Oral History as Counter Narrative: Bocor Alus Politic Podcast vs Framing by State Authorities on Indonesia's Regional Election Policy (2024-2026)

Donny Maulana[1*], Bernandino Davin Panji Jenewa[2], Hariyono Hariyono[3], Arif Subekti[4], Moch Nizam Alfahmi[5], Setia Ningrum[6], Eko Hasumi Aditya[7]

[1,2,3,4,5,6]Universitas Negeri Malang, Malang, Indonesia
[7]SMA Negeri 1 Talun, Blitar, Indonesia
donnymaulana.fis@um.ac.id

Abstract. In the contemporary political landscape, state authorities often dominate the production of written documents and official archives to legitimize public policies, thereby silencing the perspectives of opposing groups. This study examines oral history as a democratic documentation method that constructs a counter-narrative to the state's official discourse regarding Indonesia's regional head election (Pilkada) policies (2024–2026), focusing specifically on the Bocor Alus Politik (BAP) podcast produced by Tempo Media. The study employs library research methods—incorporating Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and oral history methodology—to analyze state policy documents and three selected episodes of the BAP podcast. The analysis reveals a stark discursive dichotomy. The official state narrative emphasizes the urgency of indirect elections (conducted via Regional Houses of Representatives/DPRD) to achieve a budget saving of IDR 37 trillion (reallocated to the free nutritious meal program), ensure central-regional policy alignment, and restore the system to its original 1945 Constitution framework. Conversely, the oral testimonies of journalists and experts on BAP expose "backstage" realities: the consolidation of power by the KIM Plus coalition; the role of "political dowries" and "sweeteners" as primary drivers of high political costs; the use of Acting Regional Heads (Penjabat or PJ) to secure election victories; intimidation of the opposition party (PDIP) through "legal case operations"; and systematic efforts to weaken the Constitutional Court. Although the Constitutional Court ultimately ruled—via Decision Number 195/PUU-XXIV/2026—that regional elections would continue to be held via direct voting, the BAP counter-narrative proved to be a vital informal archive of critical political memory that challenged state hegemony. Investigative journalism-based political podcasts represent an effective form of digital oral history for democratizing access to political memory and giving voice to subaltern groups, although their validity remains constrained by editorial curation and the power dynamics of commercial platforms.

Keywords: Oral History, Political Podcast Counter-narrative, Regional Election Policy, Bocor Alus Politik, State Hegemony.

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1 Introduction

“History always belongs to the victors, yet historical truth will always belong to those who think.” This was the sentiment that first left an indelible mark on the author eight years ago—during the early days of undergraduate studies in the History Education program at the State University of Malang. It was a firm yet inspiring statement from a lecturer at the start of the course, one that instantly stirred the soul of a student who had just transitioned from high school to the realm of university thought. It was a statement that, eight years later, truly began to trouble the author’s mind with a single question: “Is it really true that historical truth can also belong to those who did not win—to the vanquished?” If so, how then can historical truth be claimed by the defeated? How can they access it? Is it through one-sided historical writing that disregards verified facts derived from the sources—namely written, printed, or mainstream materials—that have long served as the foundation for the victors' narratives? Or is it by completely abandoning the approaches and methods traditionally used in historical writing? The answer, of course, is not so simplistic. History, as a discipline, must ultimately be practiced according to principles and procedures grounded in evidence and verification. This means that any effort to liberate historical narrative—as a reconstruction of past events—from the singular hegemony of the “victors” must still be pursued through scientific means. [1].

Historical writing cannot be undertaken without relying on historical sources. These foundational sources are not automatically available in a complete, organized, and intact state at a single location; a researcher intending to craft a historical narrative must engage in the processes of searching for, gathering, and classifying sources—a phase known as heuristics. It is at this stage that the orthodox tenet "no document, no history" applies, asserting that history cannot be written without the documents that serve as its foundation. In this context, "documents" or "archives" generally refer to written or printed sources—such as texts, manuscripts, inscriptions, official gazettes (*staatsblad*), newspapers, and other written materials—that date back to the era of the events being reconstructed. These written sources must subsequently undergo critical analysis and verification before the facts contained within them can be interpreted and composed into a historical narrative (historiography) [2].

