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# POLITICAL PARTY PREFERENCES ON LOCAL ELECTION IN INDONESIA: HOW DOES RATIONAL CHOICE INSTITUTIONALISM WORK IN CANDIDATE SELECTION?

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**Abstract:** *The rational choice institutionalism approach provides insight into political parties' personal and institutional preferences in determining their strategic and technical-operational decisions. Institutional and personal preferences in political parties have shaped rational choices in selecting regional head candidates. Political party preferences provide rational choices based on the values they believe have shaped political responses to individuals and institutions. This study will examine selecting mayor and deputy mayor candidates in regional head elections. This study maps the preferences of political parties in determining their rational choices. The qualitative research method involves field interviews, online media analysis, and the examination of social media data. The data processing includes content analysis conducted using NVivo 12 Plus software. The study results indicate that political parties as political institutions are very centralized and pragmatic in determining the results of selecting regional head candidates. There are variations in the types of preferences of political parties in the candidates, namely systemic, practical, and normative preferences. Internal regulations support systemic preferences, practical preferences are determined by party procedures, directors, and selection criteria, and normative preferences are based on political parties' ideology, values, and goals. Normative preferences will only become mainstream in the candidacy of political parties if party ideology strengthens and the candidate selection mechanism is transformed into a democracy-based selection.*

**Keywords:** *Political Parties; Regional Head Elections; Political Pragmatism; Rational Choices Institutionalism*

## INTRODUCTION

Democracy exists as an attempt to end the domination of power by one person or group of people over the rest. Democracy encourages the establishment of a representative government. The idea of political representation then becomes the core of the democratic political system. The concept of representation is abstract, and its meaning is still debated in philosophy and political science. The difference in meaning is substantive and formulates several competing ways to apply the term representation. Legislative institutions are considered a unique representation vessel. Just as a representative portrait looks like a servant or caregiver, a parliamentary institution is seen as a representative if it accurately reflects the composition of community representation. In the words of John Adams (Norris and Lovenduski 1993), the legislature "must be a true portrait, in miniature, of people in general, as they should think, feel, reason and act". In political science, the concept of political representation has focused on three main questions: what is representation? How and when does it occur? Furthermore, who is represented and represented? (Dovi 2002; Rehfeld 2006; Saward 2006). However, the fourth question centered on all these theoretical issues is, what determines

access to political office? Given that regulatory barriers prevent every citizen from nominating themselves as a political candidate, a situation often referred to as a domination metaphor, the issue of who is elected as a candidate and who is not holds significant implications for all aspects and subsequent phases of political representation.

A typical metaphor for this political representation is the supply and demand model in candidate selection (Lovenduski 2016; Norris 2006). This concept presupposes that the number of workers, farmers, and women elected is the combined result of (1) the qualifications of candidates as a group to run for political office and (2) the desire or willingness of the elite to elect candidates (Norris, Vallance, and Lovenduski 1992; Norris and Lovenduski 1993). The main difficulty of this model is its inability to explain why women are numerically underrepresented in each country. From a gender perspective, it is difficult to explain the extent of the pattern of representation if women's access, like men's access, is simply a matter of supply and demand. At the same time, global averages cover substantial cross-country variation in achievement: Rwanda, Cuba, and Bolivia have more women than men in their national parliaments. Meanwhile, countries such as Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu do not have women parliamentarians (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2020).

This difference shows that the dynamics of supply and demand can be distorted positively and negatively by structural conditions and the emergence of new and sometimes unexpected political opportunities (Krook 2010). In the view of Pippa Norris and Lovenduski, Yorkshire residents who are miners and dockworkers understand and express the problems of the working class, while those who are women understand and articulate women's concerns (Norris and Lovenduski 1993). Such is the case with a British Candidate Study (BCS) search to answer why middle-class white men are more likely to be selected as candidates by political parties than women and men of other skin (Lovenduski 2016).

Based on the similarities and variations, this research will examine and finally elaborate on the critique: How do we conceptualize the dynamics of candidate selection? This research focuses on the rational choice institutionalism model (North 1990; Ostrom 1991; Peters 2019). Candidate selection is the stage where political parties determine who is a suitable figure to be supported to represent party institutions in the general election ballot for elective positions. Candidate selection is one of the strategic functions of political parties in democracy (Hazan and Rahat 2006; Rahat 2009). From a comparative perspective, candidate selection is a strategic step in recruiting political elites. The processes are also full of secrecy and carried out in closed places.

The stages of candidate selection developed by Norris (2006), namely requirements, registration, and selection based on supply and demand, and all internal democratic stages schemes, can be reduced to answer the question: who meets the requirements? Who nominates, and who is nominated? Efforts to build internal democratization in selecting candidates based on supply and demand do not see that the selection process is influenced by individual and group preferences, forming actions with the rational choice institution model (Krook 2010).

It is essential to recognize that candidate selection is not only driven by supply and demand, but this study also explores the preferences of political parties in choosing regional head candidates from the standpoint of rational-choice institutionalism (Norris 2006). First, in choosing regional head candidates, this study identifies the preferences of the party's personal and institutional elites at the subnational (regional) and national levels. Second, this research maps patterns and builds models from recent developments, particularly the dominant political preferences of local and national elites

of political parties. When deciding on regional head candidates supported by political parties, candidate selection in political parties has developed rational choice institutionalism by considering personal and institutional preferences (Jubba et al. 2022; Prianto et al. 2022).

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research focuses on the election of the mayor and deputy mayor in Makassar City. This study was conducted with research on managing political parties at the regional level in South Sulawesi. This was carried out in 2020 in 12 districts/cities identified as participating in the simultaneous local elections, featuring Makassar City's election of the mayor and deputy mayor. The objects of this research are party leaders and political elites at the provincial level. This study seeks to determine political parties' personal and institutional preferences in selecting candidates. The political parties analyzed are divided into two groups, namely nationalist parties and religious parties. Political parties classified as nationalist parties are PDIP, PSI, and Democrats. Political parties classified as religious are PKB, PAN, Gelora, and PKS.

