

Submission	Review Process	Revised	Accepted	Published
18-06-2022	10 s/d 30-07-2023	29-07-2024	30-08-2024	30-08-2024

*Ampera: A Research Journal on Politics and
Islamic Civilization, Vol. 4 No.3, August 2023 (159-165)*

The Simultaneous Regional Elections of 2024 and the Leadership of Islamic Clerics in Palembang

Masagus Ahmad Fauzan

Pondok Pesantren Kiai Merogan Palembang

Email: Fauzanyayan_209@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections (Pilkada) in Palembang are a significant focus in the context of Indonesian democracy. This study examines the role of ulama in the 2024 Pilkada and its implications for leadership in Palembang. As a democratic nation, general elections are a key indicator in evaluating the democratization process. The role of ulama in local politics is becoming increasingly significant, not only as spiritual leaders but also as social and political movers. The interaction between religion and politics presents challenges related to balancing religious values with democratic principles. Despite this, elections, including regional elections, are considered crucial instruments for building democracy, even though they still face issues such as money politics and the use of religious identity for political gain. In this context, enhancing oversight of unethical political practices, strengthening regulations related to campaign financing, and increasing public participation in the political process are necessary to ensure a healthy and sustainable democratization process in Indonesia. Therefore, the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections in Palembang represent an important opportunity to strengthen democracy and boost public participation in the political process, with continuous improvements and advancements needed to maintain the integrity and sustainability of democracy in Indonesia.

Keywords: 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections, Role of Ulama, Interaction Between Religion and Politics, Democracy

ABSTRAK

Pilkada Serentak 2024 di Palembang menjadi perhatian penting dalam konteks demokrasi Indonesia. Penelitian ini membahas peran ulama dalam Pilkada Serentak 2024 dan implikasinya terhadap kepemimpinan di Palembang. Sebagai negara demokrasi, pemilihan umum menjadi indikator utama dalam mengevaluasi proses demokratisasi. Peran ulama dalam politik lokal menjadi signifikan, tidak hanya sebagai pemimpin spiritual tetapi juga sebagai penggerak sosial dan politik. Interaksi antara agama dan politik menimbulkan tantangan terkait keseimbangan antara nilai-nilai agama dan prinsip-prinsip demokrasi. Meskipun demikian, pemilu, termasuk Pilkada, dianggap sebagai instrumen penting dalam membangun demokrasi, meskipun masih dihadapi

dengan praktik politik uang dan penggunaan identitas agama untuk kepentingan politik. Dalam konteks ini, peningkatan pengawasan terhadap praktik politik yang tidak etis, penguatan regulasi terkait dengan pembiayaan kampanye, dan peningkatan partisipasi masyarakat dalam proses politik diperlukan untuk memastikan proses demokratisasi yang sehat dan berkelanjutan di Indonesia. Oleh karena itu, Pilkada Serentak 2024 di Palembang merupakan momentum penting untuk memperkuat demokrasi dan meningkatkan partisipasi masyarakat dalam proses politik, dengan langkah-langkah perbaikan dan peningkatan yang harus terus dilakukan untuk menjaga integritas dan keberlanjutan demokrasi di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: Pilkada Serentak 2024, Peran Ulama, Interaksi Agama dan Politik, Demokrasi

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country that adheres to a democratic system of government. Democracy is understood as a system of governance that upholds the welfare of the people, often referred to as government of the people, by the people, and for the people. As a political system, democracy has achieved top status, accepted by many countries due to its perceived ability to manage and resolve social and political relationships within a country. Democracy has broad and complex meanings, one of which is that citizens are given the opportunity to choose among competing political leaders. The ability of the people to select among political leaders during elections is referred to as democracy (Nugroho 2015).

In many countries with democratic systems, general elections are often seen as a symbol and primary indicator of democracy itself. Elections conducted with transparency, freedom of speech, and freedom of association usually reflect public participation and aspirations quite accurately. However, it must be acknowledged that elections are not the only indicator and should be accompanied by various other ongoing activities, such as participation in party activities, political lobbying, and others (Budiardjo 2010).

