

## The Neutrality of Village Officials in the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Election in Bantul Regency



### Netralitas Perangkat Desa Dalam Pilkada Serentak Tahun 2024 di Kabupaten Bantul

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	
<p><b>Keywords</b>                      Neutrality;                      Village Officials;                      2024 Elections;                      Political Pressure;                      Patron-Client Relations;</p>	<p><b>ABSTRACT</b>                      This study examines violations of village officials' neutrality during the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections in Bantul Regency. Employing a qualitative approach through interviews with the Bantul Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) and the analysis of official documents, the study reveals that neutrality violations remain prevalent. These violations include village officials' participation in campaign activities and their involvement in mobilizing residents to support specific candidates. Such actions contravene Article 280 (2) sections h, i, and j of the Election Law, as well as the provisions of Law No. 6/2014 on Villages, which explicitly prohibit village officials from engaging in political activities. The findings indicate that neutrality breaches are multi-causal, driven by structural weaknesses in local bureaucracy, socio-cultural norms such as ewuh-pekeuwuh, kinship ties, local political pressure, career ambitions, and political incentives. Weak administrative sanctions and uneven oversight further enable these violations to persist. This study contributes to evaluating the effectiveness of local election supervision and highlights the need for stronger institutional coordination, enhanced legal-ethical literacy among village officials, and consistent sanctioning mechanisms to safeguard neutrality in future electoral processes.</p>
<p><b>Kata Kunci</b>                      Netralitas;                      Perangkat Desa;                      Pilkada 2024;                      Tekanan Politik;                      Hubungan Patron-Klien;</p>	<p><b>ABSTRAK</b>                      Penelitian ini menganalisis pelanggaran netralitas perangkat desa pada pelaksanaan Pilkada Serentak Tahun 2024 di Kabupaten Bantul. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui wawancara dengan Bawaslu Bantul dan studi dokumen resmi, penelitian menemukan bahwa berbagai bentuk pelanggaran netralitas masih terjadi, termasuk keterlibatan perangkat desa dalam kegiatan kampanye dan upaya mobilisasi warga untuk mendukung pasangan calon tertentu. Praktik tersebut melanggar ketentuan Pasal 280 ayat (2) huruf h, i, dan j Undang-Undang Pemilu serta Undang-Undang Nomor 6 Tahun 2014 tentang Desa yang menegaskan larangan perangkat desa terlibat dalam aktivitas politik praktis. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pelanggaran netralitas bersifat multikausal dan dipengaruhi oleh interaksi faktor struktural birokrasi, budaya lokal seperti ewuh-pekeuwuh, hubungan kekerabatan, tekanan politik lokal, ambisi jabatan, serta insentif politik. Lemahnya sanksi administratif dan pengawasan yang belum optimal turut memperkuat peluang terjadinya pelanggaran. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi penting dalam mengevaluasi efektivitas sistem pengawasan Pemilu di tingkat desa dan menekankan perlunya penguatan koordinasi antar lembaga pengawas, peningkatan literasi hukum-etik perangkat desa, serta penerapan sanksi yang konsisten untuk memastikan netralitas pada pemilihan umum mendatang.</p>
<p><b>Article History</b>                      Send 23<sup>th</sup> November 2025                      Review 22<sup>th</sup> December 2025                      Accepted 4<sup>th</sup> January 2026</p>	<p>Copyright ©2026 <i>Jurnal Aristo (Social, Politic, Humaniora)</i>                      This is an open access article under the <a href="#">CC-BY-NC-SA</a> license.                      Akses artikel terbuka dengan model <a href="#">CC-BY-NC-SA</a> sebagai lisensinya.</p>



## Introduction

Neutrality among village officials constitutes a fundamental and non negotiable principle within Indonesia's democratic governance framework. Although village officials retain the constitutional right to vote, they are explicitly prohibited from affiliating with political parties or engaging in practical political activities, as stipulated in existing regulations (Gansa et al., 2023). Within village governance structures, village heads are supported by village officials who exercise administrative authority and are required to perform public services professionally, comply with state regulations, and uphold impartiality in the execution of their duties (Karna Lukmana, 2024). Maintaining neutrality is therefore essential to ensure that public administration at the village level remains objective and free from political interference.

