

Direct Regional Head Elections and Excessive Corruption Loopholes

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ABSTRACT

Corruption remains one of the most pressing challenges undermining democracy, governance, and public trust in Indonesia, particularly following the implementation of decentralization and regional autonomy. While regional autonomy was intended to bring prosperity and equal development, in practice it has often facilitated the spread of corrupt practices from central government to regional administrations. The issue has become more acute with the implementation of direct regional head elections (pilkada), which, though designed to strengthen democratic participation, have created significant financial and political pressures on candidates, often resulting in the misuse of state budgets and the normalization of money politics. This study aims to examine the relationship between direct regional elections and the proliferation of corruption loopholes, highlighting how electoral mechanisms inadvertently encourage corrupt behavior. The research employs a descriptive explorative method, relying on secondary data from scholarly works, official documents, and prior research, and analyzing them through qualitative descriptive analysis to uncover patterns and systemic weaknesses. The findings indicate that direct elections, while enhancing political legitimacy, also generate high financial demands that compel candidates to seek external funding, leading to post-election corruption through budget manipulation, project markups, politicization of social assistance, and collusion between bureaucrats, legislatures, and political investors. Moreover, the system often fails to ensure accountability, as legislative oversight is weak and public mechanisms for monitoring leaders remain limited. The study concludes that although direct elections provide opportunities for citizen participation, they also institutionalize structural vulnerabilities that sustain corruption. This paradox underscores the need for reforms in electoral financing, stricter accountability mechanisms, and stronger institutional checks and balances to prevent democracy from becoming a breeding ground for corruption.

Keyword: Decentralization, Corruption, Regional Autonomy, Direct Regional Elections

INTRODUCTION

One of the most concerning phenomena in the lives of Indonesian society and nation in the last few decades is the rampant corruption. Corruption has placed Indonesia in the ranks of the most corrupt countries in the world (Fazzan, 2015). Several corruption cases that have been revealed have not deterred other corruptors, and the more the government is aggressive in eradicating corruption, the more clever the actions of

corruptors to deceive government officials in particular. The position and office held are powerful weapons in addition to several reasons to deceive state law enforcement officials in the field of corruption eradication (Abdullah, 2015).

Corruption in Indonesia is like a very acute disease. Various antidotes have been given, but the disease has not been cured. Corruption practices have become symptoms and have infected almost all aspects of life (Fatkhuri, 2017). Corruption viewed from the public interest, according to Carl J. Friedrich is when a person who holds power or is authorized to do certain things expects a monetary reward or other kind of gift that is not permitted by law, persuades to take steps or help anyone who provides a gift so that it really endangers the public interest (Sosiawan, 2019).

In various parts of the world, corruption always gets more attention than other crimes. This phenomenon is understandable considering the negative impact caused by this crime. The impacts can affect various areas of life. Corruption is a serious problem, this crime can endanger the stability and security of society, endanger socio-economic development, and also politics, and can damage the values of democracy and morality because over time this act seems to become a culture. Corruption is a threat to the ideals of a just and prosperous society (Drury et al., 2006).

The term corruption comes from Latin, namely *corruptio*. In English it is corruption or corrupt, in French it is called corruption and in Dutch it is called *coruptie*. It seems that the word corruption in Indonesian was born from Dutch. Corrupt means rotten, bad; likes to accept bribes (using his power for his own interests and so on). Corruption is a bad act (such as embezzlement, accepting bribes and so on) (Setiadi, 2018). The term corruption in Indonesia was originally not a legal term. Even the term corruption itself comes from Latin, "*Corruptio*", which among other things means to damage, make rotten, bribe is a criminal act that enriches oneself which directly harms the country's finances and economy (Gans-Morse et al., 2018).

