Moccasin Journal De Public Perspective

The Effect of Electoral System Reforms on Political Representation and Accountability in the Indonesian Legislative Elections

Nurawaliah Amanda[1]

[1]*Fakultas Hukum, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia*

Corresponding Author: Nurawaliah Amanda
E-mail: nurawaliahamanda@gmail.com

Article Info

Abstract

This study investigates the impact of electoral system reforms on political representation and accountability in Indonesia's legislative elections from 1999 to 2024. Following democratization after the fall of the New Order regime, Indonesia implemented major institutional changes, including the shift from a closed-list to an open-list proportional representation system, the introduction of electoral thresholds, and the enforcement of a 30 percent gender quota. Using a mixed-methods approach that combines longitudinal electoral data with qualitative evidence from interviews and document analysis, the study examines three dimensions: proportionality and party system dynamics, gender representation, and legislative accountability. The findings indicate that electoral reforms have improved vote–seat proportionality and reduced excessive party fragmentation, contributing to greater electoral stability. Women's representation in parliament has increased over time, although persistent structural and cultural barriers continue to constrain substantive gender equality. In addition, indicators of accountability such as legislative attendance, constituency engagement, and public trust show moderate improvement, suggesting that open-list competition encourages more responsive behavior among legislators. However, accountability remains largely personalized rather than institutionalized, relying on individual visibility instead of collective performance. Overall, Indonesia's electoral reforms have supported gradual democratic consolidation, while remaining constrained by clientelism and weak institutional accountability.

INTRODUCTION

Electoral systems are among the most decisive institutional designs shaping the quality of democracy (Boyle, 2024; Felicetti, 2021; Fischer et al., 2021). They determine not only how votes are translated into seats but also how political actors behave, how citizens engage with politics, and how accountability is structured within representative institutions. Over the past two decades, Indonesia has experienced a series of significant electoral reforms aimed at consolidating democracy after the fall of the New Order regime in 1998. These reforms have

included the transition from a closed-list to an open-list proportional representation system, the introduction of electoral thresholds, and the implementation of a 30 percent gender quota policy. Each reform sought to strengthen the legitimacy of the electoral process, enhance the inclusiveness of representation, and improve the accountability of elected officials to their constituents. Yet, their combined effects on Indonesia's evolving democratic landscape remain complex and contested (Slater, 2023; Setiawan & Tomsa, 2023; Kenawas, 2023).

Scholars have long debated how electoral systems influence representation and accountability (Skorge, 2023; Daraghmi et al., 2024; Thesen & Yildirim, 2023). Lijphart (2012) argues that proportional representation systems tend to promote inclusivity and fairer vote-seat conversion, while Carey and Shugart (1995) suggest that open-list variants increase personal accountability at the expense of party discipline. In the Indonesian case, the open-list proportional representation (OLPR) system first adopted in 2009 was expected to empower voters by allowing them to choose individual candidates rather than merely voting for parties. However, this shift also introduced new dynamics of personalization, competition, and clientelism. Research by Aspinall and Berenschot (2019) and Mietzner (2018) shows that while open-list elections have increased voter participation and local engagement, they have also fragmented political parties and intensified transactional politics. Thus, the very reforms designed to deepen democracy may simultaneously produce unintended consequences that complicate the relationship between representation and accountability (Bardosh et al., 2022; Faguet & Shami, 2022; Canon, 2024; Jacquet et al., 2023; Broom et al., 2023).

At the same time, the introduction of a gender quota and electoral threshold has further reconfigured Indonesia's representational structure (Firdaus & Wulandari, 2023; Lailam & Andrianti, 2022; Ichsan et al., 2021). The quota system, mandated since 2004, aims to address the historical underrepresentation of women in politics, while the threshold seeks to reduce excessive party fragmentation that often undermines stable governance. However, the effectiveness of these measures remains debated. Studies such as Krook (2009) emphasize that quotas improve descriptive representation but not necessarily substantive influence, while Reilly (2021) argues that thresholds may stabilize parliaments but at the cost of excluding smaller parties. Within Indonesia's unique socio-political context marked by patronage networks, decentralization, and varying regional political cultures these reforms interact in complex ways, producing outcomes that cannot be fully explained by institutional design alone. What remains underexplored in current literature is how these multiple reforms, taken together, have reshaped the actual practices and quality of representation and accountability in Indonesia's legislative system over time.

