

The Role of the Regional General Election Commission in Improving Political Participation of Bandung Society

Zindan Baynal Hubi¹, Ilham Aji Pangestu^{2✉}, Nursanda Rizki Adhari³ and Estu Supriyadi⁴

¹²³Universitas Islam Syekh Yusuf

⁴Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

[✉]Jl. Syekh Yusuf No.10, Babakan, Kec. Tangerang, Kota Tangerang, Banten Indonesia

[✉]iapangestu@unis.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of the Bandung City Regional General Election Commission with its role in improving the political culture of community participants in the city of Bandung. This is mainly in facing the 2018 Bandung Mayor election. This research is a descriptive study that was analysed in several ways, namely data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification. The approach is done qualitatively, while the data collection technique is done by interview and observation. The participants selected in this study were the Regional General Election Commission of the City of Bandung (1 person) and the people of the City of Bandung (7 people). The results of this study indicate that the Bandung City Regional General Elections Commission in improving the political culture of participants with political education carried out various elements in the implementation of the Bandung City Regional Head election in 2018 it is known that the political participation of the community experienced significant growth and far exceeded the target set. The number of voter participants in the city of Bandung in the simultaneous regional head elections (Pilkada) in 2018 has increased compared to the last 5 (five) elections. The results also show that the increasing number of voter participants in the city of Bandung is inseparable from the cooperation of the Bandung City Regional Election Commission with various parties, both community organizations, policymakers, and other organizations in the city of Bandung. In the future, the political participation of the people of Bandung must always be maintained by involving various elements and innovations that adapt to changes and developments in society.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the main characteristics of a democratic country is its ability to involve citizens in planning and conducting general elections. People's political participation (voting) is one of the most

important parts of maintaining the order of a democratic state (Liando, 2016). Political participation in a democratic society is an indicator of the implementation of the highest legitimate state power by the people (people's sovereignty), as seen in their participation in democratic parties (elections) (Wardhani, 2018). Democracy, on the other hand, is a political system that empowers justice by limiting the ruler's power through legislation, reducing anomalies in government administration, and ensuring equality for all citizens by protecting individual citizens' rights (Solihah, Bainus, & Rosyidin, 2018).

Political participation raises concerns about the relationship between political awareness and government trust. The high political awareness and trust in the government of a citizen, the higher their political participation will be. And vice versa, if political participation and trust in the government are low, citizens will not be interested to participate in politics. In other words, political knowledge and trust in the government or political system define the citizen's level of political participation. Political participation is closely related to democracy and legitimacy as the frameworks of political involvement, democracy, and legitimacy are intertwined. Political participation has an impact on the legitimacy of a government's operation in terms of democracy (Arniti, 2020). In a democratic system, public participation in general elections is a political right for all citizens (Amrurobbi et al., 2020). Political participation is a reflection of the community's active engagement in political activities to promote good governance. The participants' political culture has the potential to greatly improve the general election's quality. The community's active involvement in the general election represents political culture and compliance with the laws and regulations.

Every country has developed a political culture for society to instil values and norms, including in the political field, where community members will try to learn about how the political system should work and what the government should do for its citizens during the development process. Over time, the community's political attitudes form a certain culture, namely a political culture. Political culture has its own set of qualities or standards that indicate the level of public participation in every political activity in the country. Based on the criteria, there are three types of political culture. Almond and Verba stated, three types of political culture are Parochial Political Culture, Subject Political Culture, and Participant Political Culture. Parochial Political Culture is a type of political culture that is limited to a small scope and is regional. Subject Political Culture is a type of political culture in which members of the community lack attention and awareness. While Participant Political Culture is a sort of political culture in which people of the community are aware of their rights and obligations as citizens, which has a significant impact on the present political system (Verba, 1990).

Parochial Political Culture is characterized by citizens' ignorance and indifference and even tends to be apathetic towards politics, and the development of democracy is manifest in its characteristics. The Subject Political Culture, on the other hand, is characterized by a passive political culture. In this political culture, the community has obeyed the rules and the government. However, the community has not yet been fully involved in the development of democracy. The indicator of its involvement is only in fulfilling the obligation to vote during elections. On the other hand, the third type is Participants Political Culture; it is a developed stage where the level of political culture raises personal awareness within themselves of democracy and political activity development (good and smart citizens).

