

## THE IMPACT OF ONGOING PANDEMIC COVID-19 ON INDONESIAN DEMOCRACY: DEMOCRATIC BREAKDOWN, POLITICAL INEQUALITY, AND DEEPENING CLIENTELISM

### *DAMPAK LANJUTAN PANDEMI COVID-19 TERHADAP DEMOKRASI INDONESIA: KEMACETAN DEMOKRASI, KETIMPANGAN POLITIK, DAN KLIENTELISME YANG SEMAKIN MENDALAM*

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#### *Abstract*

This study aims to analyze the ongoing pandemic covid-19 that brings unprecedented consequences to the Indonesian democracy system. One prominent thing to note is that the current declining democracy seems to worsen. This condition may happen due to the restricted civil liberties and increasing use of state control on behalf of pandemic policies. While these two likely result from executive aggrandizement, the latter premise seems to be a side effect of increasing personal power because pandemic makes people dependent on state actors. The way pandemic covid-19 decreases the quality of democracy in Indonesia remains unanswered clearly. This study finds three significant consequences on Indonesia's democracy such as democratic breakdown, political inequality, and deepening clientelism. In other words, these three consequences also mean the pandemic covid 19 becomes blessing in disguise for elites to push their political agendas on behalf of pandemic policies. This study will further investigate other impacts of covid-19 on Indonesian democracy.

**Keywords:** pandemic covid-19, Indonesian democracy, democratic breakdown, the persistence of authoritarianism, deepening clientelism

#### **Abstrak**

*Artikel studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dampak kekinian dari pandemi covid-19 yang membawa konsekuensi "luar biasa" terhadap sistem demokrasi Indonesia. Hal penting yang penting dicatat ialah semakin mundurnya demokrasi. Hal ini mungkin terjadi karena adanya pembatasan kebebasan individu maupun menguatnya kontrol negara dengan mengatasnamakan kebijakan penanganan pandemi. Meskipun kedua faktor tersebut sepertinya merupakan bentuk daripada membesarnya kekuatan politik dari eksekutif, argumen ini sepertinya hanya merupakan dampak sampingan karena pandemi menciptakan ketergantungan pada aktor negara. Bagaimana pandemi covid-19 menurunkan keuliatas demokrasi di Indonesia masih belum terjawab secara jelas. Studi ini menemukan tiga dampak utama pandemic covid-19 terhadap demokrasi Indonesia yakni macetnya demokrasi, menguatnya ketimpangan politik, dan semakin mendalamnya klientelisme. Dengan kata lain, ketiga dampak konsekuensi juga berarti pandemic covid-19 ini menjadi berkah politik bagi elit untuk meneruskan agenda politiknya dengan mengatasnamakan kebijakan pandemi. Oleh karena itulah, studi ini berusaha untuk menganalisis lebih lanjut mengenai dampak lain covid-19 terhadap demokrasi di Indonesia.*

**Kata Kunci :** pandemi covid-19, demokrasi di Indonesia, macetnya demokrasi, menguatnya otoritarianisme, semakin mendalamnya klientelisme

## Introduction

The current pandemic has disrupted the democratic system in most countries. This disruption includes two major consequences to underline (Engler et al., 2021). First, there is an urgent need to concentrate power on the executive level to issue pandemic-related policies swiftly. This makes the head of government in a dilemma: whether he/she should adhere to strict health advices to save citizens through by limiting freedom of expressions or he/she should prioritize economic rehabilitation over health policies to save the economy from recessions. This first choice eventually puts the head of governments ready to be unpopular leaders. Second, the continuous support to give incentives for those citizens who are badly affected by the ongoing pandemic covid-19. This unanimously makes the citizens support the government for staying in power. This second choice unanimously puts the head of governments ready to be populist leaders.

Concerning the two consequences mentioned above, it seems the second factor will be popular globally. Since populist leaders need to ensure that pandemic policies are under control, centralization of power is demanding. The latest report by V-Dem Institute shows that electoral and closed autocracies have dominated the global democracy condition. Moreover, it further argues that “the ruling government first attack the media and civil society and polarize societies by disrespecting opponent and spreading false information; the undermine elections” (V-Dem Institute, 2021). This premise gives us an initial sign that current democratic backsliding closely links with ruling executive elites.

In line with the previously-mentioned arguments, Indonesian democracy has similar problems with ruling elites. The pandemic covid emerges to be a stick and carrot mechanism for citizens. This has resulted in more restricted civil liberties in many ways, like freedom of speech (Jati, 2021). Eventually, this affects the unbalanced functioning of government in managing pandemic covid-19.

