

Public Trust as a Measure of Democratic Legitimacy: Electoral Governance in Indonesia

Elvina Nuzu Fazhitya ¹ ✉

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel, Surabaya¹

ABSTRACT

Public trust is an important indicator of democratic legitimacy because it influences citizens' confidence in electoral institutions and democratic processes. This study examines public trust as a measure of democratic legitimacy in Indonesia through a qualitative Systematic Literature Review (SLR). The analysis focuses on Law No. 7 of 2017 on General Elections and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as the principal legal frameworks governing electoral governance and political participation. Using the PRISMA 2020 framework, relevant literature published between 2020 and 2025 was systematically reviewed. The findings indicate that transparency, accountability, electoral fairness, and political participation strengthen public trust and democratic legitimacy. However, misinformation, political polarization, and electoral disputes continue to challenge public confidence in elections. The study concludes that strengthening electoral governance remains essential for sustaining democratic legitimacy in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Public Trust, Democratic Legitimacy, Electoral Governance, Electoral Accountability, Political Participation, Indonesia.*

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Elvina Nuzu Fazhitya

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel, Surabaya, Indonesia

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1. | INTRODUCTION

Public trust is widely recognized as a fundamental requirement for democratic governance because it influences the legitimacy, stability, and effectiveness of political institutions. Democratic systems depend not only on the existence of elections but also on citizens' confidence that electoral processes are conducted fairly, transparently, and in accordance with established legal standards. When public trust in elections declines, citizens may question the legitimacy of electoral outcomes, reduce political participation, and weaken support for democratic institutions. Consequently, maintaining public trust has become a central challenge for contemporary democracies.

Elections serve as the primary mechanism through which citizens exercise political rights and participate in democratic governance. Through elections, individuals select political representatives, influence public policy, and hold governments accountable for their actions. The legitimacy of democratic authority therefore depends significantly on public confidence in electoral processes. Stewart III (2022) argues that trust in elections represents one of the most important indicators of democratic health because citizens are more likely to accept electoral outcomes when electoral institutions are perceived as credible and impartial. Similarly, Kerr, King, and Wahman (2024) emphasize that declining trust in elections has emerged as a global concern affecting both established and developing democracies.

Public trust and democratic legitimacy are closely interconnected. Democratic legitimacy refers to the acceptance of political authority as lawful, appropriate, and consistent with democratic principles. Citizens are more likely to regard governments as legitimate when electoral processes are perceived as fair and representative. Malcolm (2021) argues that democratic legitimacy is strengthened when political institutions demonstrate competence, accountability, and responsiveness to public expectations. In the electoral context, these characteristics contribute directly to citizens' confidence in democratic governance.

Electoral governance plays a critical role in shaping public trust. Electoral governance refers to the legal, institutional, and administrative arrangements through which elections are organized, supervised, and evaluated. Effective electoral governance promotes transparency, accountability, participation, and procedural fairness throughout the electoral process. Kerr (2024) argues that electoral institutions contribute significantly to democratic legitimacy because they serve as the primary mechanisms responsible for ensuring credible elections. Consequently, the quality of electoral governance directly influences public perceptions of electoral integrity and democratic legitimacy.

The relationship between public trust and electoral governance has become increasingly important in contemporary democracies. Elections now occur within complex political and technological environments characterized by digital communication, social media influence, misinformation, and political polarization.

These developments create new challenges for electoral institutions because public confidence can be affected not only by electoral outcomes but also by perceptions of transparency, accountability, and institutional effectiveness. Brown, Hale, Jordan, and Williamson (2024) emphasize that public communication and institutional transparency play important roles in maintaining trust in electoral processes.

International human rights law recognizes political participation as a fundamental democratic right. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), particularly Article 25, guarantees the rights of citizens to participate in public affairs, vote and be elected in genuine periodic elections, and access public service on equal terms. These provisions establish international standards designed to support democratic participation and electoral legitimacy. The ICCPR therefore provides an important normative framework for evaluating electoral governance and public trust within democratic systems.

Indonesia has incorporated democratic electoral principles within its constitutional and legal framework. The 1945 Constitution establishes popular sovereignty as a foundational principle of governance and recognizes elections as a primary mechanism of democratic representation. Electoral administration is principally regulated through Law No. 7 of 2017 on General Elections, which governs electoral institutions, electoral procedures, voter participation, election supervision, and dispute resolution. The law seeks to ensure that elections are conducted according to principles of transparency, accountability, fairness, and democratic participation.

Law No. 7 of 2017 provides important legal safeguards intended to strengthen public confidence in electoral processes. The law establishes responsibilities for electoral management bodies, regulates electoral procedures, and provides mechanisms for supervision and dispute resolution. Sarah and Suatmiati (2022) argue that the law constitutes a comprehensive framework for organizing democratic elections in Indonesia. Likewise, Hidayat and Febriansyah (2024) emphasize that effective electoral governance contributes to democratic quality by strengthening accountability and institutional credibility.

Despite these legal and institutional developments, challenges continue to affect public trust in elections. Concerns regarding misinformation, electoral disputes, political polarization, electoral manipulation, and declining confidence in public institutions have become increasingly prominent within democratic governance discussions. Higashijima, Kadoya, and Yanai (2024) argue that electoral manipulation and perceived irregularities may significantly reduce institutional trust and weaken democratic legitimacy. Similarly, González, Mackenna, Scherman, and Joignant (2024) demonstrate that perceptions of electoral fairness influence citizens' attitudes toward democracy and political institutions.

