred by allegations of direct involvement of state officials in the winning process for certain candidates. The allegations were reported by candidate pair number one, who alleged structured, systematic, and massive violations. The case was then brought to the Constitutional Court, focusing primarily on the alleged involvement of the Minister of Villages, who allegedly mobilized village heads to support his wife, candidate number two.

After a trial, on February 24, 2025, the Constitutional Court ruled that the Minister of Villages was proven guilty of influencing village heads to support candidate number two. This action was deemed to violate the principle of neutrality of state officials as stipulated in the provisions of the Regional Election (Gabriela & Michelle, 2025). This case demonstrates that abuse of power by high-ranking state officials can disrupt democratic justice and undermine public trust in bureaucratic neutrality. Based on this, this study aims to analyze the dynamics of the Serang Regency Regional Election dispute with a focus on how the involvement of state officials affects the fairness, legitimacy, and integrity of the electoral process. This analysis also examines the implications of violations of neutrality for democratic accountability and the credibility of election governance in Indonesia.

The principle of neutrality emphasizes that state officials, both bureaucratic and political, must refrain from partisan involvement during the electoral process. In classical thought, Max Weber viewed bureaucracy as a rational-legal system designed to carry out state duties efficiently and professionally. According to Weber, bureaucracy is a neutral state instrument that operates based on established laws and procedures, not on political loyalties (Thoha, 2008:15). The Weberian bureaucratic model depicts state civil servants as implementers of government administration who must act professionally, rationally, and efficiently without being influenced by political or personal interests.

Bureaucracy in the Weberian model operates based on formal rules, a clear hierarchical structure, and technical expertise, distinguishing it from informal systems such as patronage or nepotism. This structure ensures bureaucratic effectiveness and fairness as long as its principles are consistently applied. In line with this view, Rakmawanto (2007:112) emphasizes that bureaucracy must be positioned as a neutral force independent of political power. Bureaucratic neutrality does not mean independence from the ruling government, but rather emphasizes that the bureaucracy's primary orientation is public service and the interests of the state, rather than specific political interests. In this context, the bureaucracy is expected to provide professional and fair services to the public regardless of the political actors in power.

However, challenges arise when state officials, both bureaucratic and political officials such as ministers, use their authority and influence to support certain candidates in regional elections. Although not classified as civil servants, state officials are still obliged to maintain neutrality due to their access to

government resources and networks. When officials such as ministers are actively involved in the process of winning a candidate, as occurred in the 2025 Serang Regency election, the principle of bureaucratic neutrality is violated. Such actions not only violate ethical norms of government but also undermine the principle of fairness in democratic competition and undermine the integrity of public institutions.

METHOD

Study This use method qualitative with approach descriptive . Qualitative method used For understand phenomenon social in a way deep in context natural , where researchers act as an instrument main research . Approach This leave from empirical data in the field which is then analyzed use relevant theories For explain the phenomenon being studied . Approach qualitative descriptive chosen Because capable describe in a way details dynamics social , political , and behavioral actor in context Regional Election Serang Regency in general narrative and contextual .

Election informant in study This done with use purposive sampling technique . This technique chosen Because allows researchers determine informant based on consideration certain relevant with objective research . Criteria informant covers individuals who have involvement direct in the regional election process Serang Regency in 2025, both as organizer , supervisor , and actor political local . In total there are six informant key , namely two members Commission General Election Commission (KPU) of Serang Regency , one member Committee Supervisor Election (Panwaslu), two cadres and administrators Party Golkar Serang Regency , as well as One observer political local . Characteristics informant reflect diversity role in structure

organization and contestation Regional elections , so that allows researchers get comprehensive perspective .

Data collection techniques in study This consists of on three method main , namely observation , interview in-depth , and study library . Observation done in a way directly on location research , namely at the Serang Regency KPU Office , Secretariat Party Golkar Serang Regency , and public areas place activity political ongoing . The goal is For observe pattern interactions and activities actor political in a way factual . Interview deep done to informant selected For dig view they about neutrality state officials and their implications to justice Regional elections . In addition , studies library done For strengthen framework conceptual and expanding theoretical understanding through study books , articles journal , report official , and relevant online news with theme study .

