STRATEGIES TO INCREASE VOTER PARTICIPATION IN THE MIDDLE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AT THE SIMULAR ELECTIONS IN BONE BOLANGO DISTRICT

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Abstract

Voter Participation determines the legitimacy of a stage and process of holding the 2020 Simultaneous Pilkada, it is very risky if the voter participation rate decreases or even does not reach the national target. The pandemic condition opens up great potential for the decline in the participation rate. This study aims to find out the strategy carried out by the General Election Commission of Bone Bolango Regency in an effort to increase voter participation in the midst of the Covid 19 pandemic, what steps and strategies were chosen and of course what instruments were used to achieve voter turnout in the midst of the pandemic. The method used in this research is qualitative, with data collection through three events, namely, observation. interviews, and documentation. The results of this study indicate that,

Keywords: *Voter Participation, Strategy to Increase Participation, Election Amid a Pandemic.*

INTRODUCTION

Worries arose in early 2020, when the issue of the covid 19 virus began to spread. The peak was in mid-March 2019, where the first confirmed case of Covid 19 appeared in Indonesia. The impact is that along with the spread of cases of covid patients, at the same time the public's anxiety and fear about this covid is spreading and expanding as well. It is undeniable that these concerns have also become a scourge for the holding of the simultaneous Regional Head Election stages in 2020. Initially, the voting day in accordance with KPU Regulation No. 15 of 2019 will be held on 23 September 2020, has been postponed due to the agreement of the Government, DPR and Election Organizers on September 23, 2020. Hearing Meeting (RDP) which was held on 27 May 2020.

This Hearing Meeting (RDP) actually responds to Article 122A paragraph (2) of Perppu number 2 of 2020 which reads: "The determination of the postponement of the stages of holding simultaneous elections and the implementation of further simultaneous elections as referred to in paragraph (1) is carried out with the mutual consent of the KPU, the Government, and the House of Representatives".

Conclusion The meeting agreed that the simultaneous elections would be held on December 9, 2020, and the continuation stages starting on June 15, 2020, of course with several conditions that must be met in relation to the implementation of the health protocol in the implementation of the stages and must still be guided by the principles of Democracy.

Amid the increasing resonance of concerns over the spread of this virus, several questions and pessimism arose about the holding of this election stage. questions such as: the appropriateness of the election in the midst of a pandemic, why does it seem forced? How can the government and KPU organizers carry out these stages by ensuring the implementation of the health protocol in the process? How does the KPU guarantee the health and safety of election organizers? Fund the most basic question is whether then public participation in voting

at TPS can be on target? Or can the KPU strive to achieve voter participation according to the target amid concerns about the spread of Covid which is starting to become epidemic?

Some of these questions have practically become evaluative materials for the preparation of strategies with several recommendations for regulatory improvements to support the achievement and implementation of the simultaneous 2020 regional head elections in the midst of a pandemic. Moreover, the General Election Commission of the Republic of Indonesia has set a target of achieving a voter participation rate in the 2020 Simultaneous Elections of 77.5%. From some of the complex problems of holding the Simultaneous Regional Head Elections in 2020, researchers are interested in discussing the classic problem of the General Election Commission in holding Regional Head Elections, namely the achievement of voter participation rates.

In this context, the researcher is interested in unraveling the implementation of the Regional Head Election and the achievement of participation rates in Bone Bolango Regency, and strategies such as what the General Election Commission of Bone Bolango Regency did in order to realize these targets. Moreover, Bone Bolango Regency is the only Regency in the entire Gorontalo Province which always has the highest achievement of voter participation in every event, be it the General Election event or the Regional Head Election event, and this is interesting to discuss because the 2020 Regional Head election was carried out in situations and conditions. different conditions. It is carried out in conditions of non-natural disasters, amid the fear of the community being infected, the application of physical distancing, and several conditions of limitations which of course normatively and predictably support the non-achievement of the 2020 simultaneous regional head election participation rate target. In previous studies, there were several factors that influenced the non-achievement of the participation rate target, Chaniago (2016) argued that in theory there is a system influence. carried out in the Simultaneous Pilkada with voter turnout. However, in fact, in the first phase of the 2015 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections, the effect was not significant, on the contrary. But in situations and conditions of non-natural disasters such as this pandemic, it will greatly affect the participation rate. In the previous study, there were several factors that influenced the non-achievement of the participation rate target, Chaniago (2016) argued that in theory there was an influence of the system implemented in the Simultaneous Pilkada with voter participation rates. However, in fact, in the first phase of the 2015 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections, the effect was not significant, on the contrary. But in situations and conditions of non-natural disasters such as this pandemic, it will greatly affect the participation rate. In the previous study, there were several factors that influenced the non-achievement of the participation rate target, Chaniago (2016) argued that in theory there was an influence of the system implemented in the Simultaneous Pilkada with voter participation rates. However, in fact, in the first phase of the 2015 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections, the effect was not significant, on the contrary. But in situations and conditions of non-natural disasters such as this pandemic, it will greatly affect the participation rate.