This study employs qualitative methodology. This study uses a qualitative content analysis approach to analyze texts from various research documents, such as field interviews, news, and public opinion in the mass media and social media. The data obtained is then transferred to an analysis tool called NVivo 12 Plus. The data is then visualized and analyzed.

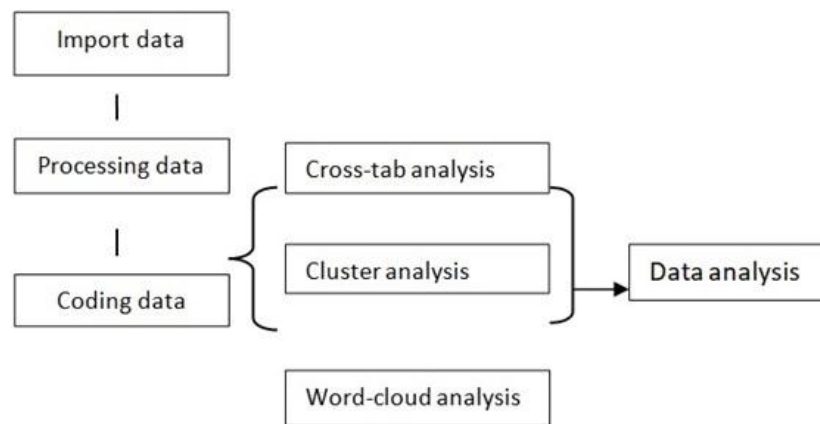


Figure 1: Data Collection and Analysis with NVivo 12 Plus (Source: Authors' depiction)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Political Party Preference in Candidate Selection in the 2020 Makassar Mayor Election

The institutional preferences of political parties form rational choices in selecting regional head candidates. Political party preferences are based on values believed in providing a political response to individuals. Political actions embodied in political values believed by the party elite are a decisive factor in directing them to respond to the political situation faced by political parties. The forms of political action given are not the same as one another. This political action depends on what values exist in the institution, which then shapes rational choices.

**Table 1: Candidate Profiles Based on Work Experience (Source: General Election Commissions 2020)**

No.	Professional Background	Candidates
1	Mayor Incumbent, Architect, Woman Politicians	Moh. Ramdhan Pomanto and Fatmawati Rusdi
2	Businessman, Senior Bureaucrats	Munafri Arifuddin and Abd. Rahman Bando
3	Vice-Mayor Incumbent, Humanitarian Activist, Young Entrepreneurs	Syamsu Rizal and Fadli Ananda
4	Senior Bureaucrats, Young Politician	Irman Yasin Limpo and Andi Muh. Zunnun Armin

In Table 1, the 2020 Makassar mayoral election brought together four couples of candidates. They are all nominated by a coalition of political parties, and none use individual (non-political party) pathways.

Those who contested included Mohammad Ramdhan Pomanto-Fatmawati Rusdi with sequence number 1. Mohammad Ramdhan Pomanto, or Danny Pomanto, was a candidate who served as mayor of Makassar from 2013 to 2018. He returned as an incumbent candidate in 2018 but was disqualified in the individual support line: election 2020, Moh. Ramdhan Pomanto “Danny” is taking part in the Makassar City Election again as a candidate for mayor. Meanwhile, his deputy is Fatmawati Rusdi, wife of Rusdi Masse, Chair of the Regional Leadership Council (DPW) of the Nasdem Party, and the former Regent of Sidenreng Rappang for two terms. Fatmawati Rusdi has also been a central parliament (DPR) member from the PPP faction for the 2014-2019 period. The Gerindra, NasDem, PBB, and Geloraparty powered the number 1 candidate pair.

Sequence number 2 is Munafri Arifuddin-Abdul Rahman Bando. Munafri Arifudin is a family relative of former vice president Jusuf Kalla, and he is also the son-in-law of Aksa Mahmud, owner of the Bosowa Group. In the 2018 Makassar election, Munafri ran as the sole mayoral candidate and was promoted by ten parties, but his vote was lost to “the blank box”. Meanwhile, his deputy, Abdul Rahman Bando, is a senior bureaucrat in the Makassar City government. At the end of his career, he served as Head of the Makassar City Education Agency. PPP, Perindo, Demokrat, and PSI powered candidates number 2. Then, the candidate pairs Syamsu Rizal-Fadli Ananda with Sequence number 3; Syamsu Rizal was a former deputy mayor of Makassar from 2013 to 2018. Syamsu Rizal has also been a member of the Makassar City Representative House for the 2004-2009 period, and he is also trusted to be the General Chair of the Indonesian Red Cross Makassar City. His deputy, Fadli Ananda, is an obstetrician and owner of the Ananda Mother and Child Hospital (RSIA) in Makassar City. This candidate is powered by political parties: PDIP, PKB, Hanura Party, and Garuda Party.

The last candidate pair is Irman Yasin Limpo-Andi Muhammad Zunnun Armin NH with sequence number 4. Irman Yasin Limpo is the younger brother of the Minister of Agriculture, namely Syahrul Yasin Limpo, former Governor of South Sulawesi. Irman Yasin Limpo is a senior bureaucrat in the South Sulawesi Provincial Government. He has been the lead in the Regional Education and Training Agency, the Regional Research and Development Agency, the Regional Investment Coordinating Board, the Governor’s Expert Staff for Development Economics and Finance, the Head of the Economic Sub-Sector, and the Head of the South Sulawesi Provincial Education Office. Meanwhile, his deputy Andi Muhammad Zunnun, the son of senior Golkar politician Nurdin Halid, had been a member of the regional parliament of South Sulawesi Province even though he was not yet 30 years old. Sequence number 4 was carried out by three political parties: Golkar, PKS, Berkarya, PAN, and PKPI.

Based on the candidates’ backgrounds, political parties responded to them. Political parties personally and institutionally have agendas connected to the momentum of regional head elections.

