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Bawaslu's Strategies for Preventing and Addressing Electoral Violations in the 2024 Election in Sinjai Regency

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Abstract

This study examines the strategies employed by the Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu) in preventing and addressing electoral violations during the 2024 Election in Sinjai Regency, Indonesia. The research focuses on assessing the effectiveness of these strategies in relation to local institutional constraints and socio-political dynamics. A qualitative approach was applied through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, field observations, and analysis of official documents. The findings indicate that electoral violations are predominantly committed by bureaucratic actors, particularly civil servants (ASN), accounting for approximately 70% of cases, mainly involving breaches of neutrality. Preventive strategies including voter education, participatory monitoring, and electoral socialization have contributed to increasing public awareness and expanding oversight networks. However, their effectiveness remains limited, as reflected in three key indicators: low public reporting participation, weak follow-up consistency on reported cases, and limited deterrent effects of sanctions. Furthermore, enforcement practices tend to be administrative rather than punitive, with only a small proportion of cases meeting criminal thresholds. This enforcement asymmetry reduces the overall deterrence capacity of the supervisory system. This study contributes to the literature on electoral governance by demonstrating that, in decentralized contexts, the effectiveness of electoral oversight is shaped not only by institutional design but also by bureaucratic behavior, local political structures, and enforcement capacity. Strengthening cross-sector collaboration, improving technical capacity, and adopting data-driven oversight mechanisms are therefore essential to enhance electoral integrity at the local level.

Keywords: Bawaslu, electoral violations, preventive strategies, enforcement, electoral oversight

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi yang digunakan oleh Badan Pengawas Pemilihan Umum (Bawaslu) dalam mencegah dan menangani pelanggaran pemilu pada Pemilu Tahun 2024 di Kabupaten Sinjai, Indonesia. Fokus penelitian ini adalah menilai efektivitas strategi tersebut dalam konteks keterbatasan kelembagaan dan dinamika sosial-politik lokal. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan informan kunci, observasi lapangan, serta analisis dokumen resmi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pelanggaran pemilu didominasi oleh aktor birokrasi, khususnya Aparatur Sipil Negara (ASN), yang mencakup sekitar 70% dari total kasus dan sebagian besar berkaitan dengan pelanggaran netralitas. Strategi pencegahan berupa pendidikan pemilih, pengawasan partisipatif, dan sosialisasi kepemiluan berkontribusi dalam meningkatkan kesadaran publik serta

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memperluas jejaring pengawasan. Namun demikian, efektivitasnya masih terbatas, yang tercermin dari rendahnya partisipasi pelaporan masyarakat, belum konsistennya tindak lanjut terhadap laporan pelanggaran, serta lemahnya efek jera dari sanksi yang diberikan. Selain itu, praktik penegakan hukum cenderung bersifat administratif dibandingkan represif, dengan hanya sebagian kecil kasus yang memenuhi unsur tindak pidana. Ketimpangan dalam penegakan ini mengurangi daya cegah sistem pengawasan pemilu secara keseluruhan. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan kajian tata kelola pemilu dengan menunjukkan bahwa dalam konteks desentralisasi, efektivitas pengawasan pemilu tidak hanya ditentukan oleh desain kelembagaan, tetapi juga oleh perilaku birokrasi, struktur politik lokal, serta kapasitas penegakan hukum. Oleh karena itu, penguatan kolaborasi lintas aktor, peningkatan kapasitas teknis, dan penerapan mekanisme pengawasan berbasis data menjadi langkah strategis untuk meningkatkan integritas pemilu di tingkat lokal.

Kata Kunci: Bawaslu, pelanggaran Pemilu, strategi pencegahan, penegakan hukum, pengawasan Pemilu

INTRODUCTION

Elections constitute a fundamental mechanism in democratic governance, serving not only as an instrument for translating popular sovereignty into political authority but also as a means of ensuring political accountability, (Norris, 2012, 2014). The legitimacy of electoral outcomes depends on the integrity of the process, which requires fairness, transparency, and effective oversight. In this regard, electoral supervision plays a critical role in preventing violations, safeguarding political rights, and maintaining public trust in democratic institutions (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2019).

