



The Relevance of the Asymmetrical Regional Head Election Model in Strengthening Regional Autonomy and the Effectiveness of Constitutional Democracy

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ABSTRACT

The uniformity of the regional head election model in Indonesia raises constitutional problems in accommodating the diversity of regional characters and strengthening regional autonomy. This study aims to analyze the relevance of the asymmetric regional head election model in strengthening regional autonomy and the effectiveness of constitutional democracy. The research uses normative legal methods with legislative, conceptual, comparative, and case approaches. Primary and secondary legal materials are collected through literature studies and analyzed prescriptively with legal interpretation. The results of the study show that the asymmetric model can accommodate regional specificities and strengthen substantive autonomy as long as it is based on constitutional criteria, democratic principles, and accountability mechanisms. The research concludes that the differentiation of the regional head election model can be a constitutional construction to balance autonomy, regional diversity, and democratic legitimacy.

INTRODUCTION

The election of regional heads is an important part of local democracy because it is an instrument for the formation of government legitimacy as well as the implementation of regional autonomy. This complexity is increasingly visible when the 2024 Simultaneous Elections are held in 545 regions, consisting of 37 provinces, 415 districts, and 93 cities. In a broader perspective, decentralization does not always have to be applied uniformly because differences in capacity, social character, and the needs of each region can justify certain institutional differentiations. Fiorillo et al. (2021) show that asymmetric decentralization can generate opportunities for efficiency and policy adjustment to the character of jurisdictions, although it still contains the risk of inequality and intergovernmental coordination problems. Therefore, the uniformity of the Regional Election mechanism in the midst of Indonesia's regional heterogeneity needs to be reviewed from the perspective of regional autonomy and constitutional democracy.

Constitutionally, Article 18 paragraph (4) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia stipulates that governors, regents, and mayors are democratically elected, while Articles 18A and 18B provide a basis for regulating central-regional relations as well as the recognition of special or special regions. The framework is currently elaborated, among others, through Law No. 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government and its amendments and Law No. 1 of 2015 concerning the Election of Governors, Regents, and Mayors as last amended by Law No. 6 of 2020. At the same time, Indonesia still implements special arrangements through Law No. 11 of 2006 concerning the Government of Aceh, Law No. 13 of 2012 concerning the Special Region of Yogyakarta, and Law No. 21 of 2001 concerning the Special Autonomy of Papua as amended last by Law No. 2 of 2021. The existence of these regulations shows that differentiation in regional governance is not a foreign concept in the Indonesian unitary state system.

Studies on asymmetric elections have actually developed in Indonesian literature. Johan (2021) points out that the implementation of asymmetric decentralization has resulted in differences in political mechanisms in several special and special regions, so the principle of "democratically elected" does not always have to be understood as a uniformity of mechanisms. Azzahro et al. (2023) then developed the idea of asymmetric regional elections based on indicators of democratic maturity and regional financial ability and offered alternatives to direct elections, elections through the DPRD, and other mechanisms according to regional characteristics. Furthermore, Hadi et al. (2025) constructed an asymmetric Pilkada model as an alternative to respond to the problems of cost, political conflicts, and the risk of state capture in uniform regional elections. These findings show that there is an academic basis for differentiating the design of the Regional Elections, but also show that the constitutional limits of its application still need to be deepened.

International and comparative literature reinforces this urgency. Buehler et al. (2021) show that the election of local heads of government in Indonesia is closely related to the ability of democratic institutions to limit the emergence of subnational authoritarianism. Muluk and Anantanatorn (2023), through a comparison of Indonesia and Thailand, found that asymmetric decentralization is better able to provide space for tolerance and equality in the face of regional diversity, while symmetrical design tends to emphasize administrative effectiveness and efficiency. On the other hand, Lewis (2023) identifies the tendency to re-strengthen central control in the development of Indonesia's decentralization, while Baker (2023) places political recentralization and weakening contestation as part of Indonesia's democratic challenges. The research gap lies in the lack of a strong study that integrates the design of asymmetric regional elections with two parameters at once, namely the strengthening of regional autonomy and the effectiveness of constitutional democracy.

