



Decentralization of Political Parties to Improve Internal Party Democracy in Indonesia

Guasman Tatawu¹; La Ode Abul Mufakhir¹; La Patuju¹;
Khabiirun²; Edy Samiel²; La Ode Zumail²

¹ Faculty of Law, Halu Oleo University

² Faculty of Humanities, Halu Oleo University
Jl. H.E.A Mokodompit, Campus Hijau Bumi Tridharma Anduonohu
Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi, 93232 Indonesia

Email: tatawug@gmail.com

<http://dx.doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v8i12.3012>

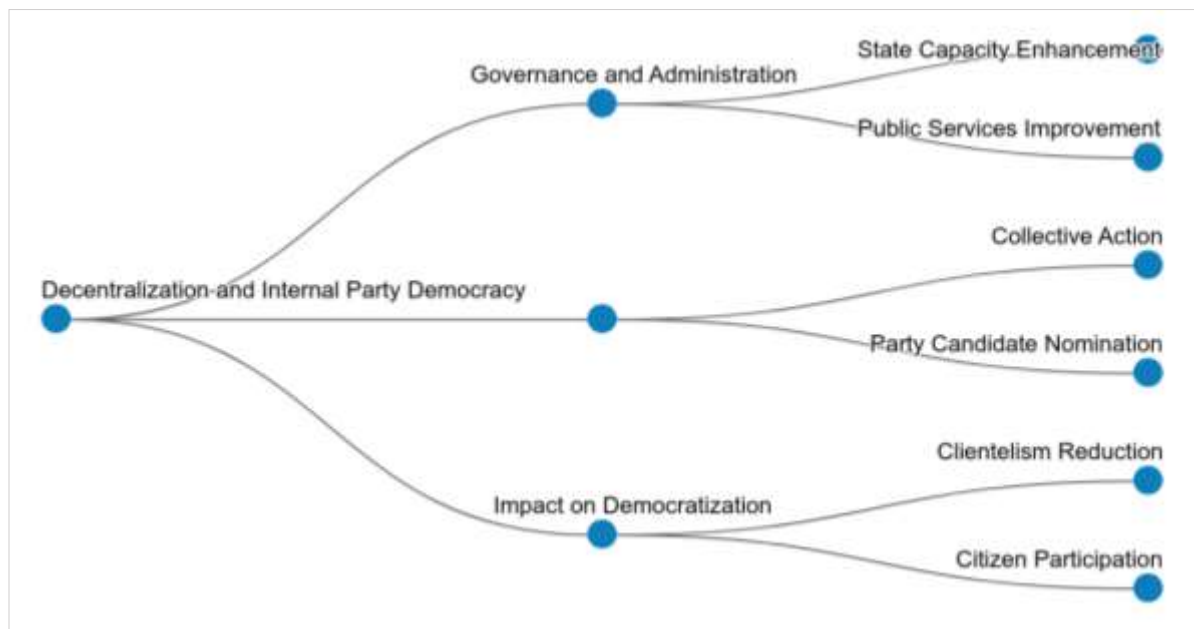
Abstract

Decentralization in political parties has become an important topic in contemporary political studies, as it is believed to strengthen internal party democracy and encourage broader member involvement in decision-making. This study aims to explore how decentralization can play a role in enhancing internal democracy within political parties. The main focus of this research is to identify the factors that cause centralization in political parties, how decentralization can increase member participation in decision-making, and the impact of decentralization on the quality of internal democracy in political parties. The approach used in this study is descriptive qualitative research with a case study on several political parties in Indonesia that have implemented or are considering implementing decentralization. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with party leaders at both central and regional levels, party cadres, as well as political experts. Additionally, an analysis of the internal party documents was conducted. The analysis aims to provide a deeper understanding of the implementation of decentralization and its impact on the internal dynamics of political parties. The results of the study show that decentralization has the potential to increase member participation in decision-making processes that are more inclusive and responsive to local conditions. Respondents indicated that decentralization opens up more space for regional cadres to present ideas and make decisions that are more relevant to local community needs. However, the main challenge identified in this study is the issue of oversight and management, which could lead to fragmentation within the party's structure. This indicates that while decentralization has significant potential, its implementation must be carried out carefully to avoid risks that could harm party unity. This study concludes that decentralization can improve internal democracy within political parties, provided that an effective communication system between the central and regional levels exists, as well as adequate supervision to prevent the abuse of power. This research makes a significant contribution to the development of democratization theory in political parties in Indonesia and can serve as a reference for political parties that seek to implement a more effective decentralization structure.