Transparency and accountability remain essential factors affecting public trust in electoral governance. Citizens are more likely to trust electoral institutions when election administration is open, accessible, and subject to effective oversight.

Papadopoulos (2023) emphasizes that accountability serves as a cornerstone of democratic governance because it ensures that institutions remain answerable to the public. Likewise, Pasquino and Pelizzo (2022) argue that accountability contributes to democratic culture by strengthening confidence in public institutions and governance processes.

Although previous studies have examined electoral integrity, political participation, and democratic governance, fewer studies have specifically analyzed public trust as a measure of democratic legitimacy through the combined perspectives of Indonesian electoral law and international democratic standards. Existing research often focuses on electoral administration or political participation independently, while the broader relationship between electoral governance, public trust, and democratic legitimacy remains less explored.

In response to this gap, this study employs a qualitative Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to examine public trust as a measure of democratic legitimacy in Indonesia. The analysis focuses on Law No. 7 of 2017 on General Elections and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as the principal legal frameworks supporting electoral governance, political participation, accountability, and democratic representation. By synthesizing contemporary scholarship concerning public trust, electoral governance, democratic legitimacy, and political participation, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how electoral institutions contribute to democratic legitimacy in Indonesia.

2. | LITERATURE REVIEW

Public Trust and Democratic Legitimacy

Public trust is widely regarded as a fundamental element of democratic governance because it influences citizens' willingness to support political institutions, comply with public decisions, and participate in democratic processes. Democratic systems rely not only on legal and institutional arrangements but also on public confidence that political institutions operate fairly, transparently, and effectively. When citizens trust democratic institutions, they are more likely to view governmental authority as legitimate and accept political outcomes, even when those outcomes do not align with their personal preferences. Consequently, public trust functions as an important indicator of democratic stability and institutional performance.

The concept of democratic legitimacy is closely associated with public trust. Democratic legitimacy refers to the extent to which citizens perceive political authority as lawful, appropriate, and consistent with democratic principles. Legitimacy enables governments to exercise authority effectively because citizens recognize the validity of political institutions and governance processes. Malcolm (2021) argues that legitimacy is strengthened when institutions demonstrate competence, accountability, and responsiveness to public expectations. These characteristics contribute to public confidence and reinforce democratic governance.

Elections play a central role in the development of public trust because they constitute the primary mechanism through which citizens exercise political rights and influence governmental authority. Electoral processes provide opportunities for participation, representation, and accountability, making them critical determinants of democratic legitimacy. Stewart III (2022) emphasizes that trust in elections represents a key dimension of democratic health because confidence in electoral institutions directly affects public acceptance of election outcomes. Consequently, public trust in elections contributes significantly to broader confidence in democratic governance.

The literature consistently demonstrates that electoral trust and democratic legitimacy are mutually reinforcing. Citizens are more likely to trust political institutions when electoral processes are perceived as fair, transparent, and credible. Conversely, declining confidence in elections may weaken perceptions of democratic legitimacy and reduce support for democratic institutions. Kerr, King, and Wahman (2024) argue that trust in elections has become an increasingly important issue because many democracies are experiencing growing public skepticism toward political institutions. These developments suggest that electoral trust should be viewed as a central component of democratic governance.

Institutional trust also influences political behavior and democratic participation. Citizens who trust public institutions are generally more willing to engage in political activities, participate in elections, and cooperate with governmental policies. Stals, Isac, and Claes (2022) argue that political trust contributes to political participation because confidence in institutions encourages individuals to become involved in democratic processes. These findings indicate that public trust supports both democratic legitimacy and democratic engagement.

The literature further highlights the relationship between electoral fairness and public confidence. Citizens evaluate electoral processes based on perceptions of fairness, transparency, and equal treatment. González, Mackenna, Scherman, and Joignant (2024) demonstrate that perceptions of electoral fairness significantly influence attitudes toward democracy and political institutions. Electoral systems perceived as fair are more likely to generate trust and acceptance of electoral outcomes, thereby strengthening democratic legitimacy.

Another important dimension of public trust concerns institutional performance. Citizens often evaluate democratic institutions according to their ability to administer elections effectively, resolve disputes impartially, and ensure accountability. Kerr (2024) argues that electoral institutions contribute to democratic legitimacy through the consistent and credible administration of electoral processes. Consequently, institutional quality remains an important determinant of public confidence and democratic stability.

The literature also identifies challenges affecting public trust in democratic systems. Political polarization, misinformation, electoral disputes, and perceptions of electoral manipulation may weaken confidence in elections and democratic institutions.

These challenges illustrate that public trust cannot be assumed but must be continuously maintained through effective governance practices and institutional accountability.

Overall, the literature demonstrates that public trust serves as a critical measure of democratic legitimacy. Through its influence on institutional confidence, political participation, electoral acceptance, and democratic stability, public trust contributes significantly to the effectiveness and sustainability of democratic governance. These findings suggest that strengthening public trust should remain a central objective of electoral governance and democratic reform.

