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Mapping Determinant Factors and Minimizing the Emergence of a Single Candidate in Regional Elections: A Case in Buton

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the factors that encourage the emergence of single candidates in regional head elections (Pilkada) in Buton and provide strategic steps to minimize the potential for a similar phenomenon to recur. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study. A total of 20 informants were interviewed and selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the election process. Data analysis was carried out with the help of Nvivo 12 Plus software to optimize data management and interpretation. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation. The study results indicate that dominant factors such as high political costs, failure of the political party cadre system, pragmatism of political party coalitions, and the difficulty of individual candidates in meeting nomination requirements play a central role in the emergence of single candidates. The implications of this study emphasize the need to improve the mechanism for monitoring political costs, improve the quality of the political party cadre system, revise the nomination requirements for individual candidates, and increase awareness of the importance of forming a healthy and politically representative coalition. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to providing in-depth understanding and strategic recommendations to prevent the recurrence of the single candidate phenomenon in the Pilkada contest, especially in Buton Regency.

Keywords: Single candidate, empty box, election, political pragmatism, political parties

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis faktor-faktor yang mendorong kemunculan calon tunggal dalam pemilihan kepala daerah (Pilkada) di Buton serta memberikan langkah-langkah strategis untuk meminimalkan potensi terulangnya fenomena serupa. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan strategi studi kasus. Sebanyak 20 informan diwawancarai, yang dipilih secara purposive berdasarkan keterlibatan langsung dalam proses pemilihan. Analisis data dilakukan dengan bantuan perangkat lunak Nvivo 12 Plus guna mengoptimalkan pengelolaan dan interpretasi data. Validitas data dijaga melalui triangulasi sumber. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa faktor dominan seperti tingginya biaya politik, kegagalan sistem kaderisasi partai politik, pragmatisme koalisi partai politik, dan kesulitan calon perseorangan dalam memenuhi syarat pencalonan, memainkan peran sentral dalam kemunculan calon tunggal. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menekankan perlunya perbaikan mekanisme pengawasan biaya politik, peningkatan kualitas sistem kaderisasi partai politik, revisi terhadap persyaratan pencalonan bagi calon perseorangan, serta peningkatan kesadaran akan pentingnya pembentukan koalisi yang sehat dan representatif secara politik. Signifikansi penelitian ini terletak pada kontribusinya

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dalam memberikan pemahaman yang mendalam serta rekomendasi strategis guna mencegah terulangnya fenomena calon tunggal dalam kontestasi Pilkada, khususnya di Kabupaten Buton.

Kata Kunci: *Calon Tunggal, kotak kosong, pemilihan umum, politik pragmatis, partai politik*

INTRODUCTION

Many regions in Indonesia have experienced single-candidate elections, which raises concerns about the quality of local democracy (Febrian et al., 2022; Safa'at, 2022). This phenomenon arises due to complex political dynamics and tactical party strategies. As a result, people's choices are limited, and diversity in regional head elections is questionable (Purwaningsih & Widodo, 2021; Romli & Efriza, 2021). This phenomenon not only raises questions about the diversity and vitality of democracy but also highlights the challenges in creating a fair and balanced space for various political interests (Damanik, 2020; Purwaningsih & Widodo, 2021; Susanti & Setiajid, 2022).

The rare phenomenon of the emergence of a single candidate in regional head elections in Indonesia is a serious concern for researchers and political practitioners. This underscores the complex political dynamics and tactical strategies of various parties and illustrates the important challenges in ensuring the diversity and vitality of a healthy democracy. Discussions regarding the implications of the emergence of a single candidate have highlighted the urgent need for efforts to provide a fair and balanced space for various political interests to encourage active and inclusive participation of the community in local political processes. Political participation is part of democracy, especially in elections, so the practice of political pragmatism should be ignored and minimized (Hasan et al., 2023; Yandra et al., 2023).