General elections (Pemilu) are democratic events that serve as the foundation for politics, the nation, and the state in efforts to build a better future. As a pillar of democracy, elections guide the nation and state towards achieving mature democracy and building a better civilization. Furthermore, elections are also a crucial evaluative moment for any regime in realizing the ideals of national independence (Chaniago, 2016). The conduct of elections as a democratic celebration and legal system in Indonesia provides citizens with the opportunity to vote and be elected. These elections are held based on the principles of equality before the law and equal opportunity in governance.

The implementation of regional elections (Pilkada) as a selection mechanism must be grounded in the spirit of popular sovereignty and carried out democratically. One of the main prerequisites for achieving democratic elections is political participation. Community participation in Pilkada is crucial as it will produce successful regional leaders, reflecting the quality of democracy. Therefore, citizen participation in choosing leaders is essential, even though citizen involvement often ends at the voting process.

From a normative perspective, the conduct of regional elections (Pilkada) is regulated by Law No. 32 of 2004 concerning Regional Government. Article 56, paragraph (1) states that "Regional Heads and Deputy Regional Heads are elected in one pair of candidates through democratic, direct, general, free, secret, honest, and fair procedures." This law requires candidates for Regional Head and Deputy Regional Head to adhere to these provisions as guidelines for the implementation of Pilkada at the provincial and district/city levels. The importance of this regulation lies in providing a framework that ensures each stage of the election process adheres to democratic principles. Without clear regulations, the conduct of elections, including Pilkada, would lose direction and purpose, akin to navigating without a compass.

The Minister of Home Affairs, Tito Karnavian, has stated that the government will conduct the Simultaneous Pilkada in 2024. According to him, the schedule is established under Law No. 10 of 2016. "Pilkada is mandated by Law No. 10 of 2016 on the Election of Governors, Regents, and Mayors, which was enacted on July 1, 2016, where the elections will be held simultaneously in November 2024" (detik.com).

In 2022, at least 76 districts and 18 cities will have their regional heads' terms expire. In 2023, 171 regional heads in 17 provinces, 15 districts, and 39 cities will also complete their terms. Consequently, new public officials will be appointed by their higher authorities for a significant period, approximately two years of governance.

This situation has the potential to create various issues if not properly anticipated, such as the legitimacy of policies implemented by Acting Regional Heads and overlapping authorities exercised by these interim officials. To address this, it is recommended to establish clear regulations governing the interim regional heads, including their authority, legal protection, qualifications for serving as acting officials, and sanctions for any misuse of authority in strategic decision-making.

In the context of the Simultaneous Regional Elections (Pilkada) in Palembang, the role of ulama is particularly significant. Ulama in Palembang function not only as spiritual leaders but also as influential figures in the community. Their influence extends across various aspects, from moral and ethical guidance to political decisions.

Ulama are Muslim intellectuals who possess formal, informal, and non-formal education and are of noble character. They have insights and analyses that transcend space and time, allowing them to interpret and address various issues in a critical, creative, and comprehensive manner (Nasution 2017).

In the Qur'an, the term ulama is often represented by the term *ulul albab*. This term reflects the characteristics of ulama, which include: the ability to interpret both cosmic and Qur'anic verses, submission to and commitment to the will and power of Allah, and wisdom in interpreting and responding to community issues. These characteristics indicate that ulama possess sharp analytical skills and a forward-looking vision, which often leads them to be involved in practical politics and community empowerment.

In regional elections (Pilkada), ulama often serve as a reference for the community in making their choices. The moral and spiritual influence wielded by ulama can shape the political views of citizens, both directly through sermons and moral guidance, and indirectly through deeply ingrained religious norms. Additionally, ulama

have the ability to mobilize masses, rallying their followers to support particular candidates, whether through speeches, active endorsement, or by encouraging their congregants to exercise their voting rights.

Ulama also play a role as supporters or critics of the political policies proposed by candidates. The religious perspectives articulated by ulama regarding these policies can significantly impact public opinion. The support of ulama for a candidate in Pilkada can provide additional political legitimacy for that candidate, reinforcing their position in the eyes of the public and reassuring voters about the integrity and quality of the candidate's leadership.