For ensure data validity , research This use technique triangulation sources and methods . Triangulation source done with compare information obtained from various group informants , such as organizer elections , parties politics , and supervisors elections . Triangulation method done with combine results observation , interviews , and studies library . This process aim For inspect data consistency , avoiding subjective bias , and improving validity results research . In addition , researchers also conducted checking repeat data (member check) with a number of informant For ensure suitability between results interpretation researchers and views informants in the field .

Data analysis in study This follow steps developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), namely data reduction , data presentation , and data extraction conclusion or verification . Stage data reduction is carried out with selecting ,

focusing , and simplifying relevant data with objective research . Stage data presentation is done with compile information to in form narrative thematic to make it easier interpretation . Next, the next stage withdrawal conclusion done through a reflective and iterative process , with linking results field findings with framework theory and context empirical Regional Election Serang Regency . Analysis done in a way inductive , where patterns and categories meaning built from data for produce deep understanding to the phenomenon being studied .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Patterns of State Official Involvement in the Serang Regency Regional Election

Case The 2024 Serang Regional Election will be highlight public and law after Court The Constitutional Court (MK) issued Decision Number 70/PHPB.BUP-XXIII/2025 on February 24, 2025, which is firm state that the Minister of Villages and PDTT, Yandri Susanto was involved in support candidates who are his wife , partner number 2nd order . Lawsuit filed by the couple candidate number massage One to Court Constitution reveal existence pattern interventions that are structured , systematic , and massive (TSM), which leads to violations principle neutrality state officials in election general . Intervention pattern This show existence utilization position public For interest political family in a way directly . Form concrete from pattern the includes :

Vertical relations of power	Ministry of Villages > village head, triggers partisanship	Documented decision
TSM (Structured, Systematic, Massive)	Systematic pressure from the center to the village	Witnesses and recordings

Source : processed by the author (2025)

Decision Court Constitution in case Regional Election Serang Regency emphasized that pattern the involvement of the Village Minister can categorized in a number of form . First , involvement the done through mobilization head village . The evidence presented in trial show that minister present in various activity such as haul, meeting Work with head village (Apdesi Work Meeting), as well as visit to the village area , and in chance the give directions to support partner candidate number sequence 2. This is reinforced by video recordings and testimony from various parties present in activity the .

Second , there is relation vertical power between state officials and heads village . Court evaluate that as Minister of Villages, the position officials the in a way structural own influence direct to head village . This is create relation the power that allows occurrence pressure political in a way fine and explicit , which encourages apparatus village For take sides in the political process . Third , the Court evaluate that action the done in a way structured , systematic , and massive (TSM). Indications of TSM are proven with existence extensive coordination , involving network head villages in many areas, as well as existence pattern repeated invitation in various activities . Evidence in the form of testimony , documents , and video recordings strengthen claim that practice partisanship done in a way organized and impactful wide .

Findings This show existence abuse authority position For influence preference political apparatus village as

Table 1. Intervention Patterns

Pattern Types	Forms of Involvement	Constitutional Court Evidence Basis
Mobilization of village heads	Presence and direct guidance at village events	Video and witnesses

an extension hand government center at the level local . Head village , as a device the government that should be neutral , to be target influence political vertical from central state officials who have power structural and symbolic . Involvement kind of This No only injure principles electoral democracy , but also shows weakness supervision to officials politics that has affiliate power with actors contestation local . In the context of Serang Regional Election , pattern This create inequality in the competitive arena politics and enlarge potential delegitimization results elections in the eyes public .

Analysis Neutrality Bureaucracy Based on the Weberian Model

In the system ideal bureaucracy according to Max Weber, bureaucracy positioned as a machine rational working based on rules , professionalism , and independence of strength politics . However , the case suspicion involvement of the Minister of Villages in Regional Election Serang Regency shows occurrence deviation Serious to principles bureaucracy neutral . Analysis This refers to six indicator main neutrality bureaucracy in Weberian Bureaucracy Model framework .

