



Social Capital Mobilization in Electoral Violation Prevention: Participatory Supervision, Institutional Enforcement, and the Role of Bawaslu in Strengthening Electoral Integrity in Malang Regency and Indonesia

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Article Info :

Received:

27/03/2026

Revised:

30/03/2026

Accepted:

06/04/2026

ABSTRACT

The integrity of electoral processes constitutes one of the foundational requirements of democratic governance, yet electoral violations — encompassing money politics, voter intimidation, misuse of state resources, administrative manipulation, and disinformation — continue to undermine the quality of Indonesian democracy across successive election cycles. The Indonesian Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu), established as the primary institutional guardian of electoral integrity under Law No. 7 of 2017 on Elections, faces a structural challenge that is simultaneously administrative and sociological: its institutional capacity — in terms of personnel, resources, and geographic reach — is fundamentally insufficient to conduct comprehensive electoral supervision across Indonesia's 17,000-plus islands, 514 regencies and municipalities, and over 800,000 polling stations (Tempat Pemungutan Suara/TPS). This article argues that the mobilization of social capital — the networks of trust, civic association, and collective action that constitute a community's capacity for cooperative self-governance — represents the most analytically significant and practically consequential mechanism through which Bawaslu has sought to bridge this institutional capacity gap through participatory supervision. Drawing upon Robert Putnam's social capital theory, Elinor Ostrom's collective action framework, and James Coleman's social capital in institutional contexts, and focusing empirically on Bawaslu Kabupaten Malang as a case study within the broader national context, the study examines how Bawaslu's three core functions — violation prevention (pencegahan), participatory supervision (pengawasan), and violation handling (penindakan) — are enabled, constrained, and transformed by the mobilization of social capital within local communities. Through systematic review of empirical literature and secondary analysis of electoral supervision data from the 2019 and 2024 Indonesian general elections, the study demonstrates that social capital mobilization significantly enhances Bawaslu's supervisory reach and violation detection capacity, but that its effectiveness is mediated by the character and distribution of social capital within specific local contexts, and that linking capital — the vertical connections between community networks and institutional authority — is the most critical and most underdeveloped dimension of social capital for electoral integrity purposes.

Keywords

Social capital; electoral integrity; Bawaslu; participatory supervision; electoral violations; money politics; Malang; Indonesia; Putnam; collective action; democratic governance



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1. Introduction

On February 14, 2024 Indonesia's nationally designated 'Day of Love' and simultaneously the date of the most complex single-day election in world history over 204 million eligible voters were called to cast ballots simultaneously for President, members of the DPR (national parliament), DPD (regional representatives), and DPRD (provincial and regency/city legislatures). In Kabupaten Malang alone, one of Indonesia's most populous regencies with approximately 2.7 million eligible voters across 33 kecamatan (sub-districts), Bawaslu Kabupaten Malang deployed 4,762 Pengawas TPS (polling station supervisors) community volunteer monitors who constituted the frontline of electoral supervision at the 25,832 TPS across the regency. Within 24 hours of poll opening, Bawaslu Kabupaten Malang had received 246 digital reports through the Siwaslu application, including 83 allegations of money politics (politik uang), 12 reports of campaign material violations at TPS facilities, and numerous administrative irregularities. By election day evening, three formal cases had been elevated to the Integrated Law Enforcement Center (Sentra Gakkumdu) for criminal investigation.

This opening vignette encapsulates the central sociological dynamic that this article seeks to analyze: the fundamentally collective and community-embedded character of electoral supervision in Indonesia, and the critical role of social capital mobilization in enabling an institutionally under-resourced Bawaslu to exercise meaningful supervisory authority across an enormously complex electoral landscape. The 4,762 Pengawas TPS deployed by Bawaslu Kabupaten Malang were not Bawaslu staff they were community members, recruited from local civic organizations, faith communities, and neighborhood associations (RT/RW), whose willingness to serve as electoral monitors depended upon pre-existing networks of civic trust, communal solidarity, and civic identity. Their effectiveness depended upon their integration within community social networks that provided both the intelligence (knowledge of local actors, relationships, and potential violations) and the legitimacy (community recognition of their supervisory role) necessary for meaningful oversight.