It has been established in the literature that pandemic covid-19 causes executive

aggrandizement in Indonesia. Two recent pieces of literature focus on how President Joko Widodo handles the pandemic covid-19. The first scholar Greg Fealy argues that the president’s focus on economy and development has downplayed pandemic management (Fealy, 2020). Massive military deployment to discipline civilians on behalf health protocol, the campaign of anti-radicalism and extremism by targeting those Islamist opposition leaders and advocating secular-pluralist ground, and pushing the critics to the corner are examples of weaponization of covid-19 for securing centralized power (Fealy, 2020).

The second scholar Marcus Mietzner emphasizes prioritizing economic rehabilitation over health advice enables President Joko Widodo to exercise the utmost political power to contain the coronavirus (Mietzner, 2020). This makes him derogate the oppositions because they may able to politicize the coronavirus in order to disrupt the ruling government.

These two recent works of literature specially focus on the mismanagement of covid-19 containment under Joko Widodo’s leadership that adversely affects democracy commitments like checks and balances. However, the two recent literatures seem missing for institutional decay factor that persistently harms the Indonesian democracy. In line with the previously-mentioned research gap, the research question is how does ongoing pandemic-covid decrease the quality of Indonesian democracy? This question would like to specially address a democratic breakdown, political inequality, and deepening clientelism. These three relate to how current elites take advantage of the pandemic for their political interests. The finding of this study is that the coronavirus pandemic underlays the continuing democratic regression in Indonesia. More specifically, it shows how the ruling elites take advantage of high public dependence in order to legitimate their interests.

## Democratic Breakdown during Pandemic

The current covid-19 drives the democratic breakdown. This topic covers the debate of

how democracy is about to sink due to the ongoing coronavirus. Pandemic covid-19 has been putting the Indonesian government in a difficult position. It leads to the functioning of government that might be more centralistic. This makes checks and balances not work. Another thing to note is the more militaries become officials in some civilian positions. While these centralistic and militaristic leadership may be useful to effectively contain coronavirus outbreak, at the same time, both leadership styles could weaken civil supremacy over the military.

This practice institutionally makes most state institutions vested in dealing with public sectors. Also, this practice personally makes the ruling elites will legitimate their political maneuvers on behalf of pandemic policies. If these two leadership styles are unlikely to change after the coronavirus, it will harm the democracy journey in Indonesia so far. Most importantly, these two factors have shown us how powerless Indonesia's current democracy system is.

The deepening of democratization in developing countries is not always a smooth process. Indeed, the ongoing pandemic will likely turn back democratic achievement in Indonesia. This section relates to Carothers's "The End of Transition Paradigm". In his article, he argues that the transition paradigm, which he describes as election, does not work as a guide for democratization in new democratic regimes because many third-world countries are no longer conforming to the model (Carothers, 2002). In addition, the western countries, as democratic promoters, do not realize that society has had problems with non-functional state building (Carothers, 2002). As a result, many developing countries turn into illiberal or weak democracies during democratization. This stagnant democracy system arguably has two significant causes: feckless pluralism and dominant-power politics. The first emphasizes the abusive ruling power practices because of unstable state management, whereas the second focuses on stagnancy because of the one-party ruling system (Carothers 2002).

From Carothers's theory, I draw on knowledge that the reality gap between society / state-building and ideal democracy theory is the problem. The elites are behind this wide gap. In line with his theory, the current democratic breakdown is undoubtedly the result of elites' abusive attitudes. Since Indonesia faces backsliding in democracy, the pandemic covid-19 seems to accelerate declining democracy through elites' attitude factors.

There are two current factors here to mention. First, some controversial bills that sparked heated debates publicly in the midst of covid-19. Second, many active high-ranking military officials were appointed active civilian officers. For the first reasons, some controversial bills like the KPK law, the draft of Pancasila Guidelines Law, and the Omnibus Law. The first two of three bills arguably represent Indonesia's remaining polarised politics. The accusation of "Taliban", which refers to conservative Islamic loyalists within the KPK, has led to executive interference to put this anti-corruption institution under ruling elites (Mietzner, 2021). This elitist intervention is likely a stab in the back because weakening the KPK means betraying democracy. Meanwhile, the draft of Pancasila Guidelines Law strongly disapproved by Islamists and military officers who saw that bill as insufficient guidelines for ideology implementation (Fealy, 2020). By contrast, Omnibus Law does not show polarisation of politics. Instead, it basically shows the persistence of ruling elites to enact pro-business agenda to be a law in order to boost economic rehabilitation during the pandemic era. In regards to the three bills, the elites seem to take advantage of pandemic for passing elitist agenda without public hearings.