This gap became increasingly relevant after the development of the Constitutional Court's jurisprudence regarding the design of regional elections and regional elections. Constitutional Court Decision No. 60/PUU-XXII/2024 changes the construction of the threshold for the candidacy of regional heads by expanding the opportunities for political parties to submit candidate pairs, while Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 rearranges the design of simultaneity by separating national and regional elections for future implementation. Based on these conditions, this study aims to analyze the relevance of the asymmetric regional head election model in strengthening regional autonomy and increasing the effectiveness of constitutional democracy, as well as identifying the constitutional basis, objective criteria, and limits of its application so that the differentiation of the regional election system remains in accordance with the principles of people's sovereignty, equality, accountability, and legal certainty.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of constitutional law by linking the theory of asymmetric decentralization, regional autonomy, electoral institutional design, and constitutional democracy in one analytical construction. Hadinatha (2025) shows that strengthening regional decision-making space and community participation is an important part of a more substantive decentralization model. This research goes further by placing electoral asymmetry as a controlled constitutional instrument, not as a deviation from democracy. Practically, the results of the research are expected to be considered for lawmakers in reorganizing the regional election system based on regional characteristics and capacity, while still making democratic legitimacy, accountability, community participation, and protection of people's sovereignty as national standards that cannot be reduced.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Asymmetric Decentralization and Regional Autonomy

Decentralization is basically the distribution of authority from the central government to the subnational government to provide decision-making space that is closer to the needs of the community. In its development, decentralization is not always applied symmetrically because the political, social, economic, historical, and institutional characteristics of each region can be different. Fiorillo et al. (2021) explain that asymmetric decentralization allows certain jurisdictions to acquire different authorities and can result in efficiency gains, but at the same time has the potential to cause distortions in decision-making processes between levels of government. Therefore, the application of asymmetry requires an institutional design that is able to maintain a balance between regional flexibility and national interests.

In the context of heterogeneous societies, asymmetry also has a function to accommodate diversity and reduce central-regional tensions. Muluk and Anantanatorn (2023), through a comparison of Indonesia and Thailand, show that symmetrical decentralization is more likely to be oriented towards effectiveness and efficiency, while asymmetric decentralization is closer to the principles of tolerance and equality in regional diversity management. These findings show that the success of autonomy is not solely determined by the uniformity of the government structure, but by the ability of decentralized design to adapt authority to regional needs. Within the framework of the Indonesian unitary state, asymmetry can thus be understood as a differentiation of authority in a constitutional system, not as a deviation from the principle of a unitary state.

Substantive Autonomy and Central-Regional Government Relations

Substantive regional autonomy requires adequate decision-making space for local governments to regulate the interests of their communities. However, the development of Indonesia's decentralization shows that there is a dynamic between the expansion of autonomy and the re-strengthening of central government control. Lewis (2023) shows that Indonesia's fiscal decentralization reform contains a number of instruments that enlarge the central government's ability to direct local governments. This condition shows that regional autonomy is not enough to be assessed based on the formal existence of local government, but also from the large capacity of the region to determine policies according to local needs.

Hadinatha (2025) strengthens this perspective by finding that the development of Indonesia's regional autonomy still shows a centralistic tendency. According to him, the decentralized unitary state model requires strengthening decision space, reducing the dominance of central government orders, increasing local community participation, and providing space for regions to develop policies based on local conditions. Such autonomy is directly related to local democracy because the ability of communities and local governments to make decisions is part of the vertical distribution of power. Therefore, the design of the election of regional heads needs to be placed as part of the autonomy architecture, not solely as an electoral procedure.

Asymmetrical Regional Head Election Model

The idea of asymmetric regional elections arises from criticism of the application of a uniform electoral model to regions that have different capabilities, characteristics, and levels of democratic development. Azzahro et al. (2023) explained that the uniformity of direct elections can face problems in the form of political conflicts, election financing, and vertical government relations. The study offers an asymmetrical election of regional heads based on indicators of democratic maturity and regional financial capabilities, with alternatives in the form of direct elections, elections through the DPRD, and other mechanisms within the scope of government. This perspective shows that the phrase "democratically elected" can be studied as a concept that is not always synonymous with one electoral mechanism.

