



Sifulloh, Ayub, Barus, & Ramadhani, 2024). General Election participants compete through the stages which were determined by the general election organizer, namely the General Election Commission (*Komisi Pemilihan Umum*). Even, it is not seldom that Regional Head Elections lead to conflicts between the supporters of these regional head candidates (Afrimadona, 2021). One of the frequently occurring conflicts is religious polarization in politics. What is meant by polarization is the intersection between two groups (interest groups, etc.) and their oppositions (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Indonesia, 2025b). Therefore, institutions that have the special task and function to handle conflicts need to carry out preventive efforts to mitigate conflicts before, during, and after the Regional Head Elections (Mulyadi, Lestari, Alvareza, & Hujaipah, 2024).

The Election Supervisory Agency (*Badan Pengawas Pemilu/Bawaslu*) is included as one of the institutions that have the task to carry out supervision against various forms of violation actions that occur during the Regional Head Election process (Suhariyanto, Ishwara, & Kirana, 2024). Law No. 7 of 2017 on the General Election (General Election Law) regulates that the Election Supervisory Agency has the role of a supervisory agency on the General Election organization in the area of the Republic of Indonesia Unified State. Meanwhile, the Provincial Election Supervisory Agency supervises the organization of General Elections and Head of the Region General Elections at the provincial level. Next, the City/Regency Election Supervisory Agency supervises the organization of General Elections and Head of the Region General Elections at the city/regency level.

However, as a juridical norm, the General Election Law does not specifically regulate religious polarization as a form of general election violation, both in its process or organization (Salahudin et al., 2020). This was because the religious polarization issue cannot be deemed as a violation of the general election process. However, it tends to be directed to the violation of political ethics. The use of the religious polarization narration in general elections generally happens during the campaign period of general election participants which is connotated as hate speech to the group of political oppositions. If this religious polarization narration is related to general election participants or other individuals, the perpetrator who spread the hate speech narration can be punished. This is not due to the violation of general election regulations, but due to insults or blasphemy against religion (Salahudin et al., 2020).

Religious polarization in the Indonesian Regional Head Election is a complex and multi-dimensional democratic phenomenon (Kimura, Istania, Afrimadona, Imawan, & Ramadhan, 2024). The emergence of issues related to ethnic groups, religion, race, and groups

in campaigns, the spread of religion-related hoaxes and hate speech, as well as efforts of mass mobilization based on religious sentiments become serious challenges for the organization of a democratic and honorable Regional Head Election (Pilander, Lolong, & Rawung, 2024). This condition may threaten the unity of the nation, trigger horizontal conflicts, and damage the harmonic social order. General Elections and Regional Head Elections that run in a conducive manner may become one of the benchmarks for the success of a democracy in a country. The state must protect the rights of society to choose regional leaders so that society can implement democratic practice in a safe and orderly manner. As a pillar of democracy, General Elections are a manifestation of the people's democracy which in essence also supports the freedom of speech that is a manifestation of human rights (Bae, 2022).

The quality of democracy started to decrease in 2014 or in the last decade. Since then, there has been an increase in polarization. Religious conservatism and the state's oppression also increased. This creates a political situation where more and more people become scared of arbitrary arrest. They generally fear discussing political issues (Setiawan & Tomsa, 2023). Politics are often infiltrated in *da'wa* (Islamic missionary activities) media or religious events, even though places of worship should ideally be sterile from political discussions. Ideally, human beings should come to places of worship to focus on the orientation of life in the hereafter rather than thinking about worldly political issues. This is a form of violation against political ethics, as places of worship are not campaign venues.

The Election Supervisory Agency has a vital role in minimizing religious polarization in Regional Head Elections. As an independent institution that has the authority to supervise the organization of general elections, the state gave the Election Supervisory Agency to prevent and act upon ethical and legal violations that occur during the election process. It is hoped that the political mitigation the Election Supervisory Agency carries out may prevent the spreading of religious polarization as well as create a conducive political climate for the organization of an honest, just, and democratic Regional Head Election. According to the Great Indonesian Dictionary, the mitigation act is defined as actions that are required to decrease the impacts of a disaster (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Indonesia, 2025a). Or at least, in the political context, it is to decrease the impacts of conflicts that are caused by religious polarization issues that spread in society.

The identified research gap is that there is a limited amount of research that specifically discusses the issue of political mitigation The Election Supervisory Agency has a

role in carrying out political mitigation in Indonesian Regional Head Elections. The majority of previous studies tend to focus on the legal and statute aspects of the supervision of Regional Head Elections. Meanwhile, there is less research on political mitigation strategies and implementation carried out by general election organizational institutions, especially the Election Supervisory Agency as the supervisor of the general election organization in the context of religious polarization. The element of novelty in this research focuses on the Election Supervisory Agency's political mitigation strategies and implementation in handling religious polarization in Regional Head Elections.