In Indonesia, the Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu) is institutionally mandated to perform both preventive and enforcement functions in overseeing electoral processes, as stipulated in Law No. 7 of 2017. Beyond administrative supervision, Bawaslu is expected to ensure compliance, deter violations, and uphold democratic norms at all levels of governance (Mochtar & Afkar, 2022). However, existing studies indicate that the effectiveness of electoral oversight institutions often varies across regions, particularly in decentralized contexts where institutional capacity, political dynamics, and socio-cultural factors differ significantly (Aspinall et al., 2020; Soderborg & Muhtadi, 2021).

Empirical evidence from local elections in Indonesia suggests that electoral violations are frequently linked to bureaucratic actors, weak regulatory enforcement, and limited coordination among oversight institutions (Darmawan, 2024; Mariana & Husin, 2017). These challenges are particularly evident in peripheral regions, where supervisory mechanisms face constraints in terms of human resources, technical capacity, and public participation (Intani, 2023). In such contexts, preventive strategies such as voter education and participatory

monitoring may not necessarily translate into effective behavioral change or reduced violations (Nasution et al., 2022).

The case of the 2024 Election in Sinjai Regency reflects these broader challenges. Several reported violations involved civil servants, village officials, and local political actors, indicating persistent issues related to bureaucratic neutrality and institutional enforcement (Bawaslu Sinjai, 2025). While some cases were processed through formal mechanisms, including the Integrated Law Enforcement Center (Gakkumdu), many did not progress to criminal adjudication due to evidentiary limitations and procedural constraints (Anindiati, 2024; Izhar, 2024). This condition raises critical questions regarding the effectiveness of Bawaslu's strategies in addressing electoral violations at the local level.

Despite the growing body of literature on electoral governance in Indonesia, most studies have primarily focused on national-level institutions or general patterns of electoral integrity (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2019; Birch & Muchlinski, 2018). Consequently, there remains a limited understanding of how electoral oversight is operationalized at the regency level, particularly in regions characterized by resource limitations and complex local political structures. This study identifies a clear research gap in the lack of micro-level, empirically grounded analysis of Bawaslu's preventive and enforcement strategies within decentralized electoral settings.

Addressing this gap, the present study aims to analyze how Bawaslu in Sinjai Regency formulates and implements its strategies for preventing and addressing electoral violations during the 2024 election. The novelty of this study lies in its integration of preventive and enforcement perspectives within a localized institutional context, combined with an empirical examination of enforcement asymmetry and bureaucratic dominance in electoral violations.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of electoral governance literature by demonstrating that the effectiveness of electoral oversight in decentralized democracies is shaped not only by institutional design but also by the interaction between bureaucratic behavior, local political structures, and enforcement capacity (Birch, 2023; d'Udekem, 2021). From a policy perspective, the findings provide insights into the need for adaptive, data-driven, and collaborative strategies to strengthen electoral integrity at the local level.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design to examine the strategies used by the Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu) of Sinjai Regency in preventing and addressing electoral violations during the 2024 election. A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for this study as it enables an in-depth exploration of institutional processes, decision-making practices, and the socio-political dynamics shaping electoral oversight, which cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement alone (Cresswell, 2017; Lawrence Neuman, 2021).

Unlike quantitative approaches that primarily focus on measuring variables and generalizing patterns, this study seeks to understand the underlying mechanisms, contextual interactions, and interpretive meanings behind Bawaslu's preventive and enforcement strategies. The complexity of electoral violations often embedded in informal practices, bureaucratic behavior, and local political relationships requires a flexible and interpretive approach that can capture these multidimensional dynamics in a holistic manner.

Furthermore, a qualitative design allows for capturing nuanced perspectives from key actors involved in the electoral supervision process, including institutional constraints, coordination challenges, and variations in enforcement practices. This approach facilitates a deeper understanding of how strategies are formulated and implemented within specific local contexts. Therefore, the use of qualitative methods provides a more comprehensive and context-sensitive understanding of electoral oversight at the local level, particularly within decentralized governance settings where formal indicators alone may not fully reflect actual practices.