The study then developed into the research of Hadi et al. (2025) which specifically placed asymmetric regional elections as an alternative in facing Indonesia's local democracy dilemma. The article strengthens the discourse that the differentiation of the mechanism for the election of regional heads can be constructed within a democratic framework as long as it does not eliminate the basic principle of political legitimacy. However, the choice of direct or indirect form cannot be based solely on efficiency considerations. Buehler et al. (2021) show that the institutional configuration of local government head elections has an important relationship with political competition and restrictions on the formation of authoritarianism at the subnational level in Indonesia. This means that the design of the Regional Elections must consider both the effectiveness of the government and the quality of power control.

Constitutional Democracy and the Legitimacy of Regional Elections

Constitutional democracy not only requires the holding of elections, but also requires political competition, protection of political rights, restrictions on power, and accountability mechanisms. Shah (2024) explained that the democratic minimum core includes regular, competitive, free and fair elections; protection of political rights that enable democratic competition; and the existence of an independent accountability institution. Thus, the quality of the Regional Elections cannot only be measured by the success of determining regional heads, but also by the ability of the mechanism to maintain competition, participation, accountability, and power limitations.

The issue of legitimacy can be seen in the dynamics of the Indonesian Regional Elections. Rohmah (2025) found that a single candidate in the Regional Elections can still have formal constitutional legitimacy, but its substantive legitimacy can be questioned when the political choices of the community and the level of competition become very limited. The dominance of the party elite and the weak recruitment function can also narrow local political contestation. Meanwhile, Wiratraman (2022) shows that the weakening of legal institutions and control mechanisms can contribute to the institutionalization of authoritarian tendencies through legal instruments. This perspective emphasizes that a model of the Regional Elections is not enough to be considered valid based on formal procedures, but must also be tested against the principles of constitutionalism and the prevention of concentration of power.

The Effectiveness of Democracy and the Risk of Electoral Asymmetry

Electoral asymmetry has the potential to make the implementation of regional elections more adaptive to regional characteristics, but this flexibility also presents risks if it is not accompanied by objective parameters. Fiorillo et al. (2021) remind that asymmetry can cause distortions if the distribution of authority results in disproportionate profits or disrupts coordination between levels of government. In the electoral context, a similar risk can arise when the differentiation of the Pilkada mechanism is determined by short-term political interests, not based on constitutional needs and objective characteristics of a region.

These concerns are also related to the condition of Indonesia's democracy more broadly. Baker (2023) shows that there are structural factors that drive the decline of Indonesian democracy, including weakening contestation and the tendency to consolidate power. Therefore, asymmetric elections should not be understood as freedom to reduce public participation, but as differentiation that remains subject to constitutional democratic standards. Any variation of the election mechanism must maintain legitimacy, fair political competition, accountability of regional heads, protection of political rights, and a mechanism for monitoring the use of power.

Theoretical Synthesis and Research Position

Based on this literature, there are three interrelated constructions. First, the theory of asymmetric decentralization suggests that differentiation can be used to accommodate regional heterogeneity and strengthen autonomy, but it requires constraints and coordination mechanisms. Second, the literature of the Regional Elections shows that the uniformity of the electoral model is not the only possible design of local democracy, but alternative elections must take into account the maturity of democracy and regional capacity. Third, the perspective of constitutional democracy emphasizes that the variation of electoral mechanisms must still meet the standards of competition, participation, accountability, protection of political rights, and restrictions on power.

Thus, this study takes the position that asymmetric elections can be constructed as controlled constitutional instruments, not just as an alternative between direct and indirect elections. The difference with previous research lies in testing the asymmetric model through two dimensions simultaneously, namely its ability to strengthen regional autonomy and its ability to maintain the effectiveness of constitutional democracy. The model is only relevant if the differentiation is based on the objective characteristics of the region, has a clear legal basis, maintains democratic legitimacy, and is equipped with accountability mechanisms and national democratic standards. This position is also a conceptual basis for a normative analysis of the relevance of asymmetric elections in the Indonesian constitutional system.