As stated above, Bone Bolango district is a district in Gorontalo Province that always achieves the highest participation rate in every election and regional election event. In the 2005 Pilkada, Bone Bolango reached 87% voter turnout. The next regional election in 2010 increased to 87.27%, as well as in the 2015 regional election as the Simultaneous Pilkada phase, Bone Bolango increased by 87.65% the participation rate. This trend illustrates that there is an

increase in the number of public participations in elections from period to period of Regional Head Elections in Bone Bolango Regency. Then what about the Simultaneous Election in 2020 amid the Covid-19 Pandemic? What is the socialization strategy used by the Bone Bolango KPU in boosting voter participation in the Simultaneous Pilkada? at least equal to or exceed the National target.

In research conducted by Samsul Arif (2020) said that Voter Participation in the Pilkada is a parameter of the success of an election event, the higher the level of public recognition embodied in voter participation is directly proportional to the Legitimate process and results of the Regional Head Election. Although the election participant factor in this case is the Regional Head candidate, it is also a very influential factor in increasing the participation rate.

METHODS

This research focuses on the Bone Bolango Regency in the 2020 Simultaneous Election, field research using a qualitative approach, exploring the role of the Election Organizer in this case the Bone Bolango KPU to increase voter participation in Bone Bolango Regency. Data collection is carried out through three mechanisms, namely Observation, Interview and Documentation. Interviews were conducted with informants who were considered the most competent and related to the problem, so that the selection of informants was carried out in a purposive manner. Which means choosing key sources that are related to the problem and best understand the data related to the increase in voter participation.

The parties interviewed in this study were the Chair and Members of the General Election Commission (KPU) of Bone Bolango Regency, the Secretariat of the Bone Bolango KPU, the Population and Civil Registry Office of Bone Bolango Regency, Members of the District Election Committee, Democracy Volunteers and several communities who channeled their voting rights. in the 2020 Regional Head Election.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
A. Identification of Voter Participation Problems in the Midst of a Pandemic

After the postponement of the stage of holding the simultaneous Regional Head Elections in 2020, which was initially held on 23 September 2020 and then according to a joint decision of the DPR, the Government and the election organizers to be held on 09 December 2020, it has more or less caused a lot of concern. Even though the implementation was carried out with due observance of health protocols, the anxiety and fear of the community members to come to TPS were still quite large. The fundamental question of this phenomenon is the potential for a decrease in voter turnout if forced in a pandemic situation. Moreover, in the 3 phases of the Simultaneous Pilkada nationally, there was an inconsistency in the achievement of the participation rate, in 2015 the participation rate reached 70%, in 2017 it increased to 74%,

Table 1. Simultaneous Election Participation Rate

Simultaneous Elections	Participation Number
2015	70%
2017	74%
2020	73%

This decline in participation rates should be a yellow code for election organizers. Efforts to increase or at least match the previous participation rate will be even more difficult if the

implementation is in the midst of a pandemic. Whereas the legitimacy of a process and election results is measured by the achievement of voter participation rates (Samsul Arif, 2020). In addition to achieving voter turnout, holding a free and fair Pilkada will encourage the level of voter confidence in the election process and organizers, so that people are still willing to participate in channeling their rights.