Accordingly, a qualitative approach is not only appropriate but also methodologically superior in this context, as it enables the analysis of complex social relations, informal practices, and institutional dynamics that cannot be reduced to measurable variables, as typically required in quantitative or mixed-methods approaches.

The study draws on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with purposively selected key informants who hold strategic roles in the supervision process. These include the Chair of Bawaslu Sinjai, the Coordinators for Law, Prevention, Violation Handling, and Dispute Resolution, as well as political party representatives and a KPPS chairperson. Secondary data were gathered from official documents, regulatory texts, monitoring reports, internal memos, and relevant media publications.

Data collection techniques consisted of in-depth interviews, direct field observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were guided by indicators derived from established theories of electoral oversight to elicit information on strategy formulation, implementation practices, and challenges encountered in the field. Observations were used to assess the alignment between formal procedures and actual practices, while document analysis served to corroborate and enrich the empirical findings.

Data analysis in this study followed the interactive model proposed by (Miles et al., 2014), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction phase, interview transcripts, field notes, and documents were systematically coded, categorized, and organized into thematic clusters, including structural prevention, participatory prevention, and administrative and criminal enforcement. Data display was conducted through structured narrative summaries and thematic matrices to identify patterns, relationships, and variations across categories. Conclusions were drawn through an iterative verification

process, continuously linking empirical findings with the theoretical framework and the study's guiding research questions.

To enhance analytical rigor, the development of interview questions was grounded in relevant theoretical constructs, particularly from electoral governance and regulatory enforcement perspectives. These constructs were operationalized into key indicators that guided the design of the interview protocol, ensuring that data collection remained systematically aligned with the study's analytical objectives.

For example, the dimension of preventive strategies included indicators such as voter education initiatives, stakeholder engagement, and participatory monitoring mechanisms. Meanwhile, the enforcement dimension encompassed indicators such as types of violations handled, procedural mechanisms for case handling, coordination with law enforcement institutions (e.g., Gakkumdu), and the effectiveness of sanctions imposed. These indicators were embedded in semi-structured interview guidelines, enabling consistency across informants while maintaining flexibility to capture context-specific insights.

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed both source and method triangulation by comparing data obtained from interviews, observations, and official documents. In addition, member checking was conducted with selected informants to validate the accuracy of interpretations and reduce potential bias. These strategies were applied to strengthen the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings within the specific context of electoral oversight practices in Sinjai Regency.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal three key aspects of electoral supervision in Sinjai Regency during the 2024 election. First, preventive strategies such as voter education, socialization, and participatory monitoring have increased public awareness but have not significantly reduced electoral violations. Second, most violations involve bureaucratic actors, particularly civil servants, indicating persistent challenges in maintaining bureaucratic neutrality. Third, enforcement mechanisms remain predominantly administrative, with only a limited number of cases progressing to criminal adjudication, thereby weakening the deterrent effect of electoral oversight.

Subsequent sections elaborate the outcomes of each case, highlighting variations in evidentiary sufficiency, legal characterization, and institutional follow-up. The tabulated results reveal that most cases fail to meet criminal elements, not necessarily due to their triviality but because of the substantial burden of proof required for criminal prosecution and the limited investigative capacity at the frontline supervisory level. At the same time, the small number of cases that progressed to prosecution underscores the stringent interpretive thresholds within the Gakkumdu deliberation process.

Taken together, these findings offer a nuanced understanding of the interplay between preventive efforts and enforcement dynamics in a decentralized electoral setting. The results not only map the empirical contours of violations in Sinjai but also expose the institutional strengths and constraints that shape Bawaslu's overall effectiveness. The subsequent subsections present these findings in detail through figures, tables, and interpretive narrative analyses.