Local political processes such as regional elections are also carried out in many regions of Indonesia (Baharuddin et al., 2023; Baharuddin & Purwaningsih, 2017; Luth et al., 2023), especially in Buton, Southeast Sulawesi (Endah Yuli, 2019). In the regional elections in 2017, a single candidate was also produced, namely Samsu Umar Abdul Samiun and La Bakry, against an empty box. This candidate received 27,512 votes (55.08%), while the empty box received 22,438 votes (44.92%) (Irawan, 2017; Rahman et al., 2022). The number of empty boxes was the highest of the 9 districts/cities in Indonesia, which also held regional elections with one pair of regional head candidates simultaneously in 2017. The difference in votes between the empty boxes and a single candidate pair was only around 5,065 votes (10.14%). This shows that 22,447 mandatory voters in the Buton district prefer an empty box rather than choosing a single candidate pair.

From data on regional election votes in Buton Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, some people are dissatisfied with the single candidate presented. A high vote share for the empty box indicates that the public feels the existing single candidate needs to represent them better, so they prefer not to support that single candidate (Harianto et al., 2020; Purwaningsih & Widodo, 2021). The small difference between the number of votes for single candidates and empty boxes also confirms that many voters would rather not vote than support the only available option. This is an important warning for stakeholders to listen more carefully to the aspirations of the community and ensure that the candidates put forward are truly able to represent the interests and aspirations of the community at large. Thus, the need to improve the candidate selection process and provide greater space for community participation in determining their political choices in the future is crucial in maintaining the integrity of democracy and encouraging more active participation from the community (Johnson & Roberto, 2019; Medeiros et al., 2019; Purwaningsih & Widodo, 2021).

The negative impact of the emergence of a single candidate in regional head elections in Indonesia could be very detrimental to the democratic process and the sustainability of the political system. This phenomenon can reduce space for healthy public debate and limit the choices and alternatives that should be available to society. Apart from that, this can also dampen the spirit of community political participation and reduce trust in the integrity of the democratic process. Furthermore, the presence of a single candidate also has the potential to create the impression of a monopoly of power, which can result in reduced government accountability and transparency, strengthen the possibility of corruption, and reduce the innovation and policy dynamics expected from diverse leadership (Rosanti, 2020; Safa'at, 2022).

Based on the results of previous research, several other determinant factors have been identified that significantly influence the quality of regional elections in Indonesia. These factors include the dominance of certain political groups that control political and economic resources (Berenschot & Mulder, 2019), weak selection mechanisms for qualified candidates (Prianto et al., 2022), minimal political participation of the community in the pre-election stage (Fionna & Hutchinson, 2019), as well as the lack of alternatives and growing political awareness among the public (Aspinall, 2005). Apart from that, social and historical factors, such as the strength of political dynasties and the economic dependence of society on certain political elites (Aminuddin & Attamimi, 2019; Aspinall, 2005; Haryanto et al., 2019), also play a role in forming conditions that support the emergence of democratic decline in Indonesia. Overall, these factors together reflect Indonesia's complex political and social dynamics that contribute to the emergence of the single-candidate phenomenon in the context of regional elections.

Several issues can influence political dynamics at the local level. Although there have been political reform efforts undertaken (Mayangsari & Permana, 2019; Romli & Efriza, 2021), the existence of factors such as the ineffectiveness of strong monitoring and law enforcement

mechanisms, unequal access to political and economic resources, and community dependency towards power-based political practices, remains a potential driving factor for the emergence of a single candidate in the future. Additionally, weaknesses in the political party system, which tend to be non-transparent and centered on certain figures, can increase the chances of a single candidate emerging. Therefore, it is important to continue to strengthen democratic mechanisms, increase active community participation, and strengthen the integrity of supervisory institutions in order to prevent the potential emergence of a single candidate and maintain the continuity of a healthy and inclusive democratic process (Purwaningsih & Widodo, 2021; Romli & Efriza, 2021).

Regional head elections with a single candidate facing an empty box reflect weaknesses in the existing regional head election system. It highlights public dissatisfaction and anxiety regarding the ongoing political process. The high number of empty box votes obtained in several related regional elections indicates distrust and dissatisfaction with the quality and credibility of the single candidate presented. The significant number of empty box votes also reflects the public's unpreparedness to support a single candidate who may be deemed not to represent the aspirations and needs of society as a whole.