In Bone Bolango Regency, achieving the highest participation rate in every election and election event is a tradition and achievement that continues to be made. However, it is different in the Simultaneous Pilkada which was held in a resonance condition of fear of the spread of Covid 19 starting to spread. Indirectly, it becomes a big potential for decreasing the participation rate or not achieving the participation rate according to the national target of 77.5%. In this context, the KPU of Bone Bolango district must rack their brains, formulate strategies in an effort to increase voter participation. Problems that may be faced and become obstacles in increasing this participation include: Anxiety and concern that the community will be infected with Covid 19, the level of public awareness in voting, knowledge about the importance of voting and channeling their political rights in the Pilkada.

B. Maximizing Voter Data Quality

One indicator that affects the level of participation is the accuracy of the validity of voter data in a region. Bone Bolango is the Regency with the second largest number of voters in Gorontalo Province after Gorontalo Regency, of course it is not easy to ensure the accuracy of Voter Data, many processes and stages are passed to ensure the validity of the voter data, including some obstacles and problems in the field in updating the data selector. These obstacles include not being able to find voters during voter data matching because they are outside the region, voters who have fulfilled the requirements to vote but are still outside the region and have not recorded their e-KTP. Because the e-KTP is a requirement for someone to be registered as a voter, the Bone Bolango KPU must make strategies and breakthroughs so that people who have met the requirements can be recorded and registered as voters in the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections. These are technical obstacles that many organizers face. KPU Bone Bolango election. However, to ensure the validity of this voter data, the Bone Bolango KPU coordinates with a number of competent parties such as the Population and Civil Registry Office, District Officials to Village officials.

Other obstacles faced in ensuring the quality of voter data include: First, there are still 19 voters or 0.01% of multiple voters in the voters list.Of the Total DPTHP3 112,047 in the 2019 Election; Second, additional voters in the voter list registered in the DPT at a TPS who due to certain circumstances cannot exercise their right to vote in the place where they were registered at the previous TPS and vote at another TPS, the data for this additional voter in Bone Bolango district is quite large, namely 1,530 voters. spread over eighteen sub-districts; Third, there are 967 voters who are included in the Special Voters List (DPK), this DPK occurs because there are voters who already have KTP-el Bone Bolango but have not been registered in the DPT or DPTB. And this is spread over 18 sub-districts with the largest percentage being in Kabila sub-district.

In the spirit of ensuring the validity of the voter data, the obstacles faced in ensuring the quality of voter data can be overcome on time, and finally at the Plenary Meeting of the DPT Recapitulation at the Bone Bolango Regency level which was held on October 16, 2020, the

KPU Bone Bolango Regency determined a total of 115,593 voters as voters. DPT in the Simultaneous Pilkada of Bone Bolango Regency in 2020. With details:

DATA PEMILIH
PEMILIHAN BUPATI DAN WAKIL BUPATI BONE BOLANGO
TAHUN 2020

KECAMATAN	JUMLAH DESA	JUMLAH TPS	DAFTAR PEMILIH			DAFTAR PEMILIH SEMENTARA			DAFTAR PEMILIH TETAP		
			LK	PR	JML	LK	PR	JML	LK	PR	JML
TAPA	7	16	2,726	2,845	5,571	2,689	2,809	5,498	2,690	2,811	5,501
KABILA	12	46	8,248	8,785	17,033	8,123	8,679	16,802	8,117	8,674	16,791
SUWAWA	10	26	4,472	4,609	9,081	4,479	4,702	9,181	4,479	4,704	9,183
BONEPANTAI	13	24	3,956	3,754	7,710	3,926	3,742	7,668	3,904	3,742	7,646
BULANGO UTARA	9	17	2,958	2,915	5,873	2,968	2,936	5,904	2,960	2,942	5,902
TILONGKABILA	14	40	6,692	6,961	13,653	6,635	6,906	13,541	6,647	6,910	13,557
BOTUPINGGE	9	16	2,340	2,378	4,718	2,369	2,412	4,781	2,361	2,408	4,769
KABILA BONE	9	25	4,230	4,061	8,291	4,172	4,018	8,190	4,183	4,024	8,207
BONE RAYA	10	15	2,406	2,359	4,765	2,439	2,397	4,836	2,438	2,398	4,836
BONE	14	25	3,402	3,283	6,685	3,428	3,330	6,758	3,435	3,336	6,771
SUWAWA TIMUR	9	14	1,930	1,851	3,781	1,951	1,875	3,826	1,961	1,892	3,853
SUWAWA SELATAN	8	13	1,993	1,938	3,931	2,012	1,961	3,973	2,011	1,962	3,973
SUWAWA TENGAH	6	13	2,268	2,195	4,463	2,253	2,204	4,457	2,260	2,207	4,467
BULANGO ULU	6	9	1,560	1,463	3,023	1,523	1,435	2,958	1,519	1,434	2,953
BULANGO SELATAN	10	23	3,803	4,058	7,861	3,826	4,086	7,912	3,822	4,082	7,904
BULANGO TIMUR	5	12	2,048	2,150	4,198	2,025	2,137	4,162	2,014	2,137	4,151
BULAWA	9	12	1,841	1,752	3,593	1,874	1,760	3,634	1,880	1,766	3,646
PINOGU	5	5	742	699	1,441	773	713	1,486	772	711	1,483
TOTAL	165	351	57,615	58,056	115,671	57,465	58,102	115,567	57,453	58,140	115,593