This obligation becomes increasingly critical during the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections, a highly competitive and politically dynamic national event. Bantul Regency, located in the politically active Special Region of Yogyakarta, presents a strategic context where interactions between candidates, local elites, and village officials intensify. Under these conditions, village officials are frequently exposed to various forms of pressure and persuasion that may compromise their neutrality. Violations of neutrality not only undermine bureaucratic professionalism but also risk generating social tension, increasing political polarization, and weakening public trust in electoral integrity. Against this backdrop, this study focuses on the practice of neutrality among village officials during the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections in Bantul Regency.

Previous empirical studies indicate that violations of village officials' neutrality are not isolated incidents but recurrent phenomena across different regions in Indonesia. Damanhuri (2009) documented instances of village officials openly expressing political support, including through social media and direct involvement in campaign activities. Martini (2015) further emphasized that bureaucratic neutrality is a core requirement of good governance, demanding that public institutions operate objectively and remain insulated from political interests. Complementing these findings, research by Winda Dwiastusi Herman, as reported by Daffa Muhaimin (2024), identified internal factors contributing to declining neutrality, such as cultural norms, career ambitions, and kinship relations that encourage political alignment.

Other studies highlight structural and contextual vulnerabilities that exacerbate this problem. Luth and Nurkholiq (2023) found that weak preventive mechanisms enable political actors to intervene in village governance. Wahyuni and Irawan (2015) showed that

the homogenous nature of village communities often facilitates personal approaches by candidates seeking political support through village leaders and their staff. Nisak et al. (2024) stressed that neutrality is particularly crucial because village officials occupy leadership positions that significantly influence public attitudes and electoral choices. Nevertheless, maintaining neutrality remains challenging, as strong local political pressure continues to be a major obstacle for village officials (Haliim, 2024).

Based on these considerations, neutrality among village officials should be understood not only as a legal obligation but also as a key condition for safeguarding democratic governance at the local level. Accordingly, this study aims to examine how neutrality is practiced by village officials during the 2024 Regional Head Elections in Bantul Regency, to identify the factors that contribute to violations of neutrality, and to analyze the implications of these practices for local democratic governance.

## **Method**

The method applied in this research is qualitative, which allows for the extraction of data and findings that cannot be obtained through quantitative or statistical approaches (Murdiyanto, 2020). According to Denzin and Yvonna, qualitative research is a method that involves various approaches with an interpretive focus and a natural approach to the subject being studied (Indra et al., 2022). The study presented (Fadli, 2008) explains that the qualitative approach is intended to deepen understanding of various phenomena in specific contextual settings by presenting a detailed and comprehensive picture of conditions in the natural environment (natural setting). This research emphasizes the actual reality found based on empirical facts in the field. As stated by Miles and Humberman in (Rijali, 2018), the stages of information collection, data reduction, data presentation, and formulation of conclusions and verification are components of the qualitative analysis method.

Information collection techniques were conducted through interviews and documentation studies. Interviews are a data acquisition technique through direct communication between researchers and informants, intended to gather information needed in the research. Interviews also involve a question-and-answer dialogue between the informant and the interviewer to obtain relevant information (Damayanti et al., 2022). . Interviews in this study were conducted with informants from the Bantul Regency Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) and Technical Staff for Violation Handling, Election Process Dispute Resolution, and Legal Affairs of the Bantul Regency Bawaslu. According to Bungin in his research (Nilamsari, 2014), documentation techniques are a data collection method in

social research methodology that functions to trace historical data. Secondary data or documentation utilized in this research comes from information on the Resolution of Violations in the 2024 Bantul Regency Regional Head Election, scientific articles in journals, official government publications, statistical information, and news through online media platforms.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Overview of the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections and the Urgency of Village Officials' Neutrality in Bantul Regency**

The 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections represent one of the most consequential political moments in Indonesia, as they were conducted alongside presidential and legislative elections, thereby intensifying political competition at both national and local levels. This heightened contestation increased the stakes of electoral integrity and reinforced the importance of neutrality among public officials, particularly at the village level, to ensure that electoral processes remain fair, transparent, and consistent with democratic principles (Hutapea et al., 2015; Arafar et al., 2022).