The relationship pattern between party elites and candidates is often mutual (mutually beneficial). Political parties create formal procedures, but in practice, candidate selection also opens informal procedures to bring political parties closer to their chosen regional head candidate. The preferences of political parties differ, although the pattern has pragmatic similarities. Based on the results of the candidate selection, the pairs of candidates for mayor and deputy mayor of Makassar 2020 promoted by political parties are as follows:

**Table 2: Political Party Support for Candidates (Source: General Election Commissions 2020)**

No.	Political Parties	Candidate Pairs	Number of Member Seat
1	Gerindra, PBB, Gelora	Moh. Ramdhan Pomanto and Fatmawati Rusdi Nasdem,	13
2	Demokrat, PPP, Perindo, PSI	Munafri Arifuddin and Abd. Rahman Bando	10
3	PDIP, PKB, Hanura, Garuda	Syamsul Rizal and Fadli Ananda	9
4	Golkar, PKS, PAN, Berkarya, PKPI	Irman Yasin Limpo and Andi Zunnun Nurdy Halid	15

The Nasdem, Gerindra, PBB, and Gelora coalitions powered Fatmawati Rusdi and Moh Rahmadhan Pomato. The Gelora Party became part of the supporting party after the party elite personally approached this candidate pair. The primary preference for Gelora as a new party is to be part of the winning team and subsequently get privileges to qualify to participate in the election. Munafri Arifuddin - Abd. Rahman Bando is powered by a coalition of Democrats, PPP, Perindo, and PSI. The Democrat Party abandoned its support for the incumbent mayor and chose the running mate in the previous 2018 Pilkada. The Democrats had disobeyed the post-electoral agreement with the incumbent mayor, which later became the reason for leaving support. PSI is a new political party that is disappointed with the incumbent mayor. The pair of candidates, Syamsul Rizal - Fadli Ananda, is the partner of the incumbent Deputy Mayor, supported by PDIP, PKB, Hanura, and Garuda. PDIP was supported after one of these pairs officially had a membership card as a party cadre. PKB supports the couple with social and humanitarian backgrounds and the representative who has

biological ancestry from the elite Nahdlatul Ulama. The candidate pair Irman Yasin L - Andi Zunnun N. H is the marriage of two traditional political clans in South Sulawesi—the rivalry of the Yasin Limpo Vs. Nurdin Halid clan for years in a tactical coalition and has the support of Golkar, PAN, PKS, Berkarya, and PKPI.

PAN, traditionally a supporter of the Yasin Limpo clan and Golkar, pushed for Nurdin Halid’s biological successor. PKS became a party that showed a pragmatic character when choosing this pair after providing support. Meanwhile, in Syamsul Rizal - Fadli Ananda, there is an informal selection mechanism model that significantly colors the transfer of support the Party Sharia Council decided at the central level.

Preferences arise from partial and holistic considerations of the relevant reasons for action. The actor’s preferences will determine how he acts according to his beliefs. These preferences can be why he should act, face, or avoid the consequences of his actions. The term preference here concerns tendencies, interests, and desires that drive individuals’ choices. Preference expresses the relationship between the actor’s desires, tendencies, and beliefs (Matei and Dogaru 2011; Ruman 2015). Preferences in selecting regional head candidates will be seen through systemic, practical, and normative indicators.

### Systemic Preference

Systemic preferences in candidate selection in political parties include factors, settings, and interactions. Systemic characteristics include organizations and laws formally formulating or structured political steps (Krook 2010). Systemic institutionalization is the formalization of a system that includes law and political party institutions. Systemic preferences describe how political parties determine regional head candidates by referring to the regeneration system, cadre recruitment rules, and systems and procedures.

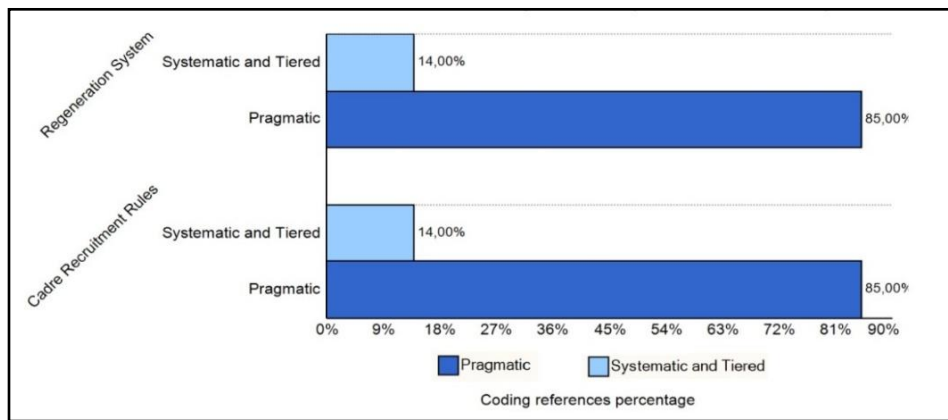


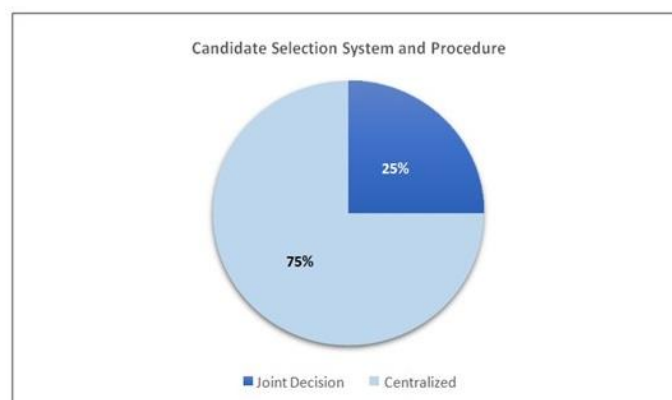
Figure 2: Recruitment Rules and Regeneration System of Political Party in Indonesia (Source: Authors’ depiction)

Figure 2 shows the pragmatism of political parties regarding cadre recruitment rules and the regeneration system of political parties in Indonesia. The regeneration system and cadre recruitment rule both got a score of 85%. This indicates that political parties in Indonesia recruiting cadres are still very pragmatic. There is only 14% value for political parties that carry out the recruitment rules in a

systematic and tiered manner. Six political parties are still pragmatic in recruiting party cadres, namely PDIP, Demokrat, PAN, PKB, PSI, and the Gelora Party.

