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Single Candidate: A Setback to Indonesian Democracy?

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Abstract. The increase in regional head candidates was held in 2015. There were 4 single candidates. In 2017, there were 9 single candidates; in 2018, there were 16 single candidate pairs; for the 2020 regional elections, there was an increase to 25. The phenomenon of single candidates in the Pilkada and the increasing trend of each provincial head election is increasingly attractive to be studied more deeply. This research uses a qualitative approach to analysis by emphasizing process and meaning. Various literature studies related to research on implementing single candidates in simultaneous regional elections from 2015, 2017, 2018, and 2020. Some of the factors of a single candidate for the regional head are the failure of political parties in the cadre process, the high cost of political dowries, the legitimacy of the law, and the difficulty of the requirements for independent candidates to run for regional head elections. The phenomenon of a single candidate in the democratic system in Indonesia certainly attracts the attention of academics, politicians, and the public to study and follow the development process of the local democratic system. The presence of independent candidates will provide an alternative solution to regions in regional head elections that do not have competitors offered by political parties.

Keywords. Pilkada, single candidate, independent candidate, democracy, electoral

Introduction

History records that the emergence of a single candidate in regional elections in Indonesia is inseparable from the decision issued by the Constitutional Court (MK) number 100/PUU-XIII/2015. The existence of the Constitutional Court's decision is the result of the granting of a judicial review request for Law Number 8 of 2015 concerning amendments to Law Number 1 of 2015 concerning the Stipulation of Government Regulations instead of Law Number 1 of 2014 concerning the Election of Governors, Regents and Mayors into Law on 29 September 2015 (Ilham, 2020). The phenomenon of a single candidate in the democratic system in Indonesia, the number of regional head elections has increased over time. With the Perpu (regulation instead of law) issuance, regional head elections (Pilkada) were held simultaneously in various regions in Indonesia to hold elections simultaneously in three stages before the presidential and legislative elections in 2019. The first phase of the simultaneous regional head elections was held in December 2015, followed by approximately 265 regions consisting of 9 provinces, 36 cities, and 224 regencies. The second phase was held in February 2017 in 7 areas,

18 cities, and 76 regencies. The third phase of simultaneous regional elections occurred in June 2018, involving 171 regions of 17 provinces, 39 cities, and 115 regencies (Agus Riyanto, 2019). Meanwhile, the 2020 simultaneous regional elections will be the fourth time held in Indonesia, followed by 270 regions consisting of 9 provinces, 224 regencies, and 37 cities.

This increase was seen when regional head candidates were held in 2015. There were 4 single candidates; in 2017, there were 9 single candidates. In 2018, there were 16 single-candidate pairs, and for the 2020 regional elections, there was an increase to 25 single-candidate teams (Rahman et al., 2022). Seeing the increasing trend of single candidates in regional head elections is undoubtedly a reflection of election organizing actors to make regulations that can provide certainty in the selection process for regional head elections as part of the democratic system. Single candidates, which in every provincial head election from 2015-2020 continue to increase, will undoubtedly impact the number of single candidates appearing in the following regional head election. In addition, how can the community or people choose the best candidate in their area if only one candidate is offered? If seen further, the existence of direct elections can punish incumbent candidates if the incumbent candidates are considered not to have good performance so that the community can choose other candidates as alternatives. The increase in single candidates in simultaneous regional elections in Indonesia can be seen in Figure 1 below;

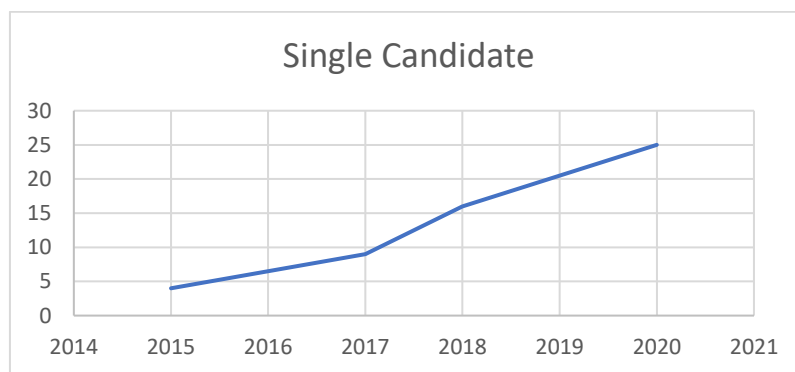


Figure 1.