This dynamic was clearly reflected in Bantul Regency. The General Elections Commission recorded a Final Voters List of 745,992 voters, consisting of 365,457 male and 380,535 female voters, distributed across 17 kapanewon, 75 villages or kalurahan, and 1,487 polling stations (KPU Bantul, 2024). According to Bantul Regency General Elections Commission (KPU) Decree Number 460 of 2024, which stipulates the recapitulation of the Final Voter List for the 2024 Bantul Regent and Vice Regent Election, the Bantul Regency General Elections Commission (KPU) determined the total number of final voters (DPT) at 745,992, spread across the following areas:

**Table 1. Number of Final Voters in Bantul Regency**

Kapanewon Name	Number of villages	Number of polling stations	P	L	P+L
Srandakan	2	48	11.852	12.311	24.163
Sanden	4	50	12.185	12.775	24.960
Kretek	5	48	11.553	12.544	24.097
Pundong	3	57	13.657	14.332	27.989
Bambanglipuro	3	64	15.908	16.814	32.722
Pandak	4	79	20.202	20.648	40.850
Pajangan	3	58	14.441	14.697	29.138
Bantul	5	100	24.503	25.984	50.487
Jetis	4	90	22.402	23.303	45.705
Imogiri	8	98	24.376	25.304	49.680
Dlingo	6	73	15.607	16.131	31.738
Banguntapan	8	175	42.310	44.804	87.114
Pleret	5	73	18.458	18.687	37.145
Piyungan	3	81	20.051	20.970	41.021
Sewon	4	156	38.468	39.735	78.203
Kasihan	4	165	40.602	41.974	82.576
Sedayu	4	72	18.882	19.522	38.404
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>1.487</b>	<b>365.457</b>	<b>380.535</b>	<b>745.992</b>

Source: Bantul Regency General Elections Commission (KPU) Decree No. 460 of 2024. Data

Processed in 2024.

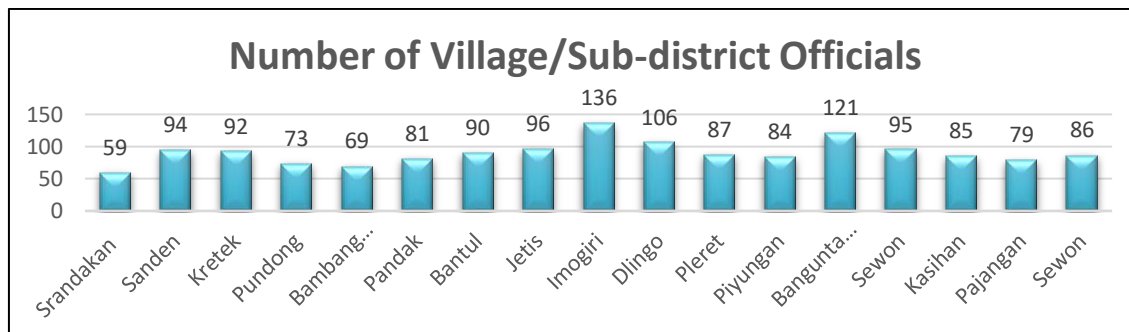
The determination of the results of the 2024 Bantul Regent and Vice Regent election shows that the final voter list (DPT) reached 745,992 voters, of which 565,656 voters exercised their right to vote, including 831 voters from the DPTb (Relocated Voters) category and 749 voters from the DPK (Additional Voters) category. Referring to Bantul Regency General Elections Commission Decree No. 731/2024 concerning the Determination of the Results of the 2024 Bantul Regent and Vice Regent Election, with 531,207 valid votes and 36,029 invalid votes, the three pairs of regent and vice regent candidates achieved the following vote count:

**Table 2 Total Votes in the 2024 Regional Election in Bantul Regency**

Candidate Pair Serial Number	Candidate Pair for Regent and Deputy Regent	Vote Gain
1	Untoro Hariadi, M.Si. - Wahyudi Anggoro Hadi	80.917 suara
2	H. Abdul Halim Muslih - H. Aris Suharyanta, S.Sos., M.M.	230.819 suara
3	Joko B Purnomo - Rony Wijaya Indra Gunawan, S.H.	219.471 suara

Source: Bantul Regency General Election Commission Decree Number 731 of 2024 concerning the Determination of the Results of the 2024 Bantul Regent and Deputy Regent Election. Data processed in 2024.