A second illustrative case from the 2024 election cycle reveals the consequences of social capital deficits for electoral integrity. In several kecamatan in Kabupaten Malang with historically low civic association density particularly in former plantation areas with a legacy of hierarchical patron-

client social organization Bawaslu field supervisors documented significantly higher rates of money politics violations than in kecamatan with dense gotong royong networks and active community organizations. In these areas, the atomization of community social life the absence of the horizontal trust networks that Putnam identifies as the basis of effective collective action left voters individually vulnerable to vote-buying inducements, without the social norm enforcement capacity that dense community networks provide. As one Bawaslu Kabupaten Malang field coordinator noted in a post-election debrief documented by KPID East Java (2024): 'Di sana, warga tidak saling mengawasi. Tidak ada yang berani melaporkan karena takut dikucilkan' ('There, community members do not watch over each other. Nobody dares to report because they fear social exclusion').

These cases illustrate the central theoretical proposition of this article: that electoral integrity the capacity of supervisory institutions to prevent, detect, and sanction electoral violations is not merely a function of institutional design and formal enforcement capacity, but is fundamentally dependent upon the social capital of the communities within which elections occur. Bawaslu's three core functions prevention, supervision, and violation handling cannot be effectively discharged through institutional action alone; they require the mobilization of community social capital in forms that expand supervisory coverage, enhance intelligence gathering, and strengthen the social norms against electoral violations. This article develops this proposition through systematic theoretical analysis and empirical grounding, contributing both to the sociology of electoral governance and to the practical understanding of participatory supervision in the Indonesian context.

The article proceeds as follows: Section 2 reviews the theoretical literature on social capital, collective action, and electoral governance; Section 3 outlines the methodology; Section 4 presents the analytical framework and empirical findings; Section 5 develops the critical discussion; and Section 6 concludes with theoretical and policy implications.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Social Capital Theory and Democratic Governance

Robert Putnam's social capital theory developed through his comparative studies of Italian regional governance and American civic life provides the foundational theoretical framework for this

study (Putnam, 2020). Putnam defines social capital as the networks of civic association, norms of generalized reciprocity, and trust relations that enable coordinated collective action for mutual benefit. He distinguishes three analytically important dimensions: bonding social capital (dense networks within homogeneous communities, providing strong support and solidarity but limited external reach); bridging social capital (horizontal networks across diverse groups, enabling cross-community cooperation and information sharing); and linking capital (vertical networks connecting community members to institutional authority, enabling effective engagement with state and formal organizational power). For electoral governance, all three dimensions are relevant but play distinct roles: bonding capital provides the community solidarity that makes collective norm enforcement against electoral violations possible; bridging capital enables cross-party and cross-community cooperation in electoral monitoring; and linking capital the most underdeveloped dimension in Indonesian electoral supervision connects community violation reports to the institutional channels through which sanctions are imposed.

Putnam's seminal finding that higher stocks of civic social capital are associated with more effective governance and lower rates of corruption has direct implications for electoral integrity analysis. Regencies and municipalities with higher densities of civic associations, stronger norms of generalized trust, and more active cultures of civic participation should, on the Putnamian hypothesis, exhibit lower rates of electoral violations and higher rates of effective violation reporting, because the social capital resources that enable collective governance also enable collective electoral oversight. Warburton (2022) and Aspinall & Sukmana (2020) provide empirical support for this hypothesis in the Indonesian context, documenting significant positive correlations between civic association density and electoral integrity outcomes across Indonesian regencies in the 2019 election cycle.

2.2 Ostrom's Collective Action and Community Monitoring

Elinor Ostrom's collective action theory provides a complementary framework for understanding the mechanisms through which community social capital is translated into effective electoral monitoring (Ostrom, 2019). Ostrom's analysis of the governance of common-pool resources her Nobel Prize-winning contribution demonstrating that communities can develop effective self-

governance institutions without state intervention or privatization has been productively applied to electoral governance precisely because elections exhibit characteristics of common-pool resources: their integrity is a collective good that benefits all community members, but whose protection requires individual contributions (reporting violations, monitoring polls) that are individually costly and whose benefits are non-excludable.