1. Impersonality (Impersonality)

One of principle fundamental from bureaucracy as put forward by Max Weber is impersonality , namely the requirement that every decisions and actions bureaucracy done in a way objective and neutral , without influenced by factors personal like connection family , loyalty personal , or interests political certain . In the context of this , bureaucrats , both ASN and officials political sued For guard distance from all form personal affiliation in operate function state institutions . However , in case Regional Election Serang Regency in

2024, the principle impersonality This experience violation serious . The Minister of Villages, Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration, who is formally the officials public with authority large administrative and symbolic at the level village , in fact allegedly use power his position For direct head villages to support his wife who is running himself as regent .

Court Constitution , in Decision Number 70/PHP.BUP-XXIII/2025, states that the Minister of Villages is proven attend activities that lead the heads villages in Serang Regency for side with the candidate number in order two, which is none other than his wife itself . This action clear injure principle impersonality Because policies and steps bureaucracy decided No on base needs institutional or welfare general , but rather based on connection personal and electoral interests of the family . More Far again , when a state officials exploit structure bureaucracy below For support actor political certain ones that have connection kinship with him , then No only neutrality corrupted bureaucracy , but also trust public towards institutional independence government .

In an ideal impersonal bureaucracy , every state officials must guard objectivity , compliance procedures that have been determined , and keep away influence emotional , affective , or familial from the retrieval process decision public . Weber himself state that " The ideal bureaucracy works in a way rational and free from influence affection , with system impersonal and hierarchical rules For ensure justice and efficiency ." (Weber in Thoha , 2008:15) So, in context Regional Election Serang Regency , violations to impersonality can said to be a form deviation to structure healthy and professional bureaucracy . This also shows How abuse position For interest

personal can damage structure normative bureaucracy that was built in a way rational by the state.

2. Hierarchy Clear Authority (Hierarchy of Authority)

Hierarchy authority This is one of the fundamental indicators that guarantee order , discipline organization , and impartiality state apparatus in operate his duties . In situations where state officials participate in Regional elections , structure clear hierarchy should help prevent abuse authority or involvement bureaucracy in political practical . Case happened at the party democracy Serang Regency concerns neutrality from a servant president (minister) who is considered help winning one of the partner candidates who are family from minister the . The official of that country happened to be new serving as Minister of Villages and PDT is considered mobilize mass in the form of apparatus village For support his wife who is running in the contest Regional elections .

Reported through news spread on social media , the Minister of Villages and PDT was present at the meeting Work Association The All Indonesia Village Government (APDESI) of Serang Regency is located in one of the lodging area Anyer . Aims and objectives state officials present at the event is request to apparatus village For make candidate pair number 01 successful in Regional Election Serang Regency . The news justified by one of apparatus the village that said that after the live event coordinate with team winner number sequence 01 (Gabriela, Michelle. 2025). Court Judge The Constitution at the time trial dispute Regional Election consider that head village have role crucial in mobilize choice residents in their respective villages . Case This describe condition neutrality state officials in party democracy of this country still very weak , it is proven Still

Lots case similar indeed on purpose No raised to public and become issue mere .

For prove from case the whether head village is derivative coordination from the Ministry of Villages and PDT. Head village someone officials government selected villages directly by the village community and his position as head government at the level village , narrative the explicit arranged in Constitution Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages (Putri Mulia, Vanya Karunia . 2022). Then the Ministry of Villages and PDT is under command The President , who has tasks in aspects development villages and areas rural areas . This ministry Work through coordination with government village province , so No Can until to level village (Syauqi , A & Setyahadi , MM 2021). Meanwhile head village stand Alone It means autonomous in arrange affairs House the stairs , the coordination line is in the government area . Therefore the head villages selected by the village community as well as responsible answer to government area , is not subordinate or extension hand direct from the Ministry of Villages and PDT.

When a state official is in a position strategic in bureaucracy participate in contestation Regional elections , there are more possibilities big that they will damage neutrality and principles hierarchy , especially If subordinate feel pressured or pushed For support superior they in maintain position or relationship work . Conditions This show shift from principle Weberian bureaucracy , which is based on the principle that every subordinate should subject to rules and functions position than interest personal or interest politics . So it must be given understanding deep when approaching party time democracy , so that subordinate No trapped in circle interest politics , later will harm self

yourself and the people around you (family).