According to the Bantul Regency Central Statistics Agency (BPS), as of October 9, 2024, the number of village/sub-district government officials was 1,533, representing 17 sub-districts in Bantul Regency. With such a large number of village officials, the potential for violations of village official neutrality is also high.



**Figure 1. Number of Village Officials in Bantul Regency**

Bantul’s demographic and administrative characteristics further amplify the strategic role of village officials during elections. With a population exceeding one million residents and 1,533 village or *kalurahan* officials, village governance constitutes a key interface between the state and local communities (BPS Bantul, 2024). Village officials often hold socially influential positions and are trusted actors within their communities. This embeddedness increases their exposure to political pressure from candidates, party elites, and local powerholders, particularly during electoral periods (Bilatu, 2016; Luth and Nurkholiq, 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, the urgency of maintaining village officials’ neutrality aligns with Weber’s conception of the ideal bureaucracy, which emphasizes rationality, objectivity, and independence from political interests. Bureaucratic actors are expected to perform their duties based on formal rules and professional competence rather than personal ties or partisan considerations (Devi et al., 2023). In practice, however, village officials in Indonesia often operate within dense social networks that blur the boundary between administrative functions and political influence, making them vulnerable to electoral mobilization (Martini, 2015).

To address these risks, the regulatory framework explicitly prohibits village officials from engaging in political activities. Provisions in Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages and Law No. 7 of 2017 on Elections forbid village officials from affiliating with political parties, participating in campaign activities, or expressing public support for candidates. These rules are intended to protect the impartiality of public services, prevent the misuse of

administrative authority, and safeguard electoral integrity (Nisak et al., 2024; Sapni et al., 2023).

Taken together, the large voter base, intense political competition, and socially embedded role of village officials make neutrality a central issue in ensuring the fairness and legitimacy of the 2024 Pilkada in Bantul. Violations of neutrality not only undermine democratic norms and create unequal competition among candidates, but also risk generating social tension within local communities (Haliim, 2024; Sadikin et al., 2022). Ensuring the neutrality of village officials is therefore not merely a legal requirement, but a critical condition for sustaining democratic governance and public trust during elections.

### **Violations of Village Officials' Neutrality in the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections in Bantul Regency**

Violations of neutrality among village officials during the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections in Bantul Regency reveal the complex interaction between regulatory frameworks, local political dynamics, and sociocultural pressures at the village level. Although existing regulations clearly prohibit village officials from engaging in political activities, empirical findings from the Bantul Regency Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) demonstrate that maintaining neutrality in practice remains challenging. This difficulty is closely linked to the strategic position of village officials within their communities. According to the Chairman of Bawaslu Bantul, Didik Joko Nugroho, village officials possess strong social influence due to their proximity to residents, familiarity with local dynamics, and routine interaction with community groups. These conditions make them particularly vulnerable to direct and indirect political persuasion, and even subtle or symbolic involvement can significantly shape voter preferences and electoral outcomes (Rri.co.id, 2024).

**Table 4 Types of Violations and Resolution Process in the 2024 Regional Elections in Bantul Regency**

Type of Violation	Solution	Location
The involvement of the Head of Kresen Hamlet, Teruman, Bantul in directing the RT heads and community leaders to provide support to the Candidate Pair for Regent and Deputy Regent of Bantul in 2024 Number 01.	The report was followed up by forwarding it to the Head of Bantul Village and copies were sent to the Regent of Bantul, the Regional Secretary of Bantul Regency and the Sub-district Head of Bantul Sub-district.	Dukuh Kresen, Teruman, Bantul, Bantul, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta
The involvement of the Head of Dukuh Pucung, Wukirsari, Imogiri in public debate activities and taking a position as a supporter of Candidate Pair for Regent and Deputy Regent of Bantul in 2024 Number 03	The report was followed up by the Yogyakarta Special Region Election Supervisory Agency, because the location where the violation occurred was outside the authority of the Bantul Regency Election Supervisory Agency.	Magelang Street, km. 4,5, Sinduadi, Mlati, Sleman, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta

*Source: Report from the Violation Handling, Election Dispute Resolution, and Legal Affairs Division of the Bantul Regency Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu). Data processed in 2024.*

During the 2024 elections, Bawaslu Bantul formally recorded and processed two notable cases that illustrate patterns of neutrality violations. The first case occurred on 19 September 2024 and involved the Head of Kersen Hamlet in Kalurahan Bantul, Kapanewon Bantul. The official was reported to have gathered RT leaders and community figures in the context of a Trah Bani Ngapiyah family lineage meeting. During this gathering, the official allegedly encouraged participants to support a particular candidate pair. As part of the investigation, Bawaslu conducted a verification process that included examining the official’s social media accounts as supporting evidence (Razak, 2024). Although the report fulfilled the formal requirements for submission, Bawaslu concluded that it did not meet the material elements necessary to classify the incident as a direct electoral violation. Consequently, the case was categorized as a violation of general administrative norms outside the formal electoral regulatory framework.