According to several theories, among the three political cultures described above, the Participant Political Culture is the best level of political culture for the growth of democracy. This is due to the harmonization of the relationship between citizens and the government, which can be seen in citizens' active participation in the political process where the community has participated in a variety of political actions, such as criticizing government policy, supervising the process of development and execution of public policies, or at the very least, engaging in voting activities and learning a great deal about political life and governance. Even further, it enables the community to participate in the development of democratic life, or to be more precise, the participants become active citizens (effective citizens).

In the life of a democratic country, the Participant's Political Culture must always be developed in the community so that the people are aware of their rights and obligations as citizens to get involved in political activities. This is in line with what was explained by Branson that democracy is not a machine that will function by itself but must always be aware of being reproduced from one generation to another (Branson, 1998). As a result, it is a shared obligation for community civics or stakeholders to raise civic knowledge and civic disposition. In this context, the scope is not only concerned with strengthening politics and democracy alone but also the formation of citizens who are aspired to be able to make a real contribution to national life (Zindan, 2021).

The maximum political participation from the public is needed to build a government with trustworthy, knowledgeable, and accountable leaders who can develop effective policies to promote good governance. The maximum political involvement can be achieved if everyone adopts a Participant Political Culture in all activities involving the government's political agenda.

The implementation of direct democracy in Indonesia requires the active participation of the community in selecting leaders, as the entire nation's leader candidates in the General Election (Pemilu) are being elected directly by the community. Democracy is now a system that is practised by every country. Democracy has been part of the culture of citizens in some nations, such as the United States and Western Europe, and has become a dominant cultural form that determines people's behaviour patterns (Badu, 2015).

General Elections imposed on a country are a means of distributing citizens' political rights, achieving people's sovereignty, and ensuring the success of law-based government elections (Antari, 2018). The general election is the driving force behind Indonesian democracy, as it is a democratic feast that serves as the nation and state's political foundation for a better future. Elections, as a foundation of democracy, lead the nation and state to achieve democracy and establish civilization. Furthermore, elections are also an important evaluative momentum for a regime of power in realizing the ideals of an independent state, as stated in the fourth paragraph of the Preamble of the Republic of Indonesia's 1945 Constitution, which is manifested in developing a good government that accommodates the community's needs in terms of education, health, and economic welfare (Chaniago, 2016).

When it comes to the evolution of democracy in Indonesia, the general election will undoubtedly be mentioned. The general election serves as a benchmark for the implementation of the country's democracy. The political participation of the community, which is shown in terms of extending voting rights to people who already have voting rights in the general election, is another measure

of the general election effectiveness (Apriani, 2019). It is necessary to have an organization or institution that can provide the required facilities and infrastructure to conduct general elections. The institution that has the task, authority, and obligation to organize general elections in Indonesia is the General Elections Commission (KPU). According to Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections, the General Election Commission, hereinafter referred to as KPU, is an Election Organizing Agency that is national, permanent, and independent in holding elections.

The Bandung Municipality's Election Commissioner (KPU) is responsible for conducting the city's Local Leaders Election, also known as the general election of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Bandung, which takes place every five years. Aside from the primary responsibility of conducting elections at the municipal level, the Election Commissioner (KPU) in Bandung Municipality also plays an important role in promoting political participation and political education to foster a political culture among community members, allowing the general election to run smoothly and citizens to exercise their voting rights. As previously stated, this research investigates the function of KPU in delivering political education and strengthening community political culture in Bandung, particularly in embracing the 2018 Bandung mayoral election simultaneously.

METHODS

A qualitative research method was used in this study. It was used to look at the details of data rather than the quantity of data. Furthermore, qualitative research stresses "naturalistic inquiry, with a greater focus on the phenomenon under study as it is, not as it should be" (Muchtart, 2015). The role of the Bandung Municipality's Election Commissioner (KPU) in shaping the political culture of the society in embracing the 2018 mayoral election was described fully in this study using descriptive research. It was researched since the purpose of this study was to locate an illustration of social phenomena in their natural environment in a community. In short, the phenomenon of this community can be clearly and properly revealed.

Participants are the most important aspect of qualitative research. According to Sugiyono, in qualitative research, the respondent is referred to as a participant rather than a respondent (Sugiyono, 2009). In qualitative research, participants play an important role in assisting and facilitating researchers in collecting data and gaining the information needed to support the research. The KPU of Bandung Municipality (1 person) and Bandung citizens (7 people) were the participants in this study.