Meanwhile, the only political party still conducting systematic and tiered recruitment is the PKS party. Many factors influencing political parties are still pragmatic in recruiting party members, such as proximity, kinship, and financing. Pragmatism in the regeneration system gives birth to party governance that certain oligarchic elites will only control, making the practice of internal democratization more complicated (Alexandre-Collier 2016; Budi 2020; Croissant and Chambers 2010; Norris 2006; Pennings and Hazan 2001).

Management of political party membership is a part that significantly affects the quality of political party members. Suppose the management of party membership runs well and can maximize the functioning of political parties. In that case, the problems of political representation can be overcome and contribute to improving the quality of democracy. In addition, strengthening political party membership can avoid false personal loyalty, affecting the quality of political parties. To avoid the trap of personal loyalty, the party needs to develop an internal regeneration management system. So, political parties in Indonesia need to manage party membership in a professional, tiered, and systematic manner. Weak political recruitment will make the party short of supply of cadres, making it vulnerable to exploitation by opportunists and political adventurers.



**Figure 3: Candidate Selection System and Produce of Political Party in Indonesia**  
(Source: Authors' depiction)

Figure 3 shows that 75% of party decisions in Indonesia regarding selecting regional head candidates are still determined by the central management or the party's general chairman. The candidate selection procedure is generally carried out starting from the selection of regional head candidates at the local level (DPC) and then submitted to the regional level (DPW). However, when the screening is complete and the recommendations are submitted to the central level (DPP), the final decision is in the hands of the central leadership of the political party. Meanwhile, only 25% of political parties make decisions based on mutual agreement. This is due to the lack of political parties that determine candidates based on joint decisions from the local to the main level, so it still seems centralized. The centralization of decision-making by political parties will present challenges for many parties, especially in selecting leadership candidates (Müller 2000; Ruanio 2002). The autonomy and independence of the branches of political parties to determine the candidates for regional heads who



are promoted in the regional head election contestations are fading, and 75% of the decisions are now entirely in the hands of the national elite. Centralization of decision-making in candidate selection by political parties in Indonesia narrows systemic preferences in the institutionalization of rational choices because centralization does not reflect democratic principles.

**Table 3: Candidate Selection System for Political Parties (Source: Authors' depiction)**

Political Parties	Candidate Selection Mechanism
PDIP	- Chairman's Decision - Formal selection: <i>Tiered selection</i>
PSI	- Chairman's Decision - Formal selection: <i>Convention and presentation of vision and mission at the central level (DPP)</i>
Demokrat	- Chairman's Decision - Formal selection: <i>Fit and proper test involving external parties</i>
PKB	- Chairman's Decision - Formal selection: <i>Focus Group Discussion, mapping the capacity of candidates, and involving external parties</i>
PAN	- Chairman's Decision - Formal selection: <i>Internal screening team</i>
Gelora	- Chairman's Decision - Informal selection: <i>Personal approach to candidates</i>
PKS	- The decision rests with the Party's Sharia Council - Formal and informal selection: <i>Internal screening, formal at the local level, non-formal at the national level</i>

The formal selection system of political parties in searching for regional head candidates is very diverse. Some parties that carried out the formal selection included PDIP, PSI, Demokrat, PKB, and PAN. The party carries out the formal selection in various ways, such as presenting the candidate's vision and mission, implementing appropriate and proper tests, focus group discussions on mapping the capacity of candidates, and forming a selection team. However, the results of the formal selection will be determined by the general chairman of the political party, so the centralization of party decision-making is difficult to avoid. Meanwhile, two parties, namely PKS and Gelora, carry out the selection informally. Non-formal practices in candidate selection will be easily controlled by elite party groups and make decision-making more centralized (Croissant and Chambers 2010). Although it appears that most political parties in Indonesia conduct formal selections, the decision on the candidate selection results is still determined by the party's general chairman, so centralization in the leadership of political parties is unavoidable. So, there is no guarantee that the formal selection system will result in democratic decisions for political parties in Indonesia.

### Practical Preferences

The institutionalization of practical preferences includes recruitment procedures and party criteria in selecting regional head candidates to be promoted in political contestations. Regarding political recruitment, the elite's formal and informal practices include the procedures and criteria used

by parties to select the candidates to be promoted by the party. They can thus be viewed as practical institutions that shape perceptions of who a “qualified” or “wanted” candidate is, a set of beliefs that can be differentiated by gender to varying degrees. Informal criteria are more about praxis and consist of various qualifications related to background, experience, and skills (Rahat and Hazan 2001). The criteria for systemic institutionalization can be seen from the pragmatism or ideological level of political party institutions in selecting candidates.

Figure 4, political practice in candidate selection, shows that political parties are still pragmatic in decision-making by getting a score of 68%. Decision-making based on party ideology gets a lower score of 32%. The pragmatism of political parties in selecting candidates is brutal to avoid due to many factors, and each political party has reasons why decision-making tends to be pragmatic.

The PDIP Party, a nationalist party, stated that ideological similarities and the financing ability of candidates influenced pragmatism in candidate selection. Then, the PSI Party, a nationalist party, reasoned that pragmatism occurred because of the parties’ similarities, issues, and prospects.

Another nationalist party is the Demokrat, which claims that historical relationships with candidates cause pragmatism in decision-making.