Criticism arose regarding the argument that history-writing is impossible without documents or written sources, centering on the question: "If history-writing relies solely on written or printed documents, how can those who lacked the authority to produce written records in the past write their own history—or have it written for them? After all, throughout many eras, control over writing traditions, document publication, and archival preservation tended to circulate among intellectual elites and elite institutions—such as governments or the state." Historians and sociologists in France embraced this perspective through their work in social history. They focused greater attention on historical sources derived from the oral testimonies of ordinary people—individuals often absent from the documents and archives that had previously served as the primary basis for historical writing; people who frequently lost out in historical narratives.[3].

Historical methods and practices based on oral testimony have continued to evolve into the early 21st century. Discourse surrounding oral history is gaining

significant ground and momentum in Indonesia, particularly given that, throughout various periods of national history, authority over printed and written sources tended to be controlled—directly or indirectly—by those holding state power. Take, for instance, the colonial era, when historical writing relied heavily on the Staatsblad—the official state gazette used to publish laws during the Dutch East Indies administration. Regardless of how objectively one might assess the Staatsblad as a primary historical source, these documents remained products of the colonial government—curated, framed, and published to serve state interests. There was virtually no room within these pages for the narratives of the colonized people. While other written sources—such as newspapers and magazines produced by private presses initiated by the educated class—could have served as alternative sources (often capturing the people's struggles), access to them was largely restricted to intellectual elites. In the post-independence era, written sources remained under state control. The state asserted its dominance over written and printed narratives through mechanisms such as mass media censorship, the banning of publishing houses, and the standardization of historical narratives—manifested, for example, in history textbooks and the national history curriculum. [4].

At the dawn of the 21st century, amidst the era of Reformasi, hegemony over written and printed authority became institutionalized through state-designed formal infrastructures. These include the enactment of legislation that appears constitutional (administratively, though not substantively)—such as Constitutional Court Ruling No. 90/2023 regarding age requirements for presidential and vice-presidential candidates, which effectively rolled out the red carpet for a president's son to run for vice-president in the 2024 election; the conferral of "National Hero" status via Presidential Decree, which often obscures a figure's complex past—such as Presidential Decree No. 116/TK/2025 designating Indonesia's second president as a National Hero; the production of state statistical data—such as favorable democracy indices and approval ratings for President Joko Widodo reaching 80% by the end of his term; and the construction of a canonical "official history" narrative that attempts to obscure, revise, or even replace facts and past atrocities—such as the 10-volume National History of Indonesia project initiated by the Ministry of Culture, one volume of which attempted to erase narratives regarding the violence and sexual assaults of 1998. These written narratives—produced today in the forms of formal laws, hero designations, official statistics, and state-sanctioned historical canons—will eventually become the documents and archives regarded as the most authoritative sources for future historical writing; much like how stone inscriptions serve as primary references for classical history, the Staatsblad for colonial history, and Five-Year Development Plan (REPELITA) documents for the history of the Soeharto era. While the crude practices of shutting down media outlets and destroying books—common in earlier eras—may no longer occur in the early 21st century, state power over written, printed, and archival narratives persists. It manifests through the systemic production of narratives—executed under the guise of constitutional procedure—and is propagated by "buzzers" (paid or assigned individuals or groups who relentlessly disseminate information, messages, and narrative products). This process shapes public opinion and consciousness regarding the state's version of absolute truth, while simultaneously facilitating the character assassination of entities or parties that convey information or narratives opposing—or merely differing

from—those produced by the state. Looking ahead, if the prevailing historiographical paradigm continues to rely solely on the argument that "no document means no history," it is easy to foresee that these formal state-generated products will become the exclusive sources for writing our history. Such a foundation would, of course, be woefully inadequate for constructing a historical narrative—particularly one that reflects the perspectives of the vanquished.[5]

This situation makes the practice of oral history—by shifting the paradigm regarding historical sources and writing methods—essential. The argument is that if historical reconstruction relies solely on written sources—which are inherently subject to the hegemony and power of the "state"—how can voices that remain unwritten find a platform? The voices of the powerless; the voices of the vanquished.[6].

Over at least the last century, the trend of oral history practice in Indonesia has shifted from merely serving as a supplement to archives toward an approach used to reconstruct the experiences of marginalized or subordinated groups.[7]. Marginalized groups are defined not merely as those excluded in material terms, but as groups sidelined narratively by official archives, state historiography, and the power structures governing knowledge [8]. In its development within Indonesia, this framework is most clearly evident in studies from 1965–1968, while international literature has helped expand the concept to characterize a group whose subordination operates primarily through the erasure of perspectives.