The data for this study was gathered by observation, interviews, documentation, literature review, and field notes. The data was then analysed continuously throughout the study, both in and out of the field, from the beginning to the end. Furthermore, the data analysis technique included three parallel streams of activities: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification. Qualitative research findings are sometimes questioned since they are deemed insufficient in terms of validity and reliability. As a result, researchers must employ methodologies to determine the level of trustworthiness that may be employed to satisfy the credibility requirements (Fahmi, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the research into the role of the Bandung Municipality's Election Commissioner (KPU) in shaping political culture in society revealed that the mayoral election socialization program was carried out optimally, and the corporation was built for all strata of society, including collaboration with the entire Bandung' society, the Bandung city government, mass media, political parties, civil society organizations, and youth organizations. Then there was socialization creation, which was a unique and innovative program that was held during the 2018 mayoral election.

In this circumstance, the Election Commissioner (KPU) of Bandung Municipality will be unable to prepare a socialization program for the mayoral election if it relies solely on the internal General Elections Commission (KPU), as indicated by Angga, the technical staff of Bandung Municipality's KPU. The collaboration can be started by submitting a proposal for cooperation and attaching a program. As a result of the support from the entire society, particularly community civics and stakeholders as the corporate partners of the Bandung General Elections Commission, the implementation of the socialization program went smoothly.

In conducting the various activities of the socialization program for the Bandung mayoral election, KPU has implemented some methods to carry out the socialization program. The methods were needed to support the society grasp the information easily and well, as well as to help society comprehend the material thoroughly. According to Angga, the implemented methods for mayoral election socialization employed community collaboration and youth organizations in Bandung by 34 mass organizations such as GP Ansor, KNPI, and GMBI.

Furthermore, to reach out to the broader society with special needs, KPU teamed up with four disability organizations in Bandung, including the Indonesian Blind Association (PERTUNI) and the Indonesian Muslim Blind Association (ITMI). In addition, to collaborating with some community organizations for people with disabilities, KPU used socialization creations that were produced in entertainment activities for all members of society to participate in. It interestingly encourages socialization. The socialization activities included the launching of the mascot and the Pilwalkot Jingle, the Healthy Walk "Election Awareness Movement", the Launch of the 2018 Simultaneous Election Stages, and the "SAKOLA (Healthy Sports) leisurely stroll".

Other interview results with some students in Universitas Islam Nusantara illustrated that the socialization programs for the mayoral election in Bandung were conducted in seminars and invited participants. The program was conducted through lectures activities by delivering the materials from speakers to the participants, which were similarly conducted at Universitas Islam Nusantara. According to Mufli, Yanto, Zain, and Anisa, who was involved in the socialization programs, the material for socializing the Bandung mayoral election was delivered in the form of seminar activities on the importance of voting in the general election, encouraging participants to avoid abstentions and the election procedures. It began with the voters' selection and closed with attendance at the polling site.

Meanwhile, informal socialization is carried out through various activities involving all levels of society, most of which are carried out in the community, such as the Simultaneous Election Stages

program, which was attended by Yuni and Melani, students of the Indonesian Education University (UPI), and through the leisurely stroll street program, "SAKOLA (Health from Sports), which was held in various sub-districts in Bandung, one of which was followed by Ano, an entrepreneur. KPU's mayoral election socialization program in Bandung was successful in reaching people from all levels of society. It was caused by the formal and informal programs that took place so that the information provided about the general election could be easily comprehended by society and it could more easily interact with fellow citizens. If only a formal program was implemented, there is a chance that only students would obtain the information. The socialization program, on the other hand, must be embraced by the larger community. As a result, KPU in Bandung did an excellent job of political socialization because it was done both formally and informally.

Political socialization is the process of introducing a political system and determining how people react to political phenomena. Political socialization also demonstrates how each community member should engage in their political system (Djuyandi, 2014). Political socialization is an endeavour or activity aimed at giving an individual a broad perspective of the political system so that they can make political decisions in response to political phenomena (Prasetyo, 2019). In state politics, political socialization is a separate study. It is caused by political socialization functions to maintain a well-functioning and positive system (Wibowo, 2017).