3. Specialization Function (Division of Labor)

Max Weber proposed specialization and division work as a form optimal bureaucracy. The formal scope of officials referred to as " division " work " in bureaucracy. Tasks that are not clear and not organized in the patrimonial system is in stark contrast with distribution work . It is clear that tasks that are not clear and not organized hinder growth economy (Hummel, 2000:121). Bureaucracy is structure administrative with regulation written regulations that regulate duties and obligations of people, with hierarchy and division different work as a fundamental component . Because the principle impressionism state that choice must made with use objective standards , bureaucracy usually found in government , institutions education , company large , and organization non-profit (Sawir , 2020).

Distribution Work is the process of breaking down something work become parts that can managed that can done back . Division Work also known as specialization functional or specialized positions . In an organization , the division of Work leading to specialization and formation groups specialist . Because of the existence of specialization , different people do different tasks . Although work they Possible only is part small from overall operation organization , specialization allows employee For become expert in specialization them (Publicuho et al., 2025).

According to Max Weber, the division Work in organization bureaucracy can in the form of combination function or specialization function . Although in a way theoretically these processes different One each other, someone finish all

necessary steps For the product . On the other hand , a managers who practice specialization function concentrate on one different functions from function manager others . With method This is only effort combination from some good people in a way successful or simultaneous - which can finish product .

In the case of dispute regional elections regency attack 2024 with suspicion involving the Village Minister who is none other than a state official /ASN, this matter This is reflection that existence non-neutrality apparatus civil state and non-neutrality bureaucracy . So because that , thing This reap conflict in organization elections that should be neutral and professional. Based on specialization function , thing This show that existence fall in application of specialization indicators the function in which ASN or state officials should act neutral and not do maladministration act . Because the purpose from system bureaucracy That Alone is For create structure an efficient , consistent , and organized organization , which allows duties and responsibilities answer defined with clear .

4. Recruitment and Promotion Based on Qualifications (Technical Competence & Career Orientation)

According to Max Weber, work in organization bureaucracy can classified as a combination function or specialization function . Although these processes different One each other in a theoretically , everyone handles all necessary steps For product . On the other hand , a managers who practice specialization function concentrate on one different functions from function manager others . With approach This is only some successful or cooperative people who can succeed sell product (Adolph, 2016).

Type of structure this is very important in organization big so that a number of large number of people working can finish all work in a way structured , according to theory Max Weber's bureaucracy . In addition , only qualification techniques used For selection and promotion in bureaucracy . Management style bureaucracy , according to Max Weber, emphasizes the need organization For operate with a balanced and unbiased manner yielding to fickle desires or unfavorable feelings and intentions rational from supervisors and management (Kadir, 2012).

Max Weber put forward that in theory bureaucracy , competence professional and skills technical ideally become base in recruitment and promotion member staff , not patronage, politics , or ties personal . This is For ensure that state apparatus carries out task bureaucracy in a way effective , no impartial , and professional (Suaib et al., 2021). Promotion and appointment determined by qualifications and competencies individual For carry out relevant tasks with role they .

However disputes that arose in the regional elections Serang Regency 2024 is one of them involving suspicion non-neutrality apparatus civil servants (ASN) and officials structural in government area . In the alleged This there is minister participating villages involved in organization elections . Moreover again , candidate winner This is his wife . Therefore That suspicion from case This show that existence personal relationship between state officials and also candidates said . Seeing existence case This can concluded that there is role active state officials /ASN in win partner candidate certain , good in a way direct and No direct . Promotion internal state employees or officials matter the intertwined from existence personal relationships . So things This smear

principle bureaucracy that should be applied with Correct .

