

The Resilient Strategy of the General Election Commission to Boost Voter Participation Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic in Makassar City

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ABSTRACT - The objective of the study is to ascertain the strategy employed by the General Election Commission to enhance voter participation in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. The study included a total of 8 informants. This study employs a qualitative research methodology. The research is based on Soerjono Soekanto's theory, which incorporates Normative Strategic, Ideal Strategy, and Factual Strategic. The research findings indicate the presence of a normative strategy, specifically demonstrating the diligent efforts of the KPU to establish norms among the residents of Makassar City in order to facilitate the peaceful conduct of elections. (b) The optimal approach demonstrates the effective execution of the KPU's responsibilities towards the community, enabling the community to express their desires through general elections by exercising their right to vote. The factual approach demonstrates the KPU's ongoing efforts to engage in outreach activities at both the sub-district and sub-district levels, as well as through the media. As election organisers, it is imperative that we enhance our pool of skilled personnel in order to cultivate proficient organisers, boost voter engagement, and improve the overall quality of our operations.

Keywords: General Election Commision; COVID-19; Resilient Strategy

Introduction

The performance of the General Election Commission is realized through an independent and non-partisan institution, namely the General Election Commission (KPU), with the aim of realizing people's sovereignty in forming a democratic government (Fahmi, 2016; Ofis Rikardo, 2020) . The entire process of holding a General Election that is transparent, honest and fair can only be achieved if the Election organizers uphold integrity and understand and respect the civil and political rights of citizens. It should be emphasized that the success of holding elections does not only depend on the technical process, but also on the high integrity of the organizers. This becomes increasingly important considering the existence of Law Number 15 of 2011 which confirms that weak election organizers have the potential to hinder the creation of quality elections (Arkam, 2018; Ichsan et al., 2013; Simanjuntak, 2016) . Therefore, the KPU as an election organizing institution must have unshakable integrity and a strong commitment to democratic principles.

A deep understanding of the civil and political rights of citizens is the main basis for carrying out the duties of the General Election Commission (KPU). Only through this understanding can General Elections become a true forum for realizing people's aspirations, guaranteeing justice, and strengthening the foundations of democracy in state leadership. Thus, the KPU plays a crucial role as the front guard in maintaining the integrity and quality of election implementation, aiming to create a strong and resilient democratic system (Huda, 2017; Ridha, 2016) .

As the only institution with the authority to organize elections in Indonesia, including Presidential Elections, Legislative Elections, Governor Elections and Regional Head Elections, the KPU is responsible for all aspects related to the implementation of elections. The KPU is a state institution that is national, permanent and independent, in accordance with the provisions in Article

22E Paragraph (5) of the 1945 Constitution which confirms that general elections are held by a General Election Commission that is national, permanent and independent. This principle is also contained in Article 1 Number 6 of Law Number 10 of 2008 concerning General Elections, which explains that the KPU has special duties and authority in organizing elections (Fahmi, 2016; Ofis Rikardo, 2020) . With this clear position, the KPU has a big responsibility to ensure transparency, sustainability and the success of every election process. The KPU is not only a technical organizer, but also a guardian of democratic principles, making it an institution that supports the development of Indonesia's democratic system as a whole.

The next election, which will be identified as the Regional Head Election (Pilkada) this year, faces very different challenges from the previous election. This was due to the implementation of the Regional Head Election which was held for the first time in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. The 2020 Simultaneous Regional Elections, which coincided with the pandemic, triggered a quick and appropriate response from the Government to ensure the continuity of these Regional Head Elections (Fadhila & Erowati, 2021; Mulyono, 2021; Muthmainnah, 2021) . In connection with the 2020 Simultaneous Pilkada which was originally scheduled for 23 September 2020 but had to be postponed until 9 December 2020, a joint decision between the KPU, Bawaslu, the Government and the DPR is an important step in adjusting the election schedule to the pandemic situation. This decision is also supported by the issuance of Law Number 6 of 2020, which stipulates the third amendment to Law Number 1 of 2014 concerning the Election of Governors, Regents and Mayors.

Regional elections are not just an administrative process, but rather a need for society to determine leaders at the regional level. This concept is confirmed in Law Number 32 of 2004 Article 24 paragraph 5, which states that "The Regional Head and Deputy Regional Head are elected as a pair directly by the regional people themselves." Thus, Pilkada is a concrete manifestation of the principle of direct democracy by the people. Data analysis shows that regional head elections in the midst of a pandemic are a dynamic that needs to be accommodated well by all relevant parties. Joint decisions and regulatory changes are adaptive steps to ensure that the implementation of elections continues as the pandemic conditions continue to develop. In this way, the Regional Head Election continues to maintain the principle of direct democracy by the people, while also demonstrating the resilience of the democratic system in Indonesia in the midst of unexpected situations.

