Local Election of Solo 2024: Looking at the Role of Political Parties and Coalitions Behind the Scenes

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Abstract

The 2024 Solo City Regional Head Election (Pilkada) is an interesting political event to study, especially regarding the role of political parties (parpol) and coalitions in determining the dynamics of contestation. This research aims to analyze the strategies, alliances, and political interactions built by political parties and coalitions behind the scenes of the 2024 Solo Regional Head Election. Using a qualitative approach and case study method, this research will explore the factors that influence coalition formation, inter-political negotiations, and their impact on the local democratic process. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with various sources, participatory observation, and analysis of official documents related to Pilkada. The results of the study are expected to reveal the complexity of the role of political parties and coalitions in the 2024 Solo Election and contribute to the understanding of local political dynamics and the strengthening of the democratic system in Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia's democratic system, regional head elections (Pilkada) are an important mechanism that not only reflects socio-political processes and local power dynamics, but also functions as an electoral contest. Given Solo's status as a cultural city with a unique and complex community, the 2024 Solo City Pilkada is attracting a great deal of attention. From candidate recruitment and alliance formation to campaign tactics, political parties and coalitions play a vital role in influencing the direction of political contests in this context. However, this function often takes place behind the scenes through discussions, lobbying, and exchanges of interests among political leaders. From a critical sociological perspective, regional elections can be understood not only as a cruel and calculative political skill, but also as a hegemonic arena between groups willing to oppress the general public. In this context, political coalitions are not based on electoral calculations but rather are a component of power strategies to develop social consensus through the control of economic indicators, political access, and religious symbols. Narratives such as "cultural preservation" or "regional stability" are often used as symbolic means to legitimize the elite, so that local politics is not only exclusive but also controlled by exclusive power networks.

From a sociological perspective on religion, the dynamics of local politics in Solo cannot be separated from the role of religious and cultural values that shape the social identity and political orientation of its people. Solo is a city that historically displays a synthesis of Islam, Javanese traditions, and local mysticism, which has given rise to a distinctive political character that is rational but still rooted in spirituality and collective ethics. In this context, religion functions not only as a source of moral legitimacy for political actors, but also as symbolic capital that can be mobilized to build public trust, strengthen voter loyalty, and shape the image of moral leadership. Many local politicians utilize religious narratives through religious language, participation in religious activities, and closeness to religious leaders to demonstrate their moral commitment while expanding their social support base. On the other hand, religious institutions and local networks of religious leaders often play an important role as mediators between the community and the political elite, bridging political interests with ethical and spiritual values. Moral support from religious leaders, for example, is often seen as a form of symbolic blessing that enhances the political legitimacy of certain candidates. This phenomenon shows that religion is not only present in the private sphere, but also an integral part of the public sphere and political arena, where religious values are transformed into social forces that shape political perceptions and preferences. Therefore, in analyzing the dynamics of the 2024 Solo regional elections, it is important to not only highlight power strategies and coalition building but also how moral symbolism, religious discourse, and cultural rituals interact in the process of shaping political meaning in society.

Through the approach of the sociology of religion, local political analysis can be expanded by looking at how spiritual beliefs and values are articulated in the context of modern democracy. Concepts such as civil religion (Bellah, 1967) and religious capital (Bourdieu, 1991) help explain how religious values function to reinforce social order and provide moral legitimacy to political power. By acknowledging the existence of this spiritual and cultural dimension, studies of the Solo regional elections can capture the political phenomenon more fully not only as an arena for pragmatic power struggles, but also as a process of sacralizing political legitimacy rooted in the value system and morality of the Solo community.

From a gender sociology perspective, gender-based power relations that influence political representation and participation cannot be separated from the dynamics of local politics in Solo. Politics is often viewed as a male domain, where male leadership is associated with ideas such as domination, competition, and rationality. Women's involvement in the political process, whether as candidates, campaign team members, or voter organizers, is still very limited in the context of the 2024 Solo regional elections. Patriarchal social institutions that prioritize men in decision-making often marginalize women. This shows that social norms and gender conceptions that regulate who is considered worthy of leadership and who is marginalized also play a role in determining political power at the local level, in addition to electoral calculations and coalition strategies. Gender-sensitive analysis will highlight how patriarchal structures and symbolic exclusion shape the way politics is conducted in Solo. The limited representation of women in strategic positions in political parties and coalition networks shows that local politics is still marked by unequal access to resources, networks, and influence. Perspectives such as R.W. Connell's gender order theory (1987) can help explain how social systems maintain male dominance through gender roles, norms, and expectations. Meanwhile, Judith Butler's (1990) concept of gender performativity highlights how political behavior and public discourse continue to reproduce the image of politics as a "masculine" space, rendering women's voices less audible, even when they are actively involved in political activities.