The famous journalist, the late Mucktar Lubis once said in the seventies that corruption had become the culture of the Indonesian nation. A statement that tickles and offends many people, but is difficult to deny. It is well known by the public that corruption is a crime that harms state finances. The actual fact is broader, that corruption is a depraved, rotten, evil, ugly, dishonest act, and other negative connotations, even an extraordinary crime. Thus the understanding, scope, and form of corruption can be examined literally, legally, sociologically, politically, and so on (Waluyo, 2014)

Corruption in Indonesia is a very serious crime and has a serious impact on the Indonesian nation, and the most disadvantaged is the community, the welfare of the people which is the dream of everyone is difficult to realize, while its eradication is very slow (Ridwan, 2012). State financial expenditures have been regulated in the Government Budget Program Planning System, which is carried out by Bappenas, the Ministry of Finance, the Indonesian House of Representatives and the Department or State Institution as the implementer of budget use. The process starts from planning, implementation, supervision to budget accountability. This is where collective corruption takes place (Everett et al., 2007).

Because it is a congregation, the state money that is eroded is also not a little. The corruption process begins with lobbying to produce a project that will be targeted for corruption. Then there is the determination of a higher price (markup), fees for services in passing a project, banking fees for storing budget money in the bank that provides the fee, implementation of work under the specifications, command participation, financial

assistance for agencies or activities of the project provider agency from the tender winner, direct procurement that is not in accordance with the rules, fictitious accountability, supervision that hides findings of budget implementation irregularities, even to the handling of compromised cases.

This congregational corruption does not only occur in the central government, but also in the regional government. It even occurs in cooperation between the two. This is where the negative impact of regional autonomy arises, namely the balance of Central and Regional finances and in legislative bodies such as the DPR RI and DPRD. There are regional officials who are willing to spend money to take care of regional rights. The vulnerability of the budget process starts from the planning process, implementation, control or supervision of the budget to budget accountability. The regent or mayor's official salary is relatively small, but the hidden income that someone can possibly obtain if they serve as regent or mayor includes tax collection fees, fees from banks if they deposit their budget money in a bank, donations from every entrepreneur who gets a project, licensing fees issued, not to mention facilities and allowances and so on.

That is why many people are eager to hold public office. For that purpose, sometimes they "borrow" funds from third parties (sponsorship or campaign teams). If elected, some promise attractive rewards. The funds are used for the campaign, even to provide a "dowry" to a political party as their political vehicle (Azmi, 2023). The funds are also poured out to their constituents with the term "struggle" which is an acronym for rice, clothes, and money. The provision of these struggle funds is conveyed during the "dawn attack" (giving gifts during the election). The incumbent also uses his position to woo his constituents by providing projects that concern the wider community. It is done before the election so that the giver will benefit. The response is positive, the community considers it the "fruit of democracy".

The effects appear after the election. The official must return the money that has been spent. One of the targets is of course the state budget that he manages. So corruption occurs. Such are the consequences that arise from political practices in the election process that are "justified" to use money (money politics). Almost every day there is always news about corruption, budget irregularities, embezzlement, manipulation, and price inflation. Corruption in this country is in a worrying situation. Acts of corruption occur in various regions, from big cities to remote areas. Starting from government officials, private sector, to parking attendants, all have committed corruption. The shame and guilt are covered up with false pride in the results of these despicable actions. It is no wonder that the international community places this country as one of the most corrupt countries in the world.

One of the fruits of reform is the implementation of regional autonomy. Regional autonomy is the central government's straightforward answer to the problem of inequality in development and welfare. After a long time, it is not prosperity and development that is evenly distributed, but corruption. This increasingly widespread corruption behavior is because during the New Order era, corruption only occurred in government centers. One source of corruption is the implementation of regional elections (pilkada), especially since direct elections have been held. Now becoming a regional head is like gambling, you have to deposit a certain amount of "betting money". If the candidate loses, the money is forfeited, but if the candidate wins, he will definitely have the opportunity to accumulate wealth.

The negative impact of the Regional Autonomy policy that has been implemented since 2001 is the decentralization of corruption. This extraordinary crime is not only rampant in the central government, but also spreads to the regions. The mode of corruption is carried out through shopping markups, becoming project brokers, and manipulating official travel. This action can be carried out by executive officials, legislative officials, or private parties. It is even possible for collaboration between the three elements, for example between the executive and legislative, between the private sector and the executive and between the private sector and the legislative through the project broker mode (Atnan, 2014).

