IDENTITY POLITICS VIOLATIONS IN INDONESIAN ELECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Identity politics violations are a frequent phenomenon in elections in Indonesia, where ethnic, religious, ethnic, gender, or other social group identities are manipulated or exploited for political gain. The purpose of this study is to identify, analyze, and understand more deeply about identity politics violations in elections, as well as their implications for democracy and Indonesian society as a whole. The analysis will be based on the theory of identity politics, multiculturalism, and political participation. The results of the analysis show that political elites and candidates for regional heads tend to use or maintain identity politics for political interests and strengthen power hegemony. As a result, the use of religious issues as political tools in the 2019 Presidential Election is a source of tension and a potential threat to the country's social and political stability. With a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, this research is expected to provide valuable insights for political stakeholders, electoral institutions, and society at large to develop prevention and countermeasures against identity politics violation and strengthen the foundation of an inclusive and equitable democracy in Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

The development of democracy continued to change from the time of colonialism to the New Order era until the implementation of the pancasila democratic system after the reform in 1998 (Akbar et al., 2023). The history of elections in Indonesia reflects efforts towards political inclusivity starting from the early period of independence to the implementation of multiparty elections. The importance of political participation in democratic systems is reflected in the political rights and freedoms afforded to citizens, including the right to vote and be elected and participate in political processes (Febriantanto, 2019).

Political identity refers to the way individuals identify themselves in a political context, which is often influenced by factors such as ethnicity, religion, ethnicity, gender, and other social groups (Khoirunnisa, 2023). This identity plays an important role in shaping a person's political preferences, as it can influence their views on certain issues, candidate choices, and political party affiliation (Panjaitan et al., 2023). For example, individuals who identify as belonging to a tribe or ethnic group may tend to support candidates perceived to represent their interests or identity. Similarly, factors such as religion and gender can also be decisive in shaping a person's political preferences. This concept of political identity is particularly relevant in understanding political dynamics in electoral processes, where identity considerations often play a key role in voter decision-making (AZZAHARA, 2023).

The General Election in Indonesia is an important milestone in the country's democratic process. Indonesia's electoral system is based on democratic principles that permit the active participation of citizens in determining their representation in the legislative and executive institutions. The election process is direct and multiparty, where voters have the right to vote for candidates from various political parties participating in electoral contests (Mufidah & Syarofi, 2024). Political parties play a major role in the electoral process, both as organizers and participants with diverse political campaign strategies to gain voter support. Political campaign procedures include various activities such as political speeches, mass gatherings, and

social media, which are regulated by law to ensure fairness, transparency, and openness in the democratic process of elections in Indonesia (Kodiyat, 2019).

Identity politics violations are a frequent phenomenon in elections in Indonesia, where ethnic, religious, ethnic, gender, or other social group identities are manipulated or exploited for political gain. In election campaigns, candidates, political parties, or interest groups often use identity politics as a tool to gain voter support, sometimes in unethical or adverse ways. This can include the spread of inflammatory narratives between different groups, the spread of hoaxes or false information attacking specific identities, or excessive emphasis on identity issues to distract from substantial issues.

Identity politics violations can disrupt the integrity of elections and create polarization in society, so it is important to implement strict regulations and raise public awareness of the importance of voting based on substantial political programs and visions, not solely based on identity.

Problems and challenges related to identity politics violations include the phenomenon of political polarization that increasingly divides society, conflicts that arise between groups with different political identities, as well as their negative impact on the integrity of elections and overall political stability. With rising tensions between political groups and an increase in divisive rhetoric, elections and political stability have become threatened, underscoring the urgency to tackle these challenges effectively.