This study addresses that gap by systematically examining the effects of electoral system reforms on political representation and accountability in Indonesia's legislative elections from 1999 to 2024. Using a mixed-method approach that integrates statistical analysis of electoral data with interpretive insights from interviews and document reviews, this research investigates three key dimensions: (1) proportionality and party system fragmentation, (2) gender inclusiveness and representational diversity, and (3) legislative accountability and voter trust. By tracing longitudinal data across six electoral cycles, the study identifies both the measurable and behavioral consequences of institutional reforms, offering a comprehensive view of how Indonesia's democratic institutions have evolved under continuous adjustment.

The significance of this research lies in its ability to connect institutional design with democratic behavior (Felicetti, 2021; Hofstad et al., 2022; Hilton et al., 2021). Rather than viewing electoral reforms as static legal changes, this study conceptualizes them

as dynamic processes of political learning and adaptation that shape the relationship between voters, parties, and legislators. By analyzing Indonesia's reforms comparatively across time, the study contributes to broader debates in political science regarding the balance between representation and accountability, the effects of open-list systems in developing democracies, and the interplay between formal institutions and informal political culture. Ultimately, this paper argues that Indonesia's electoral reforms have advanced democratic participation and responsiveness, but their long-term success depends on the consolidation of institutional accountability and the cultivation of civic political norms that move beyond personalization toward substantive democratic governance.

METHODS

This research employs a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively analyze the effect of electoral system reforms on political representation and accountability in Indonesian legislative elections. The mixed-method design is chosen because the issue under study involves complex institutional and behavioral dimensions that cannot be sufficiently explained by quantitative data alone or by qualitative insights in isolation. Quantitative analysis allows the researcher to observe measurable trends and structural shifts in electoral outcomes, while qualitative inquiry provides interpretive depth into the experiences, motivations, and perceptions of key political actors and voters. The integration of these two approaches produces a more nuanced and contextualized understanding of how electoral reforms have shaped the dynamics of representation and accountability within Indonesia's evolving democratic system.

The study follows an explanatory sequential design, beginning with a quantitative phase that examines patterns of political representation and accountability across several electoral cycles, and followed by a qualitative phase aimed at explaining and deepening the statistical findings. This structure allows the researcher to first identify empirical correlations and then explore the mechanisms and meanings behind them. The quantitative phase focuses on analyzing electoral data from the General Elections Commission (KPU), legislative records, and party statistics from 1999 to 2024 covering key reform periods such as the transition from closed-list to open-list proportional representation and the implementation of higher parliamentary thresholds. These reforms mark important institutional milestones that directly influence the quality and inclusivity of representation and the degree of political accountability.

Quantitative data are drawn from multiple sources, including official election results, legislative performance indicators (such as attendance rates, bill sponsorships, and constituency service records), and demographic data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS). These datasets provide the empirical foundation for examining how representation has evolved whether measured through vote-seat proportionality, gender balance, or party diversity and how accountability has been reflected through the responsiveness of elected legislators to their constituents. The analysis involves descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, such as regression analysis, to identify the relationships between key variables like electoral system design, party competition, and accountability indicators. Statistical patterns derived from this phase serve as a guide for developing the qualitative instruments and framing the subsequent in-depth inquiry.

The qualitative phase of the study complements and deepens the quantitative findings by exploring the perspectives and lived experiences of political actors and observers. Data for this phase are collected through semi-structured interviews with a diverse group of participants, including current and former members of parliament, political party officials, electoral commission officers, civil society activists, and

scholars specializing in Indonesian politics. Approximately 25 to 30 informants are purposively selected to ensure representation across political affiliations, geographic regions, and institutional levels. Interviews are conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, lasting between 45 and 60 minutes, and are guided by open-ended questions designed to elicit reflections on how electoral reforms have altered representative behavior, political accountability, and the relationship between elected officials and voters. All interviews are audio-recorded with the participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English for analysis.

In addition to interviews, document analysis is employed to examine primary legal and institutional sources such as electoral laws, parliamentary reports, party statutes, and court decisions concerning election disputes. This is complemented by a review of media archives including editorials, policy commentaries, and campaign narratives to capture how public discourse has evolved in response to reforms. Together, these qualitative data provide contextual insights into the cultural, structural, and institutional dimensions that underlie electoral behavior and accountability practices.

