

# Evaluating Concurrent Election Systems and Their Impact on Democratic Quality in Indonesia

Nadya Syalum Ramadhani<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Zaky Andriano<sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Ikhsan Wicaksana<sup>3</sup>, Rudi Santoso<sup>4</sup>

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung, Indonesia

nadyasyalum9@gmail.com

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## ABSTRACT:

**Background:** The implementation of concurrent elections in Indonesia represents a major political reform aimed at improving electoral efficiency and strengthening democratic governance. Despite these intentions, its application has generated ongoing debates regarding whether the system truly enhances democratic quality or instead introduces new challenges, such as increased electoral complexity and voter burden.

**Aims:** This study aims to evaluate the concurrent election system and analyze its impact on democratic quality in Indonesia.

**Methods:** This research adopts a quantitative approach by utilizing secondary data obtained from official election reports and democratic indicators. The analysis focuses on key dimensions of democratic quality, including voter participation, electoral competitiveness, and institutional performance. The data were examined using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to identify patterns and relationships between the implementation of concurrent elections and democratic outcomes.

**Result:** The findings indicate that the implementation of concurrent elections tends to increase voter participation and improve administrative efficiency. However, the complexity of the electoral system also affects voters' understanding and may influence the clarity of political representation as well as institutional effectiveness.

**Conclusion:** Overall, the concurrent election system in Indonesia produces mixed effects on democratic quality. Therefore, policy adjustments and institutional strengthening are necessary to ensure that the system contributes more effectively to democratic consolidation.

**Keyword:** Concurrent elections; Democratic Quality; Electoral System Reform; Voter Participation; Institutional Effectiveness;

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the quality of democracy has become an increasingly pressing concern in global political discourse, particularly in countries undergoing institutional reform. A growing body of international reports highlights that democratic development is not always linear, as many countries experience declining public trust in political institutions and increasing challenges in maintaining electoral integrity (Mauk, 2022). These conditions suggest that the mere existence of elections as formal procedures does not automatically guarantee substantive democratic quality. Consequently,

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scholarly attention has shifted toward examining how electoral systems are designed and implemented, as well as how effectively they promote meaningful participation, representation, and accountability (Boese et al., 2022).

Within this broader context, Indonesia presents a compelling case through the adoption of a concurrent election system as part of its electoral reform. Since the 2019 general election, legislative and presidential elections have been conducted simultaneously, with the primary aim of improving electoral efficiency and strengthening the presidential system (Madueke & Enyiazu, 2025; Mietzner, 2022). Beyond its administrative purpose, this reform reflects a broader effort to streamline political processes and enhance democratic consolidation. Given Indonesia's large electorate and complex socio-political landscape, this institutional change provides an important setting for examining how electoral system design influences democratic quality.

However, the implementation of concurrent elections has not been without challenges. The simultaneous conduct of multiple elections has introduced significant administrative and logistical complexities, placing substantial pressure on election management bodies. In addition, voters are required to process a large amount of information within a limited timeframe, which may affect the quality of their political decision-making (Fossati, 2024). In this regard, the efficiency gains expected from concurrent elections do not necessarily translate into improvements in democratic quality, particularly in terms of representation and voter understanding.

At the same time, existing studies indicate that concurrent elections may also produce positive outcomes, especially in terms of increasing voter turnout through intensified political mobilization within a single electoral cycle (Stockemer et al., 2023). Nevertheless, higher levels of participation do not always correspond to better democratic outcomes. In many cases, increased turnout may not be accompanied by improvements in the quality of political choices or government accountability (Daoust et al., 2023). This tension highlights a critical issue, namely the potential gap between quantitative participation and substantive democratic quality.

Given these dynamics, it is essential to examine more systematically how the concurrent election system shapes democratic quality in Indonesia. This study is grounded in the need to better understand the relationship between electoral system design and democratic outcomes in practice. By doing so, it seeks to contribute not only to academic discussions on electoral reform but also to the development of more responsive policies aimed at strengthening democratic governance in Indonesia.

In line with the discussion on democratic quality and the challenges of electoral system design, a growing body of research on Indonesia's electoral system provides important insights into how institutional arrangements shape democratic outcomes. In this regard, Arifin et al. (2025) argue that electoral reform in Indonesia should not be understood merely as a procedural adjustment, but rather as a broader institutional transformation that influences governance effectiveness and democratic performance. This perspective suggests that evaluating electoral systems requires a comprehensive understanding of how system design interacts with democratic quality.