By highlighting how power, ideology, and class interests operate behind the scenes of the political process, this study aims to reveal the dynamics and tactics used by political parties and coalitions in the 2024 Solo regional elections. This study focuses on how behind-the-scenes political negotiations reflect underlying power structures, rather than merely campaign tactics or coalition building. This method is crucial for determining whether local democracy in Solo truly promotes public participation or merely perpetuates the hegemony of the political elite. In addition to contributing to the study of local politics, this research is

also expected to broaden understanding of how democratic practices at the regional level are shaped by power relations that are not always apparent on the surface. Through a qualitative approach and critical analysis, this study seeks to reveal that local politics is not only about who wins elections, but also about how power is produced, negotiated, and maintained within complex social structures.

"The Dynamics of Political Party Coalition Formation in Local Elections" published in the Journal of Public Policy in 2023, analyzes the dynamics of political party coalition formation in the 2020 Kuantan Singingi Regency head elections and the factors that influence coalition formation. This study uses Arend Lijphart's coalition theory, which classifies coalitions into six types, namely Minimal Winning Coalitions, Minimum Size Coalitions, Bargaining Coalitions, Minimal Range Coalitions, Minimal Connected Winning Coalitions, and Policy-Viable Coalitions. Political Party Coalition in Winning the 2020 Regional Elections in Keerom Regency. This study aims to determine how political party coalitions (PDIP, Golkar, Nasdem) played a role in winning the regional elections in Keerom Regency. The results show that despite restrictions on activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the coalition remained effective and was able to achieve victory. The method used was descriptive qualitative with data collection through interviews, observation, and documentation. Strategies of Supporting Political Party Coalitions in Winning the Indah-Dahlan Pair in the 2020 Bima Regency Election. This 2022 study focuses on the strategies used by supporting parties in winning certain candidate pairs. The purpose of the study is to understand how these strategies contribute to the success of regional head elections.

The study entitled "The 2024 Solo Regional Election: Examining the Role of Political Parties and Coalitions Behind the Scenes" offers several significant innovations in the context of local political studies, particularly in the analysis of regional elections (Pilkada). Focus on coalition dynamics at the local level: Although many studies have discussed the role of political parties in Pilkada, this study highlights explicitly the dynamics of coalitions at the local level, which often have unique characteristics that differ from the dynamics of coalitions at the national level. The city of Solo was chosen as the locus of research because it has a rich and complex political history, providing space to understand how political parties build and maintain alliances in a local context. This study not only focuses on the public aspects of the regional election campaign but also explores the behind-the-scenes strategies and interactions carried out by political parties and coalitions. This includes negotiations, lobbying, and exchanges of interests that are often invisible to the public but have a major impact on the results of regional elections. This study not only analyzes the role of political parties and coalitions but also examines the implications of these dynamics on local democratic practices and governance in the city of Solo. This makes a new contribution to understanding

how local-level political interactions can impact the quality of democracy and governance. With these new insights, this research is expected to make a meaningful academic contribution to the study of local politics and provide a deeper understanding of the role of political parties and coalitions in regional elections, particularly in Solo.

This study is relevant given the lack of research that specifically discusses the role of political parties and coalitions in city-level elections, especially in Solo. In addition, the results of this study are expected to make an academic contribution to understanding the dynamics of local politics and to serve as material for reflection for stakeholders to improve the quality of democracy and governance at the regional level. Through a qualitative approach and in-depth analysis, this research seeks to provide a complete picture of how political parties and coalitions operate in the 2024 Solo elections, as well as the implications for the democratization process in Indonesia.

METHODS

This research uses qualitative methods because it aims to understand the political dynamics, strategies, and behind-the-scenes interactions carried out by political parties and coalitions. A qualitative approach is suitable for exploring meaning, motivation, and sociopolitical context.

Data collection techniques:

a. In-depth Interviews: Conducting interviews with key actors such as

b. Political party leaders, success teams, coalition members, and political observers.

c. Observation: Observing the campaign process, coalition meetings, and the internal dynamics of political parties.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals that the 2024 Solo regional elections are not merely a competition between regional head candidates but also reflect complex local political dynamics. Political parties and coalitions play an important role behind the scenes, influencing the contest through strategies that are often invisible to the public. One of the main findings of this study is that the formation of coalitions in the Solo regional elections is influenced more by pragmatic factors than by ideological similarities. Electoral interests are the main factor driving political parties to form certain alliances, including in determining the candidates they support. Political parties not only consider the popularity of candidates, but also access to resources and political

networks. In addition, this study shows that negotiations between political parties in forming coalitions often involve exchanges of interests, both in the form of political support and agreements on power sharing if the candidate pair they support wins. The campaign strategies implemented were also tailored to local issues in Solo, such as infrastructure development, cultural preservation, and improving community welfare. The study also found a shift in the political loyalty of the people of Solo in the 2024 regional elections. Although Solo has a strong political history and tends to support certain parties, there are indications that the performance of previous leaders, the preferences of the younger generation, and more contextual issues can influence people's political choices. This requires political parties and coalitions to be more adaptive in designing their winning strategies.