This study aims to analyze the Election Supervisory Agency's model of political mitigation against religious polarization in Regional Head Elections in Indonesia. This research is expected to bring benefits and provide academic contribution for the development of legal, political, and social studies, especially in the context of Regional Head Election supervision and social mitigation. Apart from that, it is also hoped that this research may give methodical suggestions for the Election Supervisory Agency in formulating its future strategies and programs. It may also give insight to the government and other stakeholders in formulating a public policy that is responsive to the challenge of religious polarization in Regional Head Elections. Thus, this research is expected to become a facility of contribution to organize Regional Head Elections that are democratic and honorable to strengthen the nation's unity and oneness.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This was a type of qualitative research with a doctrinal or normative approach. This approach emphasizes the analysis of the aspects of applicable laws and regulations as well as their interpretation in certain contexts (Fajar & Achmad, 2019, p. 183). In this case, this research focuses on studying the implementation of Regional Head Elections and the role of the Election Supervisory Agency. Thus, regulations related to general elections and democratic principles in Indonesia became the main basis of analysis.

This research employed the deductive analytical method, i.e., drawing conclusions from things with a general characteristic to those with special characteristics (Marzuki, 2005). This process starts off by identifying primary legal sources in the form of the Holy Qur'an and Hadith. The authors also analyzed legal regulations that are relevant to the Regional Head Elections, especially Law No. 7 of 2017 on the General Election, then elaborated them with





	Elections	to religious issues, such as the suspicion that he is a communist and that he is not a practicing Muslim.	campaigns through social media and political propaganda.	mobilize a certain voter base.
2017	2017 Jakarta Regional Head Elections	The controversy on the statement of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) on Al-Qur'an, chapter <i>Al-Maidah</i> verse 51, which triggered the 212 Act and a sharp religion-based polarization.	Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) was imposed with imprisonment for two years for the allegation of religious blasphemy based on the Decision of the North Jakarta District Court No. 1537/Pid.B/2016/PN JKT. UTR dated May 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2017.	Basuki Tjahaja Purnama lost against Anies Baswedan. There was a societal rift based on religious identity.
2018	2018 West Java Regional Head Elections	Ridwan Kamil faced religious narrations from his political opposition who questioned his representation of Islam.	No legal case. There was only a competition of political narrations through media and field campaigns.	There was a competition of Islamic narrations in politics even though in the end, Ridwan Kamil was elected as the Governor of West Java
2019	2019 Presidential Elections	Anti-Islamic issues were again directed to Joko Widodo, while Prabowo Subianto obtained support from conservative Islamic groups.	There is no legal case that is directly related to religious issues. There were only negative campaigns via social media.	The consolidation of religion-based groups in politics deepened the polarization.
2024	2024 Presidential Elections	Anies Baswedan was positioned as a symbol of conservative Islam, while Ganjar Pranowo was a symbol of moderate Islam.	Up to now, there has not been a prominent legal decision or case related to religious issues.	Polarization still continues, strengthening the segmentation between conservative Islam and moderate nationalists.

Disputes in the process of General Elections and Regional Head Elections are usually resolved by the Election Supervisory Agency. Meanwhile, normatively, disputes on General Election results are the authority of the Constitutional Court. The Election Supervisory Agency has a crucial role in enforcing the Election Law. As an independent institution that is acknowledged through the Decision of the Constitutional Court No. 11/PUU-VIII/2010, the Election Supervisory Agency is no longer a part of and no longer formed by the General Election Commission. With its status as an independent institution, the Election Supervisory Agency has an equal position as the General Election Commission as the organizer of general elections that have the characteristics of national, permanent, and independent, according to Article 22E clause (5) of the Republic of Indonesia's 1945 Constitution. Even so, in the aspect of the general election organization, it seems that the Election Supervisory Agency's tasks and authority as a supervisor of general elections are still limited (Ramdani, 2023).

The increasing religious conservatism in Indonesia is accompanied by an increase in polarization. This state is traditionally divided into those who believe that Islam must direct the state organization and policies and those who believe that the state must be religiously pluralistic. This polarization became a strong issue in the 1950's, but temporarily weakened during the Old Era and Reformation Era governmental periods. However, in the 2014 and 2019 Presidential Elections, with only two presidential candidates, religious and political polarization reached its peak (Warburton, 2020). In general, the presidential candidate at that time, Joko Widodo was deemed to represent the pluralistic side in Indonesian politics. Meanwhile, his rival, Prabowo Subianto made an alliance with Islamist groups. This polarization is reflected in the fact that Joko Widodo was supported by the majority of non-Muslim voters (97% in 2019). This means that even though there was an effort to attract non-extremist conservative groups, most voters still perceived the competition between Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto was in the framework of disunity between religious pluralism and Islam (Mietzner, 2020).