For data analysis, the study applies a combination of statistical and thematic approaches. Quantitative data are processed using descriptive statistics to summarize electoral trends and inferential methods to test hypotheses regarding the relationship between electoral system variables and outcomes of representation and accountability. For example, regression models are used to assess whether the shift to an open-list system has led to greater legislative responsiveness or improved gender representation. Meanwhile, qualitative data are analyzed using thematic coding with the assistance of software such as NVivo. The researcher reads and codes transcripts inductively, identifying recurring themes related to perceptions of representational fairness, patterns of accountability, party strategies, and the interaction between formal institutional rules and informal political norms. The integration of both datasets occurs during interpretation, where qualitative insights help explain why certain statistical patterns emerge, thereby enriching the overall analytical narrative.

To maintain research rigor, the study employs several strategies to ensure validity, reliability, and triangulation. Methodological triangulation is achieved by integrating quantitative and qualitative methods, while data source triangulation is ensured by drawing from a wide range of institutional and individual perspectives. Reliability is strengthened through transparent documentation of analytical steps, consistent coding procedures, and the use of member checking where selected interview participants review and confirm key interpretations to ensure accuracy and authenticity. Ethical considerations are strictly observed throughout the research process. All participants provide informed consent and are assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Data are securely stored, and all identifying information is removed from the final analysis to protect participants' privacy.

This research is conducted across multiple electoral cycles, focusing on the period from 1999 the first post-authoritarian election to 2024, which represents a quarter-century of democratic consolidation. The temporal scope allows for the observation of long-term institutional and behavioral trends. Indonesia's case is particularly valuable because of its frequent and significant electoral reforms, which provide a natural context for assessing how systemic changes influence democratic performance. The study also considers regional variations by including data and perspectives from both national and selected provincial contexts, thereby reflecting the decentralized nature of Indonesia's political system.

While the mixed-methods approach offers depth and breadth, certain limitations are acknowledged. Data completeness varies across electoral years, and attributing

208

causality between reforms and outcomes can be challenging due to the interaction of multiple factors, including socio-economic conditions, political culture, and party organization. Nevertheless, these limitations are mitigated through careful triangulation, transparency in analytical reasoning, and cautious interpretation of findings within the Indonesian socio-political context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and interpretative discussion concerning the effects of Indonesia's electoral system reforms on political representation and accountability across six legislative elections held between 1999 and 2024. The results are derived from a combination of quantitative indicators and qualitative interpretations that together illustrate how institutional reforms have altered the architecture of representation and the behavior of political actors.

Indonesia's post-authoritarian transition has undergone multiple phases of electoral transformation from a closed-list proportional representation system to a semi-open and ultimately a fully open-list system, accompanied by rising electoral thresholds and gender quota regulations. These reforms were not merely administrative adjustments but ideological interventions intended to strengthen democratic legitimacy, widen citizen participation, and improve the accountability of elected representatives. However, as the data below reveal, these reforms have yielded mixed but instructive results: they have improved representational fairness and accountability performance, yet also produced new tensions in the relationship between voters, parties, and elected officials.

Electoral Proportionality and Party System Dynamics

One of the most critical dimensions of electoral reform concerns the degree of proportionality between votes and seats, which directly reflects how faithfully electoral outcomes translate popular will into parliamentary representation. The Indonesian case is particularly revealing because its transition from a closed-list to an open-list proportional representation system was accompanied by the gradual introduction of an electoral threshold, designed to reduce party system fragmentation. The data below summarize the evolving structure of proportionality and party competition from 1999 to 2024.

Table 1. Changes in Vote–Seat Proportionality and Party Fragmentation (1999–2024)

Election Year	Electoral System	Electoral Threshold	Gallagher Index (Disproportionality)	Effective Number of Parties (ENP)	Dominant Party Seat Share (%)
1999	Closed-list PR	None	6.2	8.9	34.7
2004	Semi-open PR	3%	8.1	7.6	39.1
2009	Open-list PR	2.5%	10.4	9.3	20.9
2014	Open-list PR	3.5%	9.6	8.7	19.5
2019	Open-list PR	4%	8.3	7.4	19.8
2024	Open-list PR	5%	7.1	6.5	22.3

Source: Compiled from KPU data (1999–2024), author's calculations

The data reveal an initially paradoxical but eventually stabilizing trajectory. When Indonesia adopted the open-list proportional system in 2009, proportionality

209

temporarily worsened as shown by the increase in the Gallagher Index to 10.4 because the system encouraged personalized competition within parties, fragmenting votes among candidates. Over time, however, subsequent reforms especially the gradual increase in the electoral threshold reduced the number of small parties entering parliament. By 2024, the Gallagher Index had fallen to 7.1, suggesting a return to higher proportionality, while the effective number of parliamentary parties (ENP) dropped from 9.3 in 2009 to 6.5 in 2024.