Indonesian Electoral Governance Framework

Indonesia has established a comprehensive legal and institutional framework designed to support democratic elections and electoral governance. The constitutional foundation of electoral governance is derived from the 1945 Constitution, which recognizes popular sovereignty as a fundamental principle of the Indonesian state. Elections serve as the primary mechanism through which citizens exercise political rights, select representatives, and participate in public affairs. Consequently, electoral governance occupies an important position within Indonesia's democratic system.

The principal legal framework governing elections is Law No. 7 of 2017 on General Elections. The law regulates electoral administration, voter registration, campaign activities, election supervision, vote counting, dispute resolution, and the responsibilities of electoral institutions. Through these provisions, the law seeks to ensure that elections are conducted transparently, fairly, and accountably. The framework also establishes institutional mechanisms intended to strengthen public confidence in electoral processes and democratic governance.

Law No. 7 of 2017 emphasizes democratic principles including direct participation, fairness, transparency, accountability, and equal treatment of voters. These principles are intended to ensure that electoral outcomes accurately reflect the preferences of citizens while protecting political rights throughout the electoral process. Electoral governance therefore functions not only as an administrative system but also as a mechanism for maintaining democratic legitimacy and public trust.

The literature highlights the significance of electoral governance in supporting democratic institutions. Sarah and Suatmiati (2022) argue that Law No. 7 of 2017 provides a comprehensive legal foundation for democratic elections by regulating electoral procedures and institutional responsibilities. Similarly, Hidayat and Febriansyah (2024) emphasize that effective electoral governance contributes to democratic quality through the implementation of transparency, accountability, and good governance principles. These findings indicate that electoral governance plays an important role in maintaining public confidence in elections.

Electoral institutions constitute another essential component of Indonesia's electoral governance framework. The General Election Commission (KPU), Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), and other related institutions are responsible for

administering, supervising, and evaluating electoral processes. These institutions are expected to operate independently and impartially while ensuring compliance with legal standards. Their performance significantly influences public perceptions of electoral credibility and democratic legitimacy.

The literature further demonstrates that public participation is an important element of electoral governance. Citizens are not merely voters but also stakeholders who contribute to electoral oversight and democratic accountability. Putri et al. (2024) argue that public participation strengthens electoral governance by increasing transparency and encouraging institutional responsiveness. Participation therefore contributes both to democratic legitimacy and to public trust in electoral institutions.

Inclusiveness also represents an important objective of electoral governance. Electoral systems are expected to provide equal opportunities for participation regardless of social, economic, or physical conditions. Barokah and Soetono emphasize the importance of inclusive electoral practices, particularly for persons with disabilities, as part of broader efforts to ensure democratic representation and equal political rights. These findings suggest that electoral governance contributes to public trust when citizens perceive electoral processes as fair and accessible.

The Indonesian electoral framework additionally provides mechanisms for electoral dispute resolution and institutional accountability. These mechanisms are designed to address complaints, investigate irregularities, and maintain public confidence in electoral outcomes. Effective dispute-resolution systems contribute to democratic legitimacy by ensuring that electoral conflicts are managed through lawful and transparent procedures rather than political confrontation.

Overall, Indonesia's electoral governance framework provides important legal and institutional foundations for democratic elections. Through Law No. 7 of 2017, electoral institutions, public participation mechanisms, and accountability procedures, the framework seeks to strengthen public trust and democratic legitimacy. These components collectively support the credibility and effectiveness of Indonesia's democratic system.

Political Participation and Electoral Rights

Political participation is one of the fundamental principles of democratic governance because it enables citizens to influence public affairs, express political preferences, and contribute to governmental decision-making. Democratic systems derive legitimacy from the active involvement of citizens in political processes, particularly through elections. Participation strengthens the relationship between citizens and public institutions by ensuring that governmental authority remains connected to the preferences and interests of the electorate. Consequently, political participation is widely regarded as an essential component of democratic legitimacy.

Electoral rights provide the legal foundation supporting political participation. These rights include the ability to vote, seek public office, participate in political activities, and engage in public affairs without discrimination or unreasonable

restrictions. Democratic governance requires legal protections that ensure citizens can exercise these rights freely and equally. Electoral rights therefore function as safeguards that promote representation, accountability, and political equality within democratic systems.

International human rights law recognizes political participation as a fundamental democratic right. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), particularly Article 25, guarantees the right of citizens to participate in public affairs, vote and be elected in genuine periodic elections, and access public service on equal terms. These provisions establish international standards intended to protect democratic participation and strengthen representative governance. Through these protections, the ICCPR contributes to the development of electoral systems that support democratic legitimacy and political inclusion.

The literature consistently demonstrates that political participation contributes to democratic legitimacy. Citizens who participate in elections are more likely to perceive political institutions as representative and responsive. Participation strengthens the connection between governmental authority and public preferences, thereby increasing acceptance of political outcomes. Stals, Isac, and Claes (2022) argue that political trust and participation are closely interconnected because citizens who possess confidence in political institutions are generally more willing to engage in democratic activities. These findings suggest that participation reinforces both democratic legitimacy and institutional trust.

Political participation also contributes to public trust in electoral governance. Elections provide opportunities for citizens to evaluate political leaders and influence future governmental direction. Through voting and other forms of civic engagement, citizens become active participants in democratic governance rather than passive observers. Consequently, electoral systems that encourage participation are more likely to strengthen public confidence in democratic institutions.