Other findings from the implementation of the socialization program for the Bandung Mayoral election, in this case, the KPU of Bandung City has also collaborated with the community facilitated by the mass media, such as the installation of digital billboards and banners, advertising in mass media, and radio broadcasts, which display the information related to the importance of participating in the 2018 Bandung mayoral election. Besides, the implementation of the Bandung Mayoral Election socialization program also involves social media through the internet and also uses some products that can be a medium for delivering information about the general election. As the results of field notes and documentation studies conducted at the KPU office of Bandung City, there are several socialization programs for the Bandung mayoral election that utilize social media, called "socialization creations," including the use of the hashtag #atuheuy, which is carried out to publish information regarding the Bandung mayoral election, which will commonly be accessed by novice voters through social media such as Instagram and WhatsApp.

Even some adults who are also social media users can participate in disseminating information through the role of social media. In addition to social media, several products were also made by the KPU of Bandung City to convey information related to the Bandung Mayoral election, for instance by making souvenirs, such as mascot dolls, fans, key chains, pins, mugs, ballpoints, and t-shirts with the theme of general elections. These products can be used as socialization and reminder media regarding the implementation of the Bandung Mayoral election. Then, in addition to making products, KPU of Bandung City also organizes special events as informal socialization activities to attract public enthusiasm, such as launching the mascot and mayor election jingle, socialization roadshows to educational institutions, correctional institutions, traditional markets, and the community.

It can be concluded that the socialization program for the Bandung Mayoral election has been carried out with various media uses as an innovation carried out by the KPU of Bandung City.

The socialization program, which is followed by all people in Bandung City, is a form of stimulus carried out on the community so that they understand that participating in the general election is important. Besides, they were also aware of every political activity organized by the government. The government must respond to it by prioritizing the attitude of the participants.

After participating in the socialization program for the Bandung Mayoral election, the people of Bandung are expected to be consistently active in participating in the general election. Even in the future, they can react and provide responses when government policies are not by the conditions of the people. It will all arise if the community already has the attitude of participant political culture. It needs the support of all parties to make it all happen, and the people of Bandung must start by actively participating in political activities. At least they are aware of the importance of participating in general elections and the importance of not abstaining every time a general election is held. The socialization program for the Bandung Mayoral election was carried out smoothly because it was also supported by excellent facilities and infrastructure. Every activity carried out in the socialization program for the Bandung Mayoral election also ran well, and there were no unintended consequences because there had been good coordination with the security forces in the local jurisdiction.

The results of field observations related to the implementation of the socialization program for the Participant Political Culture show that the benefits received by the people of Bandung City can foster a political culture among participants in the community. According to the research subjects, it can be concluded that after participating in the socialization program, they get benefits regarding the procedures for participating in the general election, and students, as members of the middle society can bridge the role of the KPU of Bandung City in inviting the public to participate in the general election. The socialization carried out by the KPU of Bandung City regarding the Bandung Mayoral election can provide knowledge to the public so that when they convey information about the general election, they can stimulate other people to participate in political activities, especially in the general election.

Regarding the Participants' Political Culture, the role of the KPU of Bandung City in growing it in the community is very dependent on the response of the community itself. After receiving the socialization program for the Bandung Mayoral election, people will understand the importance of participating in general elections when they are aware of their role in a country that adheres to the notion of democracy, as happened in Indonesia. As Verba argues, the term "political culture" refers primarily to political orientation and its other parts and attitudes toward our role in the system (Verba, 1990). Thus, the community will play a role in every political activity if their orientation and views consider that community political participation is very important in political activities.

The city of Bandung as the capital of West Java province has a large number of voters. According to data from the Bandung City General Election Commission, in 2018 the number of the Bandung City Permanent Voter List (DPT) was 1,659,017 voters. However, in the last few years, namely the 2013 Bandung Mayor Election, the number of Bandung City people who participated were less than 60 per cent. Riswan (2013) revealed that voter participation in the 2013 Bandung City Elections was only 58 per cent or 959,647 votes from the total permanent voter list (DPT) of 1,658,808. While the white group (golput) is 42 per cent or 699,161 people. This shows that the

people of Bandung City have not shown a participant political culture so the number of DPT does not guarantee a large number of voters in the general election in Bandung City.