This underlines the need for improvements in the candidate selection process, increasing community participation in the candidate selection stage, and expanding mechanisms that ensure community involvement in political decision-making processes that are more representative and responsive to local needs. Apart from that, there needs to be consolidation between related institutions to ensure fairness and integrity in the election process and increase transparency to create more democratic and accountable regional head elections.

There has been much research on single candidates and empty boxes. However, there are still few study results that specifically discuss the case in Buton, especially assessing the political dynamics that are occurring, the chance of re-emerging contestation between single candidates and empty boxes, and efforts to minimize the potential for disputes in the future. Front. This study aims to fill the gap in academic literature regarding regional head elections with single candidates and empty boxes, focusing on the specific context of Buton Regency, Southeast Sulawesi. The implications of this research will make an important contribution to understanding political dynamics in the regions and provide a more holistic view of regional head elections. It is also hoped that the results of this research can become the basis for more effective policies in designing a more inclusive, transparent, and representative political system. The findings of this research can minimize the occurrence of contestation that gives rise to a single candidate and be the basis for improving the electoral system in the future.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study strategy to examine the phenomenon of the emergence of a single candidate in the regional head election in the Buton Regency. Twenty informants were asked to conduct interviews. The selection of informants was carried out purposively based on direct involvement in the election process. Key informants comprised members of the Buton Regency General Election Commission (KPU), the Buton Regency Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), and heads of local political parties. Meanwhile, supporting informants consisted of mandatory voters who participated in the 2017 regional elections in seven sub-districts in Buton Regency. Data was collected through observation techniques, in-depth interviews, literature studies, document analysis, and observation with the support of recording equipment. The data was then analyzed using qualitative techniques, including data reduction, presentation, and conclusion.

Nvivo 12 Plus software facilitates comprehensive data analysis, allowing researchers to explore and organize data efficiently. The data analysis process using Nvivo 12 Plus software begins with data transcription, which is then imported into the program. After the data is imported, the following process is coding, where researchers label relevant data segments to identify specific themes or categories. Next, researchers use data visualization features provided by Nvivo, such as graphs or concept maps, to present findings more clearly and easily understood. This process allows researchers to organize, analyze, and interpret data more efficiently and systematically. The research results will provide a deeper understanding of the factors that influenced the emergence of a single candidate in the previous regional elections and the opportunity for a similar phenomenon to reappear in the 2024 simultaneous regional head elections in Buton Regency.

Research validity is an important parameter that ensures the reliability and validity of research results by triangulating sources to verify the accuracy and consistency of data obtained from various informants. Several stages are described as follows. First, content validity is obtained by selecting diverse and representative informants, including members of the KPU, Bawaslu, and representatives of political parties. It must be selected from various sub-districts in Buton Regency. This ensures that the data obtained reflects a variety of relevant points of view regarding the phenomenon under study. Second, construct validity was ensured through in-depth interview techniques and structured engaged observation, thereby enabling the researcher to understand the informants' views and experiences holistically. Third, internal validity was maintained using Nvivo 12 Plus software to systematically analyze the data, minimize researcher bias, and ensure the validity of the interpretation of the results. Finally, external validity is strengthened through detailed descriptions of research methods, making it possible for this research to be replicated by other researchers in similar locations or contexts. By paying attention to these factors, the

research is expected to have strong validity to significantly contribute to a deeper understanding of local political phenomena in the Buton Regency.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Mapping Factors in the Emergence of a Single Candidate in the Buton Regional Election

Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) in Indonesia, as a manifestation of democracy at the local level, often reflect complex political dynamics (Chen, 2022; Lewis, 2020). The emergence of a single candidate in regional elections, as happened in Buton Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, has become a major highlight in recent political studies. An in-depth understanding of the factors that influence the emergence of a single candidate in the Buton Regional Election is very important in interpreting the local political realities surrounding the democratic process in this area. By identifying and analyzing the root causes that drive this phenomenon, we can learn more about the political dynamics in this area and gain richer insight into the political, social, and historical issues that influence political processes at the local level.