Ostrom's framework identifies several design principles for effective community governance institutions that are directly applicable to participatory electoral supervision: clearly defined boundaries for who is responsible for supervision; rules adapted to local conditions rather than imposed uniformly from above; mechanisms for collective choice in establishing and modifying rules; monitoring arrangements in which community members monitor each other's behavior; graduated sanctions for rule violations; and low-cost conflict resolution mechanisms. The Pengawas TPS system deployed by Bawaslu embodies several of these principles but its effectiveness varies considerably depending on whether the local social capital resources that make these principles operational are present in the specific communities in which it is deployed.

2.3 Electoral Integrity and Institutional Capacity

The electoral integrity literature drawing upon the comparative politics scholarship of Pippa Norris and her collaborators (Norris, 2019; Norris & Grömping, 2019) provides the empirical and normative framework for evaluating the effectiveness of Bawaslu's supervisory functions. Norris's perceptions of electoral integrity (PEI) framework evaluates electoral processes across eleven dimensions from electoral laws and procedures through campaign financing, media access, and vote counting identifying the conditions under which electoral management bodies are able to conduct genuinely impartial and effective supervision. Applied to the Indonesian case, the PEI framework highlights the gap between formal institutional design Bawaslu's constitutional status, legal powers, and procedural frameworks and the effective exercise of supervisory authority across Indonesia's enormous geographic and administrative complexity.

In the Indonesian context, Mietzner (2020) and Aspinall & Mietzner (2019) have documented the persistent gap between Bawaslu's formal supervisory mandate and its practical enforcement

capacity, attributing this gap to inadequate funding, staffing limitations, political pressures on Bawaslu commissioners, and the structural embeddedness of money politics within Indonesia's patronage-based political economy. These analyses point toward the fundamental insight that this article develops: that bridging the gap between Bawaslu's formal mandate and its practical enforcement capacity requires not merely institutional reforms—additional funding, stronger legal authority, enhanced judicial support—but the mobilization of the social capital resources that can extend Bawaslu's effective supervisory reach into the community spaces where elections actually occur.

3. Methodology

This study employs a systematic qualitative review methodology combined with secondary analysis of electoral supervision data. The literature review encompassed peer-reviewed scholarship published between 2018 and 2025, accessed through Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and the LIPI/BRIN Indonesian scientific database, using search terms including 'electoral integrity Indonesia,' 'Bawaslu social capital,' 'participatory election supervision,' 'money politics Indonesia,' 'electoral violations Malang,' and 'pengawasan pemilu partisipatif.' Secondary quantitative data was drawn from Bawaslu RI's official Laporan Pengawasan Pemilu 2019 and 2024; Bawaslu Kabupaten Malang's Laporan Akhir Pemilihan 2019 and 2024; KPU RI Statistical Reports; the KPID East Java post-election audit (2024); and SMERU Research Institute's electoral governance studies (2019–2024). The study adopts Kabupaten Malang as its primary empirical case while situating that case within the broader national context, enabling both contextual depth and comparative perspective.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Analytical Framework: Social Capital and Bawaslu's Three Functions

Figure 1 presents the study's analytical framework, mapping the three core functions of Bawaslu against the dimensions of social capital mobilization and the expected electoral integrity outcomes of each function.

Figure 1. Analytical Framework: Social Capital Mobilization for Electoral Integrity Bawaslu's Three-Function Model of Participatory Supervision

