

Muhammad Ihsan<sup>1</sup>, Otom Mustomi<sup>2</sup>

## NORMATIVE REVIEW OF DIRECT REGIONAL HEAD ELECTIONS IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY AND THE PRINCIPLE OF SHURA IN ISLAMIC LAW

<sup>1,2</sup>Universitas Islam Jakarta, Indonesia

Email: mohammadihsan143@gmail.com<sup>1</sup>, otommustomi@gmail.com<sup>2</sup>

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**Abstract:** *This study aims to analyze the mechanism of leadership legitimacy in Indonesia's direct regional head elections through the perspectives of constitutional democracy and the principle of shura in Islamic law. The critical issues underlying this research include the prevalence of money politics, weak accountability, and the limited application of deliberative values within the modern democratic system, all of which undermine the quality of leadership legitimacy at the regional level. The method employed is library research with a normative approach, utilizing primary legal sources such as Law No. 10 of 2016 on Regional Head Elections and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, as well as secondary sources on democracy and shura. The analysis is conducted through a comparative and conceptual approach, systematically examining the compatibility between the principles of constitutional democracy and the teachings of shura in Islam. The findings reveal that direct regional head elections represent a manifestation of people's sovereignty as guaranteed by the constitution, yet remain vulnerable to abuse if not safeguarded by the principles of justice, transparency, and accountability. From the perspective of Islamic law, shura emphasizes deliberation in leadership selection, prioritizing public interest and social justice. Thus, constitutional democracy in the context of regional head elections can be viewed as compatible with the principle of shura insofar as it is implemented based on the values of justice, responsibility, and integrity. This research underscores the importance of integrating constitutional democracy and Islamic values to strengthen participatory and just local governance.*

**Keywords:** *Constitutional Democracy; Local Election; Shura; Islamic Law; Political Participation.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian constitutional system has undergone ups and downs in line with socio-political dynamics and the demands of reform. The democratization of governance remains the nation's aspiration as mandated by the 1945 Constitution (Fatimah, 2023). The 1998 Reform movement led by students was not an isolated phenomenon, but rather part of a wave of global democratization that pushed for fundamental changes in Indonesia's political system (Jahar, 2015). One of the significant outcomes of the reform was the amendment of the 1945 Constitution and the enactment of a package of political laws, including the policy of direct regional head elections as a manifestation of popular sovereignty (Indriani et al., 2011);(Cahyono et al., 2023).

Direct regional head elections, as stipulated in Article 18 paragraph (4) of the 1945 Constitution and further regulated under Law No. 10 of 2016, were intended to enhance the legitimacy of local leaders and strengthen public participation (Ridhuan et al., 2021);(Efyanti et al., 2019). However, in practice, this mechanism has given rise to various problems. The 2020 report by Bawaslu, for instance, recorded at least 136 alleged cases of vote buying in the simultaneous local elections, while the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) emphasized that more than 70% of corruption cases involving regional heads stemmed from the high political costs of electoral contests (Mashabi & Krisiandi, 2020). This reality indicates that electoral democracy in Indonesia is often trapped in transactional practices, with candidates prioritizing popularity and financial resources over leadership capacity and moral integrity.

This condition raises a fundamental question: is the model of direct elections, which is adopted from the Western democratic concept, fully aligned with the values and principles of Indonesian statehood rooted in Pancasila and religious values, particularly Islamic law? Islamic law, through the principle of shura, emphasizes consultation as a method of leader selection, highlighting the principles of public interest (maslahah), justice, and accountability. This concept provides an essential ethical and spiritual dimension in assessing modern electoral democracy.

Islamic law, through the principle of shura, emphasizes consultation as a method of leader selection, highlighting the principles of public interest (maslahah), justice, and accountability (Seff, 2009);(Arif, 2021). This concept provides an essential ethical and spiritual dimension in assessing modern electoral democracy. The relevance of shura becomes increasingly urgent amid procedural democracy that is often trapped in political transactions and weak leadership integrity. Thus, the study of the compatibility of direct regional head elections with the principle of shura is not only theoretically important to strengthen the normative basis of democracy in Indonesia but also practically significant in promoting governance that is more accountable, participatory, and just.