Keywords: *Decentralization, Internal Democracy, Political Parties, Member Participation, Decision Making*

Introduction

Decentralization and internal party democracy become the main focus, leading to several positive outcomes, such as the enhancement of state capacity to manage and implement policies more effectively through a more equitable distribution of authority. The decentralization process enables decision-making that is more responsive to regional needs, improves public services, and strengthens collective action within the party. Furthermore, it can reduce clientelism in politics by decreasing dependence on centralized political patronage. Decentralization has the potential to increase citizen participation in the political process by providing more opportunities for the public to engage in decision-making, both within the party and in governance.



Political parties are the main pillars of a democratic system. As institutions that serve as a means for political participation, political parties should have structures that are open and responsive to the aspirations of the people. However, in practice, many political parties in Indonesia remain trapped in centralized, hierarchical, and opaque structures. Such organizational models often hinder the development of internal democracy within the party, which in turn affects the overall quality of democracy in the country. Therefore, it is crucial to explore how decentralization in the structure of political parties can serve as a solution to promote a better democratization process within the party itself.

Decentralization refers to the transfer of authority and responsibility from the central level to the branch or regional levels within a party structure. Its main objective is to provide more room for party members to be involved in decision-making processes, ensuring that the policies produced are more aligned with the needs and aspirations of the members. Political party decentralization is not only about the division of power but also encompasses aspects of communication, participation, and management that are more inclusive across all levels of the party. As a country with a developing democratic system, Indonesia faces significant challenges in ensuring that its political parties truly accommodate the interests of the people. In many cases, political parties in Indonesia remain centralized around certain figures who have full control over the strategic decisions of the party. This leads to political practices that are not transparent, overly centralized, and provide limited space for healthy internal development.

The main problem formulation in this study is how decentralization within political parties can contribute to enhancing internal democracy in Indonesian political parties. Several key questions addressed in this research include: (1) What are the factors that cause centralization within political parties in Indonesia? (2) How can decentralization increase party members' participation in decision-making processes? (3) What is the impact of decentralization on the quality of internal democracy within political parties in Indonesia? This study aims to provide a clearer picture of how decentralization can be implemented as a step toward improving internal democracy within political parties.

This study employs a descriptive–analytical design with a qualitative approach. It examines the phenomenon of party decentralization through case studies of several political parties in Indonesia that have implemented, or are in the process of adopting, decentralized models. Through in-depth interviews with party cadres, political observers, and democracy experts, as well as analysis of internal party documents, the research identifies the challenges, benefits, and obstacles associated with implementing decentralization. Within this approach, data are organized by relevant themes and then analyzed to uncover patterns that explain the relationship between decentralization and the enhancement of internal party democracy. This approach enables the researcher to probe more deeply into the perceptions, experiences, and perspectives of political actors in the field, providing a more comprehensive understanding of internal party dynamics.

In the field of political science, the decentralization of political parties has increasingly attracted the attention of researchers. Several previous studies have examined the impact of decentralization on party efficiency in resource management, decision-making, and political participation at the grassroots level. However, in Indonesia, research on political party decentralization focused on enhancing internal democracy remains relatively limited. Most studies have focused more on the hierarchical structure of parties or the role of centralization in maintaining party cohesion. On the other hand, some studies suggest that decentralization can create a more inclusive system, where party members from various levels can actively participate in shaping party policies. These studies also indicate that decentralization has the potential to foster more responsive and accountable leadership, as decisions are made closer to the realities and needs of party members. However, despite the existence of studies exploring aspects of decentralization, most of these studies do not fully address how decentralization can directly improve the quality of internal democracy within political parties, particularly in Indonesia. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by providing a more in-depth analysis of how decentralization can serve as a strategy to strengthen internal democracy within political parties in Indonesia.

This study offers novelty by examining the relationship between decentralization and the enhancement of internal democracy in political parties within the Indonesian context, a topic that has not been widely discussed in the existing academic literature. Furthermore, this research will focus on the dynamics of Indonesian political parties, which have their own characteristics and challenges in terms of internal democratization. By directly observing how decentralization is implemented across various political parties in Indonesia, this study will provide more practical and relevant insights into the evolving political landscape. Another innovation is the methodological approach used, which combines case studies with in-depth interviews with key actors within political parties. This approach offers the opportunity to study decentralization more comprehensively, both from theoretical and practical perspectives. This research not only contributes to the development of theory regarding decentralization in political parties but also provides recommendations that can be applied in practice to improve internal democracy within political parties in Indonesia.