This gradual consolidation of the party system indicates that institutional learning has occurred: both voters and parties have adapted to the logic of open-list competition. The data also show a moderate concentration of parliamentary seats, with no single party dominating, suggesting that Indonesia has achieved what Lijphart (2012) describes as a "balanced pluralism," where representation remains broad yet manageable. The trend also implies that open-list systems, when coupled with reasonable thresholds, can reconcile the tension between proportionality and governability a challenge faced by many emerging democracies.

However, the earlier disruption (2009–2014) should not be overlooked. It underscores Carey and Shugart's (1995) caution that open-list systems may empower individual candidates at the expense of party discipline, thereby reducing ideological coherence. The Indonesian experience confirms that institutional engineering requires time for political actors to internalize new incentives and for voters to recalibrate expectations regarding representation.

Gender Representation and Electoral Inclusiveness

Beyond structural proportionality, another essential goal of electoral reform is to broaden inclusiveness, particularly by promoting women's political participation. Since 2004, Indonesia has implemented a 30% gender quota policy, although its enforcement and impact have evolved across different election cycles. The data below track the participation and success of women in legislative elections from 1999 to 2024, reflecting both policy-driven change and cultural persistence

Table 2. Women's Representation in the Indonesian House of Representatives (1999–2024)

Election Year	Women Candidates (%)	Women Elected (%)	Change in Elected Women (%)	Gender Quota Policy Status
1999	9.5	8.8		No quota
2004	32.1	11.6	+2.8	30% quota (weak enforcement)
2009	33.4	17.8	+6.2	Quota enforced; open-list adopted
2014	37.1	17.3	-0.5	Quota maintained
2019	40.1	20.5	+3.2	Quota maintained
2024	41.7	23.2	+2.7	Quota and sanctions strengthened

Source: KPU, Ministry of Women's Empowerment, DPR archives

The data show a remarkable increase in women's candidacy and representation since the introduction of the quota, with the proportion of women in parliament nearly tripling from 8.8% in 1999 to 23.2% in 2024. The most significant leap occurred between 2004 and 2009, when the quota became enforceable and coincided with the open-list system, enabling voters to directly select individual female candidates. However, the stagnation between 2014 and 2019 reflects the persistence of structural barriers limited campaign financing, male-dominated party hierarchies, and voter bias that hinder women's full political inclusion.

Interviews with women legislators reveal that while the open-list system can amplify individual visibility, it also places a heavier burden on female candidates to compete on unequal grounds. Those with strong local networks or family-based political legacies perform better, while newcomers struggle. This reflects what Krook (2009) terms "conditional empowerment," where institutional reforms create opportunities but fail to dismantle embedded socio-political inequalities.

Despite these limitations, the gradual improvement in female representation indicates that institutional change can drive cultural adaptation, albeit slowly. The enforcement of quotas, supported by civil society advocacy, has contributed to a normalization of women's political participation in Indonesia's democratic discourse. The increasing number of female legislators also enriches deliberative diversity, expanding the scope of issues debated in parliament.

Legislative Accountability and Public Trust

The third set of findings examines whether reforms have strengthened political accountability a key test of democratic quality. Accountability here is operationalized through measurable indicators: legislative attendance, constituency engagement, re-election rates, and levels of public trust in parliament.

Table 3. Accountability Indicators of Members of Parliament (2004–2024)

Election Year	Average Plenary Attendance (%)	MPs Reporting to Constituents (%)	MPs Re-elected (%)	Public Trust in Parliament (%)
2004	72.4	23.1	41.7	54.6
2009	69.5	26.8	38.4	49.2
2014	76.2	33.5	42.8	57.8
2019	81.9	41.3	45.6	60.2
2024	84.7	49.5	47.1	64.8

Source: DPR Annual Reports, LIPI & Indikator Politik Indonesia Surveys (2024).

The data show consistent improvement in all four indicators over time. Legislative attendance rose from 72.4% in 2004 to 84.7% in 2024, and the proportion of MPs reporting to their constituencies nearly doubled. Public trust in parliament, often a fragile measure in transitional democracies, increased from 49.2% in 2009 to 64.8% in 2024. This upward trend coincides with the maturing of the open-list system, which compels legislators to maintain direct connections with voters to secure re-election.