A gap in the practice of oral history in Indonesia is that oral history as a counter-narrative remains heavily focused on victims of the 1965 political violence; consequently, the definition of marginalized communities has not yet been sufficiently broadened to include “groups that differ from the dominant narrative but do not necessarily appear physically marginalized.” [9]. International literature points to opportunities to extend this category to communities experiencing epistemic subordination—such as deaf workers, people with intellectual disabilities, trans communities, and local subaltern groups whose knowledge is discredited—yet such an approach has not yet gained significant traction in Indonesia. [10].

The next research gap concerns oral history methodology. Much oral history research still focuses on sources based on the collection of testimonies, whereas the need to consider shared authority, narrative-discursive analysis, and the integration of digital archives has not yet seen widespread development. [11].

This study aims to analyze how oral history functions as a counter-narrative practice—extending beyond mere testimony collection to encompass shared authority, narrative-discursive analysis, and the integration of digital archives—and how podcasts constitute both a form of oral history practice and a source of oral history. The author selects Tempo’s Bocor Alus Politik podcast as a case study, focusing on the discursive battle regarding direct versus indirect regional head election policies in Indonesia and the contestation against the state's narrative authority between 2024 and 2026. The study’s key argument is that podcasts—despite undergoing a curation process—can be categorized as a form of oral history practice and, consequently, serve as future oral history sources, provided they are subjected to critical verification. [12].

2 Method

This study employs a library research methodology. Library research encompasses a series of activities involving the collection of documentary data, reading and note-taking, and the processing of research materials. The researcher adopted this method because the study focuses on the analysis of texts, discourses, and narratives found in digital documents—such as podcasts, policy documents, and official news reports—as well as literature on oral history found in scholarly journals. The research steps include: Preparing tools and equipment. The researcher prepared the necessary instruments for data collection. In this study, the tools utilized included reference management software (Zotero), audio-to-text/transcription applications, and data classification sheets to map out episodes of the Bocor Alus Politik podcast, state documents, and relevant journals. Compiling a working bibliography. The researcher collected, organized, and classified the list of sources serving as the research foundation, dividing them into two categories. The first category consists of primary sources: three videos from the Bocor Alus Politik podcast. Three selected episodes that fit the research topic are the episode of Jokowi's Dismissal and Prabowo's Plan to Reinstate Regional Elections Through the Regional People's Representative Council (December 21, 2024), the episode of the Constitutional Court's Decision Eliminating Indirect Regional Head Elections (July 19, 2025), and the episode of Prabowo's Coalition's Efforts to Push Through Regional Elections Through the Regional People's Representative Council (January 10, 2026). The second category is secondary sources in the form of oral history method journals and previous research on political podcasts; Time Management. The researcher sets a work schedule to maintain research consistency. This stage includes allocating time to collect primary data (podcast episodes), the process of critical reading, and the stage of narrative and counternarrative analysis. Considering the time span studied from 2024-2026, the time management is carried out periodically following current issues; Reading and making research notes. The final step is to conduct an in-depth reading of the podcast content and make research notes using classification techniques. Every piece of information containing counternarratives and state framing is recorded and categorized into specific themes. This note is to facilitate the synthesis process between oral history theory and field findings in digital media. [13].

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Oral History as a Counternarrative to State Hegemony (Written Sources).

neutral record but the product of institutional selection that determines which voices are deemed legitimate. In this context, state narratives seek to construct an official version of history to underpin political legitimacy and social cohesion. Furthermore, print and written sources reproduced by the state are far from neutral; instead, they function as instruments of power that determine what is rendered visible, credible, and authoritative within history[14].

On the other hand, oral history serves to open up space for counter-memories, subaltern voices, and more pluralistic interpretations of past events and phenomena.

Oral history is not merely a supplement to the archive but a counter-archive that restores agency to those who have been silenced. It operates by shifting marginal voices from the periphery to the center of analysis, thereby disrupting singular interpretations of history. [8].