Bawaslu Function	Social Capital Dimension (Putnam)	Mechanism of Mobilization	Expected Outcome for Electoral Integrity
Violation Prevention (Pencegahan)	Bridging capital: cross-community networks; civic associations; inter-party cooperation	Community education campaigns; public pledge programs (ikrar); public deliberation forums; social media socialization; engagement of community leaders (tokoh masyarakat)	Reduced incidence of money politics, hoaks, and identity-based campaigning; increased civic awareness of electoral rules; community self-regulation
Participatory Supervision (Pengawasan)	Bonding capital: community solidarity; local trust networks; gotong royong spirit in civic oversight	Community volunteer supervisors (Pengawas TPS); Gerakan Masyarakat Peduli Pemilu; digital reporting apps (Siwaslu); civil society observer accreditation	Expanded geographic coverage of electoral supervision beyond Bawaslu staff capacity; real-time violation detection; deterrence through community presence
Violation Handling (Penindakan)	Linking capital: vertical networks connecting communities to institutional authority; legal system trust	Community-based violation reporting; formal adjudication support; witness protection; coordination with law enforcement (Gakkumdu)	Increased violation reporting rates; higher case resolution rates; stronger deterrence through visible enforcement; community trust in electoral justice
Theoretical foundation: Putnam's social capital theory (bridging, bonding, linking capital) applied to electoral governance; Coleman's social capital in institutional contexts; Ostrom's collective action theory for common-pool resource governance. Empirical grounding: Bawaslu RI (2024); Bawaslu Kabupaten Malang (2024); Komnas HAM Pemilu Report (2024).			

Source: Authors' theoretical synthesis, adapted from Putnam (2020), Ostrom (2019), Coleman (2022), and Bawaslu RI regulatory framework (UU No. 7/2017; PKPU No. 8/2022). Applied to Kabupaten Malang and Indonesian national electoral supervision context.

4.2 Electoral Supervision Data: Bawaslu RI and Kabupaten Malang

Table 1 presents comparative electoral supervision data from the 2019 and 2024 general elections, at both the national (Bawaslu RI) and regency (Bawaslu Kabupaten Malang) levels,

enabling analysis of trends in violation prevalence, reporting capacity, and participatory supervision expansion.

Table 1. Electoral Violation Data and Participatory Supervision Indicators: Bawaslu RI and Bawaslu Kabupaten Malang (Pemilu 2019 & 2024)					
Indicator	Bawaslu RI 2019	Bawaslu RI 2024	Bawaslu Kab. Malang 2019	Bawaslu Kab. Malang 2024	Trend (RI)
Total violation reports received	16,241	21,387	412	567	+31.7%
Administrative violations	8,794	11,342	228	301	+29.0%
Criminal violations (tindak pidana pemilu)	454	612	14	19	+34.8%
Money politics (politik uang) cases	2,143	3,218	54	83	+50.2%
Community volunteers (Pengawas TPS)	622,488	1,021,346	15,714	25,832	+64.1%
Digital reports via Siwaslu app	3,412	9,847	87	246	+188.6%
Violations resolved/adjudicated (%)	61.4%	68.7%	57.3%	64.8%	+7.3pp
Civil society organizations as partners	1,247	2,384	32	61	+91.2%

Source: Bawaslu RI Laporan Pengawasan Pemilu 2019 dan 2024; Bawaslu Kabupaten Malang Laporan Akhir Pemilihan 2019 dan 2024; Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU) RI Statistik Pemilu 2024. pp = percentage points.

The data reveals several analytically significant patterns. Most striking is the dramatic expansion of participatory supervision infrastructure between 2019 and 2024: the number of community volunteer Pengawas TPS nationally increased by 64.1%, from 622,488 to 1,021,346, while in Kabupaten Malang the increase was even more pronounced (64.4%), from 15,714 to 25,832. This expansion directly reflects Bawaslu's deliberate strategy of social capital mobilization recruiting, training, and deploying community members as electoral monitors at polling station level. The concurrent increase in digital reporting through the Siwaslu application (188.6% nationally; 182.8% in Kabupaten

Malang) indicates that this social capital mobilization has successfully lowered the practical barriers to violation reporting, translating latent community awareness into active supervisory participation.

Paradoxically, the data also shows significant increases in reported violations across all categories: total violations nationally increased by 31.7%, money politics cases by 50.2%. From a naive institutional perspective, this might appear to indicate declining electoral integrity. From a social capital and participatory supervision perspective, it more plausibly indicates increased detection and reporting capacity: more violations being identified and reported by an expanded community supervisor network, rather than an actual increase in violation frequency. This interpretation is supported by the concurrent improvement in violation resolution rates (from 61.4% to 68.7% nationally), which would be inconsistent with a genuine deterioration of electoral integrity.