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BUPATI DAN WAKIL BUPATI
BONE BOLANGO

Figure 1. Voter Data for Bone Bolango Regency in the 2020 Regional Head Election

C. Voter Socialization and Education Strategy

To maintain the consistency of the voter turnout of Bone Bolango Regency as in the previous regional elections, the main choice is how the Election Organizer in this case the KPU of Bone Bolango Regency convinces voters of their rights and obligations in the Pilkada. This can only be done with intense socialization and universal voter education. The choice of socialization instrument is very important, especially in the midst of a non-natural disaster situation like this, where the enthusiasm of the community to come to the polling station is overshadowed by anxiety about the pandemic. Therefore, the choice of strategy must be finalized, the use of interesting jargons, and the maximum use of social media. In this context, KPU Bone Bolango gives a characteristic in providing socialization and voter education by using acronyms and targeting the basis of socialization according to its segmentation.

The socialization models and strategies implemented include: 1) Grebek Pasar, which is an acronym for the "Electoral Information Sharing Movement", this activity was carried out before the Covid 19 Pandemic, namely in early 2020 around January and February. This socialization aims to provide election information by targeting traders and buyers who may be apathetic or receive less information regarding the 2020 simultaneous regional elections in Bone Bolango Regency. Several markets spread across Bone Bolango Regency had been actively carried out before the Covid 19 pandemic broke out; 2) Democracy Apple, this activity targets Beginner Voters in high school and equivalent spread across Bone Bolango Regency and is also coupled with the recording of e-KTPs for students who are 17 years old or who will be 17 years old on the D day of voting. By involving elements of the Population and Civil Registry Office of Bone Bolango Regency, this activity was carried out, of course, before the onset of Covid 19; 3) Formation of Democracy Agents and Democracy Terrace, this program is still carried out in a series of Democracy Appeals where the KPU Bone Bolango selects 5 (five) people to be confirmed as agents who become school representatives as well as democracy volunteers who become the KPU's arm in schools in disseminating electoral

information. related to the Regional Head Election in Bone Bolango. This activity was carried out before the pandemic and during the Pandemic, of course the dissemination of electoral information to Democratic Agents during the pandemic was carried out by using online media; 4) Mosalamu, is an acronym for "Young People's Gathering Moment", socialization targeting the basis of Young Voters, in a Pandemic condition this activity is carried out by complying with Health protocols, with the number of voters dominated by young people in the DPT Bone Bolango Regency, of course the socialization scheme this is very effective and according to its segmentation this scheme is very necessary; 5) Mosiati, is also an acronym for "Moment of Gathering of Taklim Mothers". This socialization scheme is also considered important because more than 50% of the voters in the DPT Bone Bolango Regency are women. This socialization is not only carried out according to the segment but also intensified to the village bases. This activity is also carried out by tightening the Health protocol; 6) Molahuli, is a socialization scheme that utilizes social media through the official account of the KPU Bone Bolango, be it FB, Youtube and Instagram, which is broadcast with live or live delay methods. Also implemented through radio media in the form of live interactive where listeners can ask questions directly. This Molahuli Scheme is also an acronym for "Moment Chat About Elections".

