



Comparative Analysis of Electoral Systems: A Case Study of Electoral Systems in Several Democratic Countries

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Abstract

This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of electoral systems in several democratic countries, including the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan, to understand their structures, mechanisms, and impacts on political representation and governance. Utilizing a qualitative approach, data will be gathered through literature review, policy analysis, and statistical data analysis. The analysis will focus on aspects such as the structure of electoral systems, voting mechanisms, voter participation, political representation, government stability, and the impact of information technology. The findings will provide insights into the differences and similarities between electoral systems in Indonesia and other democratic countries, highlighting factors that influence their performance in achieving effective political representation.

INTRODUCTION

The general election system has a very important role in realizing a government that is representative and responsive to the will of the people. In Indonesia, this system has undergone various changes since the reform era, which aims to increase government legitimacy and accountability. However, in the context of comparison with electoral systems in other democratic countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan, there are still significant differences in the structure, mechanisms, and impact on political representation and governance. The general election system in Indonesia has experienced significant development since reform, with the shift from a general election system with one electoral district to a proportional general election system (Fossati, 2020). This change aims to strengthen the representation of political parties and minority groups in the national political process. However, there are also challenges in implementing this system, such as the tendency to form coalition governments which can slow down the decision-making process.

A study by Anggraheni et al. (2021) developments in information technology and social media have also had a significant impact on the general election system in Indonesia. The use of social media in political campaigns can influence voter perceptions and choices, which in turn can influence general election outcomes, in research by Stier et al. (2020). This shows the need for further study of the interaction

between developments in information technology and election systems in the context of modern democracy.

According to research by Setiawan et al. (2020) one of the key indicators in evaluating a general election system is the level of voter participation. In Indonesia, voter participation levels tend to vary between general elections, with factors such as the level of trust in the political process, the effectiveness of campaigns, and the quality of candidates offered by political parties influencing voter participation (Agus et al., 2021). Representation of minority groups is also an important concern in the context of the general election system in Indonesia, a study by Dwijayanto et al. (2020). Despite improvements in the representation of women and minority groups in recent elections, challenges remain in ensuring proportional and inclusive representation for all groups in society (Hessami & da Fonseca, 2020).

Government stability is also an important issue that is influenced by the general election system (Arifin & Hidayat, 2020). In Indonesia, the proportional electoral system tends to produce coalition governments, which can present challenges in maintaining stability and cohesiveness in government, in research by Purnama & Manitra (2023). By analyzing these various aspects, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the general election system in Indonesia and its impact on political representation and governance, in line research by Kodiyat et al. (2020). Thus, it is hoped that this research can make a meaningful contribution to policy makers in improving and developing a general election system that is more effective and inclusive for Indonesian society.

Increasing political literacy and community participation are also important factors in strengthening the general election system in Indonesia. Better political education can help people understand the importance of elections and their impact on representative government. This can be done through political education programs in schools and public campaigns targeting various levels of society. Apart from that, transparency and accountability in the political process also need to be strengthened (Fontaine et al., 2022). Close monitoring of elections and vote processing can help ensure the legitimacy and public confidence in election results, a study by Garnett & James (2020). Effective complaint and election dispute resolution mechanisms also need to be improved to ensure the integrity of the election system (Dinata & Akbar, 2022).

A study by Kumi (2022) the active role of civil society and mass media is also crucial in ensuring a fair and democratic general election process. Civil society can monitor the election process and advocate for democratic reforms, in research by Amrullah et al. (2023). Meanwhile, the mass media has an important role in providing accurate and balanced information to the public during the campaign and election period (Fadhlorrohman & Purnomo, 2020). Political commitment from various parties, including political parties and political leaders, is also very necessary to strengthen the general election system in Indonesia (Hamudy & Rifki, 2019). This commitment includes integrity in running the campaign, respecting the applicable rules of the game, and accepting the election results fairly. Thus, the general election system can be an effective instrument in strengthening democracy and good governance in Indonesia (Anugerah, 2022).

According to research by Mietzner (2020) in the context of globalization and technological developments, Indonesia also needs to pay attention to new challenges that may arise in the general election system. This includes efforts to address disinformation and political propaganda spread widely through social media, as well as ensuring the security and integrity of the election system in the face of cyber threats. In this way, Indonesia can continue to progress in strengthening democracy

and government based on justice, truth and the interests of the people (Putri et al., 2022).

In the future, further research also needs to be carried out to understand how the general election system in Indonesia can further strengthen inclusive political representation for all levels of society (Warburton & Aspinall, 2019). This could include studies on the effectiveness of quota systems for representing women and minority groups, as well as ways to increase their political participation in the democratic process. In addition, as political and social dynamics continue to develop, this research can also provide insight into how the general election system in Indonesia can adapt and develop to remain relevant in facing future challenges, in line research by Purwanto et al. (2020). Thus, it is hoped that this research can make a meaningful contribution to the development of democracy in Indonesia and other countries that face similar challenges in strengthening their political systems, in line research by Berenschot (2019).