The depth and complexity of the nomination process in Buton Regency in the 2017 Pilkada is illustrated through the two paths taken by prospective pairs of candidates, namely the individual path and the political party path. In the individual route, obstacles arise related to the threshold of support requirements, which are difficult for prospective candidate pairs to fulfill, and challenges in penetrating various sub-districts in Buton Regency. Meanwhile, on the political party line, problems arise regarding the administrative requirements that must be fulfilled, including the signatures of the general chairman and general secretary of the party, which must comply with the stipulated provisions. In this context, complex requirements and internal political party conflicts at the central level are crucial factors that hinder the smooth running of the nomination process. Overall, the challenges in meeting the nomination requirements for both routes illustrate the inherent complexity of the democratic process at the local level, demanding further improvements to strengthen integrity and accessibility for candidates from various backgrounds.

This study succeeded in mapping several determinant factors that influenced the emergence of a single candidate in the Buton Regional Election. Some of these factors are mapped as follows:

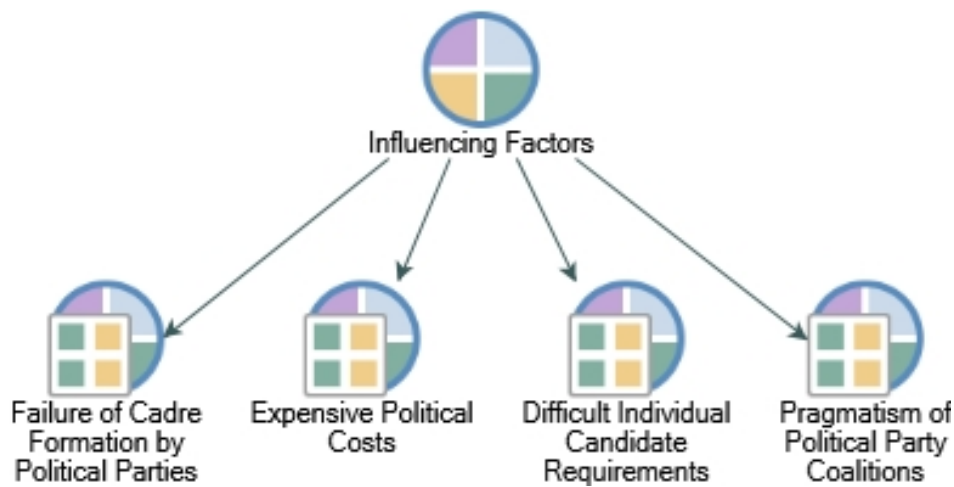


Figure 1. Several Factors Caused the Emergence of a Single Candidate in the Buton Regional Elections

Figure 1 shows several factors causing the emergence of a single candidate in the Buton Regional Election. The failure of the regional political party cadre formation system has significantly impacted candidate representation in the regional elections. The inability of political parties to develop quality local cadres and represent the aspirations of the community evenly has resulted in a lack of quality candidate options so that often only one or a few candidates emerge from political parties in the area. The impact of the failure of the political party cadre system in the regions not only narrows the options for qualified candidates but also substantially reduces political plurality in the regional elections.

One example is the phenomenon of the involvement of politicians' families in the regional elections in Southeast Sulawesi, including in Buton, which shows a strong tendency towards dynasty politics, as seen in the 2015 and 2017 regional elections (Harjudin & Zuada, 2020). This dominance reflects the failure of political party cadre formation, which has not been able to produce alternative figures outside the family circle of power. The failure of the political party cadre system not only occurs in Buton but is also found in many other regions in Indonesia, which is marked by the lack of potential cadres and the increasing phenomenon of single candidates in the regional elections (Muharam et al., 2023; Rohman et al., 2022; Romli & Irawan, 2024).

