

Open Recruitment as the Foundation of a Political Party Grounded in Pancasila

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Abstract : *Political parties play a crucial role in the political recruitment process as a means of training and selecting future leaders in a democratic system. However, political recruitment practices in Indonesia are still often characterized by elite dominance, a lack of transparency, and weak application of meritocratic principles. This study aims to analyze open recruitment from the perspective of Pancasila ethics as the foundation for the development of democratic political parties. The study employs a literature review method with a qualitative approach through the analysis of various scientific articles, books, and relevant documents. The results indicate that open recruitment can strengthen internal party democracy, expand political participation, and enhance transparency and accountability in the candidate selection process. From the perspective of Pancasila ethics, political recruitment must be conducted fairly, participatively, and with a focus on the public interest. Therefore, open recruitment serves as a crucial foundation for political parties grounded in Pancasila ethics, as it promotes meritocracy, reduces elite dominance, and fosters leadership with integrity.*

Keywords : *Open Recruitment, Political Parties, Pancasila Ethics, Democracy*

Abstrak : *Partai politik memainkan peran penting dalam proses rekrutmen politik sebagai sarana untuk melatih dan memilih pemimpin masa depan dalam sistem demokrasi. Namun, praktik rekrutmen politik di Indonesia masih sering ditandai oleh dominasi elite, kurangnya transparansi, dan lemahnya penerapan prinsip-prinsip meritokrasi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis rekrutmen terbuka dari perspektif etika Pancasila sebagai fondasi untuk pengembangan partai politik demokratis. Penelitian menggunakan metode tinjauan pustaka dengan pendekatan kualitatif melalui analisis berbagai artikel ilmiah, buku, dan dokumen relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa rekrutmen terbuka dapat memperkuat demokrasi internal partai, memperluas partisipasi politik, dan meningkatkan transparansi dan akuntabilitas dalam proses pemilihan kandidat. Dari perspektif etika Pancasila, rekrutmen politik harus dilakukan secara adil, partisipatif, dan dengan fokus pada kepentingan publik. Oleh karena itu, rekrutmen terbuka berfungsi sebagai fondasi penting bagi partai politik yang berlandaskan etika Pancasila, karena mempromosikan meritokrasi, mengurangi dominasi elite, dan menumbuhkan kepemimpinan dengan integritas.*

Keywords : *Open Recruitment, Political Parties, Pancasila Ethics, Democracy*

INTRODUCTION

Political parties serve as one of the instruments of democracy, acting as a bridge between the state and society. However, to this day, political parties still face the problem of low public trust. The results of the Indonesian Political Indicators National Survey for the period of January 2026 shows that only about 61% of the public expressed trust in political parties, while the rest expressed

little trust or no trust at all. This situation indicates that the governance of political parties still requires improvement, particularly in establishing more open, inclusive, and equitable mechanisms for cadre development and recruitment. Low public trust in political parties signals that political parties have not yet been fully able to establish a system that provides equal opportunities for every citizen to participate in political life. One aspect that requires attention is the mechanism for political cadre development and recruitment as the gateway to fostering a democratic political culture.

Conceptually, political recruitment is one of the key functions of political parties that determines the quality of democracy, as it relates to the selection process for prospective leaders who will hold political and government offices. Therefore, recruitment must be conducted objectively, prioritizing integrity, competence, and accountability to the public interest (Malik, 2020). Furthermore, it was emphasized that democratic political recruitment must be conducted inclusively by providing equal opportunities to every citizen without discrimination, so that political parties serve not only as a means of gaining power, but also as a vehicle for leadership development, strengthening political participation, and advocating for the aspirations of the people. An inclusive candidate selection mechanism will also create a more open political system because it involves party members and the public in the process of determining future leaders, rather than being determined solely by a few party elites.

A democratic political recruitment process must prioritize the candidates' abilities and qualifications and uphold the principle of equality in the selection for public office (Hidayat et al., 2022). The process of selecting candidates for legislative office must involve a rigorous screening process that prioritizes track record and ethics in order to produce representatives who possess integrity (Durahman et al., 2023, p. 399). Thus, the quality of political recruitment is largely determined by selection mechanisms that are transparent, objective, and focused on fostering leadership with strong character. Studies on internal party democracy indicate that an inclusive candidate selection process can enhance public trust, strengthen social cohesion, and reduce political alienation among the public. However, in practice, inclusive methods are often manipulated to serve the interests of the elite or even ignored entirely (Novelli et al., 2024).