Method

This qualitative study examines Makassar City residents' voter participation during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Makassar City General Election Commission office hosted the research on voter participation initiatives. General Election Commission officers, voters, and affiliated parties were studied. In-depth interviews, online questionnaires, and direct observation were used to collect data from February to April 2021. Qualitative theme analysis was used to analyze the data (Sugiyono, 2010) . Interpretation involves describing discoveries and patterns and relating them to appropriate ideas or conceptual frameworks. Introduction, theoretical framework, research methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion are typical research report sections. Peer review by relevant professionals improves research validity and dependability. With publication and distribution through scientific and academic media, the research results may help build voter involvement methods during the COVID-19 epidemic.

Result and Discussion

The results of this research were carried out to provide an interpretation of the results obtained during the research. The theory used in this research is theory (Soekanto, 2016) , which provides effective strategies for increasing voter participation amidst Covid 19, including:

Normative Strategy

The research results show that the normative strategy in implementing General Elections (Pemilu) in Makassar City is based on a set of norms that must be observed by the community. These norms involve principles such as independence, honesty, justice, legal certainty, order, transparency, proportionality, accountability, professionalism, efficiency and effectiveness (Citranu, 2022; Marlinati, 2013; Sulistiani, 2018) . The people of Makassar City are expected to follow the rules set by the local General Election Commission (KPU) during the election. In addition, the research results highlight health norms that need to be observed, such as using masks, maintaining a minimum distance of two meters at polling stations (TPS), avoiding the use of campaign attributes, rejecting money politics, and ensuring voters know the candidate they will vote for.

Information from the Chairman of the KPU adding the dimension of health and public order to the norms that must be followed during elections. Health protocols, such as wearing masks and maintaining distance, are important aspects that should not be ignored by the public. Apart from that, the KPU highlighted norms related to maintaining public order, such as rejecting money politics and avoiding provocative actions that could disrupt the course of the elections. Other members of the General Election Commission emphasized the importance of complying with the norms of "Luber Jurdil" (direct, free, secret, honest and fair) in the implementation of elections. According to him, compliance with all these norms is necessary for the election to run well. The habits of the people of Makassar City in participating in elections, voting for candidate pairs, and supervising the voting process reflect the active involvement of the community in the implementation of the elections.

Overall, the results of this research show that the norms applied in the normative strategy do not only involve technical aspects of general elections, but also include aspects of health and public order, which are a response to the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding and complying with these norms is expected to increase voter participation and maintain the integrity of election implementation amidst the challenges of the pandemic

Strategic Ideal

The research results show that the Ideal Strategy implemented by the Makassar City General Election Commission (KPU) is based on ideal values or principles that should be implemented in accordance with their role and position in the system. First, the KPU's strategy focuses on assisting in the preparation of election programs and budgets in districts/cities. The KPU carries out its duties responsibly in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. The KPU's planning and program preparation process, budget allocation for implementing socialization programs, and integrity are the steps taken to ensure the effectiveness of this strategy.

Second, the KPU provides technical services for election implementation, supports the preparation of election implementation reports, and the KPU's accountability. The KPU's important role is seen in providing election information to the public, enabling them to channel their aspirations through general elections by using their voting rights. Through this strategy, the KPU not only carries out technical tasks, but also acts as an information provider agent that influences public participation in the election process.

Third, the strategy implemented by the KPU related to direct interaction with the community is not only limited to conveying information and activities, but also includes other aspects that are responsive and inclusive. The KPU in Makassar City plays an important role in responding to obstacles or problems that arise during the election process, and a quick response to each situation indicates good performance. More than just

providing information, the KPU is actively involved in answering questions, accommodating and processing public complaints, and treating all parties fairly and equally.

The KPU's responsibility, which is not only focused on administration and technical matters, but also on aspects of service and justice, shows their commitment to creating an environment conducive to public participation. Especially in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Makassar City KPU appears to be proactive in increasing public participation by utilizing social media as the main information channel. This activity not only includes providing the latest information about elections, but also reflects their efforts to provide services that are affordable and easily accessible to all levels of society. Thus, the KPU's strategy in the field of direct interaction with the community in Makassar City describes a holistic approach that includes responsibility, speed of response, and adaptation to changing contexts, especially in facing the challenges of the pandemic.

Fourth, the Makassar City KPU has implemented a proactive strategy in socializing the steps for selecting regional heads. This socialization is designed to cover all administrative levels, starting from sub-district to sub-district levels, and is carried out via social media, in accordance with government directives which underline the importance of maintaining physical distance as an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Socialization is not carried out directly to avoid the potential risk of virus transmission. In this context, the research results confirm that the Makassar City KPU has succeeded in implementing the Ideal Strategy quite effectively in carrying out its duties and responsibilities. The focus on integrity in the election process, optimal public service, and adaptation to pandemic conditions reflects the KPU's commitment to maintaining the continuity and security of the democratic process amidst the global challenges it faces.