Based on the foregoing, this study focuses on analyzing the compatibility between Indonesia's constitutional democracy and the principle of shura, as well as its implications for improving an electoral system that is not only procedurally democratic but also substantive and oriented toward public benefit (maslahah). Several previous studies have examined direct elections from various perspectives. Efyanti et al. (2019)

studied direct general elections in Indonesia from sociological and Islamic legal perspectives, emphasizing that direct elections are consistent with the spirit of popular participation but raise moral and financial challenges (Efyanti et al., 2019). Fatimah & S. (2023) discussed the dynamics of local elections in Aceh after the Helsinki MoU, which demonstrated the complexity of local democratization in a post-conflict context (Fatimah, 2023). Khalisa Aisyah Signora et al. (2023) reviewed Indonesia's democratic system, including the implementation of direct elections as a form of popular sovereignty (Khalisa Aisyah Signora et al., 2023). Meanwhile, Purwadi (2019) examined the debate between direct and representative elections, highlighting constitutional and efficiency aspects (Purwadi, 2019). Ridhuan et al. (2021) identified ambiguities and negative impacts of direct elections, particularly in relation to the philosophy of Pancasila (Ridhuan et al., 2021). However, these studies have not examined in depth the conceptual relationship between constitutional democracy and the principle of shura in Islamic law, particularly in the context of regional head elections. This gap becomes the research niche that the present study seeks to fill.

This study introduces novelty through an interdisciplinary approach that examines the implementation of direct regional head elections not only from the perspective of constitutional democracy but also through the principle of shura in Islamic law. While previous studies generally discussed direct elections from the perspective of constitutional law or socio-political impacts, this paper adds an Islamic normative dimension through the analysis of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* to assess the benefits (*maslahah*) and harms (*mafsadah*) of the direct election system. This approach enables a more comprehensive understanding of the compatibility between procedural democracy and the substantive justice values emphasized in shura. Furthermore, this study proposes an alternative concept that integrates Islamic values into Indonesia's local democratic system, so that it is not only formally democratic but also consistent with Islamic moral and ethical principles.

This study aims to provide a critical review of the implementation of direct elections for regents and deputy regents within the framework of constitutional democracy and the principle of shura. More specifically, it seeks to describe the characteristics of Indonesia's constitutional democracy, explain the principles of shura in Islamic law related to leadership selection, and analyze their points of convergence and divergence. Through this analysis, the study is expected to provide recommendations for a model of regional head elections that accommodates modern democratic values while simultaneously internalizing Islamic principles, thereby strengthening the quality of governance that is just, participatory, and oriented toward public benefit.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a normative-empirical juridical approach (socio-legal research) (Endah Marendah Ratnaningtyas et al., 2023). The normative approach is used to examine written legal norms contained in statutory regulations, particularly the 1945 Constitution, Law No. 10 of 2016 concerning Regional Head Elections, as well as other

regulations relevant to the election of Regents and Deputy Regents. This approach is combined with the perspective of Islamic law through the principle of shura. Meanwhile, the empirical approach is applied to understand how these norms are implemented in the practice of regional head elections. Thus, this research is not only doctrinal but also connects the dynamics of written law with the socio-political realities on the ground.

This research is descriptive-analytical in nature (Faisar Ananda dan Watni Marpaung, 2016), aiming to describe and analyze legal provisions and the principle of shura, then relate them to the practice of direct elections in Bekasi Regency as a case study. Bekasi Regency was selected because of its complex political dynamics, relatively high number of electoral violations, and its representativeness as a region with a high level of political participation. The analysis is carried out by outlining the conformity between statutory provisions and their implementation in Bekasi, while also comparing them with the values of shura in Islamic law.

The data sources in this research consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders, such as the Bekasi Regency Regional General Election Commission (KPUD), the Election Supervisory Committee (Panwaslu), and local government officials involved in the administration of the elections. Secondary data were collected from literature studies, including official documents, statutory regulations, court decisions, scholarly literature, previous research findings, academic journals, and relevant media reports. The legal materials used are categorized into three types: primary legal materials (the 1945 Constitution, Law No. 10 of 2016, Law No. 23 of 2014), secondary legal materials (books, journals, academic articles, seminar proceedings), and tertiary legal materials (legal dictionaries and legal encyclopedias).