In the Pilkada process in Palembang, the role of ulama is crucial not only in their capacity as spiritual leaders but also as political figures with significant influence in shaping public opinion and political decisions. Moreover, ulama also play a role in maintaining social and political stability by upholding values of justice, honesty, and wisdom that are expected to be reflected in the leadership chosen by the community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review aims to investigate various aspects related to the Simultaneous Regional Elections (Pilkada) 2024 and the role of ulama in leadership in Palembang. In this context, relevant literature includes a range of sources such as academic journals, news articles, books, and official documents related to general elections and local politics in Indonesia. Below is a summary of some key findings from this literature review:

1. **Role of Ulama in Local Politics:** The literature indicates that ulama play a significant role in local politics in Indonesia, including in Pilkada. They function not only as spiritual leaders but also as social and political movers with considerable influence in the community (Siregar, 2018).
2. **Interaction Between Religion and Politics:** There are various perspectives on the relationship between religion and politics in the context of elections. Some literature highlights the importance of separating religion from politics to maintain fairness and equality in democracy, while others emphasize the need to incorporate religious values into public policy (Aziz, 2019).
3. **Elections as a Tool for Democratization:** General elections, including regional elections (Pilkada), are considered an important tool for democratization in Indonesia. However, there is also criticism of the electoral process, which is sometimes seen as failing to reflect true democratic principles, particularly concerning practices such as vote-buying and the use of religious identity for political gain (Hidayat, 2020).
4. **Political Participation of Ulama:** Ulama often participate in political processes, both directly and indirectly. They can mobilize masses and provide political legitimacy to candidates through their moral and spiritual support (Nugroho, 2017).
5. **Criticisms and Recommendations for Improving Pilkada Processes:** Several pieces of literature highlight various challenges and issues in the implementation of Pilkada in Indonesia. Recommendations for improvement include enhancing oversight of unethical political practices, strengthening regulations related to campaign financing, and increasing public participation in the political process (Rahman, 2021).

By considering these findings, this literature review will provide a solid foundation for further analysis of the relationship between the Simultaneous Regional Elections 2024 and the role of ulama in local politics in Palembang.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a focus on online literature review to explore the relationship between the Simultaneous Regional Elections (Pilkada Serentak) 2024 and the role of ulama in leadership in Palembang. This method was chosen because it allows the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the observed phenomena and to explore various perspectives and interpretations emerging from the available literature.

The researcher will conduct online literature searches through internet resources, including news sites, electronic journals, and other online platforms. The search will be conducted using relevant keywords such as "Pilkada Serentak 2024," "ulama Palembang," "role of ulama in politics," and similar terms. Relevant literature will then be screened and analyzed to identify key themes related to the relationship between Pilkada and the role of ulama.

By using this approach, the researcher aims to provide an overview of how Pilkada Serentak 2024 interacts with the role of ulama in leadership in Palembang. Additionally, this method allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of local political dynamics and factors influencing the democratization process at the regional level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the discussion will focus on four key aspects relevant to the context of the Simultaneous Regional Elections (Pilkada Serentak) 2024 in Palembang: the role of ulama in local politics, the interaction between religion and politics, elections as an instrument of democratization, and criticisms and suggestions for improving the Pilkada process.

1. The Role of Ulama in Local Politics

The role of ulama in local politics, particularly in the context of the Pilkada in Palembang, has a significant impact. Ulama not only act as spiritual leaders in their communities but also play a strong political role. They often become influential in shaping public opinion and political decisions, both directly and indirectly. The ability of ulama to provide moral and spiritual guidance can influence the selection of regional leaders during Pilkada. Additionally, ulama can mobilize the masses and provide extra political legitimacy to candidates through their moral and spiritual support.

2. Interaction Between Religion and Politics

The interaction between religion and politics is a crucial issue in the context of Pilkada in Palembang. Views on this relationship vary, with some emphasizing the importance of separating religion from politics to maintain fairness and equality in democracy. They argue that religious interference in political matters can lead to societal polarization and threaten the fundamental principles of democracy. On the other hand, there are views that acknowledge religious values as an essential part of societal life and advocate for the integration of these values into public policy. However, the main challenge in this integration is the risk of religion being misused for certain political interests, which can undermine the integrity of the political

process and trigger social conflicts. Therefore, it is important for policymakers and the society as a whole to carefully consider the interaction between religion and politics in the context of Pilkada, ensuring that religious freedom and democratic principles are preserved.