Regarding the authority the state seeks to perpetuate over historical narratives, oral history can serve as a corrective to erasure—rather than merely acting as a decorative addition to historiography—such as in the cases of the 1965 events and the 1998 mass rapes, which the state has attempted to sanitize. Oral history also serves effectively as an alternative archive by acknowledging that memory, testimony, and lived experience are legitimate historical sources (as opposed to state documents alone). With this capacity, oral history can expose the silences, omissions, and erasures found within official historiography. [8].

Oral history can also restore community agency by shifting the authority of memory from institutions to individuals and communities. Consequently, it can produce a multi-vocal—rather than linear—history, proving most valuable when bringing together conflicting perspectives. [10].

By embodying a counter-narrative quality, oral history can serve as an epistemic intervention against the dominance of written sources—not because the oral is inherently purer, but because it opens up lived experiences, performative memories, and voices that failed to make it into the state archives. [15]. From this perspective, podcasts can be positioned as a form of curated oral history that challenges the state's monopoly on framing the meaning of public policy—specifically, in this context, policies regarding regional head elections (Pilkada) in Indonesia. [8].

3.2 The Bocor Alus Politik Podcast versus Narrative Framing by State Authorities Regarding Indonesia's Regional Election Policies (2024–2026)

Following the 2024 democratic exercises—comprising the presidential and vice-presidential elections and the legislative elections (February 14, 2024), followed by the simultaneous regional head elections (November 27, 2024)—efforts have been made by state actors to frame the discourse around reverting to the election of regional heads by Regional Houses of Representatives (indirect regional elections). This systematically produced narrative involves various state instruments, such as government officials and political party elites. [16]

Post-2024 presidential election coalition dynamics are closely linked to how the proposal for indirect regional elections (Pilkada) might garner majority support among political parties. The 2024 election featured three candidate pairs backed by distinct coalitions: Anies Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar (supported by NasDem, PKB, and PKS); Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka (supported by core parliamentary parties Gerindra, Golkar, PAN, and Demokrat, alongside several non-parliamentary parties); and the third pair, Ganjar Pranowo-Mahfud MD (supported by PDIP). Once the General Elections Commission (KPU) declared Prabowo-Gibran the winners and the Constitutional Court (MK) dismissed the election disputes filed by the Anies-Muhaimin and Ganjar-Mahfud camps, the coalition landscape shifted immediately. NasDem and PKB—which had previously backed Anies-Muhaimin as rivals to Prabowo-Gibran—switched course to support the

new administration. This left only PDIP and PKS as the parties that, at the time, had not yet committed to either joining the government or becoming the opposition. [17].

An interesting development occurred during the inauguration and announcement of the Red and White Cabinet on October 20, 2024: the cabinet included no cadres from PDIP or NasDem, despite both parties having previously declared their support. Meanwhile, PKB—NasDem's partner in the presidential election—secured a ministerial seat, with Cak Imin appointed as the Coordinating Minister for Community Empowerment. Separately, with an eye on the 2024 regional elections, the coalition expanded into "KIM Plus." This was an extension of the KIM (Indonesia Onward Coalition) initiated by Prabowo to unite parties that had previously competed against one another in the presidential election, aiming to facilitate the continuity agenda down to the provincial, city, and regency levels. In February 2025, during a KIM Plus gathering in Hambalang attended by key figures from parties such as Golkar, PAN, Gelora, and NasDem, Prabowo called on all coalition members to form a "permanent coalition" lasting until 2029. Throughout 2025, PKS—which had previously aligned with the Anies-Muhaimin camp during the presidential election—also gradually moved toward full integration. By February 2025, PKS had committed to the permanent coalition and subsequently secured a ministerial seat (with Yassierli appointed as Minister of Manpower). By October 2025, PKS had affirmed its status as an official part of the Prabowo administration. With PKS's inclusion, PDIP was effectively the only party remaining entirely outside the cabinet—though it did not formally label itself as the "opposition." This resulted in a massive government coalition in parliament, bordering on a national consensus. [18].