Data collection techniques involved library research and field research (Sugiono, 2016). Library research was conducted by examining legal documents, scholarly literature, and journals related to constitutional democracy and the principle of shura. Field research was carried out through in-depth interviews with key informants, such as KPUD Bekasi officials, Panwaslu members, and community leaders, in order to obtain empirical insights regarding the implementation of direct elections. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively and descriptively by classifying, interpreting, and connecting normative and empirical findings. This analysis produced a mapping of the relationship between the theory of constitutional democracy, the implementation of elections in Bekasi, and the values of shura in Islamic law. This method was chosen to ensure that the research provides a comprehensive critical review, not only from the normative perspective of positive law but also from the standpoint of Islamic values.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### The Foundation of Constitutional Democracy in Regional Head Elections

Constitutional democracy is a concept of governance that emphasizes the limitation of power through the constitution, with the aim of protecting citizens' rights and ensuring

the supremacy of law (Arif, 2021);(Cahyono et al., 2023). In the Indonesian context, constitutional democracy is the fundamental principle underpinning the implementation of the governmental system, including regional head elections. As a *rechtsstaat* (state based on law), Indonesia places the constitution as the highest norm regulating democratic mechanisms, including the procedures for holding elections at both national and regional levels.

According to Jimly Asshiddiqie (2006), constitutional democracy is not merely the implementation of popular sovereignty but must also be limited by law to prevent the abuse of power (Jimly Ashshiddiqi dan M. Ali Safa'at, 2006). Democracy without legal constraints may turn into the tyranny of the majority, while excessive restrictions may hinder public participation. Therefore, the 1945 Constitution regulates democratic mechanisms through constitutional principles such as separation of powers, checks and balances, and the guarantee of human rights.

The constitutional basis for the implementation of regional head elections is stipulated in Article 18 paragraph (4) of the 1945 Constitution, which states that "Governors, Regents, and Mayors, each as the head of provincial, regency, and city governments, shall be elected democratically." The phrase "elected democratically" affirms that elections must uphold democratic principles as guaranteed by the constitution. Law No. 32 of 2004 on Regional Government subsequently regulated the mechanism of direct regional head elections by the people. This change was a milestone in the history of local democracy in Indonesia, considering that previously, regional heads were elected by the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) (Sirait, 2017).

Direct regional head elections were intended to strengthen political legitimacy and increase the accountability of local governments. According to Mahfud MD (2009), this mechanism was expected to reduce political oligarchy that had dominated elections conducted by DPRD. Furthermore, direct elections were considered a tangible manifestation of popular sovereignty, which is the essence of constitutional democracy. However, field practices reveal numerous problems. For instance, Bawaslu data from the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Elections recorded 2,178 alleged cases of vote buying in various regions, while an LIPI survey (2018) indicated that 52% of regional head candidates viewed political costs as the main obstacle in candidacy (Mahfud MD, 2009). These facts demonstrate that constitutional ideals often clash with the reality of elections, which are financially burdensome and prone to violations.

In the context of regional head elections, several principles of constitutional democracy must be fulfilled to ensure that elections are carried out in accordance with constitutional ideals. First, the principle of popular sovereignty, meaning elections must genuinely reflect the will of the people. Second, the principle of legality, whereby the entire electoral process must comply with prevailing laws. Third, the principle of justice and equality, which affirms that every citizen has the equal right to vote and be elected without discrimination (Jimly Ashshiddiqi dan M. Ali Safa'at, 2006).

In addition, the principle of checks and balances is highly relevant in the administration of regional head elections. This mechanism ensures that election

organizers, participants, and supervisors exercise mutual oversight to prevent the abuse of power. Institutions such as the General Election Commission (KPU), the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu), and the Constitutional Court (MK) were established to safeguard electoral integrity and fairness. According to Jimly Asshiddiqie (2005), the existence of these institutions represents the concrete application of constitutional democracy, which places the supremacy of law above political interests.

The implementation of direct regional head elections has significant impacts both legally and politically. Legally, this mechanism strengthens the people's position as the holders of the highest sovereignty. This aligns with Article 1 paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution, which affirms that sovereignty lies with the people and is exercised according to the Constitution. Politically, however, the practice has generated high political costs. For instance, ICW (2020) reported that the average campaign expenses for a regent/mayor candidate reached Rp20–30 billion, while the official salary of regional heads is disproportionate to such political capital. This condition has driven corruption practices and the politics of reciprocity within local bureaucracies (Mahfud MD, 2009).

Moreover, direct elections have also led to the rise of identity politics, which can threaten social cohesion. The Wahid Foundation (2017) reported an increase in the use of religious, ethnic, and racial issues (SARA) in political campaigns, particularly in regional elections in areas with diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds. In several cases, social polarization intensified after elections, thereby weakening social unity. This phenomenon clearly contradicts the principles of constitutional democracy, which emphasize equality and national unity. Therefore, stricter regulations and more effective supervision are required to ensure that democratic practices remain within the constitutional framework (Jimly Ashshiddiqi dan M. Ali Safa'at, 2006).