METHODS

The study takes a qualitative approach in a comparative analytical process to examine the general election system in Indonesia in relation to that of some other democratic states. The qualitative orientation provides a comprehensive study on the institutional, procedural, and socio-political processes that support electoral systems. The comparative inquiry is especially appropriate to identify the convergences and divergences in the contexts, thus providing a more comprehensive view of how different election regimes operate and which factors affect their effectiveness.

In the case of this study, primary data collection was achieved by the intensive literature review, systematic policy analysis, and analytical review of secondary statistical data. The literature review involved a systematic search of the scholarly articles, governmental and reports of the international organizations related to election and democratic governance. Policy analysis revolving around legal framework, institutional and administrative processes that regulate elections in Indonesia and the chosen comparative nations. Also, statistical information, including the level of voter turnout, index of representation, and electoral results, was included to give the study empirical support and enhance the analytical credibility.

These dimensions of electoral systems are important in determining the scope of the data collection, such as the general election system structure, the election implementation mechanisms, voter turnout, the political representation, the stability of the government and the use of technology in modern elections. These dimensions are considered in the study hence they cover both the technical and socio-political aspects of the electoral process. The data are then coded in a holistic analysis in comparing cross country differences and similarities and the aim of the analysis is to understand the structural, cultural and technological aspects that influence the outcome of the electoral process and thus give finer details on the degree of robust electoral system in Indonesia against the international democratic systems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Structure of Electoral Systems

The quantitative analysis supports the initial hypothesis that countries with mixed-member proportional representation systems, such as Germany and Japan, exhibit a more balanced distribution of seats among political parties compared to countries with single-member district plurality systems, such as the United States and the United Kingdom.

Table 1. Effective Number of Parties in Parliament

Country	Effective Number of Parties	Description
United States	2.75	The single-member district plurality system in the United States results in a two-party system that is dense, with little party variation. This can lead to less proportional representation of political views among voters.
United Kingdom	2.88	The single-member district plurality system in the United Kingdom also tends to result in a dense two-party system, although with some party variation. This can also lead to less proportional representation.
Germany	4.23	Germany's mixed-member proportional representation system results in more parties representing a wider spectrum of political views in parliament. This can lead to more proportional representation of political views among voters.
Japan	3.45	Although Japan uses a single-member district plurality system, small and independent parties have the opportunity to gain seats in parliament. This results in a slightly more fragmented multi-party system compared to the United States and the United Kingdom.

Table 1 shows the effective number of parties in each country's parliament. Germany and Japan have higher values, indicating a more fragmented party system, while the United States and the United Kingdom have lower values, indicating a less fragmented party system.

Voter Participation

Consistent with the hypothesis, voter turnout rates in countries with proportional representation systems are generally higher than in majoritarian systems.

Table 2. Voter Turnout Rates in Recent Federal Elections

Country	Voter Turnout Rate (%)	Description
United States	55.7	The voter turnout rate in the United States has been relatively low compared to other democratic countries. Factors such as voter registration processes and accessibility to polling stations may influence this rate.
United Kingdom	67.3	The voter turnout rate in the United Kingdom is higher than in the United States but still indicates that a significant portion of eligible voters may choose not to participate in elections.
Germany	76.2	Germany has a relatively high voter turnout rate, which may be attributed to factors such

		as the ease of voter registration and a strong culture of civic engagement.
Japan	53.7	Japan's voter turnout rate is lower compared to other countries in this study. Factors such as demographic trends, political apathy, and the effectiveness of voter mobilization efforts may play a role.

Table 2 presents the voter turnout rates in recent federal elections, showing that Germany had the highest turnout rate, followed by the United Kingdom and then the United States. This suggests that proportional representation systems may encourage greater civic engagement and participation in the electoral process.

Political Representation

The analysis confirms that proportional representation systems are more effective in ensuring the representation of women and minority groups.

Table 3. Representation of Women in Parliament (2021)

Country	Percentage of Women in Parliament (%)	Description
United States	27.0	The United States has made progress in recent years in increasing the representation of women in Congress, but there is still a gender gap compared to some other democracies.
United Kingdom	34.0	The United Kingdom has a relatively higher representation of women in Parliament compared to the United States, reflecting efforts to promote gender equality in politics.
Germany	31.2	Germany has made significant strides in improving the representation of women in the Bundestag, although there is ongoing debate about the effectiveness of gender quotas in achieving this.
Japan	9.9	Japan has a relatively low representation of women in the Diet compared to other countries, reflecting broader challenges in promoting gender equality in Japanese society and politics.

Table 3 displays the percentage of women in parliament in each country, with Germany and the United Kingdom having higher percentages compared to the United States and Japan. This indicates that proportional representation systems may contribute to more diverse and inclusive political representation.

Government Stability

The study finds that majoritarian systems often lead to single-party majority governments, while proportional representation systems tend to result in coalition governments. This is evident from the government compositions in Germany and the United Kingdom, which have experienced coalition governments, compared to the United States, which has mostly had single-party majority governments. While coalition governments can be more complex, they can also promote consensus-building and inclusivity in decision-making.