METHODOLOGY

Types of Research

This study uses a normative legal method with a qualitative-prescriptive approach. The approaches used include legislative, conceptual, comparative, and case approaches. This method was chosen because the research focuses on legal norms, asymmetric election design, regional autonomy, and constitutional democracy (Taekema, 2021; Majeed et al., 2023).

Population and Sample

Normative research does not use respondents or statistical samples. The unit of analysis is in the form of primary and secondary legal materials that are purposively selected based on their relevance and validity status. Primary legal materials include the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Law No. 23 of 2014 and its amendments, Law No. 1 of 2015 as last amended by Law No. 6 of 2020, as well as special regulations regarding Aceh, Yogyakarta, and Papua. The three regions were chosen as objects of comparison because they represent different forms of asymmetric decentralization.

Research Instruments

The research instrument is in the form of a legal document analysis matrix that includes constitutional basis, characteristics of regional specificity, substantive autonomy, and constitutional democracy indicators such as legitimacy, participation, competition, and accountability. The validity of legal materials is maintained through the use of official sources, examination of regulatory status, and comparisons between regulations, Constitutional Court decisions, and scientific literature.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected through literature studies and documentation. The research stages include the identification of legal issues, the inventory of primary and secondary legal materials, the verification of the applicability of regulations, the classification of materials based on themes, and the comparison of regulations in Aceh, DIY, and Papua. The relevant Constitutional Court decision is also used to assess the constitutional development of the Pilkada design.

Data Analysis Techniques

Legal materials are analyzed qualitatively-prescriptively through grammatical, systematic, teleological, and constitutional interpretations. The analysis is directed to assess the suitability of asymmetric regional elections with the principles of regional autonomy and constitutional democracy and formulate criteria for their application. Reference management is done using Zotero, whereas analysis does not use statistical software as the research does not generate quantitative data.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Constitutional Basis of the Asymmetrical Regional Head Election Model

The results of the normative analysis show that the uniformity of the mechanism for the election of regional heads is not an absolute consequence of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Article 18 paragraph (4) uses the phrase "democratically elected", while Article 18A and Article 18B recognize the differentiation of central-regional relations and the existence of special or special regions. The constitutional space has been realized through several different legal regimes. Law No. 11 of 2006 concerning the Government of Aceh remains valid and provides institutional and political specificity for Aceh; Law No. 13 of 2012 concerning the Privileges of Yogyakarta is also still in force and specifically regulates the filling of the positions of Governor and Deputy Governor; while the specificity of Papua is still based on Law No. 21 of 2001 as amended by Law No. 2 of 2021.

The findings show that asymmetry is not an anomaly in a unitary state, but has become part of Indonesia's positive legal construction. This is in line with Muluk and Anantanatorn (2023), who found that asymmetric decentralization can provide greater space for tolerance and equality in heterogeneous societies. Fiorillo et al. (2021) also show that asymmetry allows policies to be tailored to the character of the jurisdiction, although it can cause distortions if not equipped with adequate institutional arrangements. Thus, the relevance of asymmetric regional elections does not lie in the freedom of each region to determine its own electoral system, but in differentiation that has constitutional justification and objective parameters.

Comparative Findings: Aceh, DIY, and Papua

Analysis of the three regions shows that Indonesia's constitutional asymmetry has developed in different forms. The differences can be summarized as follows.