One of the main challenges in the implementation of constitutional democracy is weak law enforcement. Although the constitution and statutory regulations have clearly outlined the procedures, practices in the field often reveal violations such as vote buying and electoral manipulation. According to Bagir Manan (1990), democracy can only function effectively when accompanied by a strong legal culture and public awareness of constitutional values. Without these, regional head elections risk becoming mere formalities of democracy devoid of substantive meaning (Manan, 1990).

In conclusion, the foundation of constitutional democracy in regional head elections serves as the normative framework to ensure that democracy does not deviate from legal and justice principles. However, reality demonstrates a gap between norms and practice, as reflected in empirical data on vote buying, high political costs, and identity politics. Therefore, efforts are needed to strengthen the legal system, enhance public political literacy, and ensure transparent and accountable supervision so that regional head elections truly reflect popular sovereignty within the constitutional framework.

### **Analysis of the Implementation of Bekasi Regional Election in the Context of Democracy and the Principle of Syura**

The implementation of regional head elections (Pilkada) represents one of the tangible

manifestations of democracy at the local level. The Bekasi Regional Election, as part of Indonesia's mechanism for electing local leaders, reflects complex political dynamics, given the strategic position of Bekasi Regency as an industrial hub and a buffer zone for the capital city. In the context of constitutional democracy, regional elections serve as an instrument for realizing popular sovereignty. However, upon deeper analysis, their implementation should also be examined from the perspective of Islamic values, particularly the principle of *syura*, which emphasizes deliberation as the basis of public decision-making.

Democracy in Indonesia has developed significantly since the reform era, including in the mechanism of direct local elections. According to Law No. 10 of 2016 on Regional Elections, regional heads are elected directly by the people to ensure political legitimacy and enhance public participation. Nevertheless, various studies and Bawaslu reports show that regional elections are inseparable from classical problems such as money politics and high political costs. For example, ICW (2020) noted that the campaign expenses of a regent candidate could reach tens of billions of rupiah, far beyond the financial capacity of most citizens. This indicates that procedural democracy at the local level remains vulnerable to exploitation by political elites with significant financial capital (Indriani et al., 2011); (Ridhuan et al., 2021).

In the Bekasi context, the dynamics of the regional election are not only related to the contestation for power but also reflect the quality of local democracy. The 2017 Bekasi Regional Election, for instance, was marked by tight competition among candidates, the use of identity politics, and the dominant role of political parties in mobilizing voter bases (Purwadi, 2019). Religious identity politics gained prominence through the use of religious symbols during campaigns, demonstrating that local democracy is still often influenced by pragmatic strategies (Muhammad et al., 2023). This suggests a tension between the ideal of popular sovereignty and political practices laden with short-term interests (Fatimah, 2023).

In addition, the issue of inclusivity in the Bekasi Regional Election also deserves attention. Vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, continue to face barriers in exercising their voting rights. Data from the West Java General Election Commission (2018) indicated that polling station accessibility in Bekasi was not yet fully disability-friendly (Andriani & Amsari, 2021); (Nasution & Marwandianto, 2019). Ideally, democracy requires equal participation from all elements of society (Tiffany Mariana, 2020). In this regard, the principle of *syura* provides an ethical foundation that deliberation should not exclude marginalized voices but must involve all societal groups for the sake of collective welfare.

Normatively, the Bekasi Regional Election is already conducted within a clear legal framework. However, in practice, various challenges arise. High political costs remain a fundamental issue, as candidates are compelled to spend vast sums on campaigns and political consolidation (Rizqika & Firdaus, 2023). This situation creates the potential for political corruption once candidates are elected, as they attempt to recoup their campaign investments.

Another challenge lies in the spread of disinformation on social media. The Bekasi Regional Election was marred by hoaxes targeting candidates personally and threatening social cohesion (Yulianto, 2022). This phenomenon illustrates that digital participation does not necessarily equate to greater transparency but can instead generate new problems such as hate speech and online identity politics. From the perspective of syura, such practices contradict the principles of deliberation, which prioritize openness, honesty, and collective pursuit of truth (Ningsih, 2023); (Arrobi, 2021).

In Islam, the principle of syura (deliberation) constitutes one of the core concepts of governance. The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of deliberation in Surah Ash-Shura verse 38, which mentions that communal affairs are decided through consultation. Syura underscores collective participation and public involvement in decision-making, thereby sharing substantial similarities with modern democracy in terms of participation (Ismail Pane et al., 2022); (Seff, 2009).