D. Leveraging the "Power" of Online Media

Ulber Silalahi (2021) suggests that in an effort to increase public participation, one way to increase awareness is to increase awareness. Building voter awareness is of course by stimulating voter interest. In the 2019 general election, there were about 35 to 40 percent of voters from millennials, as stated by the Coordinator of the Center for Political Research LIPI, Sarah Nuraini Siregar who said there were approximately 80 million of the 185 million voters dominated by millennials (antaranews.com, 2018).
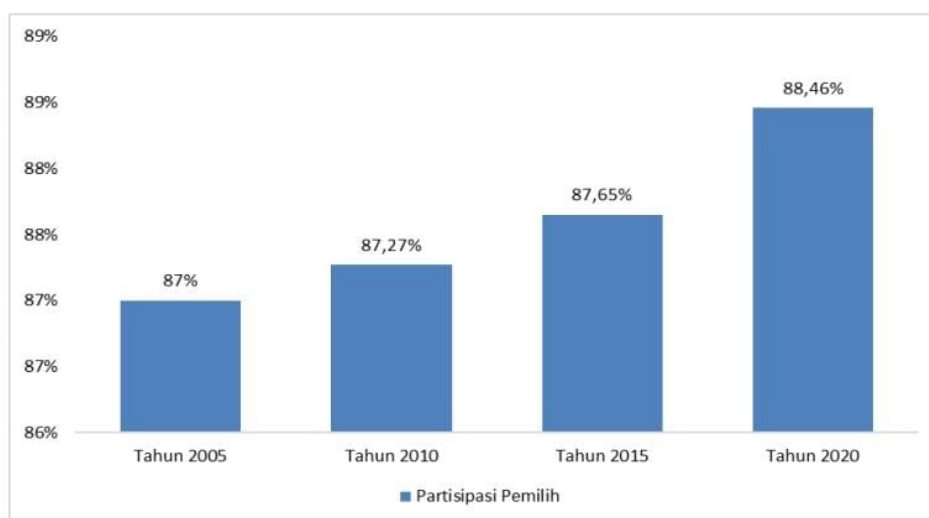
Because almost 40% of voters are dominated by the millennial generation, the choice of the right socialization scheme must be finalized in an effort to increase the participation rate, one of which is by choosing the right method and media according to the characteristics of millennials. Smartphones, gadgets are instruments used to access the internet, in the era of digitalization 4.0, it has now become a necessity for our society to use these facilities. Of course, the millennial generation is very familiar with accessing social media, on average they already have a social media account and surf in it. This opportunity actually greatly facilitates the KPU in disseminating electoral information through social media. In the current pandemic situation, the online socialization method is a strategic choice for the KPU to carry out effective and efficient socialization. In other words, social media creates a space called cyberspace to stimulate the deliberation of democratic values such as volunteerism, egalitarianism and networking in contemporary democracy. Therefore, it is very significant and important to elaborate on the existence of social media in the context of socialization and political education (Jati, 2015).