This study holds significant importance for both the academic world and political practice in Indonesia. For academia, this research is expected to broaden the understanding of the importance of decentralization in strengthening internal democracy within political parties. The findings of this study

can serve as a reference for further research on political party organizational structures, both in Indonesia and in countries with similar political systems. For political practitioners, the results of this study can provide valuable insights into strategies for managing political parties in a more democratic and inclusive manner. By understanding how decentralization can enhance participation and accountability in decision-making processes, party leaders can design policies that are more responsive to the needs of party members and the broader society. Therefore, this research is expected to make a positive contribution to improving the quality of democracy in Indonesia.

Research Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study that focuses on political party decentralization as a step to enhance internal democracy within political parties in Indonesia. This method was chosen to deeply explore and understand the phenomena occurring, particularly in the context of Indonesian political parties, which face various challenges related to organizational structure and internal participation.

Research Type

This is a descriptive qualitative study aimed at describing and analyzing the phenomenon of decentralization within political parties in Indonesia. This research focuses on gaining an in-depth understanding of the internal dynamics of political parties, as well as the factors that influence the implementation of decentralization and its impact on internal democracy.

Research Approach

The approach used in this study is a case study approach. Case studies are chosen to specifically examine how decentralization is implemented in several political parties in Indonesia and how it impacts internal democracy. Through this approach, the researcher can explore in greater depth the factors influencing the decentralization process and understand how its implementation affects participation and decision-making within the party.

Research Location and Duration

This research will be conducted in Southeast Sulawesi, selecting several political parties that represent various ideologies and internal structures. The selection of political parties will be based on certain criteria, namely: (1) Parties that have implemented or are in the process of decentralizing their structure, (2) Parties with significant representation at the national or regional level, (3) Parties with accessible documentation or internal reports to analyze their structure and decision-making processes. The duration of the research is estimated to be 6 months, with the first 3 months dedicated to data collection and the following months for data analysis.

Data Sources

The data sources for this study consist of two main types: primary data and secondary data. **Primary Data:** Primary data will be obtained through in-depth interviews with key parties involved in the party structure, such as: (1) Party leaders at the central and regional levels, (2) Party cadres from various levels, (3) Political observers and democracy experts with knowledge on political party decentralization. Interviews will be conducted using a semi-structured interview guide, which allows the researcher to explore specific themes while still giving respondents space to share their experiences and viewpoints. **Secondary Data:** Secondary data will be collected from available documents, such as: (1) Annual reports

of the party, (2) Party's constitution and bylaws (AD/ART), (3) Articles, books, and publications related to organizational structure and decentralization in political parties, (4) Documentation of conferences, national congresses, and other significant party meetings.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection techniques in this study include: (1) In-depth Interviews: Conducted with relevant individuals to gather deeper insights into the implementation of decentralization within political parties, (2) Focus Group Discussions (FGD): Held with party cadres at the regional level to understand their perceptions of decentralization and its impact on participation and decision-making within the party, (3) Collection of Internal Party Documents: Such as financial reports, meeting minutes, and AD/ART to analyze party policies related to decentralization.

Data Analysis Techniques

Once the data has been collected, the analysis process will follow these steps: (1) Coding: Organizing the data into relevant categories, (2) Thematic Analysis: Analyzing the data to identify main themes and patterns, (3) Triangulation: Cross-referencing information from different sources to ensure validity, (4) Descriptive Analysis: Providing a detailed description of the findings and insights based on the identified themes and patterns.

Results and Discussion

Factors Causing Centralization in Political Parties

The interviews with respondents, which included party leaders at the central and regional levels as well as party cadres, revealed several key factors contributing to the centralization of political party structures in Indonesia. One dominant factor is the limited resources available for party management, including financial, managerial, and human resources. Many political parties believe that centralization is a more efficient way to manage these limited resources. According to one central-level respondent, "*By having centralized control, we can ensure that the decisions made align with the party's vision and mission and are not fragmented, considering the limited funds and facilities.*"

Respondents also noted that centralization provides stronger control for central party leaders, especially when facing external challenges, such as elections or internal crises within the party. One regional-level respondent expressed, "*Too much power given to the regions can lead to fragmentation, as each region has its own interests.*" Additionally, there is a lack of trust in regional cadres. Many central-level leaders feel that regional cadres lack sufficient experience or capacity to make strategic decisions that benefit the party as a whole. "*We are concerned that if decision-making is entirely delegated to the regions, the decisions made may conflict with the national policy direction of the party,*" said a central-level leader.