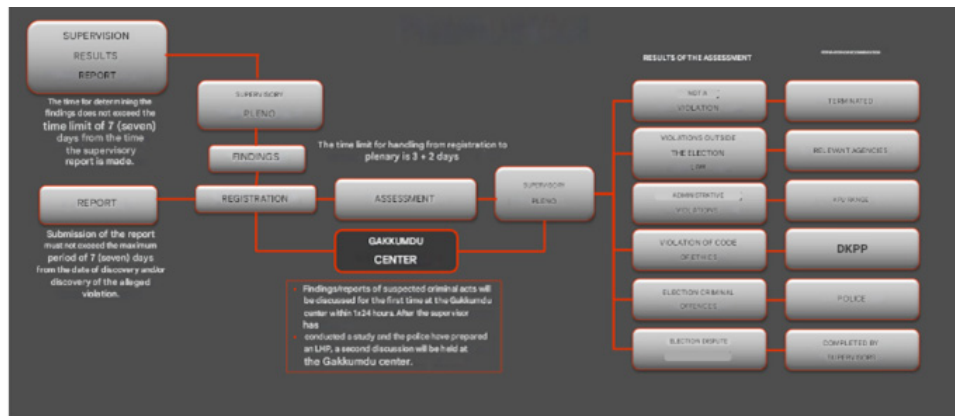


Figure 1. Mecanism for Handling Election Violantions
Source: Bawaslu RI, 2024

Figure 1 presents not merely a procedural flow but an institutional architecture that structures how electoral violations are filtered, classified, and escalated. The mechanism illustrates the interplay between administrative verification, legal examination, and inter-agency deliberation through Gakkumdu. Each stage acts as a “gatekeeping layer” that systematically narrows the number of cases eligible for criminal prosecution. The high attrition rate of cases before entering the criminal phase (as shown in the Results) suggests that this mechanism while procedurally standardized functions more as an administrative screening tool than as a punitive enforcement pathway.

This procedural filtering effect has direct implications for accountability: violations that lack strong evidence or documentation rarely advance beyond the assessment stage, thus exposing the dependence of penal enforcement on evidentiary capacity rather than severity of misconduct.

To illustrate how the mechanism operates in practice, consider a case involving a civil servant (ASN) suspected of violating neutrality during the 2024 election. The case was initially reported by the public to Bawaslu at the district level. Following this, Bawaslu conducted an administrative verification to assess the completeness and validity of the report.

After verification, the case was classified as a potential violation of electoral law and forwarded for further examination. If the case met the legal threshold, it was then discussed within the Integrated Law Enforcement Center (Gakkumdu), involving Bawaslu, the police, and the public prosecutor. During this stage, evidence was evaluated to determine whether the case could proceed to criminal investigation.

However, in many instances, including this case, the process did not advance to the criminal stage due to insufficient evidence or procedural limitations. As a result, the case was resolved through administrative measures, such as formal warnings or recommendations to the relevant institutions. This example demonstrates how the multi-layered mechanism functions in practice and highlights the filtering process that limits the number of cases progressing to criminal adjudication.

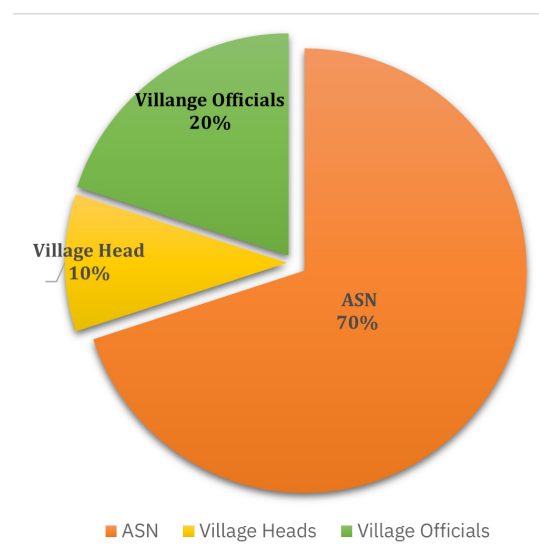


Figure 2. Case Distribution by Reported Actors
Source: Author's compilation from the Bawaslu Sinjai Performance Report

Figure 2 (supported by the detailed data) shows that electoral violations in Sinjai Regency are predominantly committed by bureaucratic actors, particularly civil servants (ASN), who account for approximately 70% of cases, followed by village officials (20%) and village heads (10%). This distribution indicates that violations are not confined to political contestants but are structurally embedded within multiple layers of the state apparatus.