Table 1. Comparative Findings

Object of analysis	Found asymmetrical shapes	Implications for autonomy	Democratic implications
Aceh	The specificity of local governance and political space, including the existence of local political parties	Expanding the space for representation of local political interests	Maintain electoral competition and community participation
DIY	The filling of the positions of Governor and Deputy Governor is based on the privilege mechanism related to Sultan Hamengku Buwono	Maintaining historical identity and regional specialties	Legitimacy does not derive solely from direct elections, but from constitutional-historical constructions and institutional mechanisms

	and the reigning Duke of Paku Alam			
Papua	OAP affirmation, including OAP requirements for Governor and Deputy Governor candidates as well as priorities in political recruitment	Protecting the representation of indigenous peoples in the implementation of special autonomy		Differentiation is justified, but its scope can be limited based on rationality and proportionality

In Aceh, Law No. 11 of 2006 recognizes a different political structure than the regions in general, including the existence of local political parties. The provision shows that decentralization can include a political dimension, not just the division of administrative affairs. Acehese legal practice thus supports the finding that substantive autonomy requires space for local communities to articulate their interests through institutions that are appropriate to the local context.

DIY shows a stronger form of asymmetry in the mechanism for filling the position of regional head at the provincial level. Law No. 13 of 2012 specifically regulates the filling of the positions of Governor and Deputy Governor, and the implementation arrangements remain in effect through Perdas DIY No. 2 of 2015 as amended in 2024. The Constitutional Court also affirmed that the historical background of the Yogyakarta Sultanate is the fundamental basis for the specificity of the requirements for the candidate for governor who is on the throne as Sultan Hamengku Buwono and the candidate for deputy governor as Adipati Paku Alam. This finding is important because it proves that the meaning of "democratic" in Article 18 paragraph (4) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia does not have to be reduced to a uniform form of direct election.

Papua shows an affirmative form of asymmetry. In the Constitutional Court's Decision No. 93/PUU-XXII/2024, the Court maintained the OAP requirements for Governor and Deputy Governor candidates, but did not extend these requirements to candidates for regents and mayors. The Court considers that the absence of OAP affirmation at the district/city level does not contradict the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. This finding is an important boundary for the theory of asymmetric elections: specificity does not automatically apply to all levels of government and cannot be expanded just because a region has a special status. Differentiation must have a reason, purpose, scope, and level of government that can be constitutionally accounted for.

The Relevance of Asymmetric Regional Elections to Strengthening Regional Autonomy

The results of the analysis show that asymmetric regional elections have relevance to strengthening autonomy if the election design is placed as part of substantive autonomy, namely the ability of regions to maintain institutions, identities, and decision-making spaces that are in accordance with their characteristics. Hadinatha (2025) found that the development of Indonesia's regional autonomy still has a centralistic tendency and proposed strengthening *decision space*, local participation, and space for regions to develop policies based on the local context. The findings of this study expand on this argument by showing that *decision space* can also include the design of political institutions, as long as it has constitutional legitimacy.

These findings also support Muluk and Anantanatorn (2023), who show that asymmetry has an advantage in accommodating regional diversity. However, the results of this study do not support the view that greater asymmetry always means stronger autonomy. Fiorillo et al. (2021) show that there is a *trade-off* between the advantages of decentralization and the risk of distortion or coordination problems. Lewis (2023) also shows that Indonesia's decentralization dynamics show a tendency to strengthen central government control instruments. Thus, effective asymmetry must be between two extremes: overly centralistic uniformity and unbridled differentiation.

Relevance to the Effectiveness of Constitutional Democracy

The next finding is that constitutional democracy is not synonymous with direct elections alone. The effectiveness of democracy must be judged from legitimacy, competition, participation, accountability, protection of political rights, and restrictions on power. Shah (2024) shows that the deterioration of democracy can occur through the weakening of political competition and accountability institutions even if formal democratic procedures are maintained. Therefore, uniform direct elections cannot in themselves be considered more constitutional if their practice narrows contestation or increases the concentration of power.

This finding is supported by Rohmah (2025), who shows that a single candidate in the Regional Elections can fulfill formal constitutional legitimacy, but its substantive legitimacy becomes problematic when the public faces limited political choices and the party's recruitment function is weakened. Buehler et al. (2021) also point out the importance of institutional configurations of local government and electoral competition in limiting the formation of subnational authoritarian regimes.