Consistent with this perspective, electoral integrity emerges as a central element in assessing democratic outcomes. Bagja et al. (2025) emphasize that electoral justice is a fundamental prerequisite for democratic legitimacy, particularly through the effective enforcement of electoral

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administrative law. This finding indicates that democratic quality is not determined solely by levels of participation, but also by the ability of the electoral system to ensure fairness and transparency throughout the electoral process. In addition, the configuration of the electoral system plays a significant role in shaping political dynamics. Mohamad (2025) shows that electoral system design, including mixed electoral models, can influence the strength of the presidential system and the balance of power among political institutions. This implies that changes in electoral arrangements, including the implementation of concurrent elections, may have broader implications for political stability and governance effectiveness. Furthermore, institutional capacity in handling electoral disputes is a crucial factor in determining democratic quality. Arifin et al. (2025) highlight that the effectiveness of specialized judicial bodies in resolving election disputes contributes significantly to the credibility of electoral processes. Therefore, democratic quality is not only shaped by voting procedures, but also by the institutional ability to manage conflicts fairly and transparently. From a broader perspective, Sudarmanto et al. (2025) argue that electoral law reform should adopt a responsive justice approach to better accommodate evolving socio-political conditions. This approach underscores the importance of flexibility in electoral system design as a means of enhancing public trust and democratic legitimacy. From a historical standpoint, Sistyawan et al. (2025) demonstrate that the transformation of Indonesia's electoral system from the New Order to the Reform era reflects broader political changes. These shifts have influenced patterns of political representation, suggesting that current electoral arrangements, including concurrent elections, should be understood within a longer trajectory of democratic development. However, democratic quality is also closely linked to the consistency of electoral regulations and their implementation. Huda et al. (2025) emphasize that ensuring honest and fair elections depends not only on well-designed rules but also on their effective enforcement. This highlights that the success of an electoral system is shaped by both its design and its practical implementation. At the same time, non-structural factors such as money politics continue to pose serious challenges to electoral integrity. Al-Hamdi et al. (2025) demonstrate that vote-buying practices can distort voter preferences and weaken democratic legitimacy. This finding suggests that the effectiveness of electoral systems is influenced not only by institutional design but also by the behavior of political actors. Moreover, broader political dynamics also play a role in shaping democratic outcomes. Tyson & Nawawi (2022) reveal that the persistence of certain political networks can affect democratic consolidation. This indicates that electoral systems operate within a wider political context that shapes their impact on democratic quality. Finally, the functioning of legislative institutions as a product of electoral processes serves as an important indicator of democratic performance. Mubiina (2020) highlights that the role of factions in parliament significantly influences political representation in the post-reform era. Thus, democratic quality should be evaluated not only at the electoral stage, but also in terms of how electoral outcomes are translated into institutional practices.

Although a growing number of studies have examined electoral reform in Indonesia, existing research still provides limited insight into how electoral system design is directly linked to democratic quality. Most studies tend to focus on specific aspects such as legal frameworks, institutional arrangements, or political behavior in isolation (Al-Hamdi et al., 2025; Arifin et al., 2025; Huda et al., 2025), resulting in a fragmented understanding of the relationship between electoral

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systems and democratic outcomes. Moreover, prior findings often reveal inconsistent conclusions, where electoral reforms are assumed to strengthen democracy, yet persistent issues such as money politics and weak law enforcement continue to undermine democratic practices. More specifically, concurrent elections, as one of the most significant electoral reforms in Indonesia, have largely been approached as an administrative strategy aimed at improving efficiency rather than as an analytical variable with measurable consequences for democratic quality. In practice, however, concurrent elections may produce complex and even contradictory effects, such as increasing voter participation while simultaneously complicating voter decision-making processes. Despite these implications, empirical evidence that systematically examines the impact of concurrent elections on democratic quality remains limited. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by providing a more integrated and comprehensive analysis of how concurrent elections shape democratic quality in Indonesia.

This study emerges from the need to better understand how changes in electoral system design translate into real democratic outcomes, particularly within the context of concurrent elections in Indonesia. While the system has been introduced as part of a broader effort to streamline electoral processes, its implications appear to extend far beyond administrative considerations. The simultaneous conduct of multiple elections not only restructures electoral timing, but also reshapes how voters engage with political choices, how parties compete, and how representation is ultimately formed. These shifts suggest that concurrent elections should be examined as a structural feature of democracy rather than merely a technical reform. At the same time, evaluating democratic quality requires moving beyond single-dimensional interpretations. Democratic processes are inherently interconnected, where participation, competition, representation, and institutional performance influence one another in complex ways. Focusing on only one dimension risks overlooking how these elements interact and produce broader democratic outcomes. For this reason, a more integrated perspective is needed to capture how electoral systems operate within a dynamic and multi-layered democratic setting. By approaching the issue from this perspective, this study seeks to provide a more grounded and comprehensive explanation of how concurrent elections shape democratic quality in Indonesia. In doing so, it aims to bridge the gap between institutional design and practical democratic outcomes, while also offering insights that may support more responsive and effective electoral policies in the future.