5. Written Formal Rules (Rules and Procedures)

Indicator this Weberian theory serves as a foundation for every action bureaucracy to remain rational , objective , and detached from influence personal subjectivity as well as interest politics . For ensure that officials public operate his/her duties and functions are appropriate with provision laws and procedures applicable administrative matters , there are diverse standard and documented regulations . However violation the formal rules often happened , well in a way open and disguised during the dispute process Regional elections involving participation state officials . In fact all over layers of society provide his contribution For sustainability something Regional elections , however need noticed help the given in accordance portion , without violate regulation organization Regional Elections (Permana et al. 2022).

For realize Indonesia's expectations are in line with mandate of the 1945 Constitution, state officials must free professional from corruption , collusion , and nepotism . Then free from intervention political so that capable provide service public to the community (I Wayan Yoga Pratama Putra et al., 2022). To uphold neutrality in party democracy , law has arrange in a way complex in A rule shaped Constitution Number 10 of 2016, contains rule to mechanisms , requirements , and organization Regional Election in a way directly in Indonesia. In detail it is written in Article 70 explains during partner candidate campaign forbidden include three type apparatus government , one of them state officials and heads village . Then explained more carry on in Article 71, that existence prohibition make effort For benefit or harm one of them partner candidates by

state officials. So look regulations that are drawn up Already such appearance, but Still just There is naughty officials do violation in party democracy.

Then investigate from lawsuit matters conveyed by the couple candidate number sequence 02 to Court The Constitution, which contains suspicion involvement minister in help winner number sequence 01. Need known sequence reporting to Court Constitution if know existence oddity moment Regional elections. If one of them partner candidate believe results Regional Election colored by fraud structured, systematic, and massive (TSM) which has an impact significant on earnings voice, they can submit dispute Regional Election to the Constitutional Court. Submission dispute This written in Article 157 of Law Number 10 of 2016. The Constitutional Court further will follow up reports submitted in order to be able to decide a decision that is not profitable One parties (Apritania , SA 2021). In the case of dispute Regional Election Serang Regency , MK issued decision in the form of order intended to the KPU for do collection voice repeat . This decision is final and binding according to Article 24C paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution, so that No There is submission effort law continued . This procedure has develop become tool important For ensure that results regional elections legitimized and provide road constitutional For settlement electoral disputes .

6. Future Career Full- time Vocation

In concept bureaucracy rational-legal developed by Max Weber, one of the fundamental characteristics of the ideal bureaucracy is that position in bureaucracy is A career full full- time vocation, which is based on professionalism and dedication to service public , and separateness from interest

politics (Weber, 1946). This means that a person officials bureaucracy or state officials should operate his duties in a way full time For interests of the state and people, not as an instrument power personal or tool partisan politics .

In context said , the case Regional Election Serang Regency in 2024 shows violation Serious to principle this . Decision Court Constitution Number 119/PHP.BUP-XXII/2024 confirms that the Minister of Villages, Yandri Susanto, was proven do intervention to head villages to support his wife , Queen Zakiyah, who nominated himself as the Regent of Serang. This in a way bright violate principle neutrality state officials and become form abuse position public For family electoral interests .

If seen through lens Weber's theory , action This show that position public the No Again executed as " call career full time " for the country, but rather as a position that can mobilized for the benefit of family and politics practical . Weber with firm mention that officials bureaucracy must operate his role technocratically and freely from interest personal and loyalty politics , as well as has a devotion to impersonal functional duty (Gerth & Mills, 1946:199).

In the system ideal bureaucracy , separation between affairs public and private is principle main . When the official tall like minister use authority structurally For push head a village which is known as is at in structure state administration instead support candidate certain , then principle This has violated . Rakmawanto (2007:112) states that bureaucracy should positioned as a neutral and independent force from power politics , and that position bureaucratic No tool mobilization political power .

Involvement minister in campaign disguised to apparatus the village also

proves that career bureaucratic as a job full time For service public has co-opted by electoral motives, which in Weber's term is form regression from rationalization bureaucracy to form patrimonial relations based on personal and family closeness (Weber, 1978). In this situation kind of In this case , neutral competence is replaced by political loyalty, so that professionalism apparatus damaged by pressure structural from superior his politics .