The development of the Constitutional Court's Decision No. 60/PUU-XXII/2024 strengthens the parameters of the competition. This decision changes the provisions of the threshold for the candidacy of regional heads so that the chances of candidacy do not only depend on the ownership of DPRD seats as in the previous construction. Meanwhile, Constitutional Court Decision No. 135/PUU-XXII/2024 regulates the design of future implementation by separating national voting and regional elections at certain intervals. Both developments show that electoral design is not a static construction, but can be

rearranged as long as it is directed to meet the constitutional demands of democracy.

Thus, the findings of this study do not support the replacement of direct elections with indirect elections as a whole. Asymmetric elections must be understood as the possibility to choose different mechanisms in a limited and measurable manner. If a variation actually closes competition, eliminates public participation without strong justification, strengthens elite dominance, or weakens the accountability of regional heads, the variation does not meet the standards of constitutional democracy.

Model Controlled Constitutional Asymmetry as Key Findings

Based on normative and comparative analysis, this study produced the main findings in the form of the concept of controlled constitutional asymmetry, namely the differentiation of the design of the Regional Elections that is constitutionally justified but limited by the parameters of national democracy. This model does not consider asymmetry as an objective, but rather as an instrument to connect regional diversity with the principles of constitutional democracy.

Its implementation requires at least six main parameters:

1. The constitutional basis and legality of any differentiation must have a basis in the constitution and laws, not merely short-term political decisions.
2. Objective characteristics of the region, such as historical background, socio-cultural specificity, institutional conditions, or demonstrable need for affirmation.
3. Democratic legitimacy, that is, the chosen mechanism must be able to provide legitimacy that can be accounted for to the community.
4. Competition and participation, so that asymmetry should not be used to disproportionately close political access.
5. Accountability and power limitations, including institutional supervision of regional heads.
6. Evaluation and proportionality, especially against affirmative policies whose nature and scope may change after the objectives of specificity are achieved.

The last parameter is strengthened by the Constitutional Court Decision No. 93/PUU-XXII/2024. The Court stated that certain affirmative policies for OAPs are not always permanent and can be evaluated after the affirmative objectives have been achieved. Thus, constitutional asymmetry must be rational, proportional, and evaluable, not a permanent exception without a testing mechanism.

Research Gap and Differences with Previous Research

The results of this study have a common point as well as a difference from the previous study. Azzahro et al. (2023) have offered an asymmetrical pattern of regional elections by considering the maturity of democracy and regional capabilities and opening up the possibility of using direct elections, through the DPRD, or certain mechanisms. Hadi et al. (2025) expanded the model by proposing indicators such as regional independence index, human development index, democracy index, community heterogeneity, and customs to determine appropriate models.

The research gap of this research lies in the lack of strength in the previous study in examining asymmetric regional elections through two integrated dimensions, namely strengthening regional autonomy and the effectiveness of constitutional democracy, as well as in determining the constitutional limits of the differentiation. The study of Azzahro et al. (2023) and Hadi et al. (2025) emphasizes more on the choice of models and indicators of their application; Muluk and Anantanatorn (2023) focus more on symmetrical-asymmetric decentralization and regional conflict; while Buehler et al. (2021) focus on local institutional relationships with subnational authoritarianism.

This study differs in that it places constitutional limits as the main filter before economic, fiscal, or administrative indicators are used. For example, a low level of fiscal ability cannot in itself be a reason to abolish direct elections. These criteria must first be tested based on legitimacy, equality of political rights, competition, participation, and proportionality. Thus, the theoretical contribution of the research lies in the change of the question from "which model of the Regional Elections is the most efficient for a region?" to "under what constitutional conditions can the differentiation of the Regional Elections model be justified without weakening autonomy and democracy?"

Supporting Factors and Limiting Factors of the Findings

This study does not use statistical hypotheses. However, the initial proposition that asymmetric elections have the potential to strengthen the autonomy and effectiveness of democracy has been conditionally supported. The supporting factors are the constitutional recognition of regional specificity, the existence of differentiation practices in Aceh, Yogyakarta, and Papua, and literature that shows the ability of asymmetric decentralization to accommodate heterogeneity.