This subsection presents the qualitative findings derived from semi-structured interviews with members of parliament, party officials, electoral administrators, and civil society actors. The purpose of this subsection is to report recurring empirical patterns that emerged from the interviews, without interpretation or theoretical generalization. The findings are organized thematically based on repeated statements across respondents.

Intensification of Direct Candidate–Voter Interaction

Across interviews, legislators consistently described an increase in direct engagement with voters following the implementation of the open-list proportional representation system. Informants reported that constituency visits, informal meetings, and personal communication have become routine electoral activities rather than supplementary campaign strategies.

One legislator stated that constituency presence has become an electoral necessity rather than a symbolic gesture, noting that

> *"Voters now expect to see us regularly; absence is immediately remembered during elections"* (Interview, MP, 2023).

Similar accounts were provided by party officials, who indicated that candidates' visibility at the local level is closely monitored by both voters and party organizations.

Electoral administrators confirmed that post-election reporting and constituency engagement have increased in frequency, particularly after 2014. These observations align with documented increases in constituency reporting records found in parliamentary archives.

Personalized Forms of Accountability

Interview data reveal that accountability practices are predominantly exercised through individualized mechanisms. Legislators frequently described accountability in terms of personal responsiveness, accessibility, and assistance to constituents rather than institutional performance indicators.

One respondent explained that

> *"Accountability is measured by how quickly we respond to constituent needs, not by legislative outputs"* (Interview, MP, 2022).

Civil society actors similarly observed that constituents tend to evaluate representatives based on personal interaction rather than policy achievements or committee work.

Party officials acknowledged that this personalization influences candidate selection strategies, with emphasis placed on candidates' local reputation and social capital. These accounts indicate that accountability is primarily enacted through interpersonal relations between representatives and voters.

Party Discipline and Internal Competition

Informants repeatedly referred to increased intra-party competition following the adoption of the open-list system. Several legislators noted that competition among candidates from the same party has intensified, particularly in multi-member districts.

A party official described internal dynamics by stating that

> *"Party ideology matters less during campaigns than individual vote acquisition"* (Interview, Party Official, 2023).

Legislators also reported limited coordination during campaigns, as candidates focus on maximizing personal vote shares.

These findings were consistent across interviews conducted with representatives from both major and medium-sized parties and were particularly pronounced in electoral districts with high candidate density.

Structural Constraints on Women Candidates

Female legislators and civil society representatives highlighted persistent structural barriers affecting women's electoral success. Interviewees reported unequal access to campaign financing, limited control over party resources, and reliance on personal or familial networks.

One female MP stated that

> *"The quota allows women to run, but winning still depends on financial and social capital"* (Interview, Female MP, 2024).

Several respondents noted that while the number of women candidates has increased, electoral competition remains uneven.

Electoral commission officials confirmed that compliance with gender quota requirements has improved steadily over successive election cycles, reflecting

stronger regulatory enforcement and growing institutional awareness among political parties. In practice, most parties now formally meet the minimum threshold for female candidacy at the registration stage, indicating progress in procedural adherence to electoral rules. However, in-depth interview data reveal that formal compliance does not necessarily translate into equal electoral opportunities. Women candidates are often placed in less competitive positions on party candidate lists or assigned to electoral districts with lower winning prospects, particularly in regions dominated by entrenched political networks. Moreover, access to critical campaign infrastructure such as funding, media exposure, party machinery, and grassroots mobilization networks remains uneven across parties and regions. These disparities are shaped by internal party hierarchies, local political cultures, and resource constraints, which collectively limit the effectiveness of quota policies in producing substantive gender representation despite improved formal compliance

Perceptions of Voter Expectations

Interviewees consistently reported that voter expectations have shifted toward tangible engagement and immediate responsiveness. Legislators noted increased demands for constituency services, local problem-solving, and direct communication.

One respondent explained that

> *"Voters no longer see us only as lawmakers but as representatives who must be physically present and responsive"* (Interview, MP, 2023).

Civil society actors corroborated these observations, emphasizing that voter evaluations increasingly focus on observable behavior.

This study demonstrates that electoral system reforms in Indonesia have functioned as instruments of institutional recalibration rather than as catalysts for radical democratic transformation. The transition from a closed-list to an open-list proportional representation system, combined with the gradual introduction of electoral thresholds, has altered how representation is operationalized within the legislative arena. These reforms reshaped the incentives governing electoral competition, shifting the locus of representation from party-centered aggregation toward candidate-centered mediation. This finding aligns with Carey and Shugart's (1995) proposition that open-list systems enhance individual accountability while simultaneously weakening collective party control. In the Indonesian context, representation has increasingly been enacted through personal visibility, constituency engagement, and individual reputation, rather than through coherent party programs or ideological platforms.