Furthermore, the political culture, which tends to be more authoritarian, is another factor contributing to centralization. Some political parties in Indonesia have highly hierarchical structures that emphasize loyalty to central leadership, limiting the freedom to make decisions at the regional level. This is further exacerbated by dependency on central figures who often serve as the key figures in attracting political support. According to several respondents, this creates a culture of dependency that is difficult to change. Finally, rigid and inflexible party regulations in some cases also affect the level of decentralization. For example, one regional-level respondent stated, "*The overly rigid rules from the*

center prevent us from acting according to the needs of the region. We are hindered by internal regulations that should be more adaptable to local conditions."

One major factor is the candidate selection process and the accompanying personalization of leadership. Empirical studies on new Southern European populist parties have shown a discrepancy between the participatory rhetoric promoted by these parties and the actual practices in candidate selection. For instance, Caiani et al., (2021) demonstrate that despite claims of radical democracy, parties like Podemos and the M5S employ centralized selection rules that consolidate power in the leadership. This trend is supported by broader studies emphasizing the evolving role of party leaders in contemporary politics, revealing that as parties increasingly rely on charismatic figures to serve as the primary public face, traditional intermediary structures are often bypassed (Sandri et al., 2019; Silva, 2019). When party leaders become the focal point for media attention and voter mobilization, this personalist approach fosters centralized control (Zons & Halstenbach, 2019).

Organizational changes driven by external pressures and evolving political environments also contribute to centralization. Modern electoral volatility, media scrutiny, and rapid information diffusion have pressured parties to adopt more streamlined and agile structures. Koskimaa, (2021) argues that the shift from member-centered mass organizations toward centralized "media agency" models is a response to this electorally volatile and publicity-oriented style of politics. Such reorganization enhances communication efficiency and decision-making while reinforcing authority concentration at the top. In a similar vein, Silva (2019) points out that transformations within party organizations have empowered single leaders at the expense of intermediate party layers, as parties aim for rapid and coherent messaging amid competitive electoral landscapes.

Technological developments compound these trends by reinforcing existing power structures. Digital tools enable parties to mobilize activists and disseminate messages quickly; however, research indicates that these technologies often serve to activate supporters without redistributing power within the organization (Rodríguez et al., 2025). Consequently, while political parties can engage a broader base of activists through social media and online platforms, such engagement rarely translates into substantive empowerment of lower-level members, thereby consolidating central leadership authority. Historical and organizational legacies further contribute to centralization. Studies on organizational imprinting suggest that early internal configurations can predispose parties to centralization over time. Andersen & Trondal, (2024) provide evidence that initial organizational choices, once established, tend to persist and guide the future internal distribution of power. This dynamic indicates that parties with a top-heavy structure may find it rational and path-dependent to continue centralizing authority. Additionally, as noted by Sandri et al., (2019), the fading importance of ideological cues creates space for charismatic leaders to dominate party dynamics, further marginalizing grassroots input.

Finally, the interplay of these factors creates a self-reinforcing cycle. The combination of personalized leadership, organizational restructuring in response to unpredictable electoral environments, and the use of technology that activates supporters without diffusing authority all reinforce centralized power structures within parties. In environments where rapid decision-making, clear messaging, and coordinated electoral strategies are essential, parties tend to privilege central control, even if such concentration undermines broader internal democracy and grassroots representation over time (Caiani et al., 2021; Koskimaa, 2021; Andersen & Trondal, 2024).

Decentralization Increases Party Member Participation in Decision-Making

The interview results indicate that decentralization has great potential to increase party member participation, especially in more inclusive decision-making processes. Respondents from various levels of

the party agreed that when authority is more distributed to regional levels, the decision-making process better reflects local interests. *"With decentralization, party members in the regions feel more valued and have a greater voice in determining the direction of the party's policies,"* said one respondent, a regional cadre. The implementation of decentralization gives regional leaders the freedom to formulate policies that align with local community needs. One regional-level respondent stated, *"The policies made by the center are often not in line with the realities in the region. With decentralization, we can be more responsive to the needs of the local community."*

Decentralization also allows more cadres to be involved in the decision-making process. For example, in some parties that have started decentralization, regional meetings or conferences have become more frequent, inviting more cadres to voice their opinions and proposals. *"This opens up space for lower-level cadres to express their ideas. We feel more empowered,"* said one branch-level cadre. However, some respondents also mentioned that while decentralization increases participation, the form of participation is still limited to regional leaders and not to the general party members. This indicates that although decentralization provides more opportunities for regional cadres to participate, access for ordinary members to engage in decision-making remains limited.