The KPU Bone Bolango Regency is very aware of the "power" of social media in an effort to disseminate electoral information. Simply put, social media is the media that is most familiar to individuals so that whatever message the KPU conveys on social media will be conveyed effectively and sustainably. This method is a socialization strategy that is carried out by maximizing technology-based communication and information and the use of social media that is currently developing.
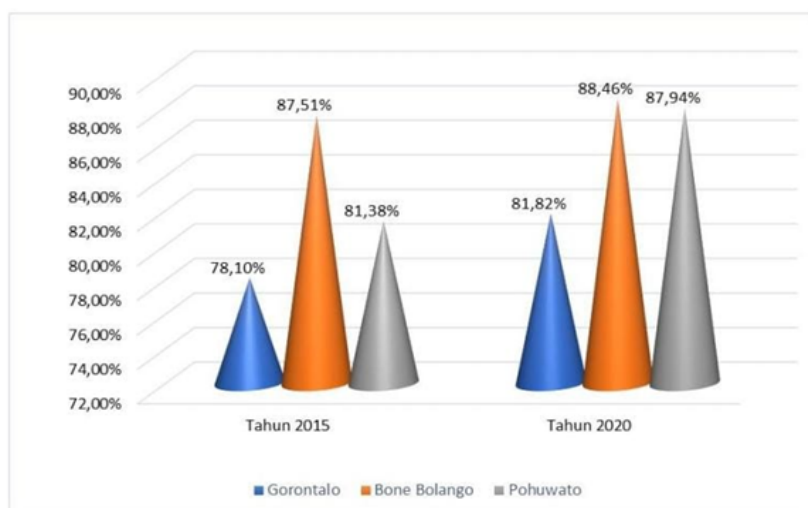
According to the researcher, there are five important things in terms of building effective communication and socialization through social media; First, determine the target target. We realize that social media users are large and heterogeneous, not all of whom are actively reading and interested in electoral information. Therefore, the socialization or information to be conveyed should be made as attractive as possible to stimulate the reading interest of social media users; Second. Viral election hashtags and jargon such as "let's vote…", "let's go to the polling station." and or "don't abstain.". Automatically, the more viral it is, the more it will make an impression on readers or social media users. Third, using interesting sentences, this is intended to persuade persuasively and subtly so that readers and social media users are interested in knowing the information we provide, usually begins with an inviting sentence; Fourth, create election slogans that are always remembered, suggested slogans in local languages, as did the KPU Bone Bolango in its social media, the closing sentence always uses the sentence "Ilege Liyongo" which means Don't Forget, Fifth, interactive or Live Streaming via FB, Instagram and Youtube which allows two-way conversations to occur by providing fast responses in interactive two-way communication.

E. Highest Achievement Participation Rate

It is a challenge for the KPU of Bone Bolango Regency to maintain the tradition of achieving the highest voter participation in Gorontalo province, especially during the Covid 19 pandemic. If this is not taken seriously by breakthroughs in socialization strategies and voter education, it is not impossible that there is a potential for a decline in participation rates. The number of voters is very large, even more extreme, the national target for voter turnout has not been achieved. Whereas on the other hand the pandemic has contributed to budget savings, in particular socialization and voter education, which previously had to be delivered face-to-face, with this pandemic, it indirectly encourages us to use technology and the internet effectively and efficiently for the implementation of the socialization. the results are not in vain, The strategy carried out by the Bone Bolango KPU resulted in the achievement of voter participation rates, even the percentage increase compared to the previous Pilkada in Bone Bolango. And of course, the highest in the province of Gorontalo, even further, that the holding of the simultaneous regional elections in Bone Bolango in 2020 did not create new clusters of the spread of Covid 19.

Figure 2. Trend of Increasing Voter Participation in Pilkada in Bone Bolango Regency

Figure 3. Comparison of Voter Participation in Bone Bolango Regency with Gorontalo and Pohuwato Regencies in the 2015 and 2020 Pilkada

CONCLUSION

Simultaneous Regional Elections in the midst of the Covid 19 pandemic has its own challenges, this of course encourages Election Organizers to be creative in their implementation. Especially in terms of increasing voter turnout, because the achievement of high voter turnout shows that the results and process of its implementation have legitimacy, this legitimacy is one of the causes of an ideal and democratic government. As mentioned by Roberts (2004) that the main dimension of democracy is citizen participation. In democratic public administration, public participation in public administration activities is the main pillar and dimension (Silalahi. 2021).

To achieve the participation rate above the national target of 77.5%, especially in the midst of a pandemic, mature strategies are needed to stimulate the public as voters to come to polling stations using their voting rights. Among them; First, building Awareness (Awareness Building), as an object of policy, the public should be given an understanding of the importance of being directly involved in channeling their voting rights for the progress and welfare of their region by selecting candidates for Regional Heads who are considered competent; Second, Voter Education and Socialization, this is important because not only interest and awareness of citizens are stimulated but also knowledge and meaning of elections that must be socialized to citizens. This means that the voting public is politically literate and at least knows who and what is chosen to determine the fate of their region in the future; Third, during a period of limited movement and maintaining health protocols, the selection of a socialization platform and voter education is important. The use of digitization facilities, the use of network media, and maximizing social media are important in efforts to increase participation rates in the 2020 simultaneous regional head elections.

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