The purpose of this study is to identify, analyze, and understand more deeply about identity politics violations in elections in Indonesia, as well as their implications for democracy and Indonesian society as a whole. Through this approach, the study aims to explore the phenomenon of identity politics violations in the context of elections, uncovering strategies and tactics used by political actors to utilize ethnic, religious, ethnic, gender, and other social group identities in political campaigns. With a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, this research is expected to provide valuable insights for political stakeholders, electoral institutions, and society at large to develop prevention and countermeasures against identity politics violations and strengthen the foundation of an inclusive and equitable democracy in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this study is a qualitative approach with literature studies as a data collection technique. First, researchers will identify relevant literature sources through searches in various databases, journals, and official documents related to identity politics, elections, and democracy in Indonesia. Then, after selection of relevant literature sources, the data will be analyzed systematically by identifying patterns, themes, and trends related to identity politics violations in elections. The results of the analysis will be interpreted to develop a deeper understanding of how identity politics is manipulated in elections in Indonesia and its impact on democracy and society. The findings will be compiled in a research report that presents a description of the methodology, the results of the analysis, and the implications of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Indonesia is a country rich in diversity of races, religions, cultures, and other social groups. With more than 300 ethnic groups, diverse religions and beliefs, and diverse cultures, Indonesia is one of the most diverse countries in the world. This diversity is reflected in the different customs, languages, arts, and beliefs in each region. However, in the midst of this wealth of diversity, it is often used to commit identity politics violations. These violations occur when the identity of a tribe, religion, ethnicity, or other social group is manipulated or exploited for narrow political interests. For example, in the context of elections, politicians or political

parties may use identity issues to gain political support, thus causing polarization and conflict in society.

Research results of Ardipandanto (2020) found that in the 2019 Presidential Election (*Pilpres, Pemilihan Presiden*), there was a violation of identity politics through religious issues in political competition. The issue of religion became a focus that was strengthened by various parties, including participants in the presidential election, in an effort to win voter support. This results in the resulting political situation being vulnerable to being used by irresponsible parties for political interests. This condition is mandated to strengthen the political agenda that aims to divide the nation and threaten the sovereignty of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). Thus, the use of religious issues as a political tool in the 2019 Presidential Election is a source of tension and a potential threat to the country's social and political stability.

Other identity politics violations successfully analyzed by Sahalatua et al. (2018). From the results of the analysis using the theory of identity politics, multiculturalism, and political participation, it can be concluded that political elites and candidates for regional heads tend to use or maintain identity politics for political interests and strengthen power hegemony. This practice has an impact on political dynamics in the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election, where certain identities, such as ethnicity and religion, play an important role in political strategy. Potential candidates can use this identity to gain a stronger bargaining position and influence voter preferences, suggesting that those identity factors have a significant impact on shaping support and election outcomes.

In addition, in Papua, identity politics has become an integral part of the experience of the Papuan people, both in the colonial period, the New Order era, and after the enactment of Special Autonomy (*Otsus, Otonomi Khusus*). During the Special Autonomy period, tribal or tribal identity again strengthened dominance compared to unitary identity as Papuans. As a result, elections are often seen more as a strategy and tool for political elites to seize resources than as a vehicle for building good governance and improving the welfare of Papuans as a whole. This suggests that identity politics can be a dominant factor in local political dynamics in Papua, which sometimes trumps efforts to prioritize development and people's welfare (Pamungkas & Triindriasari, 2018).

The violation of identity politics has a significant impact both directly and indirectly on society and the political process. Directly, such violations can undermine public confidence in the democratic process. When ethnic, religious, or ethnic identities are manipulated for political gain, it can result in the perception that elections are unfair or non-transparent, diminishing the legitimacy of elected governments and weakening democratic foundations. In addition, the violation of identity politics also increases political polarization, deepens the gap between different identity groups, and divides society. This can complicate the process of dialogue and consensus in political decision-making and increase the risk of social conflict and intergroup tensions. Therefore, it is important to recognize and overcome violations of identity politics in order to ensure political stability, democratic sustainability, and community harmony.

Responses to identity politics violations involve actions from governments, election watchdogs, and civil society. The use of identity politics has been prohibited by Article 280 paragraph 1 of Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning the Implementation of Elections. The article regulates the implementation of campaigns that are prohibited from using approaches based on ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup (SARA) (Triono, 2023); and also in Article 243 paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code Law (Ardipandanto, 2023). In addition, in KPU Regulation (PKPU) Number 33 of 2018 concerning General Election Campaigns on points (c) and (d), namely, c. Insulting any person, religion, ethnicity, race, class, candidate and/or other election participant; d. Inciting and pitting individuals or communities (KPU, 2022).