Despite not meeting the threshold for an electoral violation, the case was forwarded by Bawaslu Bantul to the Lurah of Kalurahan Bantul, with copies sent to the Regent of Bantul, the Regional Secretary, and the Panewu of Bantul for administrative follow up. According to the official report, the village head issued verbal warnings and provided guidance to the official involved, emphasizing that the conduct contradicted regulations governing the neutrality of village officials (Bantul.times.co.id, 2024). While this response demonstrates institutional follow up, the reliance on verbal warnings also highlights the limited deterrent effect of such administrative measures.

A second and more explicit case was reported on 13 November 2024 and involved the Head of Pucung Hamlet in Kalurahan Wukirsari, Kapanewon Imogiri. The official was

reported to have attended a televised public debate for the Bantul Regent and Vice Regent candidates at TVRI Yogyakarta. The official was observed sitting among the supporters of one candidate pair, an act that visually conveyed political endorsement. Because the event took place outside the jurisdiction of Bawaslu Bantul, the report was forwarded to Bawaslu of the Special Region of Yogyakarta. On 26 November 2024, Bawaslu DIY visited the Wukirsari Village Head and submitted 30 supporting documents, including evidence and formal recommendations for administrative action.

Following these recommendations, the Village Head of Wukirsari issued a First Written Warning to the hamlet head concerned. Documentation shows that prior to the written sanction, the official had already received three verbal warnings, delivered both directly and by telephone, yet continued to disregard them (Junianto, 2024). This pattern illustrates the limited effectiveness of non-punitive sanctions and indicates the need for stronger enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with neutrality regulations. Both cases constitute violations of Article 20 paragraph (1) letter (j) of Bantul Regency Regulation No. 5 of 2020, which explicitly prohibits village officials from participating in political campaigns for general elections, village head elections, or regional head elections. These findings align with legal perspectives asserting that any form of political involvement by village officials, whether through community mobilization or participation in campaign-related events, represents a misuse of administrative authority and undermines the principle of neutrality (Jogja.antaranews, 2024). The cases demonstrate that neutrality violations may occur through both active mobilization and symbolic participation, each of which carries serious implications for electoral fairness and legitimacy.

Importantly, these violations cannot be understood merely as isolated incidents. Instead, they reflect broader structural vulnerabilities within village governance. The sanctions imposed were predominantly administrative and relatively light, ranging from verbal warnings to a first written warning. While these measures satisfy procedural requirements, their limited severity raises concerns regarding their effectiveness as deterrents. Weak enforcement mechanisms and overlapping authority between village governments and supervisory institutions contribute to conditions in which neutrality violations can recur with minimal consequences.

The cases also reveal the influence of sociocultural factors on village officials' behavior. Kinship-based gatherings such as *Trah Bani Ngapiyah* illustrate how cultural traditions and familial networks may be leveraged for political purposes. Similarly, attendance at public political events shows how symbolic acts can carry substantial political

meaning within rural communities. These patterns suggest that neutrality violations may arise not only from deliberate intent but also from entrenched social practices, cultural obligations, and informal expectations placed upon village officials. In addition, the cases highlight broader political strategies in which candidates and local elites attempt to mobilize village officials to influence electoral outcomes. As influential opinion leaders, village officials possess the capacity to shape political preferences and mobilize community support. This makes them attractive targets for political actors seeking electoral advantage. Political pressure may be exerted through both formal invitations and informal mechanisms, including kinship ties and community-based interactions (Haliim, 2024; Sadikin et al., 2022). Overall, the documented cases from Bantul Regency during the 2024 elections demonstrate that neutrality violations emerge through diverse mechanisms rooted in social, institutional, and political dynamics. While supervisory institutions have shown procedural responsiveness, the limited scope of sanctions and the persistence of informal pressures indicate that neutrality remains an ongoing challenge. These findings underscore the urgent need for stronger preventive frameworks, more robust enforcement mechanisms, and sustained civic education to reinforce the importance of neutrality among village officials.