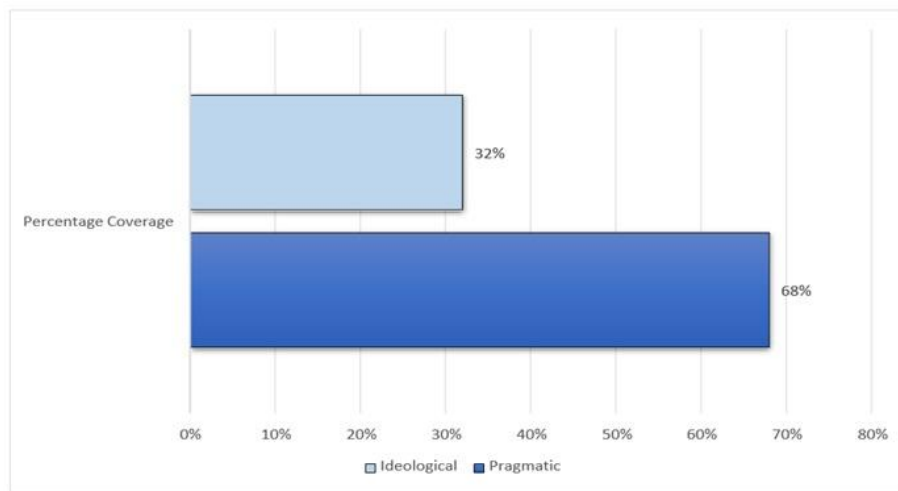


Figure 4: Trends of Political Parties in Selecting Candidates for Regional Heads in Indonesia (Source: Authors’ depiction)

Nationalist-religious parties have other factors in the pragmatism of candidate selection, including the PAN Party, which states that pragmatism occurs because of the character, cadre, financing requirements, and proximity to candidate candidates. Meanwhile, the PKB Party has the reason that decision-making on candidate selection depends on the adequacy requirements of the supporting party, the readiness of financing, and proximity to Nahdlatul Ulama. Finally, from a religious party, the Gelora Party is quite pragmatic in looking at the candidates’ capacity profiles. In contrast, the PKS party decides based on character factors, financial strength, and internal assessments.

Financing makes political parties pragmatic in the candidate selection process, which is challenging to avoid because managing political parties in Indonesia requires very high costs. Party

organizations that are national and limited sources of party financing from the state and a high-cost general election system make parties seek funding from closed mechanisms. The “dark room” of party financing has become the basis of pragmatism and capitalizing on the party elite to gain profits. A study from Reuters (2015) found that political parties in Indonesia and Southeast Asia have become highly dependent on financial support from conglomerates with significant personal wealth (Reuter 2015). Even in the latest developments, some billionaires who are active political sponsors decide to appear as leaders of political parties by adopting an oligarchic style.

A combination of political and economic power within the same individual or a small elite group gains formal political legitimacy. Conflicts of interest are brutal to avoid, between the demands of public office and their interests as politicians who also run big business empires.

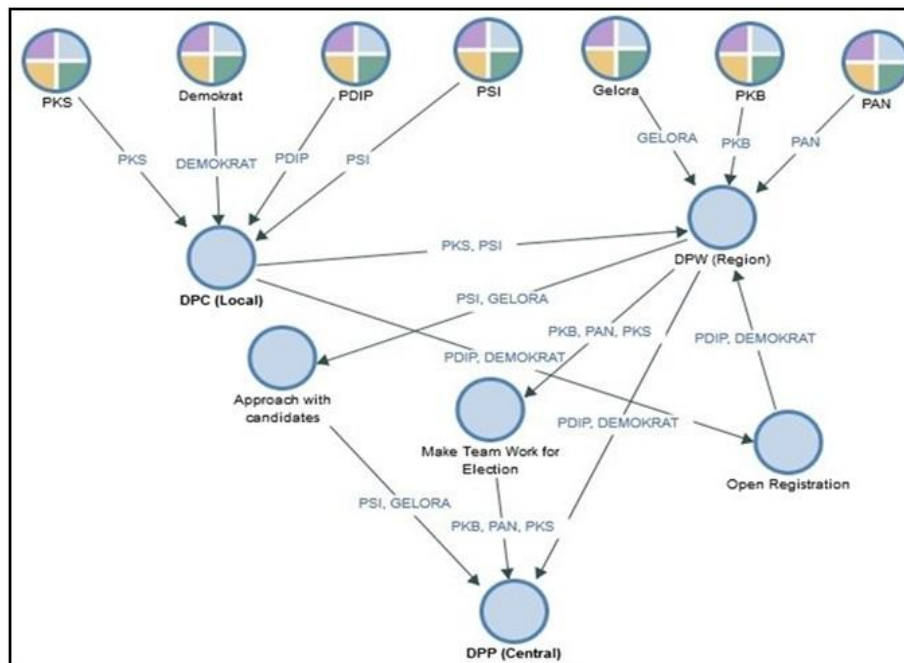


Figure 5: Technical Implementation of Candidate Selection Rules in Indonesia  
(Source: Authors’ depiction)

Based on Figure 5, political parties started in two directions: 60% started from the DPC level, and 40% started at the DPW level. Then, there are three crucial stages of all technical implementation of candidate selection in Indonesia, including opening registration/screening of prospective candidates, approaching prospective candidates, and Forming a Selection and Selection Team. However, what is interesting is that from all these stages, the decision is still left to the DPP, which the general chairman of the political party then determines. The implementation of candidate selection has been regulated by party regulations, including Statutes and bylaws (AD/ART), Organizational Guidelines, Implementation Guidelines/Technical Instructions, and external regulations such as the Law on Regional Head Elections and revisions. Its revision is Law No. 8/2015 and Law No. 10/2016. However, this regulation also legitimizes the centralization of political parties in selecting regional head candidates (Budi 2020; Hidayaturrehman, Ngarawula, and Sadhana 2022).