However, syura is not identical to Western democracy. In syura, the freedom to choose is bounded by sharia norms and the principle of justice, as articulated by classical scholars such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah. Justice, in the Islamic perspective, is not merely about equality of rights but also concerns proportional distribution according to responsibility and capacity (Elenia, 2022); (Ulum, 2022). Therefore, in the context of regional elections, the principle of syura can be applied through decision-making processes that prioritize public welfare and avoid manipulative practices detrimental to society.

The application of the syura principle also demands moral integrity from prospective leaders. In Islamic thought, leadership is a trust (amanah) that must be carried out responsibly, rather than merely serving as a means of attaining power. Contemporary scholars affirm that the Islamic political system does not reject elections, provided that their mechanisms do not conflict with sharia (Zakirun Pohan, 2021). Hence, regional elections can be aligned with the principle of syura if conducted honestly, fairly, and transparently.

A closer examination of the Bekasi Regional Election reveals both similarities and differences between democracy and syura. Their similarity lies in the principle of public participation in leadership selection. Democracy emphasizes "popular sovereignty," whereas syura emphasizes "communal deliberation." Both share the same spirit of providing space for societal contribution to political processes (Efyanti et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, the fundamental difference lies in normative boundaries. Western democracy tends to prioritize the will of the majority, while syura places justice and adherence to Islamic values as its foundation. This means that in a syura system, majority decisions are invalid if they contradict sharia (Seff, 2009).

In the Bekasi context, the implementation of syura principles can be realized through moral-value-based political education, strengthening the role of religious scholars as moral guardians, and promoting political ethics consistent with Islamic teachings. Research indicates that religious leaders continue to exert strong influence on shaping



political preferences in society (Kamaruzzaman, 2024); (Novriansyah et al., 2024). Thus, reinforcing collaboration between electoral organizers and religious institutions is crucial to ensuring that regional elections are conducted in a clean and dignified manner.

The Bekasi Regional Election, as part of local democracy, constitutes a significant mechanism for realizing popular sovereignty. However, its implementation remains challenged by issues such as money politics, pragmatism, and weak oversight. The Islamic principle of *syura* offers an ethical perspective that can strengthen the quality of local democracy. By integrating values of deliberation, justice, and trust (*amanah*), regional elections can function not only as a formal means of selecting leaders but also as a medium for realizing governance oriented toward the public good.

### **Problems and Challenges of Direct Regional Elections in Bekasi in the Digital Era**

Direct regional elections (*Pilkada*) are one of the key instruments for realizing participatory democracy in Indonesia. Bekasi Regency, with its complex socio-political dynamics and a population of more than 3.1 million people, faces various problems in organizing direct elections, particularly in the digital era. Digitalization has brought significant changes to patterns of social interaction, political participation, and electoral administration. However, behind the opportunities offered, there are fundamental challenges to be addressed, ranging from technical and regulatory issues to socio-cultural aspects.

One of the main problems in the implementation of regional elections in Bekasi Regency is the complexity of regulations governing electoral procedures. Regulations that continually change, such as Law No. 10 of 2016 on the Election of Governors, Regents, and Mayors, reflect the state's efforts to improve the quality of local democracy. However, these changes often create confusion at the level of both organizers and voters (Rizqika & Firdaus, 2023). Bawaslu Bekasi (2020) recorded at least 47 findings of administrative violations in the electoral stages due to weak understanding of regulations among committees and candidates. Moreover, the implementation of decentralization after reform has granted broad authority to local governments but has also created the potential for abuse of power and transactional politics, particularly in industrial regions such as Bekasi, where economic interests are often intertwined with electoral politics (Simanjuntak, 2015);(Komara, 2016).

As an industrial hub with high population density, Bekasi faces a dilemma in balancing decentralization with effective supervision. This dynamic is further exacerbated by the pragmatic tendencies of local politics, where political parties are more oriented toward electoral interests rather than the strengthening of substantive democracy (Indriani et al., 2011); (Purwadi, 2019).

Money politics remains a persistent problem in the implementation of regional elections in Indonesia, including in Bekasi. According to monitoring conducted by Panwaslu Bekasi in 2017, there were 32 reports of alleged vote buying involving the distribution of food packages and cash to voters (Asyari, 2017). In the digital era, money

politics has taken new forms through the distribution of online-based social assistance or electoral promises disseminated via social media platforms. Although digitalization opens space for transparency, in reality, it also provides greater opportunities for candidates to manipulate public opinion through systematically constructed narratives.