Various studies have emphasized the importance of open, inclusive, and ethical political recruitment in strengthening the quality of democracy. However, discussions on political recruitment tend to focus more on procedural aspects than on the underlying values. In fact, every system used in political decision-making inherently involves various value-based considerations that often go unnoticed when attention is directed solely toward the outcomes or the procedures employed (Lazar, 2022, p. 19). Therefore, an analysis of political recruitment must not only consider the transparency of its mechanisms but also the values that underpin the selection and nomination of candidates. Consequently, this study seeks to analyze open recruitment from the perspective of Pancasila ethics to explain its relevance as a foundation for the development of political parties that are democratic, just, and oriented toward the public interest.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a literature review method with a qualitative approach. Research data were obtained from various relevant sources, such as journal articles, books, and scientific documents discussing political recruitment, internal party democracy, political ethics, and the values of Pancasila. The data obtained was then analyzed descriptively to examine the relationship between the principle of open recruitment and Pancasila ethics as the foundation for the development of political parties that are democratic, just, and oriented toward the public interest.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Open Recruitment in Democratic Political Parties

Political recruitment is a means of attracting potential candidates for political office, while candidate selection is the process of choosing candidates from a pool of competing candidates (Prianto, 2025). It is further explained that candidate selection is described as a “political secret garden”—a process that is opaque, generally invisible to the public, and largely governed by internal party rules, informal practices, and power dynamics. Political recruitment, on the other hand, is more focused on attracting and developing potential individuals to engage in political activities, whereas candidate selection is the process of determining which individuals will receive the party’s official endorsement in a political contest. The quality of the candidate selection process is of paramount importance, as it determines the quality of leadership produced by the political party.

However, in practice, the candidate selection process within political parties often remains closed and dominated by the party elite. Prianto (2025) explains that this describes the situation through the concepts of the “smoke-filled room” and the “secret garden of politics”—that is, a decision-making process that is exclusive, lacks transparency, and is influenced more by power dynamics and the interests of the elite than by the aspirations of party members or the public. Consequently, the candidate selection process is vulnerable to transactional practices, nepotism, and favoritism that can undermine the principle of meritocracy. This situation not only weakens internal party democracy but also risks producing candidates who better reflect the interests of the elite than the public interest.

Political parties do indeed remain the primary channel for political recruitment, but in practice they do not yet fully reflect the party’s role as a vehicle for leadership development and renewal. Political recruitment should not be limited to the nomination of candidates, but should also encompass the development of members, party officials, and prospective public officials. However, in practice, the candidate selection process still tends to be undemocratic, centralized, and marked by elitism, money politics, and patronage (Bahri, 2022). This is further exacerbated by the tendency of political parties to field candidates from outside their ranks, which reflects the weakness of political institutionalization and cadre development. As a result, parties do not always give opportunities to the best cadres who have been nurtured through the organizational process, but instead prioritize figures who possess popularity, economic clout, and political resources deemed capable of increasing the chances of victory in electoral contests.

In the context of democracy, this open political recruitment process aims not only to identify candidates with high electability but also to ensure the realization of internal party democracy. Political recruitment conducted democratically has the potential to strengthen internal party democracy while also determining the quality of the party organization (Arief, 2025). Improving the recruitment and cadre development system is currently a critical aspect of producing cadres who possess integrity, ethical standards, and accountability. In addition to considering electability, the recruitment process must also prioritize ideological loyalty, capability, and the candidate’s understanding of the party’s vision and mission through a tiered leadership development mechanism. Through these system improvements, the political recruitment process can be more focused on the professionalism and leadership quality required in a democratic system—rather than being solely oriented toward a candidate’s popularity.

Open recruitment is essential because it provides equal opportunities for all citizens who meet the requirements to participate in the political nomination process. The selection process is conducted transparently so that the public can learn about the candidates’ track records, the stages

of the selection process, and the criteria used by the party in determining which candidates to endorse. Such transparency is essential for fostering healthy competition, strengthening political parties' accountability, and ensuring that the selected candidates not only secure the support of the party elite but also possess the capacity, integrity, and legitimacy that can be justified to the public (Putra *et al.*, 2022).