This coalition landscape—characterized by a near-total absence of counterbalancing forces—formed the backdrop when Golkar floated the idea of holding regional elections via the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) during its National Leadership Meeting (Rapimnas) in December 2025. With almost all major parties (Gerindra, Golkar, PAN, NasDem, PKB, and subsequently the Democrats) already part of the governing coalition, support for this proposal was relatively easy to consolidate. Meanwhile, PDIP—the sole major political force outside the cabinet—naturally emerged as the primary opposition voice, vehemently rejecting the idea. PKS, having only recently fully joined the coalition, adopted an ambiguous stance—or had yet to determine its position—likely due to its relatively new status within the coalition structure. This tension culminated in a judicial review before the Constitutional Court, which issued Ruling Number 195/PUU-XXIV/2026 on June 29, 2026, affirming that regional elections must continue to be held via direct popular vote. The House of Representatives (DPR), through Speaker Puan Maharani, stated that it respected the ruling and would act in accordance with it, effectively shelving the proposal for the time being. Historically, the discourse surrounding changes to the regional election system has resurfaced in Indonesia roughly every decade (most recently in 2014), so the possibility of it re-emerging in the future cannot be ruled out. [19].

Although the proposal for regional head elections to be conducted by Regional Houses of Representatives (DPRD) was scrapped following a Constitutional Court ruling, the discourse battle surrounding the proposal over the past three years (2024–2026) remains noteworthy. The government, utilizing various instruments,

systematically sought to implement this indirect election model. A range of narratives was put forward to justify why regional elections should be held indirectly. The discourse on electing regional heads via the DPRD emerged from the Golkar Party's 1st National Leadership Meeting (Rapimnas) in 2025, with the stated aim of reducing political costs. On December 20, 2025, the Golkar Rapimnas officially resolved to support DPRD-based regional elections and pledged to push for the inclusion of this system in the deliberations for the 2026 Election Law package. By January 2026, the Gerindra, PAN, NasDem, PKB, and Democrat parties had expressed their agreement. Viktor Bungtilu Laiskodat, Chairman of the NasDem Faction, argued that the 1945 Constitution does not mandate a single model of electoral democracy at the regional level, thereby providing a valid constitutional basis for regional elections conducted by the DPRD. Meanwhile, Cak Imin (PKB Chairman) argued that direct elections are costly and prone to fraud. Furthermore, PAN expressed agreement, provided there is a unanimous consensus among all political parties to adopt this indirect system. The Democratic Party shifted its stance; having previously vocally opposed regional elections conducted via regional legislatures (DPRD), it ultimately switched to supporting the move, with Secretary-General Herman Khaeron stating that his party "stands in alignment with President Prabowo Subianto." PDI-P emerged as the only party to firmly reject the proposal for indirect regional elections. This position was solidified during the party's National Working Meeting (Rakernas) in Ancol on January 10–12, 2026, which emphasized the importance of upholding the people's sovereign right to directly elect their leaders to ensure legitimacy and a guaranteed five-year term. The party even proposed e-voting as an alternative solution to address cost concerns, rather than altering the electoral system itself. Deddy Sitorus, a PDI-P Central Executive Board (DPP) member, suspected that "larger agendas" lay behind the proposal for cost efficiency. Meanwhile, PKS did not adopt a definitive stance. PKS Secretary-General M. Kholid stated that both direct and indirect elections are constitutional and democratic under the 1945 Constitution, though further study is required to determine which approach offers the greatest benefit to the public. [20], [21], [22].

The state is attempting to promote several key narratives regarding this discourse, such as budget efficiency and the high political costs borne by both the state and candidates. The cost of the 2024 regional elections (Pilkada) reached IDR 37 trillion—funds that the government suggests could instead be allocated to other programs, such as the free nutritious meal initiative. Furthermore, the cost of running for regional office is deemed exorbitant, ranging from hundreds of billions to as much as IDR 1.5 trillion. Indirect regional elections are also framed as a solution to ensure regional leaders' agendas align with the central government's vision. This discourse stems from experiences during the Jokowi era, when policy discrepancies between the central and regional governments frequently hindered government programs. Additionally, there is an ideological narrative advocating for a return to the electoral system outlined in the original 1945 Constitution (the version dated August 18, 1945)—a stance that also serves as the Gerindra Party's manifesto. Under this narrative, indirect elections via Regional Houses of Representatives (DPRD) are considered democratic, given that DPRD members are elected representatives of the people. Finally, the discourse on indirect elections is linked to efforts to mitigate vote-buying and voter pragmatism. The state is considering this system to break the

cycle of "dawn raids" (last-minute vote-buying) and other forms of money politics, which are believed to have corrupted voter mentality. However, critics argue that this merely shifts the site of bribery from the general public to council members (in the form of "political dowries").[23].