The digital era also presents serious challenges in the form of widespread disinformation, hoaxes, and negative campaigns on social media. Data from MAFINDO recorded more than 130 hoax contents circulating in West Java during the 2018 Regional Elections, most of which targeted candidates in Bekasi Regency (Fatimah, 2023). Arrobi's (2021) research shows that new media serve not only as channels of political communication but also as arenas of narrative contestation that shape public perception. Religious politicization, misinformation about candidates' track records, and identity-based issue framing are often exploited for electoral purposes. This problem is compounded by social media algorithms that reinforce political polarization through the creation of echo chambers, making the public more susceptible to information that merely confirms their preferences without verification (Arrobi, 2021); (Ningsih, 2023).

Public participation in regional elections is a crucial indicator of democratic success. However, challenges arise when not all social groups have equal access to information and digital facilities. A report by the Bekasi KPU (2020) indicated that voter turnout among persons with disabilities was only 63%, far below the general participation rate of 77%. This demonstrates barriers to both digital and physical accessibility for vulnerable groups. Meanwhile, although youth political participation on social media is very high, the phenomenon of slacktivism—online support without real engagement—still limits their contribution to increasing electoral turnout.

Public participation in regional elections is a crucial indicator of democratic success. However, challenges arise when not all groups enjoy equal access to information and digital platforms. Vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, often encounter obstacles in using digital platforms provided by election organizers (Andriani & Amsari, 2021); (Tiffany Mariana, 2020). This issue creates inequality in the fulfillment of political rights guaranteed by the constitution. Moreover, youth political participation on social media does not always correspond to actual electoral involvement. The phenomenon of slacktivism—online support without substantive participation—remains a serious concern (Nasution & Marwandianto, 2019).

Another recurring problem in regional elections is the high potential for disputes over results and procedures. These complexities often arise due to weak integrity among organizers, manipulation of vote data, or bias by state apparatus in favor of certain candidates (Yulianto, 2022). In the digital era, electoral disputes also encompass cybersecurity issues, such as hacking of KPU websites or the dissemination of misleading quick-count results (Kelibay et al., 2022). The integrity of electoral organizers is thus a crucial factor. Without strict oversight and adequate technology-based transparency, digital elections risk reinforcing oligarchy and undermining popular sovereignty (Efyanti et al., 2019).

From the perspective of Islamic law, the principle of *syura* emphasizes deliberation

that upholds justice and transparency. However, the practice of direct elections in Bekasi still falls far short of these values. The dominance of elite interests, money politics, and slander-based campaigns on digital media reflect significant deviations from the ideal principle of syura (Ulum, 2022). If these values were properly internalized, elections would not only serve as a formal democratic mechanism but also create a socially just governance system.

Direct regional elections in Bekasi Regency in the digital era face multiple problems and challenges. Regulatory complexity, rampant money politics, disinformation on social media, limited accessibility for vulnerable groups, potential legal disputes, and weak internalization of syura values are crucial issues to be addressed. Therefore, a holistic approach is needed, encompassing regulatory strengthening, public digital literacy, enhanced technology-based transparency, and the integration of moral and religious values into local politics. Only in this way can regional elections truly reflect substantive democracy while remaining aligned with the principle of syura.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that constitutional democracy emphasizes the balance between the people's freedom to choose and the rule of law in ensuring order and justice. Direct regional elections provide broad opportunities for public participation in leadership selection, thereby reflecting the practice of modern democracy rooted in law and guaranteeing the protection of citizens' political rights. From the perspective of Islamic law, the principle of syura underscores deliberation as a decision-making mechanism aimed at achieving the welfare of the community. Although direct regional elections do not replicate classical forms of deliberation, the substance of syura is still reflected in democratic processes involving broad public participation in choosing trustworthy leaders.

However, this study also demonstrates that the normative alignment between constitutional democracy and the principle of syura has not been fully realized in practice. Direct elections in Bekasi Regency remain marked by money politics, high campaign costs, identity politics, and weak integrity and oversight among electoral organizers. These factors create a gap between legal ideals and field realities, thus preventing the optimal realization of justice, welfare, and trust (*amanah*) as envisioned by both the constitution and syura. Therefore, critical reflection is required: strengthening regulations, technology-based transparency, political literacy among the public, and the internalization of Islamic ethical values in local politics must become urgent agendas so that regional elections are not only normatively legitimate but also substantively capable of producing just and integrity-based leadership

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