The findings of this study show that the 2024 Solo Regional Elections will be a forum for interaction between various political, economic, and ideological interests, as well as a competition between regional head candidates. Behind the scenes, political parties and coalitions play a crucial role in this dynamic, helping to maintain the existing power structure and formulate election strategies. Political actors seek to maintain their position in the local power structure through resource sharing, political negotiations, and the provision of support. From a critical sociological perspective, these practices show that local democracy in Solo maintains the dominance of the political elite rather than accurately reflecting the sovereignty of the people. With elite factions making compromises to maintain access to resources and public legitimacy, coalition politics, although seemingly practical, essentially serves to maintain the stability of power. According to Gramsci's hegemonic theory, this process can be seen as a form of political hegemony, namely the ability of dominant groups to control social consensus by combining structural power with intellectual persuasion.

Political groups use narratives such as "sustainable development," "cultural preservation," or "stable leadership" as symbolic capital to win public support. Elite groups have successfully normalized their dominant position in the local political system by wrapping pragmatic goals in the guise of neutral public discourse. This shows that power is not only used

to control political or economic resources, but also to create meanings and ideologies that shape the way society views politics in general. The phenomenon of behind-the-scenes negotiations found in this study shows that the democratically open procedural space is still limited by informal power structures. Inter-party lobbying, political compromises, and temporary alliances often disregard public participation and transparency. As a result, the political process tends to lead to the depoliticization of citizens, where the community plays more of a spectator role than that of empowered actors. This reinforces the critical sociological critique that electoral democracy without structural awareness will only strengthen the reproduction of elite power. Thus, local politics in Solo reveal a paradox between the ideal of participatory democracy and the practice of elitist power. Although regional elections formally open up space for competition and choice for citizens, the final results are still heavily influenced by patronage mechanisms, informal political networks, and control over symbolic resources. This analysis confirms that to understand local democracy more deeply, it is necessary to look not only at who wins the election, but also at who benefits and who is marginalized in the power structures that support the political process.

In addition to being influenced by political strategies and pragmatic interests, the dynamics of coalitions and political behavior in the 2024 Solo regional elections are also influenced by religious and cultural dimensions that are strongly embedded in Solo society. The city has a long history as a center of Javanese spirituality intertwined with Islamic values, so that its socio-political life cannot be separated from moral values and religious symbolism. In this context, religion serves a dual function: on the one hand, it provides a source of moral legitimacy for political actors; on the other hand, it also functions as a form of social and symbolic capital, used to strengthen emotional ties with constituents. Candidates and political parties often project a religious image through participation in religious activities, support for Islamic educational institutions, and campaign rhetoric that emphasizes moral values such as honesty, trustworthiness, and social awareness. Robert N. Bellah (1967) discusses civil religion, which integrates religious principles into public political discourse to maintain the legitimacy of power, a phenomenon reflected in this context. Religious symbolism is often employed in regional elections in Solo as a means of fostering social consensus, giving the impression that political authority possesses a sacred element. Support from religious leaders, for example, is often seen as both political support and a "moral blessing" that enhances a candidate's reputation. This shows how religion can unite political goals with social idealism, bridging the gap between the public and private domains.

In addition, the phenomenon of religious politics in Solo can be interpreted as a process

that transforms religious authority, rituals, and symbols into valuable political capital using the framework of religious capital (Bourdieu, 1991). Influential members of religious networks, such as clerics, heads of Islamic boarding schools, or leaders of religious groups, often occupy key positions in determining the direction of political support and public opinion. To capitalize on the moral legitimacy associated with these spiritual leaders, coalitions that successfully adopt these religious networks gain significant symbolic and social benefits. However, the use of religion in local politics is also ambivalent. On the one hand, it can strengthen the ethical dimension of politics, foster moral awareness, and increase public trust in leaders. However, on the other hand, religion can also be manipulated as a tool for legitimizing power, where spiritual values are commodified for electoral interests. In the context of the Solo regional elections, this practice illustrates how religion and politics are intertwined in a mutually beneficial relationship, yet it also has the potential to reinforce hierarchical power structures. Therefore, understanding the Solo regional election requires not only an analysis of political coalition and alliance strategies but also a critical reflection on how religious values and moral symbolism are used to shape, maintain, or even normalize power at the local level.