The technical implementation of candidate selection rules by political parties in Indonesia shows that political parties tend to obey the agreed-upon rules of the game. However, the final decision is still in the hands of the general chairman. Centralized decisions often do not represent recommendations from party officials at the lower levels, even though party administrators better understand the needs of a candidate figure at the local level. This becomes a dilemma because regional leader candidates in political parties are decided centrally (Budi 2020; Reuter 2015). The hierarchical relationship between parties in Indonesia is still pragmatic and strengthens the center's domination over the regions. As a result, the regions' political parties depend on the center. The dependence symptoms will negatively influence the party's internal situation and the aspirations and political interests of party constituents in the regions. This dependence will also impact the nomination of regional heads, where the candidates who appear often represent the interests of the center of the party hierarchy rather than the aspirations and interests of constituents in the regions.

The management of political parties with a dominant tendency in financing makes the owners of political parties treat the administrators and cadres as industrial relations (Crouch 2004) and call it a political firm in a post-democratic situation. Post-democracy is described as a condition. Where democratic institutions still exist and operate formally but ultimately lead to the legitimacy and interests of the political-economic elite. Political parties are no longer a basis for struggle but are transformed into tools for the interests of party owners. Political parties are managed exclusively and centrally, where political donors and investors control the "main door" of decision-making. Money talks are the primary value, so they side with materially and financially strong figures in selecting regional head candidates.

The pragmatism of political parties in selecting regional head candidates in Indonesia often forces no democratic competition in the contestation. In the context of rational choice theory, the actions of these elite actors are rational. The actors in political parties have conscious considerations. On the one hand, they are aware of their interests, and on the other, they are also aware of their potential. This awareness gave birth to a unique pattern of relations between the political elite and the promoted candidates for the regional head.

## **Normative Preference**

Formal and informal principles ultimately establish values to guide the means and ends of political life in normative preferences. As a result, they can be considered normative institutions that influence attitudes toward representation and equality in the context of choosing candidates. Normatively, all political actors who wish to run as candidates must obtain a recommendation from a political party.

The competition for political party recommendations has grown very intense between political elites who want to run for office. Political parties are essential actors in the local political system in South Sulawesi. This case is due to the formal regulation of the General Election Commission Regulation (PKPU) regarding candidacy, which requires pairs of candidates to support political parties or a combination of political parties. The primary requirements, as stated in PKPU No. 1 of 2020 Article 39, paragraphs 1 and 2, are the registration of candidate pairs, the recommendation or approval of political parties, or coalitions of political parties at the central level. Political elites wanting to run for office have entered a dynamic competition for political party recommendations.

The birth of a political dowry that is required for every candidate who wants party support is a sign that the authority of political parties is still very influential and vital in each candidate's selection in general elections at the local and national levels.

In addition to the requirements and regulations of PKPU No. 1 of 2020, which adds to the strength of political party intervention in selecting candidates for the regional head candidates. There are also individual candidates in the regional elections, namely the Constitutional Court's decision no. 5/PUU-V/2007, individual candidates are considered an alternative that provides various choices for political actors (candidates in the regional head election) not to be intervened by political parties, of course, with several advantages possessed by candidates. However, this individual route is not very attractive because the requirements are heavy, and the process is lengthy. They are making political parties more confident with their support for candidates who want to fight in local political contestations in the regional head election. Political party intervention becomes necessary because election regulations reach each party's policies when selecting candidates for regional head elections, including in South Sulawesi and Indonesia. The importance of the position of political parties in local political contestations requires this institution to have ideas that are formally enshrined in the constitution, such as the vision and platform of the party's struggle, as well as strategies and tactics for manifesting party ideology in candidate selection.

The data above shows that political parties have strategies to embody party ideology in selecting regional head candidates in Indonesia. Some of the political party strategies include forming a plural winning team, building a winning team from millennials, strengthening the team to win political contests, building a team with visionary ideas, forming an internal team that works to win candidates, building an inclusive winning team, and be part of a winning team. Normatively, political parties have implemented technical candidate selection, as shown in Figure 6. However, based on the technique of realizing party ideology in candidate selection, political parties still prioritize pragmatic victory over democratic selection.

The political party elites' apathy regarding the necessity of institutionalizing political regeneration for the development of parties and the democratic system has also been significantly influenced by the growing political pragmatism. In this context, political pragmatism is the tendency of party members and elites to choose shortcuts or instants in the struggle for political office, both within the party and in public positions in external political parties. Suppose politicians are disappointed when not nominated for positions in the government's executive and legislative branches or switch parties for various other reasons. In that case, it is not surprising that the phenomenon of party switching from politicians emerges. How political party preferences build rational choice institutions.

Indonesia started using a direct regional head election system in 2005. Since then, political parties have had the opportunity to place their candidates as pairs of regional heads at the provincial level in 33 provinces and regional heads in regencies and cities in 509 regencies/cities throughout Indonesia. There are exceptions for the Province of the Special Region of Yogyakarta and districts or cities in the Special Capital Region of Jakarta.

In other regions, if the requirements for winning seats and the required number of votes are satisfied, political parties may nominate their representatives to run as a pair of regional head candidates without forming a coalition with other parties.

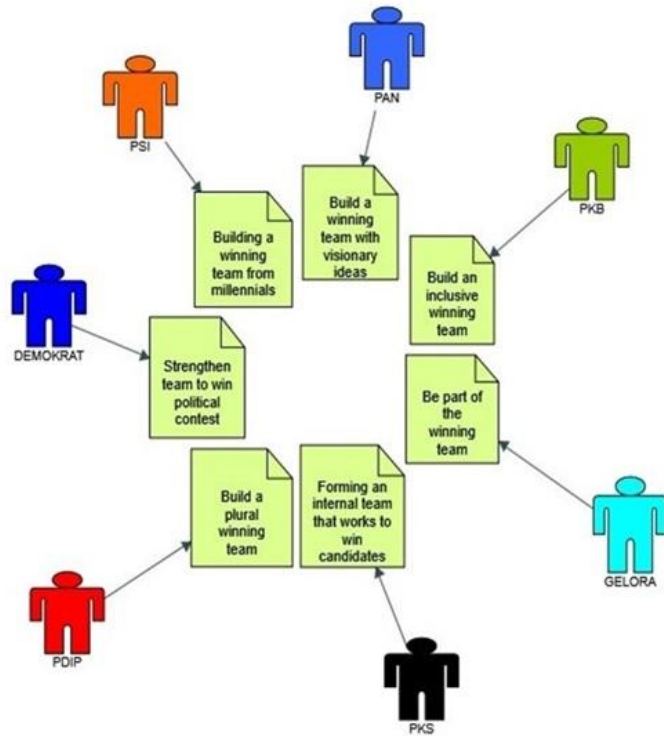


Figure 6: Strategies and Tactics for Embodiment of Party Ideology in Candidate Selection  
(Source: Authors' depiction)