Figure 1. Increase in Single Candidates in Simultaneous Regional Elections 2015-2020

Based on Figure 1 above, there is an increasing trend of single candidates in simultaneous regional elections from 2015 to 2020 in four regional head elections. There must be policies or regulations governing simultaneous regional head elections. Rules on implementing existing regional elections must be changed or revised regarding the rules for participating in regional head elections.

Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with analysis by accentuating process and meaning. Various literature studies related to research on implementing single candidates in simultaneous regional elections from 2015, 2017, 2018, and 2020. The data obtained from this research uses secondary data obtained from various previous research literature, applicable laws, books, and various mass media or websites from trusted sources. The data analysis technique used is the inductive analysis technique, namely the analysis of the data obtained and the steps in this research, namely data reduction, unitisation and categorization, data display, and conclusion (Kaharuddin, 2021).

Results and Discussion

Indonesia is a country that is quite successful in implementing a democratic system. The democracy built in Indonesia is a constitutional democracy, marked by the amendment of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD 1945). The amendment was carried out four times: the first amendment in 1999, the second in 2000, the third in 2001, and the fourth in 2002. The results of these amendments eventually gave birth to a policy of direct democracy by electing the president and vice president directly, including the election of regional heads and deputy regional heads at the provincial, district, and city levels. According to Linz and Stephen, one of the reasons is marked by the people's direct election process and guaranteed in organizing it with several principles of natural, general, accessible, and secret. Honest and fair ultimately impact the legitimacy of power based on the majority vote of the people's choice (Rahman et al., 2022).

The emergence of a single candidate in simultaneous regional head elections (*pilkada*) in various regions in Indonesia is a form of empirical democracy. The emergence of a "single candidate" situation is normatively unthinkable to the concept of democracy formulated by Robert Dahl (Nurrahmah, 2019). This phenomenon does not hinder the implementation of popular sovereignty in elections and elections. Therefore, the Constitutional Court Decision Number 100/PUU-XIII/2015 was issued. The Constitutional Court Decision Number 100/PUU-XIII/2015 provides a normative legal basis, perspective, and constitutional (Tanjung & Saraswati, 2020). With the decision of the Constitutional Court, there are various interpretations of the norms, so it appears that the legislators intend to state that there are at least two pairs of candidates in the contestation of regional head elections. On the other hand, it has not provided a clear solution if the regional head candidates are not fulfilled (Tanjung & Saraswati, 2020).

Hans Kelsen explained that democracy is categorized into two: direct democracy and indirect (representative) democracy. Direct democracy is considered an ideal democracy. Meanwhile, Robert Dahl conveyed a different opinion, stating that there is no perfect democracy. Because even though democracy is considered excellent, some things are still regarded as democratic (Rumesten et al., 2016).

Simultaneous and direct local elections in the democratic system adopted by the Indonesian state are certainly considered ideal. However, the emergence of a single candidate in the regional head elections since 2015, where three single candidate pairs are appearing in local political battles, has resulted in cross opinions from various experts, the community, and even politicians. The direct election system that has been built and is considered ideal and provides a solution for the people to determine prospective leaders or regional heads by the people's will is precise with the single candidate. The people are not given a choice of other candidates. In the absence of a battle of ideas, vision, mission, and work programs that will be implemented during the term of office, there is no offer to the people to choose the best candidates in their regions who are considered to provide change.