The expansion of digital communication technologies has transformed patterns of political participation. Social media platforms, online campaigns, and digital political discussions have created new opportunities for citizens to engage with political processes. Ahmed, Wang, and Tully (2024) argue that online political participation increasingly influences perceptions of electoral integrity and democratic processes. Digital engagement can therefore strengthen democratic participation by expanding access to political information and facilitating citizen involvement. However, digital participation may also expose citizens to misinformation and political manipulation, creating new challenges for electoral governance.

Within Indonesia, political participation is protected through constitutional guarantees and electoral legislation. The 1945 Constitution recognizes citizens' political rights, while Law No. 7 of 2017 establishes procedures designed to ensure democratic elections and equal participation opportunities. Electoral laws regulate voter registration, campaign activities, voting procedures, and electoral supervision in order

to support democratic participation. These provisions aim to ensure that elections remain accessible, inclusive, and representative.

Public participation is also recognized as an important element of electoral governance. Citizens contribute not only through voting but also through electoral monitoring, civic engagement, and participation in democratic discourse. Putri et al. (2024) emphasize that public participation strengthens electoral governance by improving transparency and encouraging institutional accountability. These findings indicate that participation serves both democratic and governance functions within electoral systems.

The principle of equal suffrage represents another important dimension of electoral rights. Democratic elections require that citizens possess equal opportunities to influence electoral outcomes regardless of social status, economic conditions, ethnicity, gender, religion, or physical ability. Inclusive electoral governance therefore seeks to remove barriers that may limit participation among specific groups. Barokah and Soetono highlight the importance of ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities as part of broader efforts to strengthen electoral inclusion and democratic representation.

The literature further demonstrates that political participation supports democratic accountability. Elections provide mechanisms through which citizens can evaluate governmental performance and influence political leadership. Through participation, citizens contribute to the accountability of elected officials by rewarding effective governance and expressing dissatisfaction with political performance. This relationship strengthens democratic governance because political leaders remain responsive to voter preferences and public expectations.

Despite its importance, political participation faces several challenges. Political disengagement, declining institutional trust, misinformation, and unequal access to political information may reduce citizen involvement in democratic processes. These challenges can weaken democratic legitimacy and reduce confidence in electoral institutions. Electoral governance frameworks must therefore create conditions that encourage meaningful participation while protecting citizens' political rights.

Overall, the literature demonstrates that political participation and electoral rights constitute essential foundations of democratic legitimacy. Through constitutional protections, international human rights standards, and electoral governance mechanisms, democratic systems seek to ensure that citizens can participate effectively in political processes. These rights strengthen representation, accountability, public trust, and democratic legitimacy, making them central components of electoral governance.

Transparency, Accountability, and Electoral Trust

Transparency and accountability are widely recognized as essential principles of democratic governance because they strengthen public confidence in political institutions and ensure the credibility of electoral processes. Democratic elections

require institutions that operate openly, provide accurate information, and remain answerable for their actions. Citizens are more likely to trust electoral systems when election administration is transparent and when electoral authorities can be held accountable for their decisions. Consequently, transparency and accountability play important roles in the development and maintenance of electoral trust.

Electoral trust refers to citizens' confidence that elections are conducted fairly, impartially, and in accordance with legal standards. Trust in electoral institutions contributes significantly to democratic legitimacy because citizens are more willing to accept election outcomes when electoral procedures are perceived as credible. Stewart III (2022) argues that electoral trust represents a key indicator of democratic stability because confidence in elections influences broader attitudes toward political institutions and governance. These findings suggest that electoral trust is closely connected to the quality of electoral governance.

Transparency contributes to electoral trust by providing citizens with access to information concerning electoral procedures, institutional decisions, and election outcomes. Transparent electoral processes allow voters, political parties, civil society organizations, and election observers to monitor electoral activities and evaluate compliance with democratic standards. When electoral information is openly available, opportunities for misunderstanding and suspicion are reduced. Consequently, transparency strengthens public confidence by demonstrating that elections are administered according to established legal and procedural requirements.

The literature consistently identifies transparency as a critical factor influencing public trust. Bastian et al. (2021) emphasize that access to reliable electoral information improves confidence in electoral administration because citizens are able to verify electoral procedures and outcomes. Similarly, Willis, Merivaki, and Ziogas (2022) argue that transparent election data contribute to electoral credibility by facilitating public oversight and independent verification. These findings indicate that transparency strengthens democratic legitimacy through improved accountability and public confidence.

Accountability represents another essential component of electoral governance. Accountability requires electoral institutions to justify their decisions, comply with legal obligations, and remain responsive to public concerns. Democratic governance depends upon institutions that can be evaluated and scrutinized by citizens and oversight bodies. Papadopoulos (2023) argues that accountability is a defining characteristic of democratic governance because it ensures that public authority remains subject to oversight and public evaluation. Within electoral systems, accountability mechanisms help preserve confidence in electoral administration and democratic institutions.

Electoral accountability operates through various institutional mechanisms, including electoral oversight bodies, election monitoring systems, judicial review procedures, and public reporting requirements. These mechanisms enable stakeholders

to evaluate institutional performance and identify potential irregularities. When accountability mechanisms function effectively, citizens are more likely to perceive electoral institutions as trustworthy and legitimate. Consequently, accountability contributes directly to electoral trust and democratic legitimacy.