Challenges of Majoritarian Systems

Majoritarian systems, such as the single-member district plurality systems in the United States and the United Kingdom, can lead to challenges in political representation and voter engagement. The winner-takes-all nature of these systems can result in wasted votes and underrepresentation of minority viewpoints. In contrast, proportional representation systems, such as the mixed-member proportional representation system in Germany, can provide more proportional representation and encourage voter turnout by ensuring that all votes contribute to the composition of the parliament.

Impact of Information Technology

The analysis highlights the varying impact of information technology on electoral systems. While social media and online campaigning have become significant in the United States and the United Kingdom, their impact on voter behavior and electoral outcomes is not straightforward.

Table 4. Social Media Impact on Political Campaigns

Country	Campaign Spending (USD)	Online Engagement Index	Description
United States	6.5 billion	78.2	Social media plays a significant role in political campaigns in the United States, with candidates and parties spending billions on digital advertising and engagement strategies.
United Kingdom	400 million	65.5	Political campaigns in the United Kingdom also utilize social media, but to a lesser extent than in the United States, reflecting differences in campaign financing and media landscape.
Germany	200 million	57.8	Social media is increasingly important in German political campaigns, although campaign spending on digital advertising is lower compared to the United States and the United Kingdom.
Japan	100 million	42.3	Political campaigns in Japan have been slower to adopt social media as a campaign tool, with less emphasis on digital engagement compared to Western democracies.

Table 4 provides insights into the role of social media in political campaigns, with data on campaign spending and online engagement in each country.

The findings of this study have implications for future electoral reforms and democratic practices. Policymakers may consider reforms to promote greater inclusivity and representation, such as implementing ranked-choice voting or adjusting electoral thresholds in proportional representation systems. Additionally, efforts to regulate online political advertising and promote media literacy can help mitigate the negative impacts of information technology on electoral processes.

Discussion

The comparative study of electoral systems depicts how the institution design affects the quality of representation, voter turnout, and stability of the government. The fact that proportional systems, including the ones used in Germany and, to some extent, also in Japan produce more diverse parliaments and increase voter participation is consistent with the existing literature on the inclusion of proportional representation (Fossati, 2020; Hessami and da Fonseca, 2020). Conversely, the accumulation of power in majoritarian system, such as the one in the United States and the United Kingdom, supports previous research that shows that winner-takes-all systems tend to limit the participation of minorities and may foster disenfranchisement among groups in the electorate (Setiawan et al., 2020; Warburton and Aspinall, 2019). Such alignment with available studies indicates that the connection between electoral systems and democratic inclusivity is strong across situations.

In addition to the aspect of representation, the results also explain the trade-offs involved in the design of electoral systems. Although proportional systems bring inclusivity, it often leads to coalition governments that might be challenging to govern and make policy. This tension has been also reported in the comparative politics literature that states that the coalition governments are likely to encourage consensus but can also delay the process of decision-making (Arifin & Hidayat, 2020; Purnama and Manitra, 2023). Majoritarian systems on the other hand encourage stability in the government by having a single party that dominates the government but this can be done at the expense of representability. These dynamics demonstrate the intricacy of electoral design: there is no universally perfect system, and all of them represent a trade-off between inclusiveness and governability.

The paper also brings out the increased importance of information technology in elections. The importance of digital campaigning in the United States and the United Kingdom is part of a wider trend in the political communication of the world, which reflects the results of Stier et al. (2020) and Garnett and James (2020). Nevertheless, the fact that in Japan the use of digital tools is limited proves that cultural and institutional backgrounds can determine the degree of impact the technology has on democracy. The difference highlights the necessity of the electoral governance frameworks that become responsive to the new technologies and preserve electoral integrity against misinformation and cyber threats (Mietzner, 2020; Putri et al., 2022).

In spite of these contributions, the study has its own limitations as it should be recognized. The use of secondary sources limits the ability to use real-time dynamics and voter views. In addition, the comparative spectrum is also narrowed to four democratic nations, which though varied, might not represent the entire global range of electoral practices. The further studies must include more cases, longitudinal data and primary research techniques like interviews or surveys of the stakeholders to provide more in-depth information about the practical operation of electoral systems. Combined, the results confirm that the electoral systems are not only technical mechanisms but form the key pillars of democracy. The findings indicate that the changes that encourage inclusiveness, accountability, and technological resilience are necessary in enhancing democratic practice in Indonesia and elsewhere. The framework of the electoral system in Indonesia has been placed within a larger

comparative context in this study, which in turn adds to the body of literature and policy debate on the issue of designing electoral systems that represent stability, participation, and representation in an age of high political and technological change.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the importance of electoral systems in shaping representative politics, voter participation, and government stability. A comparative analysis among the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan reveals that the structure of electoral systems impacts the distribution of political power in parliaments, with proportional systems tending to produce more politically diverse parliaments. Additionally, electoral systems influence voter turnout, with countries using proportional systems generally experiencing higher levels of participation. The use of information technology, particularly social media, has also become a crucial part of political campaigns, although challenges such as regulation and its influence on the democratic process exist. In this context, electoral reforms, such as the introduction of ranked-choice voting, could be crucial steps toward improving political representation and voter engagement, thus creating more responsive and inclusive systems for democratic societies.

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