The inability of political parties to produce diverse cadres and represent various levels of society can reduce the overall quality of democracy (Baharuddin et al., 2023; Rohman et al., 2022). With a lack of quality choices, people cannot express their desires and aspirations to the fullest. In addition, the dominance of one or a few candidates from a particular political party can reduce competitiveness and substantive debate in the political arena so that the ability to produce leaders who are diverse and dedicated to the public interest is hampered.

Then, very high political costs become the main obstacle for candidates in regional elections. Expensive campaign costs are often prohibitive for individuals or groups needing adequate financial resources. The involvement of this large amount of capital often limits election participants to only certain groups, making it difficult to provide diverse options for voters. The impact of very high political costs in regional elections not only limits access for candidates with limited financial resources but can also strengthen the dominance of the interests of certain economic or political groups in the electoral process.

The following is a table summarizing the costs of regional elections in Indonesia from 2015 to 2024:

Table 1. Regional Election Costs in Indonesia from 2015 to 2024

Year of Election	Budget (IDR)	Notes
2015	IDR 12 million – 200 million	The costs varied depending on the region, ranging from IDR 12 million for districts to IDR 200 million for provinces
2017	IDR 4.2 Trillion	Budget for 101 regions, with an average budget per region around IDR 26 million
2018	IDR 18.5 Trillion	Budget for 171 regions, with the largest cost being for the honorarium of election officials
2020	IDR 20.4 Trillion	Costs increased due to additional funding for health protocols in response to the Covid-19 pandemic
2024	IDR 37.43 Trillion (as of September 20)	Budget for the 2024 Pilkada, including expenses for the KPU, Bawaslu, and 14 other ministries/agencies

The high political costs of organizing regional elections, as seen in the increase in the budget from 2015 to 2024 (Muhid, 2024), can affect the dynamics of political competition, including the emergence of the single-candidate phenomenon. The increasing costs for implementing elections, which include honorariums for organizers, procurement of goods, and health protocols, can make political parties or candidates more likely to choose a practical path by running as a single candidate, reducing choices for the community. This limits the space for alternative candidates and narrows competition, which threatens the quality of local democracy in Indonesia because it reduces diversity in the regional head election process.

This can hurt the quality of democracy and representation because the presence of candidates from different backgrounds becomes difficult or even impossible. In addition, the dominance of capital in the electoral process can create the risk of political corruption and narrow interests more oriented towards personal or group gain than overall public welfare. This can also trigger the growth of patronage politics and the dependence of elected candidates

on certain groups to obtain financial support, giving rise to potential conflicts of interest that are detrimental to society (Berenschot, 2018; Berenschot & Aspinall, 2020; Hasan et al., 2023).

Apart from that, the difficulty of individual candidates in fulfilling the requirements for nominating regional heads shows real challenges in the democratic process in the region (Prianto & Yusraini, 2024; Thaha & Haryanto, 2017). Requirements that are complex and difficult for individual candidates to fulfill, such as the number of supports and limited distribution of areas of support, often limit the options for independent candidates, thus tending to give rise to a situation where it is easier for a single candidate to obtain the position. The difficulty of individual candidates in fulfilling the requirements for regional head candidacy not only limits access for individuals who wish to participate in the democratic process but can also reduce variation and plurality in voter choices.

When independent candidates need help fulfilling the requirements set, this indirectly limits the realization of political rights for citizens not affiliated with a particular political party. This situation can reduce the quality of political competition and the possibility of innovative ideas or alternative views that could bring positive change to local government. As a result, democratic processes in the region may tend to be more limited and co-opted by established interests, which could be detrimental to efforts to achieve representation that is more inclusive and responsive to the needs of society as a whole.

Finally, the pragmatism of political party coalitions at the local level also influences the dynamics of regional elections (Jubba et al., 2023; Rosanti, 2020). Alliances formed between political parties are often based on considerations of political interests and power rather than on a clear program vision and mission. This kind of pragmatism often leads to limiting candidate options and the emergence of situations where only one candidate or a few candidates are promoted by a particular coalition, narrowing the democratic space that should be more open. The pragmatism of political party coalitions at the local level, which places more emphasis on political interests and power than on community needs or a clear vision and mission, can have various negative impacts on the dynamics of regional elections.