### **Factors Contributing to Violations of Village Officials' Neutrality in Bantul's 2024 Elections**

The following factors influence the occurrence of neutrality breaches among village officials in Bantul during the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections. These breaches stem from the interaction of structural, sociocultural, political, and enforcement-related factors. Rather than representing isolated acts of misconduct, they reflect persistent vulnerabilities embedded within local governance arrangements and community dynamics.

#### **1. Structural–Bureaucratic Factors**

From a Weberian perspective, an ideal bureaucracy operates rationally, impersonally, and in accordance with formal rules, where decisions are grounded in competence rather than personal ties or political interests (Devi, Hanani, Syafitri, & Indri Yani Harahap, 2023). In practice, village-level administration often departs from this ideal. Hierarchical dependence on village heads and local executives, overlapping mandates, and broad administrative discretion create space for non-procedural influence. These conditions weaken neutrality standards and facilitate mobilization by partisan actors, particularly when internal control and accountability mechanisms are insufficient (Martini, 2015; Sutrisno, 2019). This structural vulnerability is reinforced by street-level bureaucracy

theory. Village officials interact directly with citizens and therefore exercise wide discretion in interpreting rules under conditions of limited resources and ambiguous directives. Such circumstances heighten the likelihood of subjective and non-neutral decision-making (Lipsky, 2010; Evans, 2020).

## 2. Socio-Cultural and Patronage Relations

In rural contexts, patron–client relations and local cultural norms play a decisive role in shaping bureaucratic behavior. Patronage structures involve the exchange of protection or access to resources for loyalty, producing vertical and personalized relationships that blur the boundary between public responsibility and private allegiance (Scott, 1972). Within Javanese culture, the norm of *ewuh-pekewuh*, or reluctance to refuse requests, reinforces deference to influential figures. This cultural disposition makes village officials hesitant to resist politically charged demands, particularly when interactions with candidates are frequent and personalized (Sadikin, Subhilhar, & Kusmanto, 2022; Yolanda, Bangun, Joy, Linton, & Julia, 2024). As a result, social obligations may override formal neutrality even in the absence of explicit political directives.

## 3. Local Political Pressure and Electoral Competition

Simultaneous elections intensify political competition and multiply the actors seeking to influence village governance. Local elites and campaign teams frequently pressure village officials to signal support or mobilize social networks, especially in contexts where incumbents seek re-election and retain administrative leverage (Haliim, 2024; Sadikin et al., 2022). In Bantul, a large voter base, diverse party coalitions, and the embedded position of village officials within community life amplify such pressures. Consequently, symbolic actions, such as attending public debates or sitting among supporters, acquire significant political meaning.

## 4. Ambition, Political Rewards, and Conflicts of Interest

Neutrality is further undermined by individual ambition and expectations of political reward. Although village officials do not follow the formal promotion pathways of civil servants, their perceived dependence on local executives or candidates for access to programs, projects, or future protection encourages strategic alignment (Ramdhani & Syafriyani, 2025; Endik Hidayat & Miskan, 2018). Kinship ties exacerbate these dynamics, as familial relationships with candidates create conflicts of interest that may manifest in campaign attendance or indirect mobilization of respected community figures (Sadikin et al., 2022; Nisak, Zainal, & Qorib, 2024).

## 5. Socio-Economic Constraints and Money Politics

Socio-economic constraints also shape pragmatic calculations among village officials. Offers of material assistance, projects, or economic benefits can function as compensation for political support, normalizing clientelist practices at the grassroots level (Fransisca, Sardini, & Fitriyah, 2023; Leodita, Prastika, & Puspaningrum, 2024). From a deterrence perspective, compliance with neutrality rules depends on the balance between expected benefits and anticipated sanctions. When gains from partisan behavior exceed the probability and severity of punishment, non-neutral actions may be perceived as individually rational (Becker, 1968; Sapni, Pinasang, & Setiabudhi, 2023).