From a gender sociology perspective, local politics in Solo are shaped not only by power dynamics and pragmatic alliances but also by patriarchal social structures that limit women's participation in politics. Although the 2024 Solo regional elections featured a variety of coalition strategies and inter-party negotiations, women's involvement as political actors tended to be symbolic and marginal. In the candidate selection process, for example, women are often placed in complementary or supporting roles, rather than in key decision-making roles. This phenomenon shows that the local political arena still operates within the framework of the gender order as described by R.W. Connell (1987), in which male power is socially and culturally legitimized as something "natural." Meanwhile, female leadership is often questioned in terms of capacity and social legitimacy. Furthermore, Judith Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity can be used to understand how political practices and public discourse in Solo contribute to reproducing the image of politics as a masculine domain. Political language that emphasizes strength, rationality, and competition tends to associate leadership with masculine characteristics, while more emotional, collaborative, or empathy-based expressions of leadership are often considered incompatible with the image of the "ideal leader." In this context, women involved in local politics face a performative dilemma: they must conform to masculine norms in order to be considered competent, but at the same time risk losing their gender identity attached to feminine values.

In addition to the individual level, gender inequality is also evident in the institutional structure of political parties and coalition networks. Although there are formal affirmative

policies such as quotas for female representation, practices in the field often do not provide equal space for women to influence policy direction or campaign strategies. Women are often placed in areas considered "soft," such as social activities or public communication, while strategic positions in political planning or decision-making remain dominated by men. This suggests that local democracy in Solo continues to operate within a pattern of symbolic exclusion, where women are nominally present but lack substantial agency. The perspective of gender sociology opens up a new understanding that procedural democracy does not necessarily guarantee participatory equality. Local politics, which is colored by cultural and religious values, also reinforces challenges for women, mainly when norms of modesty and morality are used to limit their political expression. Therefore, analysis of the Solo regional elections needs to include how gender relations interact with cultural, religious, and class factors, as well as how women build strategies of resistance in a male-dominated political space. Thus, the discussion of the Solo regional elections is not only a study of political coalitions and power, but also of women's struggles to negotiate space, meaning, and legitimacy in the local political arena.

CONCLUSION

The 2024 Solo regional elections are not just ordinary elections; they provide insight into the complex network of social and cultural identities and power dynamics that influence local politics in Indonesia. The study concludes that political parties and coalitions not only serve as instruments of democracy but also as covert means for the reproduction of elite power through political compromise, patronage, and bargaining. These practices illustrate how local democracy is often carried out based on hegemonic logic within a critical sociological framework, in which dominant groups maintain their power and influence through networks of resources, cultural symbols, and political narratives that normalize structures of injustice. However, local politics in Solo cannot be understood solely through the lens of power and class. In a religious socio-cultural context, religion acts as a symbolic and moral force that shapes political legitimacy and public identity. Religious values, social ethics, and cultural rituals are used by political actors as symbolic capital to build trust and strengthen their closeness to the community. Through the perspective of the sociology of religion, it can be seen that local politics also involves a process of sacralization of power, in which discourses of morality, piety, and cultural preservation are used to justify pragmatic political practices. This interaction between religion and politics makes the Solo regional elections not only an arena for competing for votes, but also an arena for the production of social meaning that reinforces the moral legitimacy of power.

On the other hand, gender sociology analysis reveals an important dimension that is often overlooked, namely, gender-based power relations that still limit women's participation in local politics. Patriarchal structures and symbolic exclusion marginalize women's involvement in decision-making, both at the political party level and in the coalition-building process. Politics is still constructed as a masculine domain, where values such as dominance, rationality, and competition are considered the ideal leadership standards. Using the theories of gender order (Connell, 1987) and gender performativity (Butler, 1990), it can be understood that local democracy in Solo has not yet fully opened up equal space for women to participate and influence the political process. Thus, the 2024 Solo regional elections can be understood as a microcosm of Indonesian politics, where power, religion, and gender intertwine in determining the direction of local democracy. Behind-the-scenes coalition politics and negotiations reveal how elites maintain their hegemony through control over resources and cultural symbols, while religion serves as a means of moral legitimization that reinforces social stability. On the other hand, women's struggles in the political arena show that democracy is not yet fully inclusive and still leaves representation gaps. Therefore, in order to realize a more substantive and transformative local democracy, critical efforts are needed to dismantle unequal power structures, recognize the role of spiritual values as part of public ethics, and ensure gender justice and equality as an integral part of political practice at the local level.

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