The relationship between accountability and electoral trust is also reflected in democratic participation. Citizens who believe that electoral institutions operate responsibly are generally more willing to participate in elections and engage in political activities. Pasquino and Pelizzo (2022) argue that accountability contributes to democratic culture by strengthening confidence in institutions and encouraging civic engagement. These findings suggest that accountability not only improves institutional performance but also promotes broader democratic participation.

Electoral accountability further supports democratic legitimacy by ensuring that electoral authorities remain impartial and responsive to legal standards. Cooperman (2024) emphasizes that accountability mechanisms strengthen democratic governance because they encourage institutions to act consistently with democratic principles and public expectations. Similarly, Motolinia (2021) argues that electoral accountability enhances representation by ensuring that political actors remain responsive to voters and democratic norms.

The literature also highlights the importance of transparency and accountability in addressing contemporary electoral challenges. Elections increasingly occur within digital environments characterized by rapid information exchange, social media influence, and growing public scrutiny. In such contexts, transparent communication and effective accountability mechanisms become particularly important for maintaining public trust. Electoral institutions must therefore provide timely information, respond to public concerns, and demonstrate commitment to democratic principles.

Within Indonesia, transparency and accountability are supported through Law No. 7 of 2017, which establishes procedures governing electoral administration, supervision, reporting, and dispute resolution. Electoral institutions such as the General Election Commission (KPU) and the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) are responsible for implementing these principles throughout the electoral process. Effective implementation of transparency and accountability measures contributes significantly to public confidence in electoral governance and democratic institutions.

Overall, the literature demonstrates that transparency and accountability are essential determinants of electoral trust. Through open administration, institutional oversight, public access to information, and responsive governance practices, these principles strengthen confidence in elections and democratic institutions. As a result, transparency and accountability contribute directly to democratic legitimacy by reinforcing public trust in electoral governance.

Challenges to Public Trust in Elections

Despite the importance of public trust for democratic legitimacy, contemporary electoral systems face numerous challenges that may undermine confidence in elections

and democratic institutions. Public trust is not automatically generated by the existence of elections; rather, it depends on citizens' perceptions of fairness, transparency, accountability, and institutional effectiveness. When electoral processes are perceived as flawed or unfair, public confidence may decline, reducing support for democratic governance and weakening institutional legitimacy. Consequently, understanding the factors that affect electoral trust is essential for strengthening democratic systems.

One of the most significant challenges concerns declining trust in electoral institutions. Recent scholarship indicates that many democracies have experienced increasing public skepticism toward elections and political institutions. Kerr, King, and Wahman (2024) describe this phenomenon as a global crisis of trust in elections, emphasizing that declining confidence can affect both established and emerging democracies. Reduced trust may weaken democratic legitimacy because citizens become less willing to accept electoral outcomes and less confident in the ability of institutions to administer elections fairly.

Electoral manipulation and perceptions of irregularities represent another important challenge. Public trust depends not only on the actual integrity of elections but also on citizens' perceptions of electoral fairness. Higashijima, Kadoya, and Yanai (2024) argue that perceived electoral manipulation can significantly reduce institutional trust and weaken confidence in democratic governance. Even when legal frameworks and electoral procedures function properly, allegations of fraud or unfair treatment may damage public perceptions of legitimacy. These findings suggest that maintaining public trust requires both procedural integrity and public confidence in electoral administration.

Misinformation and disinformation have emerged as major concerns within contemporary electoral governance. Digital communication technologies and social media platforms allow information to spread rapidly across large populations. While these technologies facilitate political engagement, they also create opportunities for the dissemination of false or misleading information. Ahmed, Wang, and Tully (2024) argue that exposure to misinformation may influence perceptions of electoral integrity and public confidence in elections. Consequently, misinformation poses significant challenges for electoral institutions seeking to maintain public trust and democratic legitimacy.

Political polarization further complicates efforts to sustain trust in elections. Highly polarized political environments may encourage citizens to question electoral outcomes, distrust political opponents, and challenge the credibility of electoral institutions. Public trust may become increasingly influenced by partisan preferences rather than objective assessments of electoral procedures. As a result, electoral institutions face difficulties maintaining perceptions of neutrality and fairness in politically divided societies.

Electoral disputes constitute another challenge affecting public confidence. Disagreements regarding electoral administration, vote counting, candidate eligibility,

or election outcomes may create uncertainty concerning the legitimacy of electoral processes. Effective dispute-resolution mechanisms are therefore essential for maintaining trust in democratic institutions. Electoral governance frameworks must ensure that disputes are addressed transparently, impartially, and according to established legal procedures. Failure to resolve disputes effectively may weaken confidence in both electoral institutions and democratic governance.

The literature also highlights the influence of institutional performance on public trust. Citizens evaluate electoral institutions based on their ability to administer elections efficiently, communicate clearly, and respond appropriately to public concerns. Brown, Hale, Jordan, and Williamson (2024) emphasize that institutional communication plays an important role in shaping public perceptions of electoral credibility. Electoral institutions that provide accurate information and maintain transparent communication are generally more successful in preserving public confidence.

Technological developments create additional challenges for electoral governance. Digital election management systems, online information platforms, and electronic communication tools may improve efficiency and accessibility. However, they may also increase concerns regarding cybersecurity, data integrity, and election security. Higashijima, Loeber, Garnett, and James (2025) argue that electoral integrity faces increasing pressure from overlapping political, technological, and social crises. These developments suggest that electoral institutions must continuously adapt to emerging risks while preserving democratic principles.