Some respondents emphasized that opening communication between the center and the regions as part of decentralization is a crucial element to ensure broader participation. *"If communication is not properly established, even if decentralization is implemented, ordinary members will still not be involved in the decision-making process,"* said a regional leader. Overall, decentralization has a positive impact on increasing participation, but its success depends on effective communication and clear distribution of tasks and authority between the center and the regions.

Empirical evidence and theoretical accounts underscore that decentralization broadens the locus of control within political parties and serves to institutionalize internal democracy, thereby fostering inclusiveness and stability among party members (Nwobu et al., 2024; Nwobu et al., 2024). We synthesize a wide range of research findings to argue that decentralization is critical in increasing member involvement in decision-making. Central to this argument is the research by (Nwobu, et al., 2024) who document that institutionalizing decentralization through standardized policies enhances inclusive local participation. By empowering regional structures and local branch organizations, parties are more apt to incorporate grassroots voices into key decisions, such as candidate selection and policy formulation. A subsequent study by the same authors Nwobu et al., (2024) presents compelling evidence that decentralized structures are correlated with membership stability. This increased stability suggests that when power is not overly concentrated at the top, members feel more engaged and valued in the decision-making process, thereby reinforcing intra-party loyalty and commitment.

Moreover, qualitative case studies provide further micro-level insights. Gaol et al., (2022) analyze the decentralization of party authority within the Indonesian context and find that decentralization during candidate nomination processes significantly increases the participatory role of local cadres. Such processes lead to broader internal debate and deliberation, ensuring that a wider cross-section of the party base contributes to key strategic decisions. Similar findings emerge from studies on European parties. For instance, Hühne, (2021) work on the populist Alternative for Germany reveals that the adoption of decentralized candidate selection procedures fosters extensive intra-party deliberation and increases the number of self-candidacies and competitive contests among candidates. These changes indicate a tangible shift from a strictly hierarchical model toward one where rank-and-file members have a meaningful voice.

Digital innovations further reinforce the benefits of decentralization. Research by Raniolo & Tarditi, (2019) shows that the integration of digital tools has enabled parties in Spain to disrupt traditional decision-making hierarchies. By leveraging these ICTs, parties facilitate real-time communication,

lowering traditional participation barriers and enabling grassroots mobilization. Complementing this, Konak, (2022) highlights the case of an online movement in Italy which, though not a traditional political party, demonstrates that platforms designed for direct participation can reinvigorate political engagement and democratize decision-making processes.

While the positive impacts of decentralization on internal participation are well-documented, it is necessary to consider critical perspectives. Eng's analysis of Cambodia Eng, (2016) illustrates that decentralization may sometimes be adopted instrumentally by ruling parties to consolidate regional power rather than genuinely foster democratic processes. Likewise, Solikhin, (2017) cautions that mere decentralization when combined with pre-existing centralized practices may not result in enhanced intra-party democracy if internal hierarchies and clientelistic networks remain unchallenged. These studies suggest that the benefits of decentralization are contingent on broader organizational culture and a genuine commitment to bottom-up decision-making.

The theoretical underpinnings offered by Bai (2024) further our understanding by emphasizing the historical pitfalls of centralization. According to Bai (2024), highly centralized structures tend to concentrate decision-making in the hands of a few, thereby limiting broader participation and increasing opportunities for corruption. Decentralization, as a countervailing strategy, can democratize internal party processes by distributing authority and reducing the risk of power abuse. This theoretical insight is supported by empirical results from studies on internal cohesion. Ugarriza et al., (2023) find that an increased perception of internal democracy as an outcome of decentralization enhances party cohesion, as members who feel included are more likely to support collective decisions.

Additional research on intra-party communication reinforces this argument. Pinzolits, (2023) investigates the permeability of internal party deliberations and finds that efforts to break down elitist bubbles lead to a substantially more participatory culture. This perspective is echoed by findings from Kamenova (2021), who demonstrates that even populist party contexts traditionally seen as leader-centric can exhibit significant grassroots involvement when decentralization is effectively implemented. Furthermore, internal power dynamics are critically examined by Chiru, (2024), whose work shows that donor-dependent clientelism, often associated with centralized decision-making, negatively affects the participatory quality of internal policies. In contrast, decentralized structures tend to mitigate such issues and empower ordinary members to become active participants in decision-making processes.

Finally, research on broader organizational reforms in new democracies illustrates that democratic candidate selection processes a central feature of decentralization can contribute to a more resilient and dynamic party structure (Kim, 2024). Although not all forms of decentralization guarantee enhanced participation, targeted reforms and supportive communication channels can create an environment where party members are both motivated and able to participate constructively in decision-making. This synthesis of empirical and theoretical work suggests that decentralization, when genuinely implemented, is instrumental in shifting the internal dynamics of political parties toward a more participatory and inclusive model (Bruhn & Wuhs, 2016; Craig, 2016; Aragón et al., 2017).