In line with this rationale, this study aims to evaluate the concurrent election system and examine its impact on democratic quality in Indonesia. It focuses on understanding how the implementation of concurrent elections influences key dimensions of democratic life, particularly voter participation, electoral competitiveness, political representation, and institutional effectiveness. Rather than treating these dimensions separately, the study considers them as interconnected components that collectively reflect the quality of democracy. Through this approach, the study seeks to offer a more nuanced interpretation of how electoral system design shapes democratic outcomes in practice. By doing so, it is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of concurrent elections in Indonesia's democratic development.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative approach to examine the relationship between the concurrent election system and democratic quality in Indonesia. Quantitative methods are widely used in social and political research to explore relationships between variables and to generate findings that can be interpreted systematically (Hirose & Creswell, 2023). Rather than relying on normative assumptions, this study emphasizes empirical evidence to understand how electoral system design is reflected in observable democratic outcomes. A correlational design is employed to explore the associations between the implementation of concurrent elections and key dimensions of democratic quality, namely voter participation, electoral competitiveness, political representation, and institutional effectiveness (Stępień & Pierzgalski, 2025).

To provide a clearer picture of the research process, the overall procedure of the study is presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Research Procedure of the Study

As illustrated in Figure 1, the study begins with the identification of the research problem, followed by the formulation of research objectives. The next stage involves selecting an appropriate research design based on a quantitative approach using secondary data. Subsequently, the study defines its variables and indicators, which are then followed by data processing and statistical analysis. The process concludes with data interpretation and the formulation of research outputs that reflect the impact of concurrent elections on democratic quality.

## Participant

This study does not involve individual participants, as it relies entirely on secondary data. The unit of analysis consists of aggregated national-level data related to electoral processes and democratic indicators in Indonesia. These data are obtained from official sources such as the General Election Commission (KPU), national reports, and relevant democratic datasets. The use of secondary data allows the study to capture broader systemic patterns and has been commonly applied in social research to examine large-scale political phenomena (Primerano et al., 2026).

## Instrument

A set of indicators derived from official datasets is used to operationalize the concept of democratic quality. The concurrent election system is treated as the independent variable, while democratic quality serves as the dependent variable. Democratic quality is examined through several interconnected dimensions, including voter participation, electoral competitiveness, political representation, and institutional effectiveness. A multidimensional approach is considered more appropriate for capturing the complexity of democratic systems, as it allows for a more comprehensive assessment compared to single-indicator measurements (Boese et al., 2022).

## Data Analysis

The data are analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive analysis is conducted to identify general trends in voter participation and democratic indicators following the implementation of concurrent elections. This is followed by inferential analysis to examine the relationships between the concurrent election system and the selected dimensions of democratic quality. Statistical techniques such as correlation and regression analysis are applied to assess the direction and strength of these relationships. These methods are widely used in social science research to explore associations and test empirical relationships between variables.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Result

#### Voter Participation Trends

The findings indicate a noticeable increase in voter participation following the implementation of concurrent elections. Based on official data from the General Election Commission (KPU), voter turnout rose from approximately 70% in the 2014 general election to around 81% in the 2019 election. This increase suggests that organizing elections simultaneously may enhance public engagement by reducing voter fatigue and concentrating political mobilization within a single electoral cycle.

**Table 1.** Voter Turnout Before and After Concurrent Elections

Election Year	Election Type	Voter Turnout (%)
2014	Non-concurrent	70
2019	Concurrent election	81

As presented in Table 1, voter participation increased substantially after the adoption of concurrent elections. However, this quantitative improvement does not necessarily reflect a corresponding enhancement in the quality of voter decision-making.

### Electoral Competitiveness

In terms of electoral competitiveness, the results show that the overall pattern of political competition remained relatively stable before and after the introduction of concurrent elections. Data from legislative election results published by the KPU indicate that the number of participating political parties remained high.