From a theoretical perspective, the dominance of ASN is significant as it reflects persistent challenges in maintaining bureaucratic neutrality in decentralized governance systems. Rather than functioning as politically neutral actors, bureaucratic institutions may become intertwined with local power networks, making them susceptible to political mobilization (Diprose et al., 2019; Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2016). This pattern is consistent with the concept of bureaucratic

politicization, where state actors are indirectly involved in electoral processes through institutional proximity and patronage relations (Mietzner, 2011 & (Grindle, 2012).

Consequently, these findings suggest that effective enforcement strategies should not only target candidates but also prioritize internal bureaucratic reform, particularly in strengthening neutrality, accountability, and institutional safeguards within the public sector. Table 1. Distribution of Cases by Violation Category

No	Violation Category	Number of Cases	Percentage	Trands
1	Non-neutrality of ASN/Village Official	9 Cases	90%	Dominant, indicating structural problems in the bureaucracy
2	Administrative Violations Election of	1 Case	10%	Rare, but still appearing
3	Election Crime	2 Cases (AS & TM)	20%	Subset of total cases
Total		11 Cases	100%	

Source: Author's compilation from the Bawaslu Sinjai Performance Report

Table 1 shows that 90% of cases involve neutrality violations, indicating that electoral misconduct is not merely incidental but reflects a structural governance problem. Within the Indonesian regulatory framework, neutrality is a fundamental obligation for civil servants (ASN), as stipulated in Undang-Undang Nomor 7 Tahun 2017 tentang Pemilihan Umum and reinforced by regulations issued by Bawaslu, which prohibit any form of partiality toward electoral contestants. These findings suggest that neutrality violations are not random occurrences, but rather reflect institutionalized practices in which bureaucratic actors are often expected or implicitly pressured to align with political interests, particularly in local electoral contexts.

At the same time, the fact that only 10% of cases are classified as administrative violations and only two cases (20%) meet criminal elements further indicates that most violations fall into regulatory “gray zones” behaviors that are ethically problematic but do not always meet the legal threshold for formal sanctions. In practice, actions such as attending political events, expressing preferences on social media, or engaging in informal interactions with candidates are often difficult to categorize definitively as legal violations, despite signaling potential bias. This ambiguity is compounded by evidentiary limitations, particularly in establishing intent and direct involvement within existing procedural frameworks.

This condition raises critical questions about whether the current regulatory framework is sufficiently robust to capture the political realities of bureaucratic involvement in elections. It underscores the need for clearer regulatory interpretation and stronger enforcement mechanisms to ensure the consistent implementation of bureaucratic neutrality.

Table 2. Summary of Follow-up Actions (Outcome Results)

No	Study Results	Number	Percentage	Follow-up
1	Does not meet the criminal element	7 cases	70%	Recommendation to KASN/ Regency Government or terminated
2	Fulfils Criminal Elements	2 cases	20%	Transferred to the prosecutor’s office/ final decision
3	Does not meet administrative element	1 case	10%	Report terminated
Total		10 Cases	100%	

Source: Author’s compilation from the Bawaslu Sinjai Performance Report. The outcome patterns in Table 2 reveal a significant enforcement asymmetry: 70% of cases fail to meet criminal elements, not necessarily because the behavior is minor, but often due to evidentiary challenges, lack of material proof, or limited investigative capacity at the frontline level. Only 20% of cases escalate to criminal prosecution, indicating that the threshold for criminality remains exceptionally high. As a result, administrative outcomes dominate, suggesting that Bawaslu’s regulatory framework operates more as a compliance and advisory regime than a punitive one.