Case after case of corruption that befalls politicians or elites is a real form that corruption has become a kind of mentality and awareness that is difficult to change. Many individuals or public officials commit corruption without fear of being caught in the law. The mentality of corruption is created by a modern mentality such as a consumer culture, easy going, not wanting to work hard, and so on. It's called mentality, the stronger the law is enforced to ensnare corruption, the stronger the corruption displayed by elites and officials. The desire to obtain a luxurious personal life for a corruptor by carrying out acts of corruption is an unhealthy cultural element.

There are already many cases of corruption in Indonesia. Corruption has become ingrained in the culture of the Indonesian nation. If this statement is true, it will certainly contradict the concept of the Indonesian nation which has noble values as contained in Pancasila, or as taught by the religions that have flourished in Indonesia. In Indonesia, it seems as if corruption is no longer a violation of the law, but has become a habit. This is because corruption in Indonesia is developing and growing, especially among officials from high-level state officials to the lowest RT level. This increasingly fertile and seemingly never ending corruption is real evidence of how rotten the morality of our officials is.

Corruption is a very dangerous problem for the present and future of Indonesia. High appreciation is given to every effort to build a national and state life that is free from corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN) (Yustia & Arifin, 2023). When the reformation rolled in this country in 1998, an awareness was born from all elements of society to Unite in freeing this country from injustice, especially in the distribution and redistribution of welfare. There was a hope that Indonesia in the future would be much better than in previous times.

After Indonesia went through the reformation era, all the challenges and threats faced were certainly different. Many things have changed such as the implementation of decentralization and regional autonomy, the direct legislative and executive election system, where changes in the political system also influenced the massification of corrupt behaviors that were previously centered on only one point, while now they are widespread following changes in the existing political system. So, when the early reformation period rolled, the identification of corruption could easily be directed at the New Order rulers at that time, while now it is not easy for us to find a "scapegoat" for the perpetrators of corruption because everything is disguised in the scattered state management system. The recipe for curing corruption in the early reformation era needs to be reviewed considering that the problem of corruption is currently increasingly decentralized (Rachman, 2018).

Corruption is a major obstacle to development and has a damaging impact both at the national and international levels. Corruption in the public sector is a serious problem

that has many negative impacts on various sectors of society and therefore must be eradicated in all its forms (Sugiarto, 2013). Corruption is seen not only as a moral problem, but as a multidimensional problem (political, economic, social, and cultural). Changes in perspective and approach to corruption, followed by the proliferation of international cooperation on this issue, have sown optimism that the war against corruption is a war that we can win (Wattimena, 2016). Corruption is a serious problem, this crime can endanger the stability and security of society, endanger socio-economic and political development, and can damage democratic values and morality because over time this act seems to become a culture. Corruption is a threat to the ideals of a just and prosperous society (Saifuddin, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

The research specification in this study uses descriptive exploration, namely describing the research results according to the problems and objectives to be achieved and analyzing them in terms of applicable science and then revealing something new from the research. The data sources used in this study are secondary data. Secondary data include official documents, books, research results in the form of reports, journals, and so on. While the data collection technique in this study uses library research, namely a data collection technique sourced from documentation related to the problem being discussed. Data analysis uses qualitative descriptive analysis. Qualitative data analysis is an effort made by working with data, organizing data, and sorting it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for and finding patterns, finding what is important and what is learned, and finding what can be told to others.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Legitimacy of Regional Heads and the Selectivity of Voters

Regional heads are not only supported by the majority of votes in each polling station but must also have a vision, mission, conception, and the skills required to manage their region and its people. The number of votes is indeed important, because the more voters who support, the higher the legitimacy of a candidate. This legitimacy is essential as a justification for policies implemented by regional leaders. However, legitimacy alone does not guarantee that a regional head can fulfill the aspirations of the people. Therefore, the public is required to be selective in choosing leaders, otherwise regional elections will only succeed in producing leaders with many constituents but without the competence to fulfill the people's mandate.