**Table 2.** Electoral Competitiveness Indicators

Indicator	2014	2019
Number of Political Parties	12	16
Dominant Party Vote Share (%)	19	20

Table 2 illustrates that although the number of political parties increased, vote distribution remained concentrated among a limited number of dominant parties. This suggests that higher participation does not automatically lead to more balanced electoral competition.

### Political Representation

The findings related to political representation indicate that the implementation of concurrent elections has not significantly altered the structure of representation within legislative institutions. Based on the composition of parliamentary seats following the elections, political representation continues to be dominated by major parties, with only limited changes in the distribution of seats. These findings suggest that while the electoral process has become more efficient, its impact on improving inclusiveness and diversity in political representation remains relatively limited.

### Institutional Effectiveness

With regard to institutional effectiveness, the results reveal a mixed pattern. On the one hand, the implementation of concurrent elections has improved administrative efficiency by reducing the frequency of electoral events. On the other hand, the complexity of conducting multiple elections simultaneously has introduced challenges in coordination, logistics, and voter comprehension. This indicates that institutional effectiveness is influenced not only by efficiency gains but also by the capacity of electoral institutions to manage increased operational complexity.

### Democratic Quality Indicators

When viewed more broadly, the indicators of democratic quality show only partial improvement. Based on data from the Indonesia Democracy Index (IDI) published by the national statistical agency, the overall democracy score did not experience a substantial increase following the implementation of concurrent elections.

**Table 3.** Indonesia Democracy Index (IDI) Trends

Year	Democracy Index Score	Category
2014	73.04	Moderate
2019	74.92	Moderate
2020	73.66	Moderate

As shown in Table 3, the democracy index remains relatively stable, with only minor fluctuations over time. Although voter participation increased, other dimensions such as political representation and institutional effectiveness did not show significant improvement. These findings

indicate that progress in one dimension of democracy does not necessarily translate into overall improvements in democratic quality.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study point to a complex relationship between the implementation of concurrent elections and the overall quality of democracy in Indonesia (Mindarti et al., 2021). Although voter participation increased considerably following the introduction of concurrent elections, this improvement was not accompanied by equivalent progress in other dimensions, such as political representation and institutional effectiveness. This imbalance suggests that electoral reform, while successful in encouraging participation, does not automatically lead to broader improvements in democratic quality. Instead, its impact appears to vary across different aspects of the democratic process.

One possible explanation for the increase in voter participation lies in the consolidation of electoral events into a single cycle (Kostelka et al., 2023). By combining multiple elections, the system may reduce voter fatigue and intensify political mobilization, thereby encouraging greater public involvement. However, increased participation should not be interpreted as a direct indicator of better democratic outcomes. When voters are required to engage with multiple ballots and complex information within a limited timeframe, the quality of their decisions may be affected. This condition highlights a potential gap between the quantity of participation and the substantive quality of democratic engagement.

This interpretation is consistent with previous research emphasizing that voter turnout alone is insufficient to capture the broader concept of democratic quality. Studies have shown that higher participation can coexist with persistent structural issues, including uneven political competition and limited representational diversity (Boese et al., 2022). In the Indonesian context, similar patterns have been observed, where dominant political actors continue to shape electoral outcomes despite ongoing reforms (Mietzner, 2022). These insights reinforce the need to assess electoral systems beyond procedural achievements.

Furthermore, the relatively stable pattern of electoral competitiveness observed in this study suggests that concurrent elections have not significantly altered the underlying structure of political competition (Wagner & Krause, 2023). Although more parties participated in the elections, the distribution of votes remained concentrated among a small number of dominant actors. This indicates that structural characteristics of the political system continue to influence electoral outcomes, limiting the transformative potential of institutional reforms. Such findings align with comparative studies showing that electoral reforms often interact with existing power structures rather than replacing them entirely (Stockemer et al., 2023).

A similar pattern emerges when examining institutional effectiveness. On the one hand, the adoption of concurrent elections has improved administrative efficiency by reducing the frequency of electoral processes (Asimakopoulos et al., 2025). On the other hand, the increased complexity of managing multiple elections simultaneously has introduced new challenges, particularly in coordination, logistics, and voter comprehension. This dual outcome reflects an inherent tension within electoral system design, where gains in efficiency may be offset by greater operational demands.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the impact of concurrent elections on democratic quality cannot be understood through a single dimension (Steele et al., 2021). The coexistence of

higher participation and limited improvements in other areas reveals a potential trade-off between the quantity and quality of democratic engagement. By highlighting this dynamic, the study contributes to a clearer understanding of how electoral system design shapes democratic outcomes, particularly in contexts characterized by institutional complexity such as Indonesia.