President Joko Widodo seems to concentrate the state power upon himself. Two regulations like multi-tiered public activity restrictions (PPKM) and health protocols are likely to give him bypassing democratic procedural to discipline public. These personalization of power potentially ramps political violence up because the executive leader often performs itself as the saviour of the country (Diamond, 2015). This may affect

public to refer that leader to be a populist. As the populist leader, Joko Widodo wants to ensure the economic activities should be underway regardless of pandemic. He believes this action will give multiplier positive effects not only economic but also social life. However, since the president pays little attention to human rights and political rights during the ongoing pandemic. This causes almost all Indonesians to hold up the same attitudes. Consequently, the polarised condition of society seems to get heightened in the meantime. Most importantly, controlling state resources for containing the coronavirus means politicking the pandemic to get public support. The ruling elites get benefit from these attitudes.

The elites remain a potential democracy dismantler alongside the parties in the unconsolidated democratic countries. Thanks to the current pandemic, Public distrust of parties and dependency on social aid and have encouraged the ruling elites to take full control of power in most developing democratic countries. Unfortunately, they somehow cause democratic breakdown to some degree. While the normative democratic rules such as parliament and constitution are still constitutionally to run, the ruling elites vehemently steer the power (Levitsky&Ziblatt, 2018). This resulted in a divisive situation that indeed puts democracy in a fragile condition. Levitsky and Ziblatt focus on how liberal democracy has been under siege because of the anti-democratic behaviour of politicians and weak political parties (Levitsky&Ziblatt, 2018). To tackle the democratic breakdown, they suggest that politicians and parties committed to democratic rule become the gatekeepers against authoritarians (Levitsky&Ziblatt, 2018).

In line with the explanations mentioned above, the current pandemic situation is likely to steer ruling elites bypassing the democratic rules. For example, the grass-root level's aspiration was somehow turned down because the elites selfishly pursued their stakes. Unsurprisingly, corruption cases rise since the great amount of money to be distributed immediately. This tempts the ruling elites to get access to that sources.

From all the above-mentioned conditions, it seems clear that democracy is declining globally. However, this claim might be misleading. The relationship between the pandemic and declining democracy did not advance a straightforward method to measure whether or not a country is experiencing a democratic breakdown. While Indonesian democracy has been declining, most Indonesians who live in rural areas feel satisfied with the current pandemic policies. This became a significant concern of mine whilst analyzing the impact of the pandemic on democracy in Indonesia.

Most importantly, the current analysis of democracy setbacks not by looking at the extent of democratic rule but by focusing on the durability of democratic rule (Foa& Mounk, 2017). In accordance with Foa and Munck, Larry Diamond also criticizes global democracy assessments by global survey institutions, saying its index might be inaccurate in measuring a country's democracy level. The political rights and civil liberties indicators may not capture the root of democratic breakdown. The indicators are not telling us the cause but only the effect of declining democracy.

The lesson learned values we get from the democratic breakdown in this pandemic era are 1) the remaining divisive society as the government controls the resources and keeps cornering the opposition and 2) the check and balances system does not fully balance since the executive leaders concentrate the power. These two conditions lead us to understand the political inequality within the Indonesian democracy system.

## **Political Inequality in the Pandemic Era**

The declining democracy principles certainly have a detrimental impact on political inequality. This kind of inequality mainly features limited public access at the state level. This topic also subsequently covers the debate on to what extent a pandemic can affect democracy in the current pandemic situation. Three topics - political institution, wealth distribution, and access to the policymaking process - are the key issues



the authors discuss to analyze the relationship between democracy and inequality. The three factors arguably have strengths and weaknesses. Especially in this meantime, the concentration of power can be equal to the concentration of wealth and restricted power sharing.