The problem is whether people in areas with low levels of education and income are selective enough to choose directly elected leaders. The essence of democracy through direct elections is to open access as widely as possible for community participation in determining leaders. As John Stuart Mill argued, every minority is valued in democratic participation, and every individual involved must also be responsible (Rangkuti, 2018). Based on this principle, the system is expected to produce leaders who meet the expectations of the people.

Thus, direct regional elections are actually an anticipatory step to minimize the possibility of choosing the wrong leader (Istikharah & Asrinaldi, 2019). However, democracy not only brings good hope but can also create anxiety (Nadir & Wardani, 2019). Socrates was even the first to be skeptical of such a system. He worried that this system opened opportunities for incompetent individuals to become leaders merely because

they were supported by the majority. Socrates understood very well that people do not always support the most capable and intelligent figure, but more often the one they like. Without reason, competence, and political experience, regional heads tend to act instinctively, trapped in routine agendas and procedures, all of which are carried out without rational and critical consideration. As a result, bureaucratic policies often emerge as reflexive actions rather than products of reflective intellectual discourse.

2. Preconditions for Local Democratization and the Weakness of Direct Elections

Schumpeter emphasized three important prerequisites for the process of local democratization: political equality, local accountability, and local responsiveness. Political equality refers to the creation of a check-and-balance mechanism that allows partnerships to run without domination by one side. However, the direct election system in practice has not fully encouraged the creation of such a mechanism. What has occurred instead is a shift of power from a strong legislature to a stronger executive. Local legislatures appear only as a complementary institution in special meetings, without effective power to shape policies.

The Accountability Report (LKPJ) of regional heads is only a progress report, not an impeachment instrument. Local accountability, which refers to the expectation that regional heads can be held accountable for every policy in front of the community, also does not work as expected. Even though the mechanism exists, no regional head has ever been openly accountable to the people (Sunarto et al., 2021). The hope then falls back on the local legislature. However, the many regulations that weaken the role of the local legislature in political oversight have reduced accountability into mere formality. Responsiveness, which refers to the hope that leaders will quickly respond to people's needs, is also relatively unfulfilled. Regional leaders rarely appear as fatherly or friendly figures to society, but instead are closer to their winning team or bureaucratic allies who benefit from the relationship. In fact, only certain groups enjoy the fruits of this political closeness, not the broader community.

In smaller areas, however, political communication is actually not difficult, which is why direct democracy is more effective in small countries. In such conditions, every citizen can directly participate in decision-making, as practiced in the polis of Athens. This is what is called political participation, namely the involvement of every citizen in the political process (Hermawan, 2020). In contrast, in modern states with large populations and complex structures such as Indonesia, the idea of direct democracy is difficult, even unrealistic. Thus, representative democracy becomes the only feasible alternative.

3. Problems of Direct Elections in Indonesia and the High Cost of Democracy

In Indonesia, the debate is no longer about whether democracy is appropriate, since the amendment to the 1945 Constitution has established democracy as the chosen political system. What needs to be discussed is the appropriate mechanism that aligns with Indonesia's current context. Since the implementation of direct regional elections in 2005, several problems have emerged, ranging from technical issues of voter registration, candidate nomination, campaigns, voting, counting, and certification (Fatoni, 2010). While some problems can be resolved technically, broader issues remain as predicted earlier by political observers (Surbakti & Haris, 2005). Bisri et al. (2006) highlighted two crucial problems: the rise of wealthy candidates due to political liberalization, and the

strengthening of executive dominance because they are directly elected. Domestic investors provide financial support to gain project concessions, while foreign investors seek access to resources such as minerals and palm oil (Riwukore et al., 2020).

The strengthening of the executive is not imaginary; planning and implementation of local budgets (APBD) are practically monopolized by elected leaders, while local legislatures merely approve them without critical oversight. LKPI, as a moment of accountability, becomes a formality without substantial evaluation. More broadly, direct elections have also raised the problem of high democratic costs. Fatah (2008) recorded that on average regional elections are held 103 times per year. According to Jusuf Kalla (2008), the state spends around 200 trillion annually on elections.