At the same time, the moderating role of electoral thresholds suggests that institutional design can partially mitigate the fragmenting effects of open-list competition. The gradual reduction in party system fragmentation over successive elections indicates a process of institutional learning among both parties and voters, supporting Lijphart's (2012) argument that proportional systems can balance inclusiveness and governability when appropriately calibrated. However, this balance remains fragile. While fragmentation has declined, the consolidation of programmatic competition has not advanced at the same pace, suggesting that structural stabilization does not automatically translate into ideological clarity or policy coherence. Thus, electoral reforms have reconfigured the form of representation without fundamentally redefining its substantive content.

The findings contribute to broader debates on party system adaptation in post-authoritarian democracies by illustrating how institutional reforms interact with entrenched political practices. Although electoral thresholds have encouraged parties to rationalize coalition strategies and candidate selection, open-list

competition continues to incentivize intra-party rivalry (Hohendorf, 2025; Invernizzi, 2021). This dynamic weakens party discipline and reduces the strategic importance of long-term policy commitments, echoing concerns raised by Mietzner (2018) and Aspinall and Berenschot (2019) regarding the personalization of Indonesian politics.

Rather than operating as cohesive ideological actors, political parties increasingly function as electoral vehicles for individual candidates. This shift reflects a broader pattern identified in comparative studies of developing democracies, where electoral rules prioritize vote maximization over programmatic differentiation (Felicetti, 2021; Skorge, 2023; Gunderson, 2025; Hlatky & Gyárfášová, 2025). The Indonesian case reinforces the notion that electoral engineering alone cannot generate programmatic party competition in contexts where political trust, organizational capacity, and internal party democracy remain limited. Consequently, the reforms have improved the mechanics of electoral competition while leaving deeper dimensions of party institutionalization underdeveloped (McCoy & Somer, 2021; Acheampong, 2023).

The discussion of gender representation highlights the distinction between formal institutional inclusion and substantive political equality. The introduction and enforcement of a 30 percent gender quota have significantly expanded women's access to electoral competition, confirming findings from the broader quota literature that such mechanisms are effective in increasing descriptive representation (Krook, 2009; Thesen & Yildirim, 2023). However, the Indonesian experience also illustrates the limitations of quota-based reforms when they are not accompanied by parallel changes in party organization, campaign financing, and political culture.

Open-list competition intensifies resource-based electoral dynamics, disproportionately affecting women candidates who often face structural disadvantages in accessing financial capital and political networks (Oyekanmi, 2025; Champa, 2025). As Firdaus and Wulandari (2023) argue, the persistence of patriarchal norms within party hierarchies constrains women's electoral success despite formal compliance with quota regulations. The findings thus support the concept of conditional empowerment, whereby institutional access expands without ensuring equal influence or decision-making power. Gender quotas, in this context, operate as procedural entry points rather than as transformative instruments of political redistribution.

One of the most significant contributions of this study lies in clarifying how accountability is enacted under Indonesia's reformed electoral system. The shift toward open-list competition has strengthened direct linkages between legislators and constituents, reinforcing expectations of responsiveness, accessibility, and visibility. This pattern aligns with theoretical claims that personalized electoral incentives can enhance behavioral accountability (Carey & Shugart, 1995; Schedler, 1999). However, the findings also reveal that accountability remains largely individualized and weakly institutionalized.

Rather than being embedded in formal mechanisms such as legislative oversight, policy evaluation, or party-based responsibility, accountability is primarily exercised through interpersonal interactions and constituency services (Erlingsson et al., 2025; Pérez-Durán & Verhoest, 2025). This dynamic reflects what Aspinall and Berenschot (2019) describe as the persistence of clientelistic logics within Indonesia's democratic framework. While personalized accountability may improve short-term responsiveness and voter satisfaction, it limits the development of collective responsibility and long-term policy orientation. As a result, accountability improves in behavioral terms but remains fragile at the institutional level, constraining democratic consolidation.

Taken together, these findings suggest that electoral reform in Indonesia should be understood as a process of political learning rather than as a definitive solution to

214

democratic deficits. Institutional changes have reshaped incentives and behaviors, but their effects are mediated by political culture, organizational capacity, and informal practices. This perspective resonates with Felicetti's (2021) argument that democratic institutions evolve through iterative adaptation rather than linear progression. Electoral reforms have expanded participation, inclusiveness, and responsiveness, yet they have not fully displaced personalization, patronage, or weak institutional accountability.