Public participation itself may also influence levels of electoral trust. Citizens who perceive limited opportunities for participation or who feel excluded from political processes may become less confident in democratic institutions. Inclusive electoral governance therefore remains important for strengthening public trust and democratic legitimacy. Electoral systems that promote equal participation opportunities are more likely to foster confidence in electoral outcomes and institutional fairness.

The literature further demonstrates that transparency and accountability remain essential responses to declining public trust. Open electoral administration, effective oversight mechanisms, and accessible electoral information can help strengthen confidence in electoral processes. When citizens possess sufficient information concerning election procedures and institutional performance, they are more likely to perceive elections as legitimate and trustworthy. Consequently, transparency and accountability function as important safeguards against declining trust.

Overall, the literature demonstrates that public trust in elections is influenced by multiple factors, including institutional performance, electoral fairness, misinformation, political polarization, electoral disputes, and technological challenges. These issues highlight the complexity of maintaining confidence in democratic systems. Strengthening public trust therefore requires continuous efforts to improve transparency, accountability, electoral integrity, and citizen engagement. Through

effective electoral governance, democratic institutions can enhance legitimacy and preserve public confidence in electoral processes.

3. | RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to examine public trust as a measure of democratic legitimacy in Indonesia. The review focuses on how electoral governance frameworks contribute to public confidence, democratic legitimacy, political participation, accountability, and transparency. Particular attention is given to Law No. 7 of 2017 on General Elections and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), especially Article 25 concerning electoral rights and political participation.

The study follows the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework to ensure methodological rigor, transparency, and consistency. According to Page et al. (2021), PRISMA provides systematic procedures for identifying, screening, evaluating, and selecting relevant literature. The review process consisted of four stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion.

Relevant literature was collected from Google Scholar, Scopus, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, HeinOnline, and other legal and governance databases. Searches were conducted using combinations of keywords including public trust, democratic legitimacy, electoral governance, electoral trust, electoral accountability, election transparency, political participation, voting rights, electoral integrity, institutional trust, and Indonesia elections. Additional searches focused specifically on Law No. 7 of 2017, ICCPR Article 25, and contemporary studies examining public confidence in elections.

The inclusion criteria consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, conference papers, governance studies, legal analyses, and policy publications published primarily between 2020 and 2025. Studies were included when they examined public trust, democratic legitimacy, electoral governance, political participation, electoral accountability, election transparency, or electoral institutions. Duplicate records, non-academic publications, and studies unrelated to the research objectives were excluded from the review.

The selected literature was analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings were organized into five thematic categories: public trust and democratic legitimacy, Indonesian electoral governance framework, political participation and electoral rights, transparency and accountability in electoral trust, and challenges to public trust in elections. These themes were selected because they represent the principal dimensions through which electoral governance influences democratic legitimacy.

The analytical framework conceptualizes public trust as an indicator of democratic legitimacy and institutional performance. Electoral governance is examined as a legal and institutional mechanism that promotes confidence in elections through

transparency, accountability, participation, and electoral fairness. Law No. 7 of 2017 is analyzed as the principal domestic framework governing elections in Indonesia, while the ICCPR serves as the primary international standard supporting democratic participation and electoral rights. Through the integration of systematic literature review methods and comparative legal analysis, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how electoral governance contributes to public trust and democratic legitimacy in Indonesia.

4. | RESULTS

The findings of this study demonstrate that public trust plays a significant role in shaping democratic legitimacy within electoral governance systems. The reviewed literature consistently indicates that citizens' confidence in electoral institutions influences perceptions of electoral fairness, political representation, accountability, and democratic stability. Electoral governance frameworks established through Law No. 7 of 2017 and supported by international standards contained in the ICCPR provide important legal foundations for strengthening public confidence in elections. The findings further reveal that public trust functions not only as a consequence of effective electoral administration but also as an indicator of democratic legitimacy and institutional credibility.

One of the principal findings concerns the relationship between public trust and democratic legitimacy. Democratic governments derive authority from elections that are perceived as credible, transparent, and representative. The literature demonstrates that citizens are more likely to accept political authority when they believe electoral processes are conducted fairly and impartially. Stewart III (2022) argues that trust in elections serves as a critical measure of democratic health because public confidence directly affects the legitimacy of electoral outcomes. Similarly, Kerr, King, and Wahman (2024) emphasize that declining trust in elections has become a global challenge with significant implications for democratic governance. These findings indicate that public trust contributes directly to democratic legitimacy by strengthening acceptance of electoral institutions and political outcomes.

The findings further demonstrate that institutional credibility represents a major determinant of electoral trust. Citizens evaluate electoral institutions according to their ability to administer elections effectively, resolve disputes impartially, and ensure compliance with legal standards. Kerr (2024) argues that electoral commissions contribute significantly to democratic legitimacy through the consistent implementation of electoral procedures and governance standards. Consequently, institutional effectiveness and impartiality play important roles in shaping public confidence in elections.

Political participation emerged as another significant factor influencing public trust. Elections provide opportunities for citizens to exercise political rights, express political preferences, and influence governmental authority. The literature indicates that participation strengthens democratic legitimacy because it reinforces the connection

between citizens and political institutions. Stals, Isac, and Claes (2022) argue that political trust and political participation are closely interconnected, as confidence in institutions encourages greater democratic engagement. These findings suggest that participation contributes both to electoral legitimacy and public trust.