Need noted that although a minister is position politics , he still is part from machine the government of the country being sued operate his duties based on legal-formal principles . Involvement minister in victory of a particular candidate pair No only violation ethics and law (Law No. 10 of 2016, Article 71), but also degrades integrity bureaucracy as an institution service neutral public . Case This reflect failure implementation principle career futures full in Weberian bureaucracy . When the position public used For interest political family , then bureaucracy No Again function as a force rational - legal, but rather become tool power of a nature private and particularistic . This is threat Serious for neutrality bureaucracy , trust public , and quality electoral democracy at the level local .

Case Regional Election Serang Regency shows that the bureaucratic model in Indonesia is not yet fully represent Weberian ideal character . In the Weberian framework , bureaucracy should Work in a way rational - legal, based rules , and free from interest personal and politics . However , the findings study show existence regression going to form patrimonial bureaucracy , where personal loyalty and relationships power vertical precisely replace principle impersonality and professionalism . Phenomenon This in line with Irving Levine's (1985) criticism which states

that bureaucracy in developing countries often becomes an arena for reproduction power politics , not instrument rational state. With Thus , involvement state officials in Serang Regional Election can understood No just violation ethics administrative , but also symptoms hybridization between bureaucracy rational and patrimonial structures , which result in form " half " bureaucracy rational , half personal".

In a Weberian context , this deviation indicates that the relationship between political officials and bureaucratic apparatus at the local level has not yet experienced *a disenchantment* or full rationalization of traditional power relations. The power of ministers over village heads, as revealed in the Constitutional Court ruling, confirms the existence of an asymmetry of authority that allows for covert political pressure. This creates a distortion in the hierarchical structure of the bureaucracy, where political loyalty is prioritized over adherence to legal norms and official ethics. Thus, the Serang case is a concrete example of the failure to implement Weberian bureaucratic rationality in the context of local Indonesian politics that still has patrimonial and neopatrimonial characteristics .

The novelty of this research lies in its analytical focus on the tension between the Weberian bureaucratic model and patrimonial practices in the context of local elections, particularly through a case study of state officials' involvement in the Serang Regency elections. Unlike previous studies such as Amir & Hertanto (2023) which emphasized the legal aspects of ASN neutrality, and Millah et al. (2024) which highlighted ethical violations by public officials in the 2024 elections, this study positions the phenomenon of state officials' lack of neutrality as empirical evidence of the

failure of Weberian bureaucratic rationalization at the local level.

Furthermore, this study also makes a theoretical contribution by adapting the Weberian model to the contemporary Indonesian political context, characterized by patronage relations and local oligarchies. Combining Weber's conceptual analysis and Levine's critique of bureaucracy in developing countries, this study demonstrates that bureaucratic neutrality is not merely a matter of ethics or law, but also a matter of the power structures and political culture inherent in state institutions.

Implications Violation Neutrality To Democracy Local

Neutrality bureaucracy is principles that emphasize that bureaucracy must function as a provider service public that is not influenced by any political power. The importance of neutrality lies in the ability of bureaucracy to give efficient and effective service, without there is pressure or influence from party political certain. Law Number 5 of 2014 concerning State Civil Apparatus, confirms return importance principle neutrality in bureaucracy. Law This emphasize that ASN must own integrity, professionalism, and freedom from mix hand politics (Ray et al., 2025).

main goal is ensure that state apparatus can realize the vision of the country and fulfil community needs through service clean public from practice corruption, collusion, and nepotism. In addition, ASN is expected to play a role in guard unity and oneness nation, with principle demanding neutrality every ASN members for no influenced by interests politics or groups certain, so that can give objective and fair service. The tendency bureaucracy to support strength dominant can cause disappearance objectivity, emergence

biased service, and improvement procedure excessive bureaucracy.

Implications from existence non-neutrality bureaucracy or state officials towards organization elections Serang Regency 2024 of course just give very broad impact among the district community attack. That alone one of them impact there is existence suspicion fraud so that can cause public trust is increasing reduced. The fact that a minister village follow as well as in campaign one of candidate The Regent of Serang is one of the reason Why There is problem fraud in Serang district. It is natural that part Serang residents believe that the victory of candidate pair 02 is false. Because her husband, a minister village, involved in campaign. In addition, public trust in regency the decrease. Because they believe that the KPU Bawaslu and other parties involved fail supervise elections.