In the implementation of the Bandung Mayoral Election in 2018 it turned out that the political participation of the community experienced significant growth and far exceeded the target to be achieved from the previous election, which was around 76.72 per cent. Yusuf (2018) revealed that the voter participation rate in the city of Bandung in the 2018 simultaneous regional elections had increased compared to five years ago. From the number of people's participation in the election of the Mayor of Bandung in 2018, the General Election Commission of the City of Bandung has succeeded in growing the political culture of participants. The growth of Bandung City's community participation in the election of the Mayor of Bandung in 2013 and 2018 can be seen in the following diagram:

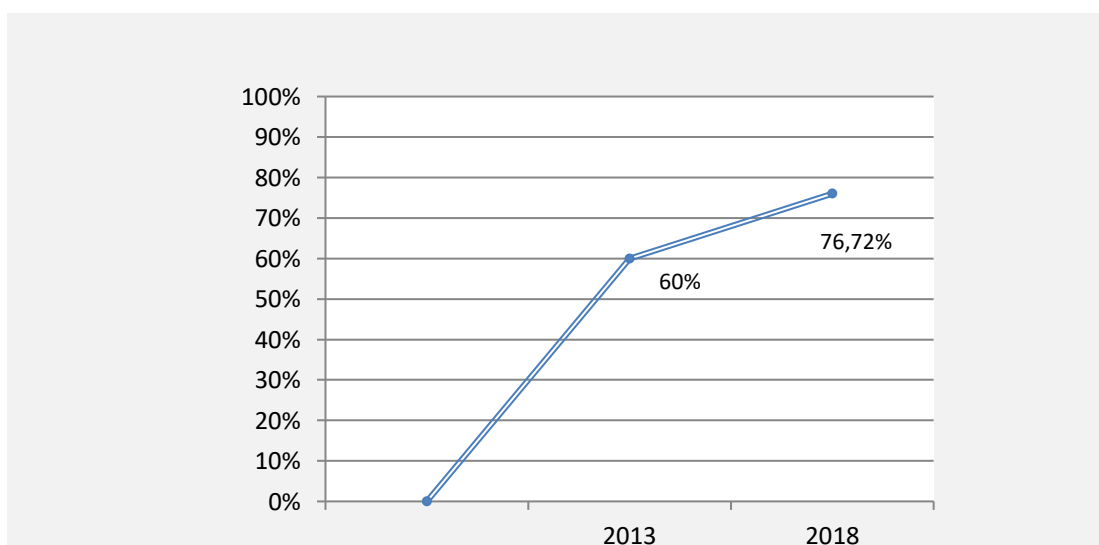


Chart 1: Growth of Community Political Participation in the Bandung Mayoral election in 2013 and 2018 Processed by Researchers in 2019 [source]

Thus, the data above has shown significant growth in the political participation of the people of Bandung City in the general election of the Mayor of Bandung. It can be concluded that the socialization program for the Bandung Mayoral election, carried out by the KPU as an effort to foster the participant political culture in the community, which was carried out in collaboration with various elements of society, had been going so well. The parameters of a democratic election are marked by the integrity of the electoral process and the integrity of the election results (Suswantoro, 2015). Indeed, all circles of society must play a role in realizing the importance of political participation in general elections.

In the future, the evaluation of planning and implementation of the general election socialization program by the KPU of Bandung City must be improved so that the innovations of several programs that have been implemented in the socialization of the 2018 Bandung Mayoral election can be maximized in the coming year. Besides, in the future, it is hoped that the collective awareness of the citizens of Bandung City will arise, that elections are a very important part because elections act as a mechanism for political change regarding the pattern and direction of public policy and/or regarding the circulation of elites periodically and in an orderly manner (Surbakti, 2015). On the other hand, the public should be encouraged to provide input regarding

government policies themselves, oversee the process of forming and implementing public policies, and not only participate in voting activities but also in building good governance and democracy itself.

CONCLUSION

In general, the role of the KPU of Bandung City in fostering a participant political culture has been achieved through various socialization programs before the Bandung Mayoral election. The role of the KPU of Bandung City regarding the planning of the general election socialization program is based on the KPU's regulations, duties, and work programs. Then, in the planning of the socialization program for the Bandung Mayoral election, it was discussed in the plenary meeting of the KPUD of Bandung City regarding innovation and forms of socialization activities so that in its implementation it could embrace all circles of society, ranging from community organizations, religious figures, youth organizations, and organizations for people with disabilities. All socialization programs for the Bandung Mayoral election in their implementation received enthusiasm and good responses, and the full support of the community went well. Researchers suggest that the KPUD of Bandung City optimize the role of social media, especially to embrace the millennial generation and maintain and strengthen communication with various community groups that are implemented in various activities.

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