The study also highlights the importance of electoral rights recognized under the ICCPR. Article 25 establishes international standards concerning political participation, voting rights, and democratic representation. The findings indicate that these rights provide an important normative framework supporting public confidence in electoral processes. Electoral systems that protect participation rights and ensure equal treatment of voters are more likely to generate trust and legitimacy. Consequently, international human rights standards contribute to the development of electoral governance systems that promote democratic confidence.

Another important finding concerns Indonesia's electoral governance framework. Law No. 7 of 2017 establishes comprehensive regulations governing election administration, electoral oversight, voter registration, and dispute resolution. The literature demonstrates that these provisions are intended to strengthen electoral integrity and public confidence in democratic institutions. Sarah and Suatmiati (2022) argue that the law provides a comprehensive legal basis for democratic elections, while Hidayat and Febriansyah (2024) emphasize the importance of electoral governance in supporting accountability and democratic quality. These findings suggest that legal frameworks contribute significantly to public trust by establishing transparent and accountable electoral procedures.

The findings further reveal that transparency constitutes a central factor influencing public confidence in elections. Citizens are more likely to trust electoral institutions when information concerning electoral procedures, administration, and outcomes is accessible and understandable. Transparency enables public oversight and reduces uncertainty regarding electoral processes. Bastian et al. (2021) emphasize that accessible electoral information improves public confidence because citizens can independently evaluate electoral procedures and outcomes. Similarly, Willis, Merivaki, and Ziogas (2022) argue that transparent election data strengthen electoral credibility through increased accountability and public verification. These findings indicate that transparency supports public trust by promoting openness and institutional accountability.

Accountability also emerged as a significant determinant of public confidence. Electoral institutions are expected to justify decisions, comply with legal standards, and remain responsive to public concerns. Papadopoulos (2023) argues that accountability strengthens democratic governance by ensuring that institutions remain answerable to citizens and oversight mechanisms. Likewise, Pasquino and Pelizzo (2022) emphasize that accountability contributes to democratic culture by reinforcing confidence in political institutions. These findings suggest that accountability functions as an essential mechanism for maintaining electoral trust and democratic legitimacy.

The literature additionally highlights several challenges affecting public trust in elections. Misinformation and disinformation represent major concerns because inaccurate information may distort public perceptions of electoral integrity. Ahmed, Wang, and Tully (2024) argue that online political engagement and exposure to misleading information may influence perceptions of electoral fairness and legitimacy. These findings indicate that information quality has become an increasingly important factor influencing public confidence in electoral governance.

Electoral manipulation and perceptions of irregularities constitute another significant challenge. Higashijima, Kadoya, and Yanai (2024) demonstrate that perceived electoral manipulation may reduce institutional trust and weaken confidence in democratic governance. Even when electoral procedures comply with legal standards, public suspicion regarding fairness can negatively affect perceptions of legitimacy. These findings suggest that maintaining public trust requires both procedural integrity and effective public communication.

Political polarization and electoral disputes also affect public confidence. Highly polarized political environments may encourage citizens to question electoral outcomes and distrust electoral institutions. The literature indicates that effective dispute-resolution mechanisms and transparent governance practices are essential for preserving confidence in electoral systems. Electoral institutions therefore play a critical role in maintaining trust during periods of political competition and uncertainty.

The findings further demonstrate that democratic legitimacy is influenced by perceptions of electoral fairness. González, Mackenna, Scherman, and Joignant (2024) argue that citizens' evaluations of electoral fairness significantly affect attitudes toward democracy and political institutions. Electoral systems perceived as fair are more likely to generate trust, acceptance of electoral outcomes, and support for democratic governance. Consequently, fairness represents a key element connecting electoral governance to democratic legitimacy.

Overall, the evidence reviewed in this study demonstrates that public trust contributes significantly to democratic legitimacy in Indonesia. Through transparent electoral administration, accountability mechanisms, political participation, and the protection of electoral rights, electoral governance strengthens confidence in democratic institutions. Although challenges associated with misinformation, political polarization, electoral disputes, and perceptions of manipulation remain significant, both Law No. 7 of 2017 and the ICCPR provide important legal foundations for promoting trust, legitimacy, and democratic governance.

5. | DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that public trust constitutes a fundamental indicator of democratic legitimacy within electoral governance systems. Democratic institutions rely not only on legal authority but also on citizens' confidence that political processes are conducted fairly, transparently, and consistently with democratic principles. The reviewed literature indicates that public trust influences citizens' acceptance of

electoral outcomes, participation in democratic processes, and overall confidence in political institutions. These findings support the argument that public trust functions as both an outcome of effective electoral governance and a measure of democratic legitimacy.

One of the most significant findings concerns the relationship between public trust and democratic legitimacy. Democratic legitimacy depends upon citizens' recognition that political authority has been acquired through lawful and representative electoral processes. Elections provide the primary mechanism through which democratic governments obtain public authorization to govern. When citizens trust electoral institutions and procedures, they are more likely to regard political authority as legitimate and accept electoral outcomes. The findings therefore suggest that public trust serves as an essential foundation for democratic stability and institutional effectiveness.