These high costs burden the state budget and raise a serious question: has direct democracy produced quality leaders who can fulfill the people's mandate? In fact, many elected leaders have only become "dreamers," leaving behind debts for the next regime, while local budgets are burdened further by election costs. Instead of creating a trickle down effect, what appears is a trickle-up effect, where capitalists dominate the local political scene. Public interest is often sacrificed in favor of elite interests. Although democracy has weaknesses, it is still considered better and wiser compared to other systems, especially because democracy has a positive correlation with efficiency (Boediono). However, as Arvid Jain noted in his paper *Corruption: a Review*, democratic systems remain vulnerable to corruption, as interactions between political and economic actors create opportunities for abuse. This mapping of corruption-prone areas fits the Indonesian context, where democracy often fails to fulfill its ideal role of producing competent leaders.

4. Potential Corruption in Democratic Interactions

In democratic systems, the relationship between state leaders, legislators, bureaucrats, and society is ideally built on accountability, transparency, and checks and balances. However, these interactions often create overlapping power structures that may be exploited for personal or group gain. When political leaders, legislators, and bureaucrats have the authority to formulate and implement public policies, approve government programs, and enforce laws, the process of decision-making can be vulnerable to corruption. This vulnerability arises because access to political power is frequently influenced by financial strength, lobbying, or patronage networks rather than purely democratic ideals. As a result, instead of serving the interests of the wider community, the system often strengthens the position of political elites and bureaucrats, leaving ordinary citizens with limited influence over decision-making.

Figure 1 above illustrates how corruption can potentially occur in democratic countries through the interactions among state leaders, legislative members, and bureaucrats. Citizens, who should be the main beneficiaries of democracy, receive benefits depending on their capacity to influence decision-makers. Meanwhile, public policies, government programs, and law enforcement processes can be swayed by the interests of certain groups or individuals, particularly those with strong political or economic leverage. This structure often reduces the function of democracy to a mere formality, where the balance of power is weakened and accountability is undermined, ultimately creating fertile ground for corruption at various levels of governance.

1. Interaction 1: People and National Leaders; Interaction 1 highlights the relationship between the people and the country's leaders who are elected through democratic

processes. In many democracies that have not yet consolidated, this interaction often creates opportunities for political corruption, most notably in the form of money politics to secure election victories. Once in power, elected leaders usually have broad discretion in shaping government policies, and this discretion can easily be misused for the benefit of certain groups rather than the general public. In practice, political elites often issue economic and social policies that provide advantages to their supporters or investors. For example, in budget allocation, elites may direct funds to sectors that generate profits for their political investors, even if these allocations provide little benefit to the people as a whole.

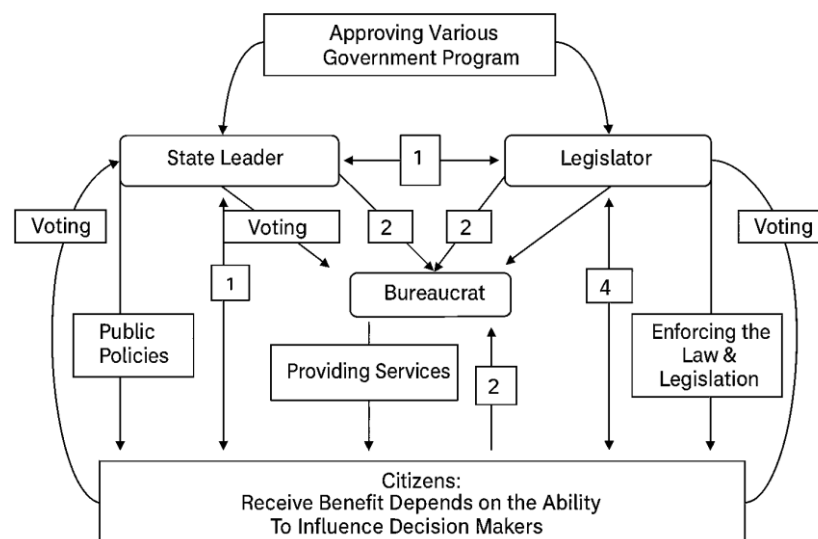


Figure 1. Interactions that Potentially Cause Corruption in Democratic Countries
Source: Author, 2025