Decentralization increases party member participation in decision-making by diffusing power away from a centralized elite, institutionalizing practices that promote grassroots involvement, and fostering an organizational culture that values inclusiveness. While challenges persist particularly in contexts where decentralization is used instrumentally the weight of evidence supports the conclusion that a well-designed and authentically implemented decentralization strategy can enhance internal democratic practices and lead to more stable and vibrant political organizations.

The Impact of Decentralization on the Quality of Internal Democracy in Political Parties

The research findings indicate that decentralization can have a significant impact on the quality of internal democracy within political parties in Indonesia. In the interviews, many respondents stated that decentralization enables increased transparency in the decision-making process. One regional leader said, *"With decentralization, the decision-making process becomes more open, and we can monitor the policies being implemented by the central leadership."* Another positive impact is the increased accountability within the party. For example, parties that have implemented decentralization tend to have stronger oversight structures at the local level. *"Decentralization forces us to be accountable to regional cadres, not just the central leadership. This increases our accountability as leaders,"* stated a regional leader.

Although decentralization can improve transparency and accountability, some respondents also highlighted the challenges of more complex oversight. Regional leaders often feel they have difficulty overseeing the performance of branch-level leaders located farther away. *"Decentralization does give more power to the regions, but without a good oversight system, this can lead to the abuse of power,"* said a central-level leader. Additionally, decentralization can increase pluralism and the diversity of voices within the party. By providing more space for regional cadres, voices that were previously marginalized can find a place. *"We can express our views more freely, in accordance with local conditions, without fear of being sidelined by the center,"* said one regional cadre.

However, there are also concerns that too much decentralization could lead to fragmentation within the party, which may harm internal cohesion. *"Decentralization gives freedom, but sometimes it leads to fragmentation that undermines the unity of the party,"* said a respondent from the central leadership. This study shows that decentralization has the potential to improve the quality of internal democracy within the party, although challenges in oversight and party fragmentation must be carefully managed to prevent diminishing the benefits derived from the process.

Decentralization has the potential to enhance internal democracy by redistributing decision-making power from centralized party leadership to local branches. Nwobu et al., (2024) argue that a standardized approach to decentralization policy can strengthen local decision-making processes and foster inclusiveness, thereby reinforcing the institutionalization of the party. This is echoed in their subsequent work, which emphasizes the need for harmonized frameworks that ensure membership stability and coherence across local party structures Nwobu et al., (2024). Such frameworks are crucial in preventing fragmentation and ensuring that decentralization translates into effective intra-party democratic practices.

Despite these prospects, the literature indicates that decentralization can have adverse consequences if poorly managed. For instance, Solikhin, (2017) highlights that in Indonesia, the decentralization of party authority has often failed to produce genuine internal democracy due to the persistence of centralized, oligarchic, and clientelist practices. This gap between the theoretical promise of decentralization and its practical implementation suggests that, without appropriate checks and balances, decentralization may exacerbate pre-existing power imbalances within parties. Morgan, (2022) presents evidence from Latin America indicating that decentralization can contribute to the decay of traditional party structures. In contexts characterized by poor economic performance and weak programmatic differentiation, decentralization may undermine party cohesion, eroding the quality of internal democratic practices. This negative outcome contrasts with the ideal of decentralization as a democratizing tool, underscoring the importance of contextual factors in shaping its impact.

From a reform perspective, Mikucka-Wójtowicz, (2024) provides an analysis of evolving intra-party democracy patterns, noting that reforms aimed at democratizing leadership selection and decision-

making processes are critical for enhancing party legitimacy. His work suggests that decentralization, when combined with deliberate internal democratic reforms, can help parties transition away from elitist practices. Similarly, Höhne, (2024) documents experimental approaches in Germany where intra-party leadership selection has been reformed for greater participation. These reforms illustrate how decentralization strategies can improve internal democracy by ensuring more transparent and inclusive leadership selection processes.