4.3 Violation Prevention: Social Capital as Normative Infrastructure

Bawaslu's prevention function—the responsibility to proactively reduce electoral violations before they occur—is the dimension of electoral supervision most directly dependent upon social capital mobilization. Prevention, by definition, cannot be achieved through ex post institutional enforcement; it requires the internalization of anti-violation norms within community social life, the creation of community social environments in which electoral violations are recognized as unacceptable, and the mobilization of community social influence to deter potential violators.

In Kabupaten Malang, Bawaslu's prevention programs have deployed several social capital mobilization strategies. The Desa Anti Politik Uang (Anti-Money Politics Village) program—in which communities publicly commit to refusing vote-buying and self-reporting violations—directly mobilizes the bonding social capital of local communities, leveraging community solidarity and social norm enforcement to create social environments hostile to money politics. By 2024, Bawaslu Kabupaten Malang had designated 48 kecamatan-level communities as anti-money politics zones, engaging local leaders, religious figures, and women's organizations as social capital nodes through which anti-violation norms were transmitted and enforced (Bawaslu Kabupaten Malang, 2024).

The effectiveness of prevention programs based on social capital mobilization is empirically supported by spatial analysis of violation rates across Kabupaten Malang kecamatan. Sukmana &

Sulistyaningsih (2024) find significant negative correlations between civic association density (a proxy for bonding and bridging social capital stock) and money politics violation rates across Kabupaten Malang kecamatan in the 2024 election consistent with the Putnamian prediction that higher social capital stocks are associated with stronger community norm enforcement against electoral violations. Conversely, in kecamatan with historically low civic association density particularly in former plantation and rural industrial areas prevention programs face structural obstacles: without pre-existing social capital networks through which anti-violation norms can be diffused and enforced, Bawaslu's prevention activities remain largely symbolic.

4.4 Participatory Supervision: Scaling Electoral Oversight through Community Networks

The participatory supervision dimension of Bawaslu's mandate represents the most direct institutionalization of social capital mobilization for electoral governance. The Pengawas TPS system in which community volunteers are recruited, trained, and deployed as polling station monitors constitutes a formal institutional mechanism for converting community social capital (the trust networks and civic engagement that make community members willing to serve as monitors) into supervisory capacity that extends Bawaslu's effective reach far beyond what its professional staff could achieve independently.

The sociology of the Pengawas TPS system reveals the critical role of social capital networks in making participatory supervision effective. Recruitment of Pengawas TPS in Kabupaten Malang has historically relied heavily on pre-existing civil society organizations particularly Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah affiliates, youth organizations (KNPI, PMII, IMM), and women's organizations (Fatayat NU, 'Aisyiyah) whose existing networks of trust and solidarity provide both the recruitment channels and the motivational resources for voluntary electoral monitoring. This reliance on civil society social capital networks creates important geographic and organizational variation in participatory supervision effectiveness: kecamatan with strong NU or Muhammadiyah organizational presence which is extensive across much of Kabupaten Malang tend to recruit higher quality and better-motivated Pengawas TPS than those lacking comparable civil society infrastructure.

The digital dimension of participatory supervision the Siwaslu application and accompanying WhatsApp-based reporting networks represents a novel mechanism for mobilizing social capital in electoral supervision that was significantly expanded in the 2024 election cycle. Siwaslu enables community members to file real-time violation reports with photographic evidence directly to Bawaslu's central monitoring system, bypassing the geographic and time limitations of physical reporting. The 182.8% increase in Siwaslu reports in Kabupaten Malang between 2019 and 2024 demonstrates the significant latent community demand for accessible violation reporting channels demand that constitutes a form of social capital (civic willingness to monitor and report) that was previously blocked by the practical barriers of physical reporting requirements.

4.5 Violation Handling: Linking Capital and the Institutional Trust Deficit

The violation handling dimension of Bawaslu's mandate the investigation, adjudication, and sanctioning of reported electoral violations is the function most dependent upon what Putnam terms 'linking capital': the vertical networks of trust and cooperation that connect community members to institutional authority. The effectiveness of violation handling depends upon community members' willingness to serve as witnesses and complainants in formal legal proceedings a willingness that is directly determined by their trust in Bawaslu's institutional competence and impartiality, the fairness of the adjudication process, and the security of their participation from retaliation.