Katz and Mair (1995) explain the shift in the role of political parties into “party cartels” that are more oriented towards access to power and utilization of state resources, thus making pragmatism the primary basis for forming coalitions. Political party coalitions are no longer built based on shared ideology but rather for short-term electoral goals and power distribution (Katz & Mair, 1995). Within this framework, elite capture, as explained by Aspinall, becomes increasingly apparent, where political elites dominate the decision-making process for the benefit of their group, while the aspirations of the wider community are ignored by pragmatic coalitions that prioritize power stability over the quality of political representation (Aspinall et al., 2019).

When political parties only form alliances based on purely pragmatic considerations, this can be detrimental to the democratic process and public participation in general. In a situation where political alliances are only focused on achieving power without considering substantial programs, the opportunity for the emergence of diverse candidate options that reflect the aspirations of society becomes increasingly limited. In this way, the opportunity for a single candidate to occupy a leadership position can be made easier without giving voters various choices. This condition can result in a decline in the quality of the democratic process and regional government as a whole, as well as strengthening established patterns of political domination, which can hinder the realization of substantial and sustainable change for society at the local level.

Overall, mapping the factors that influenced the emergence of a single candidate in the Buton Regional Election illustrates several serious problems in the democratic process in the area. The existence of factors such as the failure of the political party cadre system, high political costs, difficulties for individual candidates in fulfilling nomination requirements, and the pragmatism of political party coalitions indicate that the democratic process is still co-opted by certain interests that do not always represent the aspirations of society as a whole. These findings imply the need for substantial reform in the political system and democracy at the local level. First, political parties must develop an inclusive and representative cadre system to ensure the creation of quality candidates who represent the diverse aspirations of society. Apart from that, reforms need to be made in regulations related to political costs so that the election process is more open to all groups and is not limited by financial factors alone.

Furthermore, efforts are needed to simplify the requirements for individual candidates so that they also have easier and fairer access to the democratic process. Lastly, efforts must be made to increase transparency and accountability in forming political party coalitions so that political alliances are based on clear programs and not just to gain power. Thus, it is hoped that these reform efforts can reduce the dominance of single candidates in regional elections and, vice versa, expand democratic space to create an electoral process that is more inclusive, transparent, and responsive to the needs of society as a whole. With increased community participation and the adoption of a more inclusive political system, the regional election in Buton can become a more effective forum for realizing the aspirations and interests of the public.

As for understanding more deeply influential factors, this study successfully mapped the dominant factors that created regional head elections followed by a single candidate in Buton. Based on data coding at the data source, this can be seen as follows:

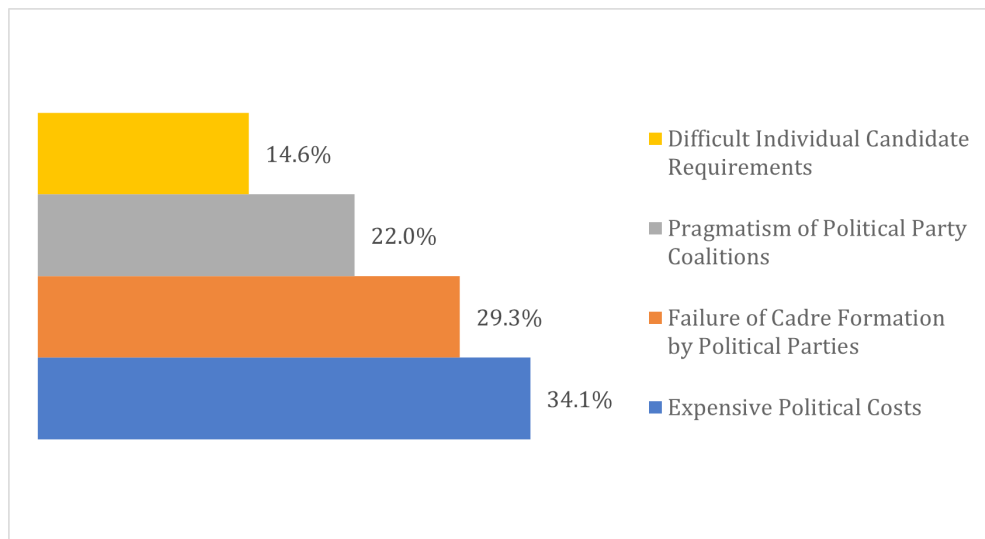


Figure 2. The Dominant Factor Influencing the Emergence of a Single Candidate in the Buton Regional Elections

Based on the results of interviews, it is known that the order of determinant factors in the Buton regional elections, among which high political costs (34.1%) is ranked highest as the dominant factor among others, hinders the participation of candidates who do not have adequate financial access. The failure of the cadre formation system by political parties (29.3%) also had a significant impact, reducing the variety of qualified candidates and political plurality. The pragmatism of political party coalitions (22.0%) at the local level narrows the democratic space that should be open, while the difficult requirements for individual candidates (14.6%) limit the variety of choices without affecting the political system as a whole.

Based on the interview results, high political costs are the most dominant factor in the emergence of a single candidate in the Buton Regional Election. These financial constraints directly hinder the participation of candidates who do not have adequate financial access, narrowing opportunities for those who wish to participate in the democratic process. Meanwhile, the failure of the political party cadre system in the regions significantly reduces the diversity of quality candidates and limits political diversity. The pragmatism of political party coalitions at the local level narrows the democratic space that should be open, while the difficult requirements for individual candidates to qualify for regional head candidacy, although limiting choice, tend to affect individuals more than the political system as a whole. Thus, a deeper understanding of the priorities of these factors can provide a basis for promoting more inclusive and representative democratic processes in the future.

Minimizing the Potential for a Single Candidate to Appear in The 2024 Buton Regional Elections

Based on research data regarding the factors driving the emergence of a single candidate in the 2017 Buton Regional Election, it is evident that this phenomenon is not only related to local conditions but is also influenced by various structural factors that influence the political system. The trend of increasing the number of single-candidate pairs from regional election to regional election in Indonesia also shows the need for serious attention to democratic mechanisms that occur at the local level. This indicates that all of this has the potential to strengthen the phenomenon of the emergence of a single candidate, putting pressure on the democratic process, which should be open and inclusive.

Even though a single candidate is constitutionally regulated, the emergence of a situation with only one pair of candidates can indicate an imbalance in local political dynamics. Implementing regional elections that involve healthy competition from various candidate options is the essence of substantial democracy (Mayangsari & Permana, 2019; Purwaningsih & Widodo, 2021; Romli & Efriza, 2021). Therefore, serious efforts are needed to overcome the factors driving the emergence of a single candidate, such as improving monitoring mechanisms for political costs, strengthening the political party cadre system, clarifying the rules for individual candidates, and prioritizing mutual agreements and interests in political coalitions. In this way, the democratic process in the Buton regional elections in 2024 and beyond can better represent the interests of society as a whole and avoid democratic anomalies that have the potential to harm public participation.

High political costs are one of the main concerns. High campaign costs have provided an advantage to candidates with access to sufficient financial resources while limiting the participation of those with financial limitations (Aspinall et al., 2017; Aspinall & Mietzner, 2019). This could lead to the dominance of candidates from certain groups, raising questions about equality of access and representation in the democratic process in Buton. Second, the failure of the regional political party cadre formation system has reduced the diversity of quality candidates (Jubba et al., 2023; Prianto et al., 2022). Limitations in developing local cadres who represent the community's aspirations evenly have resulted in a lack of quality candidate options, often only offering one or a few candidates from existing political parties. The impact of this failure not only narrowed the options for quality candidates but also substantially reduced political plurality in the Buton regional election.