Pancasila Ethics as the Foundation of Political Recruitment

Political recruitment, viewed through the lens of Pancasila political ethics, is not merely understood as a mechanism for filling political positions, but also as a process of cadre development aimed at producing leaders who possess integrity, competence, and a commitment to the public interest. Therefore, the selection process for prospective cadres must be conducted objectively, taking into account each individual's track record, capabilities, and moral values. The more selective the screening system implemented by political parties, the better the quality of the members and cadres produced (Durahman *et al.*, 2023). Based on this concept, political recruitment grounded in the ethics of Pancasila should not be solely focused on gaining power, but must instead aim to cultivate leaders of integrity and character who are accountable to the interests of the nation and the state, through a selection process that prioritizes candidates' capabilities, track records, and ethical standards.

The influence of powerful figures can interfere with the candidate selection process within the party, resulting in undemocratic mechanisms (Ekayanta *et al.*, 2025). This situation leads to the aspirations of grassroots leaders and members often being ignored; indeed, the rights of members who are more deserving of nomination opportunities can be sidelined by specific political interests. Consequently, the political recruitment process is no longer based on the principles of justice, meritocracy, and participation—which are the very essence of democracy—but is instead influenced by power dynamics and pragmatic interests. It is further explained that within the framework of Pancasila political ethics, such practices contradict the value of Democracy Led by the Wisdom of Deliberation and Representation, which emphasizes the importance of participation, deliberation, and respect for members' aspirations in political decision-making. Moreover, elite dominance and power intervention in the nomination process are also inconsistent with the principle of Social Justice for All Indonesian People, as they diminish equal opportunities for cadres to compete fairly. Therefore, political recruitment grounded in the ethics of Pancasila demands a selection process that is open, accountable, free from practices of nepotism and oligarchy, and oriented toward the candidates' capacity, integrity, and dedication to the public interest.

The process of recruiting party members is often influenced by internal competition and the interests of local elites (Barros & Schmeißer, 2024). Member recruitment is geared more toward building a political support base and bolstering the candidacy prospects of certain elites than toward recruiting competent and representative members. This phenomenon indicates that the political recruitment process is susceptible to being used as a tool for maintaining power, thereby potentially undermining the principles of meritocracy and the public interest. The democratization enshrined in party rules can coexist with the strong influence of elites in the candidate selection process (Marino, 2025). Furthermore, the informal rules that develop within parties are often not inclusive enough and, in some cases, actually run counter to efforts to democratize political parties. Therefore, the political recruitment process cannot be measured solely by the existence of formal procedures; it must also take into account the practices that occur during its implementation. Furthermore, the political recruitment process must be conducted substantively by upholding openness, participation, and fairness so that every cadre has an equal opportunity to compete democratically in accordance with the political ethics of Pancasila.

Open Recruitment as the Foundation of a Political Party Grounded in Pancasila Ethics

Open recruitment is one of the key prerequisites for establishing an ethical and democratic political party. Through open mechanisms, political parties can provide broader opportunities for members and the public to participate in the political process based on their capabilities, integrity, and competence. Political parties should have structures that are open and responsive to the aspirations of the public (Tatawu *et al.*, 2025). However, in practice, many political parties remain trapped in centralized, hierarchical, and opaque structures, which hinder the development of internal party democracy. The issue of political recruitment is not only related to candidate selection mechanisms but also concerns the internal governance of political parties. The authority to determine candidates in most Indonesian political parties remains centralized within the party's central leadership, while the aspirations of regional leaders and grassroots members often lack a voice in the decision-making process (Pahrudin *et al.*, 2025). As a result, there is a tendency toward oligarchic control, the marginalization of rank-and-file members' voices, and top-down decision-making, which has the potential to undermine transparency and inclusivity in the political nomination process. Therefore, this open recruitment process is essential to expand member participation, reduce elite dominance, and strengthen internal party democracy so that the nomination process can proceed in a more fair and accountable manner. Equalizing political access and strengthening public participation also have the potential to enhance accountability, strengthen social cohesion, and promote sustainable political development (Sajian & Alif, 2025).

Competition and transparency in the process of selecting party leadership are important aspects of democratic politics because they promote competition, accountability, and the legitimacy of political organizations (Katsourides & Ioannidis, 2025). The more open and inclusive a party's decision-making process is, the greater the likelihood of reducing elite dominance and increasing the involvement of members and the public in political life. Furthermore, a process conducted fairly and transparently can demonstrate the party's commitment to democratic values while enhancing public trust in political parties. Openness in political recruitment is not only related to public access to the nomination process but also concerns the transparency of political party governance. Political parties hold significant authority in determining candidate selection mechanisms, nomination requirements, and the parties with final authority in determining the list of candidates (Glaser, 2023). politics. This situation indicates that transparency and accountability are essential prerequisites for ensuring that the political recruitment process is conducted democratically and is not controlled solely by the interests of certain elites.