At the global level, pandemic situations seem to cause many political severe disruptions. For example, the overthrowing of legitimate government in Myanmar, Afghanistan, and Guinea, and increasing use of repressive state actions in Belarus and Hungary. These two major consequences show how ruling elites tend to use pandemics for their political agendas. This creates an unbalanced power relationship among ruling elites, oppositions, and the public. While Indonesia so far experiences restricted civil liberties, not going into an authoritarian state yet, if the inequality goes further, it will likely turn down Indonesian democracy into an unequal situation. According to Robinson and Acemoglu, the threat of revolution is greater in an unequal society than in an equal society. This unequal situation occurs when the existing political institution prefers to serve elites rather than citizens. Unequal distribution of wealth which motivates citizens to overthrow the elites. (Robinson&Acemoglu, 2006)but opposed by elites. Dictatorship nevertheless is not stable when citizens can threaten social disorder and revolution. In response, when the costs of repression are sufficiently high and promises of concessions are not credible, elites may be forced to create democracy. By democratizing, elites credibly transfer political power to the citizens, ensuring social stability. Democracy consolidates when elites do not have strong incentive to overthrow it. These processes depend on (1. These two factors also connect with unfair tax revenue and also disfranchised people. Therefore, the demand for a neutral political institution in allocating power results from economic inequality as the driving force (Robinson & Acemoglu, 2006, p. 26)but opposed by elites. Dictatorship nevertheless is not stable when citizens can threaten social disorder and revolution. In response, when the costs of repression are sufficiently high and promises of concessions are not credible, elites may be forced to create democracy. By

democratizing, elites credibly transfer political power to the citizens, ensuring social stability. Democracy consolidates when elites do not have strong incentive to overthrow it. These processes depend on (1. Although democratic political institutions can work for the citizen than the elite, it also does not directly make a prosperous society. Robinson and Acemoglu acknowledge that low inequality impacts population and has little motivation for revolution. This condition shows us thzthat equal society does not democratize at first.

In line with the previously-mentioned arguments, the current pandemic puts the Indonesian lower-middle incomers at risk. They make up almost 70 per cent of the labour force in Indonesia. The public activity restrictions without good compensation would encourage people to get a strike. These undoubtedly affect those lower incomers because they usually get paid on a daily basis. Meanwhile, the social pandemic aid distribution has continued since last year. However, the bribery cases involving former ministers of social affairs show greater public disillusionment. At the same time, this did not lead to the revolution due to an uncertain pandemic. The public need for clean and transparent state institutions should be the top priority among policymakers. This will be a panacea to calm the public due to their critical views toward corrupted actions during the pandemic.

It is important to note that managing coronavirus does not equalise wealth distribution. Although money transfer has been a major priority for tackling pandemic impact on the economy, it should be careful to analyze. It can be preliminary “vote buying” practice for ruling elites ahead of 2024. On the other side, it can be wise policies to save the economy rather than politics.

Wealth distribution can either support or diminish democracy. These statistical analyses give different results regarding the relationship between inequality and democracy. The first quantitative research by Houle says inequality damages the consolidation and only weakly promotes democracy (Houle, 2009)this article argues that inequality harms consolidation

but has no net effect on democratization. The author shows that the existing theories that link inequality to democratization suffer from serious limitations: (1. More precisely, he argues, the high inequality makes democracy more likely to become an authoritarian regime. This backsliding occurs because democracy is costly for the elites because of redistributive demands (Houle, 2009) this article argues that inequality harms consolidation but has no net effect on democratization. The author shows that the existing theories that link inequality to democratization suffer from serious limitations: (1. The cost includes the cost of redistribution and the cost of suppression that the elite used to manage public demand. The current Indonesian political system is unlikely to be an authoritarian regime because of the widening wealth gap. However, paying much attention to the elites with authoritative power should be done. Previously, the third-term presidential term has sparked debate on whether or not President Joko Widodo should continue to work in managing pandemics after 2024. This discourse represents the elitist and upper middle incomers' agenda rather than the entire Indonesians. Here we can see that unequal income has driven elites to do something on behalf pandemic.

By contrast, there is a positive relationship between income inequality and democracy (Ansell & Samuels, 2010). This argument opposes the previous theoretical arguments emphasising that inequality leads to declining democracy during the pandemic. It has been established within literature that income inequality positively affects the transition from autocracy to partial democracy (Ansell & Samuels, 2010). The growing income quality is a sign of an emerging class of wealth and middle-class town people/capital owners who want protection from the state. Regarding these different statistical results, both types of research have a good method foundation to run multiple regression analysis. However, we should carefully read the context and theory. Houle's research uses democratic consolidation theory, whereas Ansell and Samuels use modernization theory. In addition, Houle's research takes place in an established democratic situation and Ansel

/ Samuels's research context in a transitional period of democracy.