The study also highlights the importance of electoral governance in shaping public confidence. Electoral governance encompasses the legal, institutional, and administrative arrangements that regulate elections and protect electoral rights. The findings indicate that transparent electoral administration, effective oversight, and impartial institutional performance contribute significantly to public trust. Electoral institutions therefore perform not only administrative functions but also legitimacy-building functions by demonstrating commitment to democratic principles and electoral fairness.

Another important implication concerns the role of Law No. 7 of 2017 in supporting democratic legitimacy. The law establishes comprehensive procedures governing electoral administration, supervision, participation, and dispute resolution. Through these provisions, the legal framework seeks to ensure that elections are conducted fairly and transparently. The findings suggest that electoral laws contribute to public trust when they provide clear standards, effective accountability mechanisms, and meaningful opportunities for citizen participation. Consequently, legal certainty and institutional accountability remain important components of electoral legitimacy.

The comparative analysis further demonstrates the relevance of international democratic standards contained within the ICCPR. Article 25 recognizes political participation and electoral rights as fundamental democratic freedoms. The findings indicate that these international standards complement domestic electoral regulations by reinforcing principles of equal participation, representation, and democratic accountability. The relationship between Law No. 7 of 2017 and the ICCPR illustrates how national and international legal frameworks collectively support democratic legitimacy and public confidence in elections.

Political participation emerged as another important factor influencing public trust. Citizens who actively engage in electoral processes are more likely to perceive democratic institutions as responsive and representative. Participation strengthens democratic legitimacy because it creates direct connections between citizens and

political decision-making processes. The findings therefore support the view that public trust and political participation reinforce one another. Higher levels of participation may strengthen institutional confidence, while greater trust may encourage continued civic engagement.

Transparency also plays a critical role in maintaining public confidence. Citizens require access to reliable information concerning electoral procedures, institutional decisions, and election outcomes in order to evaluate the credibility of electoral processes. The findings indicate that transparent electoral governance reduces uncertainty and increases confidence in democratic institutions. Transparency further enables public oversight, which contributes to perceptions of fairness and accountability. As a result, transparency remains an essential requirement for strengthening democratic legitimacy.

The study additionally demonstrates the importance of accountability within electoral governance. Electoral institutions must remain answerable for their decisions and actions to maintain public confidence. Accountability mechanisms provide safeguards against misconduct while encouraging adherence to legal and democratic standards. The findings suggest that accountability strengthens electoral legitimacy because citizens are more likely to trust institutions that operate under effective oversight and public scrutiny. Consequently, accountability contributes directly to both public trust and democratic governance.

Despite these positive contributions, several challenges continue to affect public confidence in elections. Misinformation and disinformation have become increasingly influential within contemporary political environments. The rapid dissemination of inaccurate information may distort perceptions of electoral fairness and undermine confidence in democratic institutions. The findings indicate that electoral governance frameworks must address information-related challenges while preserving democratic freedoms and political participation.

Political polarization represents another challenge affecting public trust. Highly polarized environments may encourage competing political groups to question electoral outcomes and challenge the credibility of electoral institutions. Such conditions can weaken confidence in democratic governance even when electoral procedures comply with legal standards. The findings therefore suggest that maintaining public trust requires not only effective electoral administration but also institutional capacity to manage political tensions and preserve perceptions of impartiality.

Electoral disputes and allegations of manipulation further illustrate the fragility of public confidence. Citizens often evaluate democratic legitimacy through perceptions of fairness rather than solely through legal compliance. Consequently, electoral institutions must ensure both procedural integrity and public confidence in electoral processes. Effective communication, transparent decision-making, and impartial dispute resolution are therefore essential for maintaining trust in democratic institutions.

Overall, the study demonstrates that public trust serves as a critical measure of democratic legitimacy in Indonesia. Electoral governance contributes to trust through transparency, accountability, political participation, and protection of electoral rights. The findings further indicate that Law No. 7 of 2017 and the ICCPR provide important legal foundations supporting public confidence and democratic governance. Nevertheless, challenges associated with misinformation, political polarization, and electoral disputes require continuous institutional improvement. Strengthening public trust therefore remains essential for maintaining democratic legitimacy, electoral credibility, and democratic stability in Indonesia.

6. | CONCLUSION

This study examined public trust as a measure of democratic legitimacy in Indonesia through a qualitative Systematic Literature Review (SLR). The analysis focused on Law No. 7 of 2017 on General Elections and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as the principal legal frameworks governing electoral governance, political participation, transparency, accountability, and electoral rights.

The findings demonstrate that public trust plays a significant role in strengthening democratic legitimacy. Citizens are more likely to accept electoral outcomes, participate in democratic processes, and support political institutions when elections are perceived as fair, transparent, and accountable. Electoral governance therefore functions not only as an administrative framework but also as a mechanism for building confidence in democratic institutions.

The study also found that transparency, accountability, political participation, and electoral fairness are important factors influencing public trust. Law No. 7 of 2017 and the ICCPR provide complementary legal foundations that support democratic participation and electoral legitimacy. However, challenges related to misinformation, political polarization, electoral disputes, and perceptions of electoral manipulation continue to affect public confidence in elections.

Overall, the study concludes that public trust constitutes an important indicator of democratic legitimacy in Indonesia. Strengthening electoral governance through improved transparency, accountability, institutional effectiveness, and protection of electoral rights remains essential for maintaining confidence in democratic institutions and ensuring the long-term stability of democratic governance.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval and Originality Statement

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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