On the contrary, there are limiting factors in the form of the risk of elite domination, low competition, inequality of treatment, and the possibility of asymmetry being used to justify the concentration of power. Baker (2023) shows that the narrowing of the space for contestation and political recentralization are part of the challenges of Indonesian democracy, while Wiratraman (2022) warns that the use of legal instruments can interact with the weakening of power control mechanisms. Therefore, the results support conditional asymmetry, not absolutely.

Implications, Limitations, and Further Research

Theoretically, this research shows that regional autonomy and constitutional democracy do not have to be opposed. Differentiation can strengthen autonomy as long as it continues to work within the constitutional fence. The concept of *controlled constitutional asymmetry* provides a framework to assess whether an exception is a legitimate form of accommodation or actually results in a weakening of democracy.

Practically, lawmakers should not implement asymmetric regional elections only based on cost efficiency or regional fiscal ability. Policy design needs to contain objective indicators, a basis for constitutional justification, public participation mechanisms, accountability measures, and periodic evaluations. The Constitutional Court's ruling on Papua shows the importance of ensuring that the scope of specificity is not expanded without a rational and constitutional basis.

The limitations of the research lie in the normative-doctrinal character and the use of three regional contexts as comparative objects. This research has therefore not been able to prove empirically that certain models lead to an improvement in the quality of democracy, public satisfaction, or the effectiveness of government. Further research is recommended using a socio-legal or mixed method approach, involving election organizers, local governments, political parties, academics, indigenous peoples, and voters. The next study can also operationalize the *controlled constitutional asymmetry parameter* as a measurable indicator to compare regional readiness without reducing constitutional principles.

Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the study found that the asymmetric model of regional head elections is relevant for strengthening regional autonomy and the effectiveness of constitutional democracy, but its relevance is conditional. Asymmetry must be based on objective regional characteristics and a clear legal basis and maintain legitimacy, participation, competition, accountability, equality of political rights, and restrictions on power. The findings of Aceh, Yogyakarta, and Papua show that Indonesia's constitutional system has accepted differentiation as part of autonomy, but the Constitutional Court's decision also shows that differentiation has constitutional limits. Therefore, the recommended model is not free asymmetry, but controlled constitutional asymmetry as a balance point between regional diversity, substantive autonomy, and democratic legitimacy.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that the asymmetric regional head election model has constitutional relevance in strengthening regional autonomy and the effectiveness of constitutional democracy, but its application cannot be carried out uniformly or without limits. Analysis of Aceh, the Special Region of Yogyakarta, and Papua shows that differentiation has become part of Indonesia's constitutional system and can be justified if it is based on objective regional characteristics, a clear legal basis, and special needs that can be accounted for. The main finding of this study is the concept of controlled constitutional

asymmetry, namely the differentiation of the mechanism of the Regional Elections which is still limited by democratic legitimacy, political competition, community participation, accountability, equality of political rights, proportionality, and power limitations. Thus, asymmetry is not placed as an objective, but as a constitutional instrument to achieve a balance between regional diversity, substantive autonomy, and national democratic standards.

Based on these findings, lawmakers are advised not to make cost efficiency, fiscal capacity, or administrative considerations the only basis for implementing asymmetric regional elections. Each differentiation needs to first go through a constitutional test based on regional specificity, needs, democratic legitimacy, proportionality, and periodic evaluation mechanisms. The asymmetrical election policy must also ensure space for competition, public participation, openness, and accountability of regional heads so that they do not turn into an instrument of elite domination or restriction of political rights. Therefore, the development of the Regional Election model in the future needs to be directed towards measurable and adaptive differentiation while maintaining the principles of people's sovereignty and constitutional democracy as a standard that cannot be reduced.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

The next research is suggested using a socio-legal or mixed method approach to empirically test the controlled constitutional asymmetry model. The study can involve election organizers, local governments, political parties, academics, indigenous peoples, and voters, as well as develop measurable indicators of regional readiness in implementing asymmetric regional elections. Comparative studies between regions and countries are also needed to examine the relationship between electoral differentiation, the quality of local democracy, political participation, and the effectiveness of government.

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