In line with the previously-mentioned theoretical arguments, the Indonesian middle class seems resilient during this pandemic. The public restrictions do not significantly affect them as they get used to working remotely. Concerning the inequality; the Indonesian middle class seems to be safe player rather than open opposition. This might signal political dependency on the government due to the social provisions. This might also signal a cautious attitude since cyberattacks sometimes target critics. The Indonesian middle class seems to get more polarised than lower incomers because of maintaining certain political preferences. This shows Indonesian middle class tend to have a connection with the elites. This favouritism makes pandemic policies somehow unequal.

Political equality ensures fair public policy demand, regardless of whether there are a few influential people with higher policymaking access. This situation often occurs in some democratic regimes. Indonesian experience shows two or three influential elites are supposed to be strongmen in managing covid measures. General (Ret.) Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan is arguably one of the strongmen due to his iron-fist policies during this pandemic. His policies on behalf of pandemic management somehow upset the public. For those who are upper-middle-class people, this will save more people to save. On the other hand, those people who are lower middle class, they felt disappointed because of unfair compensations. It is important to note that Indonesian pandemic management is unstable. Here the ruling elites monopolizes the pandemic information and its preventive actions. Although the main aim of pandemic policies is reducing the casualties' rate, Indonesian pandemic management is likely to emphasize the economic rather than lives. This more economic-oriented views eventually puts economics and businessman are the front liners rather than medical experts. In regards to this above arguments, Acemoglu and Robinson have warned us that the lobbyist has a louder voice in the influential economic decision than ordinary people (Robinson & Acemoglu, 2006)

but opposed by elites. Dictatorship nevertheless is not stable when citizens can threaten social disorder and revolution. In response, when the costs of repression are sufficiently high and promises of concessions are not credible, elites may be forced to create democracy. By democratizing, elites credibly transfer political power to the citizens, ensuring social stability. Democracy consolidates when elites do not have strong incentive to overthrow it. These processes depend on (1. These lobbyists are often used by “oligarchs”—people behind democracy curtain who seek an opportunity to increase their current wealth. According to Winters and Page, oligarchs are affluent people (Winters & Page, 2009). More importantly, their intention to enter the political arena is to dominate strategic public policy such as investment, labour market, and industrialization. There are three reasons for oligarchs entering the political arenas: lobbying, campaign donations, and public opinion shaping (Winters & Page, 2009). These three methods show us that democracy already democracy cannot tackle inequality but succumbs to it.

In line with the above arguments, the current pandemic condition makes the ruling elites win hearts and minds rather than opposition. Most importantly, the 2024 election stages will concurrently run with this uncertain period, starting in early 2022. This means it will attract many lobbyists entering this arena to lobby the elites. Previously, the pandemic aid corruption showed the oligarch networking involved with the third-parties actors like businessmen. This pattern is likely to attract other outsiders entering the policymaking process. This condition, consequently, makes also the unequal political race between the incumbents and challengers. Mainly, when it comes to a political campaign, it seems the clientelism is going further because most Indonesian needs money to afford living cost during the pandemic. This condition makes the ruling elites can issue some pork-barrel policy to boost their popularity.

## **Deepening of Clientelism during The Pandemic Coronavirus**

One main reason behind the political inequality is clientelism. The term seems to be a recent phenomenon in poor democratic countries. The current condition seems to be a breeding ground for clientelism in Indonesia because of unsatisfied social aid distribution. At the same time, the concurrent election should be underway, albeit increasing the covid victims. These two factors ultimately get voters deeply involved in clientelism. In general, clientelism shows the reciprocal cooperation between one elite and more individuals. This relationship clientelist pattern can have a detrimental effect on democracy itself. For example, abuse of public office for private gains and favouritism in public service. The concentration of wealth and power enables the ruling elites to address clientelism during the pandemic. This results in the high public support of the regime through the quality of democracy decreasing in Indonesia.

Clientelism is attached to poor economic conditions, but it is less likely in economic solid countries. The pandemic entirely affects most countries in the world. While the solid democratic countries successfully contain the coronavirus pandemic, the weak democratic countries seem to face turmoil conditions due fluctuated relationship between state and society. This argument reflects comparative case between Indonesia case and UK/US case. India and Indonesia look a lot alike in some ways (Jati, 2022). Both countries are the major democratic countries and one of the most densely-populated countries in the world. More importantly, they are countries that have a vast majority of poor populations. This condition causes access to public services to become a prominent factor in these two countries. However, the different political institutionalism in India and Indonesia gives different clientelism accounts. Berenschot argues India has pervasive politicians and political parties in society, whereas Indonesia has local leaders' role in providing access to state resources (Berenschot, 2019). This different condition gives India's parties/politicians and Indonesia's local leaders the middlemen in good public distribution.