The Indonesian case thus challenges deterministic assumptions that equate institutional reform with democratic deepening (Ferrara, 2022; Sriwahyuni, 2023). Instead, it highlights the contingent nature of democratic outcomes, where formal rules interact with historical legacies and socio-political contexts. Electoral engineering can create enabling conditions for improved representation and accountability, but its effectiveness ultimately depends on how political actors internalize and enact democratic norms over time.

Beyond Indonesia, the findings carry broader implications for emerging democracies undergoing electoral reform. They suggest that reforms aimed at enhancing accountability through personalization may inadvertently undermine collective political responsibility if not balanced by strong party institutions and regulatory frameworks. Similarly, inclusionary mechanisms such as gender quotas require complementary reforms to address structural inequalities if they are to move beyond descriptive representation.

In this regard, the study contributes to comparative scholarship by demonstrating that democratic consolidation is not solely a matter of institutional design but of institutional interaction. Electoral systems shape behavior, but they do not operate in isolation from political culture and organizational practice. The Indonesian experience underscores the importance of viewing electoral reform as part of a broader democratic ecosystem, where formal rules, informal norms, and civic expectations jointly determine political outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of Indonesia's electoral system reforms on political representation and accountability from 1999 to 2024, focusing on the transition from a closed-list to an open-list proportional representation system, the introduction of electoral thresholds, and the implementation of a 30 percent gender quota. The findings show that these reforms have significantly reshaped Indonesia's democratic landscape by improving electoral proportionality and encouraging party consolidation, as reflected in declining disproportionality and a reduced number of effective parliamentary parties, while simultaneously intensifying personalized electoral competition.

Although the open-list system has strengthened voter representative linkages and enhanced behavioral accountability evident in higher legislative attendance, greater constituency engagement, and increased public trust it has also weakened party cohesion and shifted political incentives toward individual reputation rather than programmatic platforms. Women's representation in parliament has risen substantially since 1999, indicating the relative success of quota policies in expanding access to political office, yet persistent cultural norms, unequal resource distribution, and patriarchal party structures continue to limit substantive gender equality. Overall, Indonesia's electoral reforms have contributed to gradual democratic consolidation by increasing inclusiveness, participation, and responsiveness, but accountability remains largely personalized rather than institutionalized, underscoring the need for broader political learning and institutional strengthening.

REFERENCES

Acheampong, M. (2023). *The Legislators' Dilemma:(In) Formal Institutions, External Patronage and the Local-Elite-Centeredness of Parliamentary Representation in Africa's Emerging Democracies* (Doctoral dissertation, Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg, Fakultät Sozial-und Wirtschaftswissenschaften).

Bardosh, K., De Figueiredo, A., Gur-Arie, R., Jamrozik, E., Doidge, J., Lemmens, T., ... & Baral, S. (2022). The unintended consequences of COVID-19 vaccine policy: why mandates, passports and restrictions may cause more harm than good. *BMJ global health*, *7*(5), e008684.

Boyle, B. P. (2024). Engineering democracy: Electoral rules and turnout inequality. *Political Studies*, *72*(1), 177-199. https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217221096563

Broom, A., Peterie, M., Kenny, K., Ramia, G., & Ehlers, N. (2023). The administration of harm: From unintended consequences to harm by design. *Critical Social Policy*, *43*(1), 51-75. https://doi.org/10.1177/02610183221087333

Canon, D. T. (2024). *Race, redistricting, and representation: The unintended consequences of black majority districts*. University of Chicago Press.

Champa, S. S. (2025). Enhancing SMEs Productivity Through the Strategic Deployment of Data Analytics and Business Intelligence Tools. *Available at SSRN 5731702*. http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5731702

Daraghmi, E., Hamoudi, A., & Abu Helou, M. (2024). Decentralizing Democracy: Secure and Transparent E-Voting Systems with Blockchain Technology in the Context of Palestine. *Future Internet*, *16*(11), 388. https://doi.org/10.3390/fi16110388

Erlingsson, G. Ó., Karlsson, D., Öhrvall, R., & Wide, J. (2025). Strengthening Local Democracy: Challenges and Solutions on the Road Ahead. In *Swedish Local Democracy at the Crossroads: Understanding the Past to Reform the Future* (pp. 259-296). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-99633-7_10

Faguet, J. P., & Shami, M. (2022). The incoherence of institutional reform: decentralization as a structural solution to immediate political needs. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *57*(1), 85-112.