The government's attitude in anticipation of identity politics is to strengthen the rules and regulations governing political campaigns, enforce laws against violations that occur and

provide political education to increase public awareness of the importance of voting based on the substance of political programs and visions. Election supervisory agencies, such as the KPU (General Elections Commission), also have an important role in monitoring and following up on identity politics violations during campaigns and elections. In addition, citizens are often involved in monitoring the political process and exerting pressure on governments to act fairly and transparently. However, in the face of identity politics violations, there are challenges such as lack of resources, ineffective coordination between agencies, and resistance from parties involved in unethical political practices. Despite efforts, success in tackling the issue is often hampered by the complexity and intensity of politics.

Links to laws and regulations in addressing identity politics violations in elections are critical to ensuring the integrity of democratic processes. Existing regulations, including election laws and campaign codes of conduct, provide an important framework for curbing the abuse of identity politics by candidates and political parties. However, there are often shortcomings in regulations that allow loopholes for unethical political practices, among which unclear or weak rules governing political campaigns can make room for identity politics-based campaigns that divide society. Therefore, recommendations are needed for related legal improvements, such as strengthening regulations to prohibit inflammatory or discriminatory identity politics-based campaigns, as well as increasing law enforcement against violations that occur. This can be done through a more assertive and effective revision of laws, an increase in the role of election supervisory agencies in enforcing rules, and increased public awareness of the importance of voting based on the substance of the program and political vision put forward by candidates.

The violation of identity politics has a significant impact on democracy in Indonesia. When ethnic, religious, or ethnic identities are manipulated for political gain, it can undermine the integrity of democratic processes and undermine public confidence in the legitimacy of elected governments (Herdiansah, 2017). Such violations can also deepen political polarization and trigger inter-group conflicts that can disrupt political and social stability (Sihono, 2024). In addition, political practices based on identity politics often result in political representation that is less inclusive and does not represent the interests of the entire society fairly. This can reduce the quality of political representation and hinder the development of a society based on justice and equality (Sos, 2024). Therefore, it is important to tackle the violation of identity politics to ensure the preservation of democracy, the legitimacy of elected governments, and the better quality of political representation for all citizens.

Identity politics basically refers to political practices that garner support from certain groups because they feel injustice or dissatisfaction stemming from similar backgrounds, such as ethnicity, race, religion, or gender. This identity is not only a sociological problem, but also has significant political implications. Identity politics has the potential to produce both positive and negative consequences in the context of a country as diverse as Indonesia (Perdana, 2023).

Efforts to prevent and overcome identity politics violations in elections require a series of efforts involving policies, legal reforms, and social and educational efforts. Strengthening regulations and strict law enforcement against political practices that utilize ethnic, religious, or ethnic identity as a tool to gain political support. These include revisions to electoral laws to prohibit inflammatory or discriminatory identity politics-based campaigns, as well as an increased role of election watchdogs in enforcing the rules. In addition, greater social and educational efforts are needed to strengthen understanding of the importance of tolerance and diversity in politics. This can be done through political education programs that involve the community at large, social campaigns that emphasize the values of unity and diversity, and training for candidates and political parties on ethical and inclusive campaign practices. Thus, through the joint efforts of various stakeholders, it is hoped that identity politics violations in

future elections can be minimized so as to maintain democratic integrity and promote more inclusive and fair political representation for all citizens.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion described earlier, it was found that identity politics is a crucial issue that affects political dynamics and democratic stability. Political practices that utilize the identity of a particular tribe, religion, race, or group are often played by political elites to gain support and win elections. This leads to political polarization, vulnerability to social conflict, and a decrease in the legitimacy of elected governments. Handling identity politics violations requires cross-sectoral efforts, including strengthening regulations, strict law enforcement, inclusive political education, and the active role of the community in overseeing the political process. Thus, the conclusions of this study emphasize the need for integrated and sustainable action to ensure the continuity of a healthy democracy and prevent the use of destructive identity politics in elections in Indonesia.

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