From the perspective of deterrence theory, this asymmetry directly weakens the deterrent function of electoral enforcement. Classical deterrence theory emphasizes that the effectiveness of sanctions depends on their certainty, severity, and swiftness (Chalfin & McCrary, 2017), while more recent studies highlight that the perceived certainty of punishment is the most critical factor shaping compliance (Nagin, 2013). In this case, the low proportion of cases reaching criminal prosecution reduces both the certainty and perceived severity of sanctions, thereby diminishing the deterrent effect. As a result, potential violators particularly bureaucratic actors may perceive that the risks associated with misconduct are relatively low.

Consequently, this enforcement pattern has important implications for future elections. If enforcement asymmetry persists, similar patterns of violations are likely to continue or even intensify, particularly in decentralized contexts where bureaucratic involvement remains high.

This highlights the urgent need to strengthen investigative capacity, clarify evidentiary standards, and enhance the credibility and consistency of sanctions to ensure that electoral enforcement functions not only as a regulatory mechanism but also as an effective deterrent.

Table 3. Detailed List of Individual Cases

No	Reported Actor Initials	Status / Position	Category of Violation	Review Findings	Outcome
1	JF	Civil Servant (ASN)	Neutrality Violation	Not a criminal offense	Recommended to KASN
2	RN	Civil Servant (ASN)	Neutrality Violation	Not a criminal offense	Recommended to KASN
3	BS	Civil Servant (SMPN 19)	Neutrality Violation	Not a criminal offense	Non-criminal sanction
4	YS	Civil Servant (SDN 2)	Neutrality Violation	Not a criminal offense	Non-criminal sanction
5	PH	Election Commission Civil Servant (KPU ASN)	Neutrality Violation	Not a criminal offense	Non-criminal sanction
6	AW	Village Apparatus	Neutrality Violation	Not a criminal offense	Recommended to District Government / KASN
7	AS	Village Head	Attending a campaign event	Fulfills elements of a criminal offense	Final and binding court decision (inkracht)
8	(Redacted)	Candidate Pair	Administrative Violation	Does not meet administrative elements	Terminated
9	TM	Civil Servant (Regional Secretariat)	Neutrality Violation	Fulfills elements of a criminal offense	Referred to the Prosecutor's Office
10	(Not specified)	Specific Individual	Election Violation	Does not meet the required elements	Terminated

Source: Author's compilation from the Bawaslu Sinjai Performance Report

The micro-level detail presented in Table 3 provides a clearer picture of variation across actors. First, civil servants (JF, RN, BS, YS, PH, and TM) are generally involved in neutrality violations; however, only one case (TM) reached the criminal threshold, indicating disparities in the degree of involvement and the strength of evidentiary support. Second, village-level actors (AW and AS) tend to exhibit more explicit forms of political engagement, as illustrated by the case of AS, who attended a campaign event and was subsequently subject to a final and legally binding court decision. Third, cases categorized as “terminated” reveal recurring procedural weaknesses, particularly in the documentation and evidentiary substantiation of reports.

Overall, this variation demonstrates that electoral violations are not uniform but instead reflect differences in behavioral patterns, evidentiary capacity, and enforcement outcomes across actor categories. This fragmentation indicates the presence of structural gaps within the oversight system, particularly in relation to inconsistent evidentiary standards, uneven enforcement practices, and limited institutional capacity at the local level.

From a theoretical perspective, these conditions also reflect symptoms of bureaucratic politicization, whereby bureaucratic actors are not fully neutral but are embedded within local power dynamics, making them vulnerable to political mobilization. At the same time, when viewed through the lens of deterrence theory, inconsistencies in enforcement and the low proportion of cases resulting in criminal sanctions weaken both the certainty and severity of punishment. This, in turn, reduces deterrent effects, as potential violators may perceive the risks associated with misconduct as relatively low.

Therefore, these findings imply the need for institutional reform that extends beyond procedural adjustments to include strengthening bureaucratic neutrality and enhancing enforcement effectiveness. Such reforms should encompass improving investigative capacity, standardizing evidentiary thresholds, increasing the consistency of sanction enforcement, and strengthening coordination among oversight and law enforcement institutions in order to establish a more credible, consistent, and deterrence-oriented electoral oversight system.