In the context of Indonesia, Samsidar, (2025) provides a cautionary perspective, underscoring that internal democratic practices remain stifled by ongoing oligarchic dominance and weak party institutionalization. Despite efforts to decentralize and enhance local engagement, many political parties struggle with low political literacy and internal clientelism. This suggests that decentralization may be insufficient for robust internal democracy unless complemented by broader structural and cultural reforms. Synthesizing these findings, it becomes clear that decentralization has dual potential to enhance or undermine internal democracy in political parties. On one hand, when implemented through standardized policies promoting inclusiveness and local empowerment, decentralization can strengthen internal democratic practices by diversifying decision-making and fostering accountability. Conversely, if poorly designed or if it reinforces entrenched local power bases characterized by oligarchic or clientelist behaviors, decentralization can lead to fragmentation and decay of party structures. Therefore, the quality of internal democracy in political parties is shaped not only by the degree of decentralization but also by the interaction between the decentralization framework and the broader socio-political and institutional context in which parties operate (Ali & Mufti, 2021; Vandeleene & Haute, 2021; Rahat, 2022; Shrestha et al., 2022).

In conclusion, current research indicates that the relationship between decentralization and internal party democracy is complex and context-dependent. Future research and policy formulation should focus on developing comprehensive decentralization strategies that promote local participation while embedding systemic accountability measures and ensuring coherence across different levels of party organization. Only through such an integrated approach can the potential benefits of decentralization for enhancing internal democratic quality be fully realized, while mitigating risks of exacerbating internal oligarchic tendencies and fragmentation.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that decentralization holds significant potential in enhancing the quality of internal democracy within political parties in Indonesia. Decentralization has been shown to increase transparency and accountability in decision-making processes, as regional leaders and cadres are given more space to contribute to the formulation of policies that align with local needs. This inclusivity in decision-making fosters a greater sense of empowerment among party members, especially at the regional and grassroots levels. Furthermore, decentralization allows for greater pluralism and diversity of voices within the party, helping to address previously marginalized perspectives. However, the study also reveals that decentralization presents certain challenges. One of the key concerns is the complexity of oversight, as regional leaders face difficulties in monitoring branch-level activities effectively. Additionally, while decentralization can improve internal democracy, excessive decentralization may lead to fragmentation, potentially undermining party cohesion and unity. Therefore, while decentralization offers considerable benefits in strengthening internal democracy, its successful implementation requires careful management of these challenges, particularly in ensuring effective oversight and maintaining the unity of the party.

References

- Ali, S. A. M., & Mufti, M. (2021). Political Parties and Decentralization in Pakistan. *Publius the Journal of Federalism*, 52(2), 201–224. <https://doi.org/10.1093/publius/pjab037>
- Andersen, J., & Trondal, J. (2024). From Exclusion to Establishment: Organizational Birthmarks and Imprinting Within Populist Parties. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 47(2), 260–281. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9477.12272>
- Aragón, P., Gallego, H., Laniado, D., Volkovich, Y., & Kaltenbrunner, A. (2017). Online Network Organization of Barcelona en Comú, an Emergent Movement-Party. *Computational Social Networks*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40649-017-0044-4>
- Bai, J. (2024). The Logic of the Historical Evolution of Rosa Luxemburg’s Idea of “Self-Centralization.” *Journal of Sociology and Ethnology*, 6(2), 127–133. <https://doi.org/10.23977/jsoc.2024.060219>
- Bruhn, K., & Wuhs, S. T. (2016). Competition, Decentralization, and Candidate Selection in Mexico. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 60(7), 819–836. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764216632821>
- Caiani, M., Padoan, E., & Marino, B. (2021). Candidate Selection, Personalization and Different Logics of Centralization in New Southern European Populism: The Cases of Podemos and the M5S. *Government and Opposition*, 57(3), 404–427. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2021.9>
- Chiru, M. (2024). Clientelism, Party Organization and Intra-Party Democracy. *Comparative Political Studies*, 58(4), 680–713. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140241252082>
- Craig, P. (2016). Pressure and Politics in a Decentralized Candidate Selection System. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 60(7), 799–818. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764216632819>
- Eng, N. (2016). Decentralization in Cambodia: New Wine in Old Bottles. *Public Administration and Development*, 36(4), 250–262. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.1765>
- Gaol, J. L., Muryanto, M., & Kusmanto, H. (2022). Demokratisasi Dan Desentralisasi Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan Dalam Pemilukada Provinsi Sumatera Utara Tahun 2018. *Perspektif*, 11(1), 333–354. <https://doi.org/10.31289/perspektif.v11i1.5637>
- Höhne, B. (2021). How Democracy Works Within a Populist Party: Candidate Selection in the Alternative for Germany. *Government and Opposition*, 58(3), 478–496. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2021.33>
- Höhne, B. (2024). The Experimental Catch-Up Democratization of Intra-Party Leadership Selection in Germany. *German Politics & Society*, 42(1), 61–87. <https://doi.org/10.3167/gps.2024.420103>
- Kamenova, V. (2021). Internal Democracy in Populist Right Parties: The Process of Party Policy Development in the Alternative for Germany. *European Political Science Review*, 13(4), 488–505. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1755773921000217>
- Kim, Y. (2024). The Development of Party Organizations in New Democracies. *Oxford University Press*, 19, 401–426. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198888734.003.0019>
- Konak, İ. (2022). İtalyan Beş Yıldız Hareketi Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme. *Bingöl Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 24, 424–440. <https://doi.org/10.29029/busbed.1117977>
- Koskimaa, V. (2021). The Weight of the Past: Political Parties’ ‘Genetic’ Heritage and the Ease of Their Organizational Professionalization. *Government and Opposition*, 58(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2021.22>
- Mikucka-Wójtowicz, D. (2024). Intra-Party Democracy: Patterns of Change. *Teoria Polityki*, 10, 81–92. <https://doi.org/10.4467/25440845tp.24.004.20596>
- Morgan, J. (2022). Political Decentralization and Party Decay in Latin America. *Latin American Research Review*, 53(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.25222/larr.255>
- Nwobu, G., Nwanegbo, C. J., & Onu, G. (2024). *Strengthening Inclusive Local Participation Through Decentralized Party Organization: Insights From Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressive Congress (APC), 2015–2023*. <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202410.1318.v1>
- Nwobu, G., Onu, G., & Nwanegbo, C. J. (2024). *Assessing the Impact of Decentralized Party Structures on Membership Stability in Nigeria: A Study of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressive Congress (APC), 2015–2023*. <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202410.1158.v1>