Figure 7: Keywords Political Party Preferences in Selecting Regional Head Candidates  
(Source: Authors' depiction)

Based on the keywords that emerged about the preferences of political parties in candidate selection, the pragmatism approach became the dominant behavior (Figure 7). Pragmatism is constructed both formally and informally. The existence of internal regulations of political parties further legitimizes this pragmatism. Political pragmatism is the dominant attitude to adjust to the agenda and interests of political elites and political party institutions.

Operationally, rational choice institutionalism will be applied to three institutional role models for choosing regional head candidates in political parties: principal-agent, game-theory, and rule-based. This will be done from the perspective of political preferences.

### Principal Agent Model

The principal-agent model pays attention to the relationship between leaders (principals) and followers (agents) (Putra and Sanusi 2019). In selecting regional head candidates, those who act as principals are political party leaders, and those who act as agents are regional head candidates. The relationship between the principal agent or political party leader and the candidate for mayor is a rational relationship formed from an institutionalized process.

The rationality of the actor's actions occurs in all forms of relationships. The thing that underlies why agents only choose certain principals, or why candidates for regional heads only choose candidates promoted by certain political parties, cannot be separated from the agent's goal to maximize profits, namely achieving victory in elections.

Based on this rationality, the candidate for the regional head (agent) will choose to approach the principal (leader of a political party) who has attainable selection criteria, elite organizational and personal characteristics, party size and political clout, and ownership of party networks and resources, all of which enable this regional head candidate to achieve the electoral victory goal. Candidates for regional heads (agents) will leave or not prioritize support from small parties, which are expensive and do not have a complete winning organizational structure. Non-parliamentary seats will only be complementary to the candidate's support. When the leadership of a political party (principal) cannot guarantee the validity of the support and eligibility for electoral work, the regional head candidate (agent) chooses to leave the relationship.

### Game-Theory Model

Political actors will find balance and equality in relations through cooperation and competition. In aggregate, each actor will get incentives as an achievement of interests, and *vice versa*; actors who do not get benefits (disincentives) will move to a competitive relationship pattern. Political actors can build new political identities to gain incentives and renew identities to pursue larger incentive schemes. Control of the playing field is the key to how political actors can achieve their goals.

A candidate can create a new political identity in the regional head selection dynamics. This was only done to gain access to and control the political party support system. When support legitimacy cannot be established, the candidate will look for new support under a different political guise. Party leaders and candidates share an equal relationship in this role. Candidates are no longer under the principal control of party leaders as agents. Everybody works towards their individual goals and interests.

## Rule-Based Model

Instead of focusing on the actors' interests, this model emphasizes the institutional aspect. This model's nature of free-fight competition corrects the interaction pattern that previously relied on free market mechanisms. This model views institutions as a remedy for market failures in resource management (Ostrom 1991). All political parties have official written regulations governing the candidate selection process. Candidate-specific rules are also presented to prevent free-riders from taking advantage of any support needed by regional head candidates. The rules for party organization and the statutes and bylaws of political parties typically contain the mechanisms for choosing candidates. The candidate selection process's mechanism, parameters, and organizers (selectorate) are generally regulated. Every choice made by a political party's leadership is more legitimate when the selection criteria are specific and explicit and adherence to these criteria is unwavering. Political parties with a robust institutionalization in candidate selection are less likely to make decisions that their internal cadres oppose.

## Democratic Candidate Selection Model

Ideally, political parties recruiting candidates for regional heads should be carried out openly through preliminary elections involving party cadres, party administrators, and members of the party legislature as determinants. This is to avoid party oligarchy, irregularities, and money politics (Haris et al. 2016).

In political practice in Indonesia, the rules of the game and democratic procedures for political parties have been developed, but internal implementation distortions still occur. In the end, democratic procedures that are built will be subject to specific candidate qualifications based on experience, political connections, kinship, party services, financial resources, family "big name", and organizational skills (Hazan and Rahat 2006). The case of the regional head election in Makassar City became an exciting phenomenon in how bargaining the interests of the four networks of resource groups faced each other with variants of their respective interests. This makes the candidate selection process in the election prioritize closeness/relative relations and the personal popularity of the candidates. The formal candidate selection does not dominate decisions when determining and legalizing support.

In Figure 8, the selection mechanism is explained simply with a democratic and non-centralized system. The role of party elites at the local level is a determinant in selecting regional head candidates whom political parties will propose. The selection stage begins with the selection of candidate candidates conducted by party administrators at the local level and members of the regional parliament of the regency/city (DPRD). At this stage, political parties produce three pairs of candidates. Then, the screening stage, where the participants in the activities are still the same as the screening; what is different is that two pairs of candidates are left at this stage.