Voter Education: Alignment with Electoral Integrity Theory but Limited Behavioral Impact

The findings indicate that voter education constitutes a central pillar of Bawaslu’s preventive efforts, consistent with Electoral Integrity Theory, which posits that informed citizens are better equipped to resist manipulation and detect irregularities. Programs such as GARASI On The Street and Bawaslu Campus Talk have contributed to improving civic literacy, particularly among first-time voters.

However, despite these improvements, a persistent gap remains between increased awareness and actual behavioral change. This limitation can be explained by deeper socio-

economic and cultural factors. Practices such as money politics are often embedded in reciprocal social relations and economic dependency, where voters may prioritize short-term material benefits over normative electoral principles. In this context, informational interventions alone are insufficient to alter entrenched behavioral patterns.

Thus, while Bawaslu's voter education initiatives are theoretically sound, their effectiveness is constrained by structural realities at the grassroots level. This finding suggests that voter education must move beyond information dissemination toward more integrative approaches that address socio-economic incentives and collective norms shaping electoral behavior.

Participatory Monitoring: Expanding Oversight Through Collaboration, but Constrained by Enforcement Gaps

Participatory monitoring initiatives demonstrate strong alignment with collaborative governance perspectives, emphasizing multi-actor engagement in achieving public accountability. The involvement of civil society organizations, youth groups, and local NGOs reflects an inclusive model of electoral oversight that enhances legitimacy and expands surveillance networks.

Nevertheless, two critical limitations emerge. First, constraints in digital literacy and unequal access to technology hinder the effective use of reporting platforms such as Gowaslu and SiGap Lapor. These challenges reflect broader issues of digital governance and inequality, where technological solutions risk reinforcing existing disparities rather than broadening participation. Second, inconsistencies in the follow-up of reported violations indicate gaps within the enforcement chain, reducing institutional responsiveness.

From the perspective of Regulatory Enforcement Theory, these weaknesses highlight that monitoring mechanisms must be supported by credible and consistent enforcement pathways. When enforcement is perceived as selective or uncertain particularly in cases involving politically influential actors such as civil servants public trust declines, thereby weakening incentives for participatory reporting.

Therefore, while participatory monitoring enhances situational prevention, its capacity to generate systemic deterrence remains limited without addressing digital inequality and strengthening enforcement consistency.

Electoral Socialization: Multi-Channel Communication and Stakeholder Engagement with Persistent Inclusion Barriers

The study shows that Bawaslu's electoral socialization strategy adopts a multi-channel communication approach, combining direct engagement, digital platforms, and formal collaboration with youth organizations. This reflects an inter-organizational coordination model that emphasizes networked governance in reaching diverse audiences.

Despite these efforts, the overall impact remains uneven due to persistent inclusion barriers, particularly low digital literacy and limited community participation. More importantly, the current strategy tends to rely heavily on formal and youth-based networks, while underutilizing informal institutions such as religious leaders and community figures who hold significant normative authority in local contexts.

In rural and semi-rural areas, these informal actors often play a decisive role in shaping political attitudes and behaviors. The limited engagement with such actors reduces the effectiveness of normative messaging, as formal communication channels may not fully penetrate communities where traditional authority structures remain dominant.

This finding suggests that electoral socialization should be reoriented toward culturally embedded approaches that actively integrate informal institutions as strategic partners in promoting electoral norms.

Integrative Interpretation: Prevention Strategies Are Effective but Not Yet Transformative

Synthesizing the findings across the three domains reveals that Bawaslu's preventive strategies are effective at the procedural and awareness-raising levels but have not yet achieved transformative impact on electoral behavior. The persistence of money politics, digital inequality, and inconsistent enforcement outcomes indicates that preventive strategies, while necessary, are insufficient when implemented in isolation.