3. Elections as an Instrument of Democracy

Elections, including Pilkada, are considered an important instrument in building democracy in Indonesia. This is because elections provide citizens the opportunity to directly and freely choose their leaders. However, the electoral process does not always run smoothly. Practices such as political money, the use of religious identity for political gain, and other challenges often lead to criticisms of the democratic process. Despite these issues, active public participation in elections is crucial for strengthening democracy. Through their participation, citizens can confer legitimacy on the elected leaders and reinforce the democratic principles underlying the electoral process.

4. Criticisms and Suggestions for Improving the Pilkada Process

Regional elections (Pilkada) in Indonesia often face various challenges and criticisms. Unethical political practices, abuse of power, and inadequate public participation in the political process are significant issues that need to be addressed. To improve the Pilkada process, concerted efforts from various stakeholders are necessary. Monitoring of unethical political practices should be intensified, regulations related to campaign financing need to be strengthened, and public participation in the political process should be encouraged and increased. By addressing these areas, Pilkada can become a more effective instrument for achieving a healthy and sustainable democracy in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion, it can be concluded that the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections (Pilkada) in Palembang encompass several important dimensions, particularly regarding the role of ulama in local politics. The role of ulama extends beyond that of spiritual leaders; they have a significant impact on shaping public opinion and political decisions. Ulama possess the ability to provide moral and spiritual guidance to the community, mobilize mass support, and offer additional political legitimacy to candidates.

The interaction between religion and politics also emerges as a crucial issue in the context of the Pilkada in Palembang. Balancing religious values with democratic principles presents a unique challenge, underscoring the need to ensure that religious freedoms and democratic principles are upheld throughout the electoral process.

Elections, including Pilkada, are viewed as essential instruments for building democracy in Indonesia. However, challenges such as the practice of money politics and the use of religious identities for political gain must be addressed seriously to ensure a healthy democratic process.

In addressing various criticisms and challenges associated with the Pilkada process, necessary improvements and enhancements must be implemented. This includes strengthening oversight of unethical political practices, reinforcing regulations related to campaign financing, and boosting public participation in the political process.

Thus, the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections in Palembang represent a critical opportunity to reinforce democracy, accommodate religious values in public policy, and enhance community involvement in the political process. Continuous improvements and enhancements are essential to maintain the integrity and sustainability of democracy in Indonesia.

REFERENCES

- Nasution, Nurseri Hasnah. 2017. "Ulama dan Politik: Keterlibatan Ulama Sumatera Selatan dalam Politik Praktis dan Community Empowerment Pada Abad XX." *Jurnal Studi Sosial dan Politik* 1(2): 126–44.
- Nugroho, Heru. 2015. "Demokrasi dan Demokratisasi: Sebuah Kerangka Konseptual Untuk Memahami Dinamika Sosial-Politik di Indonesia." *Jurnal Pemikiran Sosiologi* 1(1): 1.
- Miriam Budiardjo, Dasar-dasar Ilmu Politik, Cet ke-4 (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2010).
- Pangi Syarwi Chaniago, Dalam Jurnal "Evaluasi Pilkada Pelaksanaan Pilkada Serentak Tahun 2015", *Indonesian Political Science Review*, Vol.1 No.2, (2016),
- Nasution, Nurseri Hasnah. 2017. "Ulama dan Politik: Keterlibatan Ulama Sumatera Selatan dalam Politik Praktis dan Community Empowerment Pada Abad XX." *Jurnal Studi Sosial dan Politik* 1(2): 126–44.
- Nugroho, Heru. 2015. "Demokrasi dan Demokratisasi: Sebuah Kerangka Konseptual Untuk Memahami Dinamika Sosial-Politik di Indonesia." *Jurnal Pemikiran Sosiologi* 1(1): 1.
- Detik.com. (2021, 12 Maret). Mendagri: Di 2016 tak ada fraksi tolak Pilkada digelar serentak 2024. Diakses pada 18 Mei 2024, dari <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-5494081/mendagri-di-2016-tak-ada-fraksi-tolak-pilkada-digelar-serentak-2024>