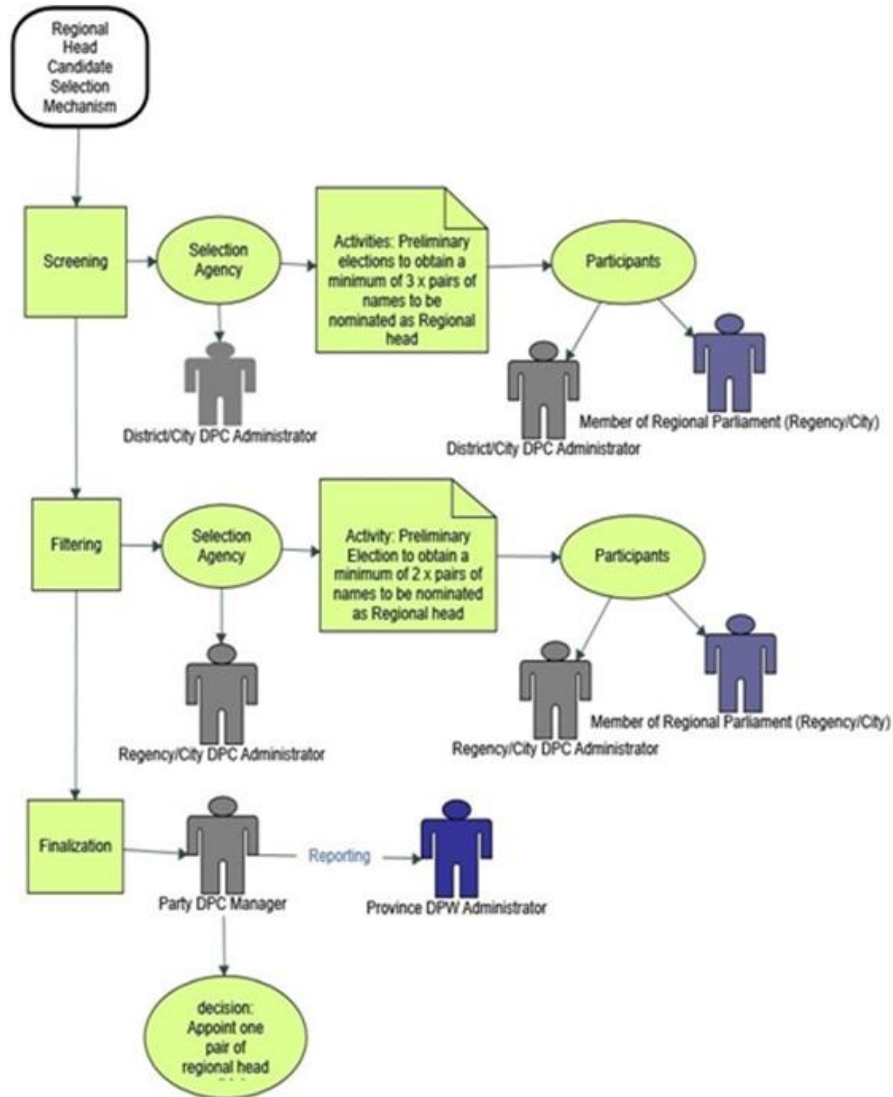


Figure 8: The Steps of a Democratic Candidate Selection Mechanism (Source: Authors' depiction)

The final stage is the determination of the candidate pairs that political parties will carry out in the regional head election contestation. At this stage, the final determination is in the hands of party leaders at the local level (DPC), and the results are only reported to regional and central administrators. The mechanism, as described above, will give full autonomy to party administrators at the local level to determine candidates for regional head candidates. Stages like this will create a more democratic and less centralized candidate selection.

As a public institution that has a strategic role in the life of the broader community in Indonesia, political parties need to be encouraged to make improvements and improvements. One of the efforts that can be made is to require a governance and regeneration system and changes to the recruitment mechanism in Indonesia's party and electoral system. These changes are anticipated to compel parties to adopt patterns and levels of cadre on the one hand and, on the other hand, to alter

the recruitment pattern of public officials. The current system is rife with the subtleties of political dynasties, prioritizes elite interests, pays scant attention to the concerns of cadres and constituents, and is marred by rampant dowry practices. These changes must be adopted to improve legislation regarding political parties and elections in the next five years (Haris et al. 2016).

## CONCLUSION

Candidate selection by looking at personal and institutional preferences in political parties has formed rational choice institutionalism when determining regional head candidates promoted by political parties. Political party preferences provide rational choices based on the values they believe have shaped political responses to individuals and institutions. This paper examines the preferences of political parties in selecting regional head candidates from the perspective of rational-choice institutionalism. Explanatively finds variations in the types of preferences of political parties in candidacy, namely systemic, practical, and normative preferences. Internal regulations support systemic preferences, practical preferences are determined by party procedures, directors, and selection criteria, and normative preferences are based on political parties' ideology, values, and goals. Normative preferences will only become mainstream in the candidacy of political parties if party ideology strengthens and the candidate selection mechanism is transformed into a democracy-based selection.

The candidate selection process for local elections involves internal interactions and endogenous relationships. Considering the diverse backgrounds of actor profiles within political parties, it can be deduced that the selection process for candidates in regional head elections takes two forms.

Firstly, institutions control the behavior of political actors. Secondly, agents endeavor to utilize institutions to advance their interests. When political parties fail to accommodate the interests of their members, efforts are made to promote adjustments or reforms to party policies. Candidate selection plays a crucial role in the dynamics of political parties, yet it can also give rise to dilemmas, particularly for local-level political parties. This is because party power remains centralized in practice despite party elites incorporating democratized candidate selection rules. The selection of candidates should assign a significant role to local party elites, serving as intermediaries between party power, local head candidates, and the national party board.

Political parties retain a central role in supplying the requirements of local head candidates. Local head candidates should recognize that political party elites and leaders are individuals who could maximize their personal and organizational preferences. Local head candidates can identify situations that privilege local party elites in utilizing opportunities for personal preferences. The party elite is also responsible for closing opportunities for other parties to be involved in achieving organizational preferences.

Regarding the future political science research agenda, it is important to review the neo-institutional approach with all its variants. The development of digital-based democracy challenges the neo-institutionalism model. The conventional-formal political institutions are challenged by digital political actors, which are anonymous and not institutionalized. New democratic actors are born with new preferences. The attendance of the connective action movement as a transformation of collective action is important as an entrance to changing conceptual-theoretical and methodological

perspectives. Methodologically, the availability of big data and artificial intelligence makes it possible to conduct qualitative-based research. The future research agenda recommends research on neo-institutionalism revisited and post-digital democracy.

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