1. The Emergence of Single Candidates for Regional Heads

The emergence of a single-candidate phenomenon has undoubtedly made the General Election Commission (KPU) extend the registration period for candidates for governor and deputy governor, regent and deputy regent, and mayor and deputy mayor. The extension of the registration period is carried out as a legal framework that requires the elections to be followed by at least two pairs of candidates. The birth Constitutional Court's decision Number 100/PUU-XIII/2015 was to provide solutions for several regions with single candidates. In 2015, there were at least seven single candidates, including Surabaya City, Mataram City, North Central

Timor Regency, Samarinda City, Blitar Regency, Pacitan Regency, and Tasikmalaya Regency (Ishak, 2020). Due to the extension of the regional head nomination time, in the end, from seven single candidates, it was reduced to four regions with single candidates, namely, Blitar Regency, Tasikmalaya Regency, North Central Timor Regency, and Mataram City (KPU RI, 2015).

According to Mohammad Alexander, as a product of the dynamics of local politics, the existence of a single candidate in the elections provides an alternative to achieving participation to avoid the loss of constitutional rights of citizens and candidates who will run, but on the other hand places the elections as an uncontested election, which unanimous polls will be more challenging to achieve—degrading the element of participation in democracy (Rahmanto, 2018). Meanwhile, Ni'matul Huda stated that the postponement of elections due to a single candidate is a setback to a democratic system and can be said to violate human rights (Huda, 2005). Meanwhile, one of the values of democracy, according to Henry B. Mayo, is to hold regional elections regularly to find candidates (*orderly succession of rulers*) (Huda, 2005).

The phenomenon of single candidates does not only occur in Indonesia but also several countries. In the Philippines, around 500 candidates ran without opponents in the 2019 elections (Tomacruz, 2019). In addition, in countries with single candidates in regional head elections, in India, there are 218 single candidates elected without any political opponents (Bosco Dominique, 2019). Meanwhile, a single candidate occurred in the Quebec City election in Canada by reaching 56.3% running for office without any competitors. Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, there are around 148 seats contested by single candidates (*unopposed/uncontested*) (Rahman et al., 2022). Whereas in Indonesia, in the regional head elections, there were around 25 single candidates to compete for the seats of Regent and Deputy Regent, City, and Mayor in 11 provincial areas in Indonesia. For more details, see Table 1 below;

Table 1.
Single Candidate Candidates for the 2020 Regional Head Election

No	District	Province	Name Candidate Pair	Total Votes			City of Kosong	Number of polling stations
				Paslon	Empty Box	Paslon		
1	Humbang Hasundutan Regency	North Sumatra	Dosmar Banjarmasinahor-oloan P. Nababan	51861	46940	52,50%	47,50%	385
2	Pematang Siantar City	North Sumatra	Asner Silalahi - Susanti Dewanayani	87733	25560	77,40%	22,60%	545
3	City Sitoli	Gunung Sumatra	Lakhomizaro - Sowa'a Laoli	47501	12402	78,30%	20,70%	307
4	Pasaman Regency	West Sumatra	Benny Utama - Sabar AS	104519	20558	83,60%	16,40%	707
5	Ogan Komering Ulu Regency	South Sumatra	Kuryana Azis - Johan Anuar	116606	63244	64,80%	35,20%	725
6	South Ogan Komering Ulu Regency	South Sumatra	Popo Ali Martop B. Commerce - Sholehien Abuasir	210623	8407	96,20%	3,80%	893
7	North Bengkulu Regency	Bengkulu	Mian - Arie Septia Adinata	105133	41440	71,70%	28,30%	637