The key theoretical contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that the effectiveness of electoral oversight in decentralized contexts depends on the interaction between formal institutional mechanisms and informal socio-political structures. Preventive strategies do not operate in a vacuum; rather, they are shaped by local power relations, cultural norms, and structural inequalities.

This implies that strengthening electoral integrity requires a more integrated approach that combines preventive education, inclusive participation, and credible enforcement. In contexts such as Sinjai, where political competition is embedded in patronage networks and socio-economic vulnerabilities, preventive strategies must be complemented by stronger deterrence mechanisms, community empowerment, and enhanced inter-agency coordination.

Contribution to the Literature

This study contributes to the literature on electoral governance in decentralized democracies by offering a context-sensitive analysis of how preventive strategies operate at the local level. While existing studies emphasize the importance of voter education, participatory monitoring, and electoral communication, this research demonstrates that their effectiveness is contingent upon broader structural and socio-cultural conditions.

More specifically, the study advances electoral governance theory by highlighting the

need to integrate formal institutional analysis with informal socio-political dynamics. It shows that the success of electoral oversight depends not only on institutional design and regulatory frameworks but also on how these mechanisms interact with local inequalities, patronage systems, and community-based authority structures.

By foregrounding these interactions, the study provides a more nuanced understanding of electoral governance in Indonesia and underscores the importance of adaptive, context-driven strategies in strengthening both preventive and enforcement capacities.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Bawaslu's strategies for preventing and addressing electoral violations in Sinjai Regency are formally aligned with national regulatory frameworks and the principles of electoral governance. However, their effectiveness remains constrained by structural and contextual challenges, including bureaucratic politicization, limited enforcement capacity, uneven digital literacy, and the persistence of patronage-based socio-political relations.

Empirically, the findings show that electoral violations are predominantly committed by bureaucratic actors, particularly civil servants (ASN), indicating systemic weaknesses in maintaining administrative neutrality. While preventive strategies such as voter education, participatory monitoring, and electoral socialization have improved procedural awareness, they have not yet produced significant behavioral change. Moreover, enforcement remains largely administrative, with limited progression to criminal sanctions, thereby weakening deterrence and accountability.

From a theoretical perspective, this study advances electoral governance theory by demonstrating that, in decentralized contexts, the effectiveness of electoral oversight is shaped not only by formal institutional design but also by its interaction with informal socio-political structures, including patronage networks, cultural norms, and local power relations. This finding contributes to the broader literature by bridging electoral governance and public administration perspectives, emphasizing that institutional performance at the local level is contingent upon both regulatory capacity and embedded social dynamics.

To address these challenges, several context-specific and actionable policy recommendations are proposed. First, voter education should adopt a behaviorally oriented model, for example through community-based interventions such as peer educator programs, village-level deliberative forums, and collaboration with local influencers to address socio-economic motivations behind vote-buying. Second, participatory monitoring should be strengthened through structured digital literacy training modules for community groups and election volunteers, alongside the development of hybrid reporting systems that integrate mobile applications with offline complaint posts at village offices.

Third, electoral socialization should be expanded by formally integrating religious leaders, customary leaders, and community figures into Bawaslu's outreach strategy through partnership schemes or local advisory councils, ensuring that electoral norms are disseminated through trusted informal institutions. Fourth, enforcement capacity should be enhanced by introducing specialized investigative training programs for field supervisors, developing standardized evidence assessment guidelines, and establishing clear escalation protocols for cases entering the Gakkumdu process.

Fifth, institutional reform is needed to strengthen coordination mechanisms between Bawaslu, Gakkumdu, and local government actors. This can be operationalized through integrated case management systems, joint monitoring task forces, and periodic inter-agency evaluation forums to ensure consistency and accountability in enforcement practices.

In conclusion, strengthening electoral integrity in decentralized settings requires more than procedural compliance. It demands an integrated approach that combines institutional reform, capacity building, community engagement, and consistent enforcement. By adopting adaptive, data-driven, and context-sensitive strategies, electoral oversight institutions can move beyond procedural effectiveness toward achieving more substantive and transformative impacts.

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