Participation rate voters reduce After the exit decision mk No. 70/PHPB.BUP-XXIII/2025. Although expected with With the existence of this PSU, residents Serang Regency can return practice and celebrate democracy, but community participation in elections in Serang Regency instead decrease If compared to with the election held on November 27, 2024. Only 790,595 voters were registered. official use right vote in this election, or around 64.49 percent of the 1,225,871 registered voters in the Voter List Fixed (DPT). Compared with elections the last one took place on November 27, 2024, the number This show level participation declining voter turnout.

With 904,155 voters, or 73.75 percent from DPT, the number voters present more high on November 27, 2024. The striking difference between second amount voters This show that community participation in elections has decrease in a way significant. 13. This is show How

the presence of PSU has caused inhabitant become not enough involved in community ; thing This caused by problems fraud past elections and their recurrence money politics in the PSU. Reduced involvement inhabitant in this PSU clear impact on erosion trust inhabitant to place the .

This can also be influence trend institution bureaucracy For functions as a tool power than as a servant public . delegitimization results elections because ASN and officials bureaucracy considered do interventions that are not fair in the process . reduce trust public to impartiality organizer elections and bureaucracy . More Far again , thing This can cause intensification the real conflict can avoided If service public and oversight done in a way professional and precise target . Mix hand political has cause organization government become No regular and destructive values democracy and meritocracy .

Response Institutional to Allegations Violation Neutrality

One of the problem that becomes highlight in Regional Election Serang Regency in 2024 is suspicion violation neutrality state officials . Court Constitution (MK) in the verdict mention existence violations of a nature structured , systematic , and massive (TSM), especially related involvement state officials , such as Village Ministers, and heads village in the process of winning one of them partner candidate . Alleged This cause question about to what extent is the institution elections , in particular Commission General Election (KPU), party politics , as well as actor government local respond and anticipate abuse power in electoral contestation .

Commission General Election Commission (KPU) of Serang Regency as the organizer technical elections confirm that the institution is not interpreter

regulation , but rather implementer from provisions that have been determined by the Indonesian General Elections Commission (KPU RI). One of the regulations that are made base in ensure neutrality state officials are KPU Regulation Number 13 of 2024 concerning Campaign . In regulation mentioned , the prohibition to involvement of ASN, head village , until BUMN and BUMD officials emphasized in a way explicit , including prohibition make a decision or action that benefits one partner candidate .

After determination partner candidate , we do socialization of PKPU 13/2024 concerning implementation campaigns and instruments law other For complied with , especially by parties who frequently made into subject suspicion violation , " he said a representative of the Serang Regency KPU (WWC, 2025). The KPU claims has do socialization in a way face advance with various element such as ASN, students , and the general public . In addition , the KPU also carried out distribution tool demonstrations , talk shows , and giving directions to ad hoc bodies at the level subdistrict until village .

Respond lawsuit from partner candidate 01 (Andika-Nanang), the KPU explained that lawsuit the is right constitutionally legitimate and protected law . However , the KPU emphasized that in application submitted to the Constitutional Court, no There is not a single point that is direct target performance or negligence of the Serang Regency KPU . " Object lawsuit is the KPU Decree as the basis formal , but substance lawsuit questioning the behavior of other candidates . And for ensure whether it is a violation or not , that's it become realm Bawaslu , " explained the KPU.

As a party bearer Andika-Nanang pair , Party Golkar look at that actions involving state officials in winner

candidate certain is form violation ethics and principles democracy . "That's not ethical . Because ASN and position public it has power , power That Can press and influence . It should be neutral only , no "take sides , " said the Chairman of the Golkar DPD Serang Regency (WWC, 2025). For Golkar , the involvement of state officials in activity winner leading to violations principle democracy such as LUBER and JURDIL, because happen inequality power and potential pressure to voters .