8	Kebumen Regency	Central Java	Arif Sugiyanto - Ristawati Purwaningsih	389724	251059	60,80%	39,20%	3155
9	Wonosobo Regency	Central Java	Afif Nurhidayat - Muhmmad Albar	269363	153778	63,70%	36,30%	1950
10	Boyolali Regency	Central Java	Mohammad Said Hidayat - Wahyu Irawan	664872	31148	95,50%	4,50%	2277
11	Sragen Regency	Central Java	Kusdinar untung Yuni Sukowati - Suroto	431271	106559	80,20%	19,80%	2271
12	Grobogan Regency	Central Java	Sri Sumarni - Bambang Pujiyanto	594197	94752	86,20%	13,80%	2971
13	Semarang City	Central Java	Hendrar Prihadi - Hevearita Gunaryanti Rahayu	714531	67407	91,40%	8,60%	3447
14	Kediri Regency	East Java	Hanindhito Himawan Pramana - Dewi Mariya	590317	181423	76,50%	23,50%	3311
15	Ngawi Regency	East Java	Ony Anwar Harsono - Dwi Rianto Jatmiko	470354	28430	94,30%	5,70%	1798
16	Badung Regency	Bali	I Nyoman Giri Prasta - I Ketut Sulasa	285241	16172	94,60%	5,40%	996
17	West Sumbawa Regency	West Nusa Tenggara	W. Musyafirin - Fud Syafuddin	55455	19115	74,40%	25,60%	291
18	Kutai Kartanegara Regency	East Kalimantan	Edi Damansyah-Rendi Solihin	199880	70851	73,80%	26,20%	1695
19	Balikpapan City	East Kalimantan	Rahmad Mas'ud-Thohari	160741	96669	62,40%	37,60%	1505
20	Gowa Regency	South Sulawesi	Adnan Purichta Ichsan-Abdul Rauf Malaganni	377245	36998	91,10%	8,90%	1430
21	Soppeng Regency	South Sulawesi	A. Kaswadi Razak - Lutfi Halide	114030	18056	86,30%	13,70%	517
22	Mamuju Regency	Central Sulawesi	M. Aras T - Muh Amin Jasa	66652	3841	94,60%	5,40%	274
23	Raja Ampat Regency	West Papua	Abdul Faris Umlati-Oridek0 I. Burdam	22671	11382	66,60%	33,40%	205
24	South Manokwari Regency	West Papua	Markus Waran - Wempie Welly Rengkung	26871	2003	93,10%	9,90%	112
25	Arfak Mountains Regency	West Papua	Yosias Saroy - Marinus Mandacan	33126	-	-	99,11%	166

Source: 2020 regional head election results (kpu.go.id. 2020), processed

The phenomenon of the increase in single candidates in the 2020 regional elections is based on a table.1 above shows that the percentage of voters for single candidates is significant in almost all regions with single candidates. People seem to be forced to vote for candidates who do not have political opponents. If the increase in single candidates in the next regional elections continues, the regulations to carry out the election process will certainly erode Indonesia's democratic system.

2. Factors in the Emergence of Single Candidate Candidates

The surge in single candidates in Indonesia's regional head elections over time, of course, raises a variety of questions. Why are there more and more single candidates? There is a downward trend in public trust in political parties from 2017-2020. Based on data submitted by the Henny Susilowati Centre in 2017, Charta 5 Politica in 2018, the LSI Survey Institute in 2019, and Barometer in 2020, the level of public trust in political parties tends to be according to. In 2017, it only reached 35%. In 2018, it came to 45.60%. In 2019, it reached 53%, and in 2020 it reached 53%. Acquired 49.10% (Rahman et al., 2022).

A multi-party presidential system of government can disrupt the president's stability due to the solid political friction between the executive and legislative branches. It is not much different with regional head elections against single candidates. Many think that single-candidate elections are considered undemocratic. The main essence of a democratic system is the community's genuine involvement in the governance process. In other words, the people are the determinants of power in the process of governance given by the people's representatives through the election process as a social contract (Rini, 2016).