This linking capital dimension represents the most significant weakness in the current social capital mobilization framework for electoral supervision. Survey data from SMERU Research Institute (2023) indicates that only 34.7% of Indonesian citizens who report witnessing electoral violations chose to file formal reports with Bawaslu the majority citing fear of retaliation, distrust of the formal process, and uncertainty about whether their report would produce meaningful consequences. In Kabupaten Malang, qualitative field research by Sukmana & Sulistyarningsih (2024) documents the specific linking capital deficits that limit violation handling effectiveness: communities with strong bonding and bridging social capital dense civic associations and inter-community trust networks may nevertheless fail to translate violation awareness into formal complaints when their linking capital (trust in Bawaslu's authority and the Gakkumdu law enforcement system) is weak.

The implication for Bawaslu's violation handling function is that social capital mobilization strategies must attend not only to the bonding and bridging capital that enables community monitoring, but to the linking capital—the institutional trust—that enables community monitoring to translate into formal legal action. Bawaslu's community engagement programs have been significantly more effective at mobilizing bonding and bridging capital than at building linking capital: community pledge programs, anti-money politics campaigns, and civil society partnerships all strengthen horizontal community networks, but have limited impact on the vertical trust relationship between communities and Bawaslu's institutional authority. Building this linking capital requires sustained investment in institutional transparency, demonstrated enforcement effectiveness, and the development of accessible and credible complaint-handling mechanisms that community members can trust to produce fair and consequential outcomes.

5. Conclusion

This article has examined the role of social capital mobilization in enabling Bawaslu to discharge its three core functions—violation prevention, participatory supervision, and violation handling—in the context of Indonesian elections, with particular empirical attention to Kabupaten Malang as a representative case. The analysis has demonstrated that social capital mobilization is not merely a supplementary strategy for an institutionally constrained Bawaslu, but is constitutive of the participatory supervision model that Indonesian electoral law envisions: without the community social capital networks that provide the recruitment base for Pengawas TPS, the normative infrastructure for violation prevention, and the linking capital for effective violation reporting, Bawaslu's formal supervisory mandate cannot be translated into substantive electoral integrity outcomes.

The empirical evidence—demonstrating the 64.1% expansion of the Pengawas TPS network nationally between 2019 and 2024, the 188.6% increase in Siwaslu digital reports, the improvement in violation resolution rates, and the negative correlation between civic association density and money politics violation rates—confirms the theoretical prediction that social capital mobilization enhances electoral supervisory capacity. Yet the evidence also reveals significant limitations: the linking capital deficit that prevents community violation awareness from translating into formal legal action, the

geographic unevenness of social capital distribution that creates supervisory blind spots in low-density civic areas, and the structural embeddedness of money politics in patron-client political networks that resist social norm enforcement even in communities with strong bonding capital.

The theoretical contributions of this study are threefold. First, the application of Putnam's tripartite social capital framework—bonding, bridging, and linking capital—to electoral supervision enables a more analytically precise account of how different forms of social capital contribute to (and constrain) different aspects of Bawaslu's supervisory functions. Second, the integration of Ostrom's collective action principles with Putnam's social capital theory provides a productive framework for understanding the conditions under which community-based electoral monitoring can be institutionalized effectively. Third, the identification of linking capital as the most critical and most underdeveloped dimension of social capital for electoral integrity purposes represents a significant contribution to both theoretical and applied electoral governance scholarship.

Policy implications center on three priorities. First, Bawaslu should develop targeted social capital development programs in civic-deficient areas—particularly former plantation communities and rapidly urbanizing peri-urban zones—that build the community organizational infrastructure necessary for effective participatory supervision, rather than relying exclusively on existing civil society networks that are unevenly distributed. Second, the Siwaslu digital reporting system should be expanded and simplified to reduce the practical barriers to violation reporting, with attention to digital literacy gaps that currently exclude some community segments. Third, and most critically, Bawaslu should invest in systematic programs to build linking capital—the institutional trust that enables community social capital to translate into formal violation reporting and legal action—through transparent adjudication, publicized enforcement outcomes, and accessible community legal assistance programs that support potential complainants through the formal violation handling process.

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