Party Golkar also justified his application For done collection voice rework (PSU) as part from effort uphold principle democracy , not just maneuver politics . In perspective they , if the people's voice was obtained through ways that are not normative , then the election process That Alone lost legitimacy . " Is because society does not like , or because society is affected pressure ? That's what it takes tested in court , " he continued . More far away , Golkar evaluate that repair to front must done through improvement quality candidates nominated by the party politics . They also stated that regulations Actually Already Enough firm , but problem main lies in its implementation in the field . "If the regulations Already good , next the practice that must be controlled , " he said . In the context of supervision to neutrality apparatus village , Golkar Not yet detailing specific strategies , but implies importance internal party evaluation and improvements at the cadre and nomination levels .

Different with Golkar , National Mandate Party (PAN) as the sponsor couple Queen Zakiyah and Najib more choose position defensive to MK decision . PAN stated that his party respect the legal process and will follow all over applicable mechanism . "We submit only

on the Constitutional Court's decision . This means , this right of course mechanism valid law , and we follow it just . The principle yes road in accordance " rules , " said the Chairman of the PAN DPD of Serang Regency (WWC, 2025). However when asked question activity collection head village by the Minister of Villages, PAN denied that matter That is part from political strategy or campaign disguised . "That is not what we know discuss support to partner candidate . That's a matter work head village no , no political practical , " he said . Statement This as if deny MK findings , which stated that collection head village the is part from a systematic strategy that benefits one candidate .

PAN's attitude shows How actor political tend use approach normative For respond accusation violation . This is in accordance with findings of Aspinall and Mietzner (2010), that in context political local in Indonesia, relations between elites and officials bureaucracy often patronizing in nature , so that difficult separate interest professional and political . With No touch root problem in a way critical , PAN actually display effort legitimacy political rather than reflection institutional response from the KPU, Golkar , and PAN shows complexity in face issue neutrality state officials in regional elections . In one side , KPU as the implementer technical elections Still depending on the realm supervision Election Supervisory Agency in handle violation , whereas party political own position strategic good as a carrier and the party being sued .

When the institution elections relying solely on formal norms and parties political reluctant carry out internal reforms or encourage update regulation , then issue neutrality will always become point vulnerable democracy local . As declared by the Court Constitution in

decision Serang Pilkada , TSM violations not only injure integrity elections , but also has the potential erode trust public to institutions politics . Therefore that , response institutional nature normative and symbolic just No enough . Necessary commitment structural For reform patronage practices in bureaucracy and building system a truly democratic election fair .

Theoretically, this study shows that the Indonesian bureaucracy has not yet achieved the rational-legal ideal as envisioned by Weber. The bureaucratic structure remains mired in ambiguity between administrative professionalism and political loyalty. This finding extends Weberian theory by emphasizing the importance of viewing bureaucracy not merely as an administrative machine, but also as an arena of power relations that can be influenced by social, cultural, and political patronage factors. Within this framework, bureaucratic neutrality must be understood as a dynamic social process, not a static institutional condition.

Practically, this research implies the need for more fundamental bureaucratic reform, particularly in terms of fencing off the politicization of public office, strengthening mechanisms for monitoring the neutrality of state officials, and increasing the ethical capacity of civil servants in facing political pressure. These reforms need to be accompanied by a reorientation of bureaucratic culture from personal loyalty to professional loyalty based on law and public service. Furthermore, to strengthen local democracy, collaboration between election management bodies, political parties, and civil society is crucial in building a participatory oversight system that ensures the neutrality of state officials. Thus, electoral democracy will operate not only procedurally but also

substantively—based on fairness, integrity, and public trust.

CONCLUSION

Dispute Regional Election Serang Regency reflects problem Serious related neutrality state officials in elections local . Participation head village and officials public in support one of partner candidate trigger conflict that led to the PSU decision by the Court Constitution . KPU as the organizer technical confirm his position as executor regulation , not enforcer law , while response party political show difference orientation between defense procedural and encouragement update democracy . Findings This reveal that violation neutrality Still difficult prevented Because weakness supervision and enforcement sanctions . This is signify existence gap in governance elections local , which requires strengthening regulation , improvement ethics politics and supervision institutions for democracy local more fair and with integrity .

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