The presence of political parties that offer social contracts or political contracts to the people by providing various choices of candidates from their political cadres in the regions to become regional leaders will undoubtedly produce a healthier democratic climate if candidates from political parties are deemed capable of leading, of course, through mechanisms following political parties. The emergence of a single candidate in the local elections should be a slap in the face for political parties if the regeneration process within political parties cannot present a figure to lead the local government. There are several factors for the emergence of a single candidate in the regional head election;

a. Failure of political parties in the cadre process

Political parties that should have a cadre function to form prospective leaders do not carry out the cadre process properly. Not running the cadre system properly, and political parties cannot bring up their best candidates will undoubtedly impact people's trust in political parties. The function of political parties as a mediating institution where various community groups can express their aspirations through political parties has failed to be carried out by political parties when they cannot offer candidates for leaders. Consequently, the wheels of political democracy in Indonesia will stagnate and will reduce the quality of democracy in Indonesia. Political parties will gradually lose legitimacy from the community for their existence and political power in the government. This is dangerous for regional and national political stability (Manan, 2015).

b. The high cost of political dowries

In modern democratic systems, political parties perform the function of providing candidates to compete in elections. The best candidates are selected through political party mechanisms, electability, and social capital and are the best cadres of political parties. The high political dowry of the nomination in the nomination is certainly not small. Individual candidates participating in the regional head nomination process need sufficient funds to get voters' votes.

It cannot be denied that the practice of money politics contributes to the high cost of politics in the nomination—both executive and legislative candidates. Money can influence voters in making their choices. But success can also occur for candidates who have little money but are favored by voters. The high political dowry is why regional head candidates must see the chances of winning to advance in the nomination process. Especially if the opposing candidate is an incumbent and has high electability, political opponents will think twice about running. Incumbents are considered strong candidates, and political calculations calculated by political parties are deemed unable to compete, giving rise to parties that are ultimately pragmatists.

a. The legitimacy of the law

The emergence of single candidates in regional head elections resulted from the Constitutional Court (MK) decision number 100/PUU-XIII/2015 due to the granting of judicial review, so various single candidates in the regions gained legal legitimacy. In addition, a considerable obstacle is the existence of rules that are considered to hinder the emergence of many potential candidates to advance in local political battles.

b. Complex requirements for independent candidates

Independent candidates, commonly known as individual candidates, can be an alternative solution to the single candidate in the regional head election. The high requirements of a single candidate through the personal path of 6.5% to 10% of the population make it difficult for candidates to fight in the elections through the Independent approach. The high requirements certainly affect the small number of independent candidates entitled to participate in the elections. If you look at KPU RI data in 2015, independent candidates who follow the election are 136 pairs (16.5%), and through political party channels, as many as 687 teams (83.5%) (Manan, 2015). Meanwhile, in the 2020 Pilkada, 203 independent candidate pairs registered, and only 66 candidates passed and were determined as election participants consisting of 58 abrasions in the recent election and 8 abrasions in the mayoral election (Pilwalkot) (Wardi, 2020).

There needs to be an improvement in regulations for individual candidates, especially in the support requirements for independent couples to advance in the process—regional head elections. The existence of independent candidates will undoubtedly provide an alternative solution to reducing the fact of a single candidate in regional head elections.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of a single candidate in the democratic system in Indonesia has undoubtedly attracted the attention of academics, politicians, and the public to study and follow the process of developing the local democratic system. The 2020 Pilkada, carried out simultaneously and in the conditions of the covid 19 pandemic, became a new experience in organizing elections. The existence of a single candidate pair of as many as 25 candidate pairs with a reasonably significant percentage victory certainly provides a big question mark.

The democratic process of presenting a single candidate pair against an empty box is part of the democratic process, or there appears to be covert coercion where the community is only offered a single candidate or an open container. Even if the empty box wins, of course, the community will experience a political dilemma regarding who the leader of the regional head will be appointed to fill the position of the regional authority. On the other hand, the single-candidate pairs do not offer political programs to the people, and the community has no choice but to see the government programs of their political opponents.

The presence of independent candidates will provide an alternative solution to areas in regional elections that do not have competitors offered by political parties. It is necessary to

improve the regulations governing independent candidates to be able to participate in regional elections. The requirements considered burdensome for independent candidates who will run in politics indeed hamper the democratic process in Indonesia. Meanwhile, political parties tend to want to play it safe when the regional head candidates who will run are incumbent candidates with high electability.

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