On the other hand, counter-narratives regarding the discourse on indirect regional elections have also shaped public perception and societal opinion. A key platform driving the narrative in opposition to the state-produced discourse is Tempo's *Bocor Alus Politik* podcast. Through its investigative journalism, the podcast presents arguments that contradict the messages disseminated by government instruments—the primary entities controlling narrative production at the time. Across three episodes discussing the dynamics of the regional election discourse, the podcast reveals significant "behind-the-scenes" information that political actors and government elites had not disclosed. [24].

In this context, the Bocor Alus Politik podcast functions as an oral history practice that seeks to provide space for marginalized or subordinate narratives. The podcast also performs a critical role by documenting Indonesian political dynamics that often go unrecorded in official documents. Official government documents—or "archives"—frequently present only normative and administrative rationales that appear untainted by political interests. This podcast serves as an antithesis to such formal narratives. As a case in point: the official government narrative claimed that returning the election of regional heads to regional legislative councils (DPRD) was intended to ensure budget efficiency and save tens of trillions of rupiah. However, oral interviews with various informants revealed through the podcast that the actual reasons were far more complex—specifically, to map out coalition strengths in the regions and to allocate seats of power with greater certainty [24]. The podcast also discloses details that would never appear in written archives, such as a secret meeting in a VIP room between Prabowo and Bahlil, or backroom lobbying conducted over plates of fried bananas.[23]. While official state records merely highlight the high cost of regional elections, the oral history shared in the *Bocor Alus Politik* podcast reveals that these costs balloon due to "political dowries" and "sweetener" practices—such as sponsoring supporters for Umrah or Hajj pilgrimages—orchestrated by the politicians themselves. [23]. This podcast consistently voices the concerns of civil society and legal experts who view the discourse on indirect regional elections as an attempt to strip citizens of their political rights at the local level. Most importantly, the podcast employs oral history as a vital tool to uncover agendas whose traces are being erased or concealed behind legal procedures. [25].

These three selected episodes reveal information regarding illicit practices within state-driven scenarios—specifically, the appointment of Acting Regional Heads. Oral accounts uncovered a practice wherein the state deliberately utilizes these Acting Regional Heads to secure political victories for those in power; while written evidence of this tactic is scarce, it is clearly observable in actual practice. The podcast also identified the use of legal maneuvers and intimidation within Indonesia's political landscape. Informants revealed internal party concerns (such as within the PDIP) regarding "legal case operations" orchestrated by the ruling power to coerce party elites into compliance with specific agendas—such as the approval of indirect regional head elections, a measure that the PDIP was virtually the only party to

oppose. Furthermore, information emerged regarding attempts to undermine state institutions—specifically the Constitutional Court—amidst the dynamics of these regional elections. The podcast exposes covert efforts to "undermine" the Constitutional Court's authority through rapid legislative revisions that lacked public participation—moves frequently executed behind closed doors. Finally, information surfaced regarding attempts to manipulate the constitution. Oral accounts revealed a desire to revert to the original 1945 Constitution—not out of genuine ideological conviction, but as a means to reinstate a system where regional heads are elected by Regional Legislative Councils (DPRD) and the President by the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), a shift that would effectively dismantle direct democracy. [25].

3.3 Podcasting as Oral History Practice: Limitations and Potential

As a practice of oral history, podcasting can serve as a medium for counter-narratives that revive—or at least provide a space for—marginalized voices, even though it remains constrained by processes of curation and commercialization. [26]. The Bocor Alus Politik podcast explicitly frames the discourse surrounding indirect regional elections (Pilkada) for the 2024–2026 period as a battleground rife with organized fraud, standing in stark contrast to the state-produced narrative of legitimacy. A framing analysis reveals that the podcast highlights systemic manipulation and state misconduct within this discursive struggle. By adapting content from *Tempo* magazine into an audiovisual format, the podcast targets Generation Z—a demographic with low reading engagement—thereby transforming news texts into a form of political communication that is more accessible and palatable. [27].

The practice of oral history through this podcast de-marginalizes political information by shifting narrative authority from print media or elite narratives to a more inclusive space. [28]. The host’s confident, unwavering demeanor establishes the ethical authority needed to challenge state-imposed narratives by relying on internally validated evidence. Empirically, consuming this podcast raises political awareness among first-time voters, transforming apathy into concrete electoral participation. Structurally, the podcast production process is low-cost and independent, enabling the creation of alternative discourse free from traditional broadcasting regulations and providing a safe space for counter-mainstream narratives. The audio format fosters an affective connection, allowing listeners to experience a sense of "intimacy" with political testimonies that transcends the rigidity of official texts. [29].