The importance of open recruitment also lies in its ability to broaden political participation and improve the quality of candidates recruited by political parties. Open recruitment provides an opportunity for all eligible individuals to participate in the selection process, whether they come from within the party or from outside it, such as community leaders, academics, and professionals (Fatkhi *et al.*, 2025). This mechanism fosters candidate diversity while enhancing transparency in the political nomination process. Furthermore, openness in the candidate selection process can broaden public participation in political life and strengthen the relationship between political parties and the public. First-time voters with a solid understanding of politics tend to demonstrate a high level of political interest and are more active in various forms of political participation (Darmansyah, 2025). This means that open access to political information plays a crucial role in encouraging public engagement—particularly among the younger generation—in democratic life. In addition to identifying qualified candidates, this open recruitment process can also serve as a means to build public trust in political parties and as a vehicle for political education that strengthens citizen participation in the democratic process. Transparency in political recruitment

relates to the ease with which the public can obtain and understand information regarding the process. Open data alone is not sufficient to achieve transparent political governance, as what is truly needed is information that is accessible and understandable to the public (Zhao et al., 2021). In the context of political recruitment, transparency is not achieved merely by publishing documents or nomination rules, but also by providing clear information regarding candidate requirements, the selection process, candidates' track records, and the basis for the party's decision in selecting its candidates.

The fundamental problem facing political parties today is the lack of a merit-based recruitment system. The recruitment process for legislative candidates is still dominated by political loyalty, personal connections, and the candidates' financial resources, while aspects such as competence, integrity, and the ability to represent constituents often receive insufficient attention (Sihombing, 2025). As a result, political recruitment tends to reinforce the dominance of the party elite and limit opportunities for individuals who possess leadership qualities but lack strong political or economic resources. The dominance of the elite, high political costs, and the strong influence of oligarchs make the nomination process non-competitive and reduce opportunities for alternative candidates (Saputri et al., 2025). This situation indicates that recruitment and nomination mechanisms within political parties remain susceptible to being influenced by the interests of the elite rather than by the principles of meritocracy and internal democracy. It also suggests that procedural democracy has not yet been fully accompanied by substantive democracy within political parties. Therefore, open recruitment serves as a crucial foundation for political parties grounded in the Pancasila ethos, as it expands political access, strengthens meritocracy, and ensures that the candidate selection process is based on capacity, integrity, and commitment to the public interest.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Political recruitment is a strategic function of political parties in preparing and selecting prospective leaders to fill public office. However, various studies indicate that the process of recruiting and selecting candidates within political parties often remains closed, centralized, and influenced by elite dominance, and thus does not yet fully reflect the principles of democracy, participation, and meritocracy. From the perspective of Pancasila ethics, political recruitment should not be solely oriented toward the attainment of power but must also serve as a means of leadership development to produce leaders of integrity, competence, and accountability who are committed to the public interest through processes that uphold the values of justice, deliberation, and participation. Therefore, open recruitment serves as a crucial foundation for the development of political parties grounded in Pancasila ethics, as it expands political opportunities for all citizens, strengthens internal party democracy, reduces elite dominance and oligarchic practices, and ensures that the candidate selection process is conducted transparently, accountably, and based on capacity, integrity, and commitment to the public interest.

Based on these findings, concrete efforts are needed to promote the implementation of a more open and democratic political recruitment system within political parties. There is a need to implement a political recruitment system that is more open, transparent, and inclusive by providing equal opportunities to all citizens who meet the requirements to register as prospective party cadres or public officials, whether from within or outside the party. The process of registration, selection, and nomination of candidates must be conducted openly by providing the public with information regarding requirements, selection stages, evaluation criteria, and selection results. Furthermore, the selection of candidates should be based on the principle of meritocracy, which considers capacity, integrity, track record, and commitment to the public interest, rather than solely on proximity to

the party elite, popularity, or financial power. Through such mechanisms, political parties are expected to strengthen internal democracy, improve the quality of political leadership, and rebuild public trust in political parties as democratic institutions.

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