2. Interaction 2: Bureaucrats, Leaders, Legislators, and the People; Interaction 2 consists of three dimensions: the relationship between bureaucrats and elected leaders, the relationship between bureaucrats and members of the legislature, and the relationship between bureaucrats and the people. The first dimension reveals how bureaucrats, often appointed by elected leaders, are positioned as extensions of political elites to extract state wealth through government institutions or state-owned enterprises. In many cases, bureaucrats are pressured to deliver regular payments to the elites to safeguard their positions, thereby perpetuating cycles of corruption. The second dimension, which involves bureaucrats and legislators, opens further opportunities for corruption, particularly in systems like Indonesia where the appointment of officials must pass through a fit and proper test in the legislature. This process often leads to the “buying and selling” of positions, while subsequent hearings between bureaucrats and legislative members provide further grounds for corrupt practices. The third dimension emerges in the daily interactions between bureaucrats and the people, where petty corruption occurs. Public officials at various levels often extract money from citizens for services that should otherwise be free. This petty corruption is frequently systemic, as lower-level officials are required to share their illicit earnings with their superiors, who in turn provide them with protection.

3. Interaction 3: Elected Leaders and Legislators; Interaction 3 involves the relationship between elected leaders and legislative members in shaping public policies. Because many policies require legislative approval, this interaction creates opportunities for legislative corruption in the form of bribes or coercion. The likelihood of corruption increases in countries where campaign financing is poorly regulated or inadequately supervised. The closed voting system within legislatures, as seen in Indonesia, worsens the situation since constituents cannot monitor whether their representatives truly represent their interests. This lack of transparency leads to acute accountability problems. Furthermore, the absence of strong opposition parties contributes significantly to the rise of legislative corruption. Without meaningful opposition, interest groups can push their agendas more easily and at lower costs, often through bribery of a single dominant faction. The absence of opposition also reduces the risk of exposing irregularities, creating an environment where corruption can flourish unchecked.
4. Interaction 4: People and Legislators; Interaction 4 describes the relationship between the people and members of the legislature who are elected through general elections. While procedural democracy, such as holding elections, is relatively easy to achieve, substantive democracy remains a far greater challenge. One of the key prerequisites for achieving substantive democracy is the effective regulation of money politics and the establishment of transparent systems of campaign financing. Without these regulations, democratic processes risk being reduced to formal procedures that fail to truly represent the people's interests.

Transparency International has a more flexible definition of corruption, namely "abuse of trust given by others, for personal gain" (Wattimena, 2016). On the other hand, Indonesia has also taken a step forward in defining non-corruption, when the types of actions included in the category of corruption were expanded, even Law Number 31 of 1999 as amended by Law Number 20 of 2001 concerning the Eradication of Criminal Acts of Corruption includes a list of 29 acts that can be categorized as corruption, both involving and not involving public officials (Fazzan, 2015).

According to Huntington's formulation, corruption is the behavior of state officials that deviates from the general norms of public service (Lestari, 2019; Muchlis, 2016). Usually at the beginning of modernization it is more serious than afterwards. In the United States, the fact of corruption in the 18th and 20th centuries was much smaller than in the 19th century. While in England in the 17th and late 19th centuries it was much smaller than in the 18th century. During that time, political institutions experienced severe pressure and possible decay. Corruption is one of the negligence of the effectiveness of political institutions (Muallifin, 2015). Why modernization breeds corruption.

There are three basic factors surrounding it. First, modernization involves a fundamental change in societal values. Students, academics, the military and the elite are the first to accept the new norm, namely that all citizens have the same rights and obligations. Behavior that has been accepted and validated by tradition becomes irrelevant, while acts of deviation are opposed and highlighted proportionally. Corruption in developing countries is thus not a relevant result of behavioral deviations from generally accepted norms but rather an excess of the refinement of established behavioral norms. New standards and criteria regarding truth and deviation are largely directed at rejecting and eradicating traditional behavioral patterns that support and

condone corruption. Second, modernization also creates corruption, because it creates new sources of wealth and power.