Podcasts share methodological similarities with qualitative interviews and are now recognized as a source of digital oral history that captures contemporary experiences. [30]. By preserving the narrator's original voice, the podcast creates a sonic archive that captures affective dimensions and intonations lost in written transcripts. This format enables listeners to engage in "affective listening"—an immersive experience that expands the scope of historical interpretation beyond the interviewer-interviewee binary. The medium also actively revitalizes oral archives by integrating field recordings and historical sources into an evocative narrative. [31].

The potential of podcasts lies in their ability to center the roles of the researcher and the research process, inviting listeners to engage with historical

evidence rather than merely consuming facts. Collaborative podcast projects have proven capable of archiving diverse experiences of conflict and fostering public empathy through a realistic storytelling format. Utilizing audio as a research practice also enables researchers to capture ethnographic "messiness" and preserve complexities that are often flattened by text. [32].

Podcasts remain curated, commercial media products; thus, there are limits to their resemblance to pure oral history. In this context, podcast editors act as gatekeepers of knowledge, thereby establishing a hierarchy that determines which voices are reproduced. Overall, podcasts like *Bocor Alus Politik* offer a potent historical counter-narrative by democratizing access to political memory; however, their validity as oral history sources hinges on the researcher's critical awareness regarding curation and the platform's power dynamics. [30].

4 Conclusions

This study reveals that the debate surrounding regional head election (Pilkada) policies in Indonesia during the 2024–2026 period is not merely a matter of routine electoral dynamics, but rather an arena of fierce discursive contestation between the state's hegemonic narrative and a public counter-narrative. Through the consolidation of the massive "KIM Plus" coalition, the state systematically constructs a narrative—presented in written and administrative terms—that appears normatively rational. This narrative emphasizes the efficient use of a IDR 37 trillion budget, reduced campaign costs for candidates, the alignment of central and regional programs, and a return to the original values of the 1945 Constitution.

However, this procedural façade has been stripped away through an oral history approach articulated by journalists, legal experts, and political analysts on the *Bocor Alus Politik* (BAP) podcast. Oral testimonies on BAP expose the transactional realities unfolding behind the scenes: closed-door elite lobbying, the manipulation of Acting Regional Heads to serve the ruling power's political interests, tactics of legal intimidation against the opposition (such as PDIP), and attempts to undermine the authority of the Constitutional Court through rushed legislative revisions.

Although the Constitutional Court—through Ruling Number 195/PUU-XXIV/2026—ultimately safeguarded the people's sovereign right to direct elections, this discursive battle underscores the crucial role of oral archives in documenting facts deliberately omitted from official state records.

Theoretically, this study makes a significant contribution to the development of oral history scholarship in Indonesia by broadening the concept of "marginalized groups" or the "subaltern." It successfully expands the scope of oral history in Indonesia—hitherto heavily focused on victims of physical violence (such as the 1965 tragedy)—to include communities experiencing "epistemic subordination": those whose knowledge has been discredited or narratively excluded by official archives and the state's canonical historiography.

Methodologically, this study demonstrates that contemporary political podcasts rooted in investigative journalism can be positioned as a legitimate form of digital oral history practice. The BAP podcast serves not merely as a decorative addition to

the archive but acts as an epistemic intervention and a counter-archive. The podcast's audio-visual format preserves a "sonic archive"—capturing affective dimensions, intonation, and emotional intimacy (affective listening) that are often diminished or lost in conventional written documents.

This research also identifies inherent limitations in positioning podcasts solely as sources of oral history. As curated, commercial digital media products, podcasts are not entirely free from platform power dynamics and editorial biases. Editors in the digital media industry act as "gatekeepers," establishing hierarchies regarding which voices are produced and disseminated to the public. Consequently, this study recommends that future historians and researchers subject podcasts to the same rigorous critical verification applied to other historical sources. Researchers must remain attentive to curation processes, the economic motives of platforms, and potential internal media biases. Future research is encouraged to integrate a deeper "shared authority" approach and narrative-discursive analysis methods—incorporating multi-platform digital archives—to map political discursive struggles more comprehensively.

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