More importantly, the clientelism story of these two countries is the result of the asymmetric conditions. This could be an information gap or ingrained society hierarchy.

As a result, clientelism remains salient in both India and Indonesia. Conversely, US and UK are less prone to clientelism. Industrialization makes American and British societies become wealthier than India and Indonesia. In the British case, “economic growth also increased pressure to open suffrage” (Stokes et al., 2013). This condition subsequently encouraged more electorates because of the grown middle-class population. Another factor is newspaper growth (Stokes et al., 2013). This provides information and critical opinion of the people on certain political issues like poverty. Therefore, people become a well-informed society than relying on one individual or organization as India and Indonesia do. American case seems to be different from British. Although the US has rapid industrialization and more affluent people, the decline of clientelism itself is not an economic-driven factor. More precisely, it is just about the Americans’ stance to refuse bribes and the birth of anti-clientelist legislation (Stokes et al., 2013).

Regarding the above-mentioned arguments, it seems the populist leaders decline the quality of democracy. India has Narendra Modi for his anti-Muslim sentiments, whereas Indonesia has Joko Widodo for his economic and infrastructure vision but little attention to political rights. Particularly for the Indonesian experience, the increasing use of populist action can result in two factors. First, a populist leaders can easily build clientelist networking due to their charisma and fame. Second, clientelism enables the smooth process of pandemic aids.

In line with two basic arguments, the Indonesian pandemic experience shows both can be feasible. Different social and health system qualities between rural and urban / Java and non-Java Island put Indonesia not pass the first wave of the outbreak since the beginning of coronavirus. This condition certainly makes the dependent public relation on the elites. Also, the impoverished condition encourages people heavily rely on the government’s aid. These

two conditions can create a long-term clientelist relationship between ruling elites and society. Here the critics can get rid of this pandemic-led clientelism system

Elite and society’s anti-clientelist commitment is an important factor in curbing clientelism. Student activism is still an ideal movement to challenge clientelism in Indonesia. As I mentioned above, the American case shows that the society’s initiative and the elite’s anti-clientelist views are important. Stokes argues that voters’ unwillingness to accept bribes was the major of the clientelism decline (Stokes et al., 2013). More importantly, society can constrain public officials in generating public funds for their interests (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2015). This society’s stance reflects their view about the mismanagement of public policy service. They should pay a bribe to elites to access public services. And this makes elite as the patron (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2015). People expect to have fair treatment. Therefore, citizens become outspoken voters as they are more concerned with public services (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2015, p. 40). In other words, anti-clientelist among people is merely ethics matter – how government fairly treats people. The elite’s commitment perceives vote buying as an illegal practice in electoral competition (Stokes et al., 2013). Consequently, certain candidates can retain public positions longer than other candidates. Moreover, this is a disrespectful manner in democracy.

It seems the economic and political will is the essential thing in curbing clientelism. However, the most important thing in my mind is different cultures. In developed countries, people are culturally independent and not politically engaged with political things. They are more likely to pursue business and make a profit. Therefore, they refuse to pay bribery. After all, what they would get is not equal to their services. The private sector overpowers the public service.

Meanwhile, in developing countries, people have mutual social bounding. This makes a dependent relationship. Another issue is the pervasive public representation within society. This also creates a bold relationship with elites.



In a nutshell, the other economic performance and political will are the primary factors why clientelism keeps going in the pandemic era. This shows that the ruling elites take advantage of the current situation to boost their electability in 2024. Particularly the way elites approach the public with several social aids, signals how clientelism has been deeply ingrained before the election campaign.

## Conclusion

This study combines the theoretical, critical democracy framework and Indonesian covid experiences to analyze how Indonesian democracy is going to be. The current pandemic certainly makes declining democracy getting worse in Indonesia. These aspects, like democratic breakdown, political inequality, and deepening clientelism, show the institutional decay during the pandemic era. One thing to remember is that the aggrandizement of executive power and its ruling elites is behind the institutional decay. This has an impact on widening the political gap between state and society.

Another impact is the dependent relation on state pandemic aid. It makes the public less likely to be critical of the current government's policies. As a result, the concentration of power upon executive will affect the political system during the current pandemic situation. Most importantly, the quality of Indonesian democracy seems to get decreased.

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