While political activity has not been defined by its boundaries in ancient traditions, new norms have not been widely accepted by important groups in society. Third, modernization encourages corruption by changing and producing something through the political system. Modernization, especially in countries that have launched the latest development, usually involves expanding the authority of the ruler and expanding the forms of activity that are subject to government regulation (Batubara, 2008).

Corruption will only occur if two things occur simultaneously, namely the desire to be corrupt (willingness to corrupt), a factor that is internal but can be influenced by external things, and the opportunity to be corrupt (opportunity to corrupt), a factor that is external (Hariyani et al., 2016). Humans are economic creatures who always try to maximize the benefits of every activity at the lowest possible cost. Economists call this phenomenon utility maximization, in many cases this principle is difficult to distinguish from the phenomenon of selfishness or prioritizing oneself. Selfishness is the beginning of the emergence of greed, the root of a corrupt mentality. In other words, in humans there are actually seeds or tendencies to commit acts of corruption.

The desire to be corrupt is a reflection of the moral quality of each individual (Kurnia, 2020). Humans are not angels who have stable high morality. Honest humans can also act dishonestly because of coercion. In terms of reliability, efforts to eradicate corruption that focus on moral development alone are not reliable (Soemanto et al., 2014). In addition to fluctuating, a person's moral quality can change drastically over time. Many corruptors, when they were young or in the early period of their leadership, were individuals with high integrity.

Many leaders were democratically elected by the people because they raised the issue of eradicating corruption, but fell due to corruption cases (Rumambi, 2014). Opportunity is the second factor that allows corruption to occur. Efforts to reduce the opportunity for corruption to occur can be done by improving the system, for example by implementing a more accountable system (Habaora et al., 2020). The open tender process related to ordering goods or determining contractors is a classic example of such efforts. Another example is implementing an open voting system in the legislature so that constituents can better supervise their representatives.

Here, bureaucratic politicization occurs where regional government officials tend to be pragmatic and realistic. The impact of planning is designed in such a way that the incumbent gets support in terms of logistics through a number of artificial or excessive budget items. The loopholes for corruption in regional elections can be seen from several things such as determining candidates through political party boats, manipulation of campaign funds and money politics.

The high rates of political parties are one of the driving factors in the large absorption of the APBD for illegal interests. For example, each candidate is basically required to be able to fund the regional election, return the capital that has been spent, and pay post-election debts. The mode that is often used is involving partners and political networks that contribute to the tender for the procurement of goods and services. The loopholes for corruption begin with providing social assistance through community organizations that have been mobilized.

The excesses of regional elections ultimately become a burden on the APBD. A number of regions have to cut spending on programs and activities including vital sectors such as education and health in the year when the regional elections are held. It must be admitted that the budget items for regional elections are mostly allocated to pay honorariums for organizers which contain disparities in value between regions. The high budget for regional elections ultimately affects the APBD posture every five years of the democratic party. At the technical stage, efforts to increase activity activities by regional election organizers become a kind of bargaining. This opens up opportunities for the KPUD and regional governments to take advantage, including the auction process for goods and services. In a number of cases, gaps in budget duplication were found, sourced from the APBD and the APBD for honorarium components and administrative expenses, affecting the high cost of organizing regional elections.

CONCLUSION

If the advantage of direct regional elections is that regional heads tend to be desired by the people, in fact they tend to be desired because of money. Regional heads desired by the people are limited to those from certain electoral districts. If regional heads are considered close to the people, in reality many candidates actually come from outside the region who have long left their birthplace. If the assumption is that regional heads are understood and understand the people, in reality many regional heads do not really understand the ins and outs of their regions, and do not even understand the will of the people.

If regional heads are considered to be able to make promises directly and the people can collect them directly, in reality most promises are just promises, and the people do not have a definite mechanism for collecting promises from the regions. If the people are seen as being able to correct the way regional heads work, in fact the people do not have the guts as well as a standard mechanism to carry out control, let alone give punishment when regional heads carry out actions that violate morals. Compare this to competing in direct regional elections, at least a candidate must prepare 15-20 M in each round to win the position of regional head. Even if we win, with the salaries and allowances of regional heads as stated, it is impossible to return them within five years, unless we take actions that we all reject, namely corruption.

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