- Pinzolit, R. F. J. (2023). Intraparty Communication and Permeability in the Spö From the Perspective of Local Political Actors. *South Eastern European Journal of Communication*, 5(1), 79–86. <https://doi.org/10.47960/2712-0457.2023.1.5.79>
- Rahat, G. (2022). Party Types in the Age of Personalized Politics. *Perspectives on Politics*, 22(1), 213–228. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1537592722000366>
- Raniolo, F., & Tarditi, V. (2019). Digital Revolution and Party Innovations: An Analysis of the Spanish Case. *Italian Political Science Review/Rivista Italiana Di Scienza Politica*, 50(2), 235–253. <https://doi.org/10.1017/ipo.2019.27>
- Rodríguez, R. P., Rosenblatt, F., & Vommaro, G. (2025). Activating Without Transforming: The Use of Technology to Engage Activists in Political Campaigns. *Latin American Politics and Society*, 67(3), 69–84. <https://doi.org/10.1017/lap.2025.6>
- Samsidar, S. (2025). Dynamics of Democracy in Indonesia: A Literature Review of the Role of Political Parties in Democratic Consolidation. *Nawala Education*, 2(3), 48–55. <https://doi.org/10.62872/e08bms38>
- Sandri, G., Seddone, A., & Venturino, F. (2019). When Charisma Is No Longer Enough. Insights on Populist Parties' Leadership From the (Northern) League. *Polish Political Science Review*, 7(1), 80–95. <https://doi.org/10.2478/ppsr-2019-0005>
- Shrestha, K., Martínez-Vázquez, J., & Hankla, C. R. (2022). Political Decentralization and Corruption: Exploring the Conditional Role of Parties. *Economics and Politics*, 35(1), 411–439. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ecpo.12222>
- Silva, F. F. d. (2019). Party Organizational Change and Leader Effects on Voting Behavior: Linking the Electoral and Party Faces of Presidentialization. *Party Politics*, 27(4), 803–813. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068819893511>
- Solikhin, A. (2017a). Menimbang Pentingnya Desentralisasi Partai Politik Di Indonesia. *Journal of Governance*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.31506/jog.v2i1.2120>
- Ugarriza, J. E., Quishpe, R., Acuña, D. C., & Salazar, M. A. (2023). Transitioning Guerrillas: An Analysis of the Internal Cohesion of the Former FARC in Their Transit From War to Democracy. *Latin American Politics and Society*, 66(3), 79–106. <https://doi.org/10.1017/lap.2023.37>
- Vandeleene, A., & Haute, É. V. (2021). A Comparative Analysis of Selection Criteria of Candidates in Belgium. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 3. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.777747>
- Zons, G., & Halstenbach, A. (2019). The AfD as a 'Leaderless' Right-Wing Populist Party. How the Leadership-Structure Dilemma Left an Imprint on the Party's Leadership. *Polish Political Science Review*, 7(1), 41–60. <https://doi.org/10.2478/ppsr-2019-0003>

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).