From a practical perspective, these findings carry important implications for electoral policy (Bolet et al., 2024). While concurrent elections may offer clear administrative advantages, their broader consequences need to be carefully considered. Efforts to strengthen voter education, improve electoral management systems, and ensure fair political competition are essential to maximize the benefits of such reforms. Without these complementary measures, increases in participation may not translate into meaningful improvements in democratic quality.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study suggest that the implementation of concurrent elections carries important implications for the development of electoral policies and democratic practice in Indonesia. While the system appears effective in increasing voter participation, this improvement does not automatically extend to broader aspects of democratic quality, particularly in terms of representation, political competition, and institutional effectiveness. This indicates that electoral reform should not be assessed solely based on procedural efficiency or participation rates, but rather through a more comprehensive evaluation of its impact on democratic performance. Consequently, strengthening voter education, improving institutional capacity, and ensuring a more balanced political competition are essential steps to ensure that concurrent elections contribute meaningfully to the quality of democracy rather than merely enhancing participation in quantitative terms.

### **Research contribution**

This study contributes to the literature by offering an integrated empirical perspective on the relationship between electoral system design and democratic quality in Indonesia. Unlike previous studies that often address legal, institutional, or behavioral dimensions separately, this research positions concurrent elections as a central analytical focus and examines their impact across multiple dimensions of democracy simultaneously. In addition, by adopting a multidimensional approach, this study demonstrates that increased voter participation does not necessarily correspond to overall improvements in democratic quality. Through this perspective, the study helps clarify a previously ambiguous relationship between electoral reform and democratic outcomes, particularly in the context of emerging democracies where institutional complexity plays a significant role.

### **Limitations**

Despite its contributions, this study is subject to several limitations. First, the reliance on secondary data at the aggregate level means that the analysis primarily captures systemic patterns rather than individual-level dynamics, thereby limiting insights into voter behavior and decision-making processes. Second, the measurement of democratic quality depends on available indicators, which, although multidimensional, may not fully capture more nuanced aspects such as political awareness and the quality of public deliberation. Finally, the focus on the Indonesian context may limit the broader applicability of the findings, as different political and institutional settings could produce varying outcomes.

### **Suggestions**

Future research is encouraged to build on these findings by adopting more comprehensive approaches that combine quantitative analysis with qualitative insights, allowing for a deeper understanding of how concurrent elections influence democratic processes at both systemic and individual levels. Comparative studies across different countries may also provide valuable insights into how contextual factors shape the effectiveness of concurrent elections. In addition, longitudinal research designs could help capture long-term impacts that are not immediately visible within short-term observations. Further efforts to develop more refined and integrative measures of democratic quality are also needed to better reflect the complexity of democratic systems.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study was conducted to assess how the implementation of concurrent elections relates to the quality of democracy in Indonesia. The results indicate that, although the simultaneous conduct of elections has succeeded in encouraging higher levels of voter participation, this improvement is not accompanied by comparable progress in other important dimensions, particularly political representation and institutional effectiveness. This condition suggests that increased participation alone is not sufficient to reflect a meaningful improvement in democratic quality. In addition, the findings reveal that the impact of concurrent elections is not uniform, as it simultaneously produces both advantages and constraints. While combining multiple electoral processes may help strengthen public engagement, it also introduces a level of complexity that can influence voter decision-making and place additional pressure on institutional performance. For this reason, concurrent elections should be understood not merely as a mechanism for improving administrative efficiency, but as a broader structural change that shapes democratic processes in multiple ways. Consequently, efforts to strengthen democracy should not focus solely on expanding participation, but also on improving institutional capacity, fostering better voter understanding, and ensuring a more balanced political environment, thereby offering a more comprehensive view of how electoral system design affects democratic outcomes in Indonesia.

## **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT**

Nadya Syalum Ramadhani contributed to the preparation of the manuscript, including drafting the initial version of the article, identifying and selecting the target journal, developing the introduction section, and designing the research flowchart in the methodology. Muhammad Ikhsan Wicaksana contributed to the development of the research methodology and was responsible for writing the sections on implications, research contributions, limitations, and suggestions. Muhammad Dzaky Andriano contributed to data analysis and interpretation, including the preparation of the results, discussion, and conclusion sections. Rudi Santoso contributed as the research supervisor by providing academic guidance, critical feedback, and overall direction throughout the research process. All authors reviewed, revised, and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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