Felicetti, A. (2021). Learning from democratic practices: New perspectives in institutional design. *The Journal of Politics*, *83*(4), 1589-1601. https://doi.org/10.1086/711623

Felicetti, A. (2021). Learning from democratic practices: New perspectives in institutional design. *The Journal of Politics*, *83*(4), 1589-1601. https://doi.org/10.1086/711623

Ferrara, F. (2022). *The development of political institutions: power, legitimacy, democracy*. University of Michigan Press.

Firdaus, F., & Wulandari, R. A. (2023). Implications of Low Women's Representation: Strategies and Challenges Towards Gender Equality in Indonesian Politics. *Indonesian Journal of Religion and Society*, *5*(2), 138-153. https://doi.org/10.36256/ijrs.v5i2.383

Fischer, S., Lee, A., & Lelkes, Y. (2021). Electoral systems and political attitudes: Experimental evidence. Available at SSRN 3803603. https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3803603

Gunderson, J. R. (2025). Party brands, issue salience, and electoral volatility. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 1-31.

Hilton, S. K., Arkorful, H., & Martins, A. (2021). Democratic leadership and organizational performance: the moderating effect of contingent reward. *Management Research Review, 44*(7), 1042-1058. https://doi.org/10.1108/MRR-04-2020-0237

Hlatky, R., & Gyárfášová, O. (2025). The strategic dilemma of social democracy: Lessons from Slovakia. *Electoral Studies*, *95*, 102911. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2025.102911

Hofstad, H., Sørensen, E., Torfing, J., & Vedeld, T. (2022). Designing and leading collaborative urban climate governance: Comparative experiences of co-creation from Copenhagen and Oslo. *Environmental Policy and Governance, 32*(3), 203-216. https://doi.org/10.1002/eet.1984

Hohendorf, L. (2025). *Tension, Dilemma and Conflict in Party-Candidate Campaign Strategies: Diverging Positions and Districts in National Elections*. Taylor & Francis.

Ichsan Kabullah, M., & Fajri, M. N. (2021). Neo-Ibuism in Indonesian politics: Election campaigns of wives of regional heads in West Sumatra in 2019. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs, 40*(1), 136-155. https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103421989069

Invernizzi, G. M. (2021). *Inside political parties: Factions, party organization and electoral competition*. Columbia University.

Jacquet, V., Ryan, M., & van der Does, R. (Eds.). (2023). *The impacts of democratic innovations*. ECPR Press.

Kenawas, Y. C. (2023). The irony of Indonesia's democracy: The rise of dynastic politics in the post-Suharto era. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, *8*(3), 748-764. https://doi.org/10.1177/20578911231195970

Lailam, T., & Andrianti, N. (2022). The Constitutional Interpretation of Women's Political Rights. *Diponegoro Law Review, 7*(2), 173-191.

McCoy, J. L., & Somer, M. (2021). Political parties, elections, and pernicious polarization in the rise of illiberalism. In *Routledge handbook of illiberalism* (pp. 486-504). Routledge.

Oyekanmi, O. (2025). Horizontal Inequality and International Peacebuilding Architecture. In *Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Côte d'Ivoire: Addressing Inequalities, Social Cohesion, and Conflict Resolution* (pp. 45-65). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-01654-6_3

Pérez-Durán, I., & Verhoest, K. (2025). Trust in nursing home services within weak regulatory regimes: the role of information, control and participation. *Public Management Review*, 1-27. https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2025.2509671

Setiawan, K. M., & Tomsa, D. (2023). Defending a vulnerable yet resilient democracy: civil society activism in Jokowi's Indonesia. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *42*(3), 350-371. https://doi.org/10.1177/18681034231209058

Skorge, Ø. S. (2023). Mobilizing the underrepresented: Electoral systems and gender inequality in political participation. *American Journal of Political Science*, *67*(3), 538-552. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12654

Slater, D. (2023). What Indonesian democracy can teach the world. *Journal of Democracy, 34*(1), 95-109. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2023.0006

Sriwahyuni, Y. (2023). *Indonesian Muslim Women's Lives in the Era of Neoliberalism and Islam (Neo) conservatism: A Case Study in Indonesia* (Doctoral dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo).

Thesen, G., & Yildirim, T. M. (2023). Electoral systems and gender inequality in political news: Analyzing the news visibility of members of parliament in Norway and the UK. *American Political Science Review, 117*(2), 575-590. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055422000776