Furthermore, the difficulty of individual candidates in fulfilling the requirements for regional head candidacy is also an important concern. Complex and difficult-to-fulfill requirements, such as the number of supports and limited distribution of support areas, have limited the options for independent candidates (Dettman et al., 2017; Purwaningsih & Widodo, 2021). This often gives rise to a situation where it is easier for a single candidate to win the position, reducing variation and plurality in voter choice. Lastly, the pragmatism of political party coalitions at the local level has narrowed the democratic space that should be more open.

Alliances based on considerations of political interests and power rather than clear program vision and mission can reduce opportunities for the emergence of diverse candidate options that reflect the aspirations of society as a whole.

Considering the various determinant factors that have been discussed, the potential for the emergence of a single candidate in the 2024 Buton Regional Election can be understood as a result of the complexity of political dynamics and the existing system. Limited financial access, failures in the cadre system, difficult requirements for independent candidates, and the pragmatism of political party coalitions all significantly contribute to this phenomenon. To ensure a more inclusive and representative democratic process, collective efforts are needed to overcome these obstacles and strengthen fundamental aspects of the political system in Buton.

In order to minimize the potential for a single candidate to emerge in the 2024 Buton Regional Election, several strategic steps can be taken. First, it is important to strengthen the political party cadre system in the regions by paying attention to diversity and more equal representation. This can be done by involving more elements of society in the cadre selection process, thereby creating fairer opportunities for qualified candidates. An emphasis on cultivating a cadre with a strong commitment to public service and social equality can broaden the base of qualified candidates.

Second, stricter regulations regarding political costs in the regional election process must be enacted. These steps could include tighter oversight of the sources and use of campaign funds and limits on the amount each candidate can spend. In this way, it is hoped that political participation will not only be limited to those with abundant financial resources but can also enable wider access for candidates from various backgrounds.

Third, there needs to be a revision of the nomination requirements for individual candidates so that they are more accessible to potential individuals. Overly complex and restrictive procedures could be reviewed so that independent candidates have a fairer chance of competing. Establishing more inclusive and proportional regulations can help create a more democratic environment and stimulate wider participation from various levels of society.

Finally, to overcome the pragmatism of political party coalitions at the local level, it is necessary to increase supervision of forming political alliances. Support for political parties prioritizing a clear vision, mission, and programs must be increased. In contrast, awareness of the importance of forming coalitions based on healthy and representative political principles must be increased. In this way, a more inclusive political climate will be created and encourage the emergence of diverse options for voters in the 2024 Buton Regional Election.

These strategic steps' implications are significant for advancing democracy at the local level, especially in Buton. By strengthening the political party cadre formation system, stricter regulations regarding political costs, revising nomination requirements for individual candidates, and increasing supervision of the process of forming political alliances, it is

hoped that a political climate will be created that is more inclusive and equally represents the interests of society. In this way, political participation can be more open, and democracy in the 2024 Buton regional elections will better represent the aspirations of society as a whole. Hopefully, these steps will reduce pressure on the democratic process, which should be open and inclusive, and bring positive changes in local political dynamics, allowing wider participation from various levels of society.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that the emergence of a single candidate in the Buton regional elections was caused by various factors, including high political costs, failure in the political party cadre system, the pragmatism of political party coalitions at the local level, and the difficulty of individual candidates fulfilling the requirements. To minimize the potential for a single candidate to emerge in the 2024 Buton Regional Election, it is recommended to strengthen the political party cadre system, implement stricter regulations regarding political costs, revise the nomination requirements for independent candidates, and increase supervision of the process of forming political party coalitions.

In this case, stricter campaign financing regulations and reforming the development of party cadres are necessary to reduce elite dominance and increase candidate diversity. In addition, easing the requirements for independent candidates can increase electoral competition and prevent unopposed elections. This research can provide benefits in increasing more inclusive and representative participation in the democratic process, ensuring fairness in political access for various social groups in Buton. However, the limitations of this research lie in the limited data that covers all factors that can influence the phenomenon of the emergence of a single candidate in the Buton Regional Election. Further research is needed to accommodate this so that an analysis can be found that breaks down the high complexity and can provide a more comprehensive view.

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