## 6. Weak Sanctions and Uneven Law Enforcement

Empirical handling of neutrality violations in Bantul reveals that sanctions are predominantly administrative and relatively mild, ranging from verbal warnings to initial written reprimands. Although procedurally valid, such measures offer limited deterrent value, particularly against repeated or symbolic violations (Dea, Maramis, & Palilingan, 2024; Sari, 2021). At the district level, Bawaslu's authority is largely confined to issuing recommendations, making effective enforcement contingent upon the willingness of village heads and local executives to act. In the absence of consistent follow-up, neutrality breaches may persist. Law enforcement theory emphasizes the importance of certainty, proportionality, and timeliness of sanctions. When these elements are weak, rule compliance becomes fragile (Alfiantoro, 2018). In Bantul, inter-jurisdictional handling of cases, such as referrals to Bawaslu of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, demonstrates institutional responsiveness. However, the layered process and limited severity of sanctions dilute their deterrent effect (Rri.co.id, 2024; Junianto, 2024).

## 7. Oversight Capacity, Electoral Integrity, and Governance Quality

Neutrality is also contingent upon the capacity of oversight institutions. Effective prevention and supervision require strong institutional frameworks, transparent procedures, and active public participation (Norris, 2014; Luth & Nurkholiq, 2023). When oversight is fragmented or coordination among Bawaslu, the KPU, and local government is weak, subtle and informal violations are more likely to escape scrutiny. Principles of good governance, including rule of law, transparency, and accountability, form the backbone of neutrality. When these principles are inadequately implemented, bureaucratic behavior tends to align with dominant political interests (World Bank, 1994; Johnston, 2002). In contexts of delegative democracy, executive dominance further undermines impartial administration (O'Donnell, 1994).

From a principal–agent perspective, misaligned incentives exacerbate these challenges. Village officials as agents may not fully share the public, rule-based objectives of principals such as citizens and regulatory bodies. Information asymmetries and political inducements, including promises of positions, projects, or protection, create conditions for moral hazard and partisan conduct (Gailmard, 2014; Endik Hidayat & Miskan, 2018). Thus, neutrality violations in Bantul’s 2024 elections arise from an interconnected set of structural, socio-cultural, political, and economic pressures that collectively normalize non-neutral behavior among village officials. Weak institutional controls, broad bureaucratic discretion, and entrenched cultural norms such as *ewuh-pekewuh* intersect with kinship networks, political pressure from local elites and incumbents, and instrumental incentives in the form of rewards or protection. These dynamics are further reinforced by socio-economic pragmatism, including the persistence of money politics, while inconsistent and lenient sanctions, coupled with uneven oversight, allow such practices to endure. Given the trusted and socially embedded position of village officials, even symbolic actions can subtly influence voter preferences and undermine electoral fairness.

## **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that neutrality violations among village officials in Bantul Regency persisted during the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections. These violations took various forms, including participation in campaign activities and the mobilization of community members to support particular candidates. Such actions clearly contravene Article 280(2) letters (h), (i), and (j) of the Election Law, which prohibits village officials from engaging in campaign activities, as well as the provisions of Law No. 6/2014 on Villages, which similarly restrict political involvement by village governance actors. The research identifies several interrelated factors driving these violations, including Javanese socio-cultural norms such as *ewuh-pekewuh*, career ambitions and expectations of political rewards, kinship ties that blur administrative impartiality, and local political pressures exerted by elites or incumbents. These findings highlight not only the behavioral dimensions of neutrality breaches but also structural weaknesses in the local election monitoring environment. As such, the study contributes to the evaluation of supervisory mechanisms, showing the need for stronger institutional coordination and more consistent sanctioning practices. A key limitation of this research lies in the broad categorization of “village officials,” which does not distinguish the specific roles or hierarchies within village

governance. Future studies should therefore identify these positions more precisely to reveal variation in vulnerability, authority, and exposure to political pressure. Nonetheless, the study offers valuable, up-to-date insights into neutrality practices during a pivotal electoral year in Indonesia, providing an important foundation for improving regulatory safeguards, administrative ethics, and election oversight in future local elections.

### **Acknowledgent**

The author would like to thank the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, for providing support and facilities that made this research possible. He also expresses his appreciation to the Bantul Regency General Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) and its staff for their willingness to serve as resource persons and provide invaluable information for the preparation of this article. He also extends his gratitude to all parties who, directly or indirectly, have assisted, provided input, and provided moral support, enabling the completion of this paper.

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