Politics that exploit religious issues is called "religious politization". In general, "religious politization" means the use of a certain religion's laws, Sharia, doctrines, school of thought, norms, principles, documents, discourses, and symbols in real politics to obtain power or status that is used for certain political, socio-religious, and business-economic goals or benefits (Purba & Widodo, 2021). The consequence of the emergence of religious politization is that there is a social condition where the people start to be sceptical of political parties with a religious nuance. There is political influence in places of worship or even the



- c. Insulting a person, religions, ethnic groups, races, groups, candidates, and or other General Election Participants;
- d. Inciting and pitting individuals or society;
- e. disturb public order;
- ...
- h. use governmental facilities, places of worship, and educational institutions;”

As how the General Election Law has regulated principal regulations, the General Election Commission has also issued technical regulations, one of which is the Regulation of the General Election Commission No. 15 of 2023 on General Election Campaigns, namely Chapter VIII on Prohibitions on General Election Campaigns, Article 70 letter a and Article 71 letter a, on the prohibition on installing campaign equipment in places of worship. However, the campaign equipment installation in places of worship is only in the form of a written prohibition. This is different from the condition if a prospecting general election participant comes to a place of worship and then delivers an oration with a political nuance. This is what is categorized as religious politization in politics.

Therefore, the Election Supervisory Agency can carry out efforts that may supposedly make the political situation in society more conducive, aside from whether or not there are regulations governing it. Preventive efforts that the Election Supervisory Agency carried out include cooperating with influential religious and public figures with the aim of protecting society from the influence of political paradigms spread by irresponsible individuals (Habibi, 2022). The Election Supervisory Agency has also organized focus group discussions (FGD), published books on the sermons of six official religions in Indonesia that reject the politization of issues related to ethnic groups, religion, race, and groups, as well as mapped out the Election Vulnerability Index in all regions (Gloria, 2022).

Islam prohibits actions such as pitting a person against another (*namimah*), gossiping about others (*ghibah*), defamation, spreading false information, and slander. Anyone who committed such deeds conducted a bad action (*akhlak madzmumah*). Therefore, being careful in speaking is a command of religion. Every person has the obligation to guard their personal dignity (*Hifzh Al-'Irdh*) and Muslims are prohibited from expressing opinions that contain hate against certain religions, races, or groups. Hate speech itself is a type of evil and it is prohibited in Islam. On the contrary, Muslims are commanded to encourage others to carry out good deeds (*amar ma'ruf*) and prevent harm (*nahi munkar*). Muslims must prevent the act of hate speech as it is included in the categories of *namimah*, *ghibah*, *sukhriyyah* (sarcasm), *istihza'* (insulting), *buhtan* (another form of slander), and defamation (Badan Pengawas Pemilihan Umum Republik Indonesia, 2018). Therefore, the best Muslim is one who

encourages his peers to carry out good deeds and prevent harm. This is based on an argument in Al-Qur'an, Chapter *Ali 'Imran* (3) verse 104 which states:

لَتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

*Meaning: "Let there be a group among you who call 'others' to goodness, encourage what is good, and forbid what is evil—it is they who will be successful."*

The Election Supervisory Agency's action is according to Islamic principles which elaborates the act of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (promoting good and preventing vice) stated in these arguments. Politics that are according to Islam must be clean, honest, and just. The Election Supervisory Agency has indirectly applied the principles of *da'wa* by maintaining a conducive political climate as well as protecting human rights so that members of society can use their political rights in a safe, comfortable, just, and sovereign manner. The end goal for the Election Supervisory Agency's need to carry out political mitigation is to achieve democratic General Elections and Regional Head Elections that are according to the mandate of the 1945 Constitution.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analyses above, the Election Supervisory Agency has the authority to determine strategic policies and carry out the requires actions as the steps of political mitigation to prevent religious polarization in Regional Head Elections. The Election Supervisory Agency carries out these actions by cooperating with influential religious and public figures to give education and protect society's rights in utilizing their political rights. The conducive implementation of General Elections and Regional Head Elections supports the protection of human rights and the freedom of speech. They are facilities to help Indonesians choose leaders that are according to their conscience. As a religion that is embraced by most Indonesians, Islam also guarantees the sustainability of democracy, as many democratic values align with Islamic law. The Election Supervisory Agency's