Factual Strategy

The Factual Strategy implemented by the General Election Commission (KPU) focuses on concrete realities on the ground and social life that actually occurs. First, in the context of the successful implementation of elections, the KPU focuses on several key aspects that illustrate the factual approach they apply. First, the KPU emphasized the importance of effective coordination at the Polling Place (TPS) level and with the District Election Committee (PKK). This includes efforts to organize access to public information, safeguard the constitutional rights of citizens, and ensure the authenticity of the people's voice. As part of its factual strategy, the KPU carries out established programs, such as outreach carried out directly to the public. Through this activity, the KPU is trying to overcome several concrete problems that often arise, such as the lack of availability of ballot papers and the readiness of organizers. This action reflects a real response to field situations that could influence the implementation of elections.

Furthermore, the KPU also responded to the reality of the pandemic by tightening health protocols. This includes concrete steps such as conducting outreach to the public about election procedures in the context of a pandemic, which is an integral part of the KPU's factual strategy. Thus, through the implementation of factual strategies, the KPU seeks to embrace field realities, using information obtained from real social life as a basis for formulating and implementing relevant and effective policies and programs.

Second, to make the election a success, the KPU continues to strive to carry out outreach both at the sub-district and sub-district levels and through social media in accordance with government directions to maintain distance. At least two meters, the KPU is trying to maximize this so that this general election runs well, even though it is still in the midst of the Covid 19 pandemic, socializing the elderly and low-income people is difficult. So several times the KPU held outreach on social media to understand. The obstacles in the implementation of the election were the lack of ballot papers in the city of Makassar, so the KPU coordinated with polling stations or other sub-districts that had ballot papers, moreover, in relation to the factual strategy, to make the election a success, the KPU must continue to make efforts to carry out outreach through the media. However, there are obstacles for the KPU in maximizing general elections, such as outreach to the elderly, people with low education, and the lack of ballot papers.

Third, as a professional election organizer, of course you have to increase competent human resources as a way to create professional organizers, increase voter participation and quality. Of course, at this time, the KPU's objectives have not been achieved optimally. Indonesia is a democratic country but there is still a lack of public awareness of the importance of being involved in determining potential leaders. The KPU still lacks integration to realize honest and fair elections. Obstacles in the implementation of the election are problems related to logistical distribution, difficulty in obtaining C6 forms during the election, the vote counting process which takes a long time (midnight), and lawsuits over the final results of the votes. That as a professional election organizer of course we must improve human resources. competent as a way to create professional organizers, increase participation and quality of voters increase participation and quality of voters.

Fourth, in an effort to make the election a success, the General Election Commission (KPU) continues to be committed to ensuring order during implementation and integrity in vote counting. Even though the KPU has tried hard to achieve this goal, the obstacle that often arises is the implementation of elections which do not always match the promised time. Despite this, the KPU continues to prioritize order and honesty in the election process. The main obstacle encountered was the inaccurate timing of the election, which was a source of complaints from some members of the public. Even though the KPU has tried hard to maintain order and honesty in vote counting, delays in holding elections remain a challenge faced. People who complain about untimeliness show the importance of elections being held according to the promised schedule, so that they can provide trust and satisfaction to all voters (Hubaib et al., 2021; Liwaul & Yunus, 2018).

However, it needs to be acknowledged that the KPU has not stopped trying to improve and overcome these obstacles. The efforts made by the KPU reflect their commitment to maintaining integrity and order at every stage of the election. Therefore, even though time constraints may continue to arise, the KPU's seriousness and dedication in achieving order and honesty in the election process remains the main focus in creating successful and trustworthy elections for the entire community.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion in the previous chapter regarding the General Election Commission (KPU) strategy in increasing voter participation amidst the Covid-19 pandemic in Makassar City, it can be concluded that the efforts made have been quite effective. The KPU needs to continue to work hard to continue to increase the number of voter participation every time an election is held, especially in regional head elections. KPU report data shows an increase in the number of voters every time an election is held. Despite this, the Makassar City KPU remains committed to increasing voter participation. The efforts made in the 2020 regional head elections show the KPU's commitment in Makassar City to continue to increase voter participation.

The results of research regarding the KPU's strategy in increasing voter participation amidst the Covid-19 pandemic in Makassar City provide the basis for several suggestions that can be given. First, the KPU needs to maximize popular socialization methods or utilize social media so that information related to regional election technical matters can be easily understood by the public. Second, the public is expected to follow information more often from the media and outreach held by the Makassar City KPU to increase awareness of the importance of participating in Regional Head Elections and other General Elections. Third, the Makassar City KPU is expected to be more aggressive in carrying out outreach as the spearhead of their strength, especially in the current Covid-19 pandemic situation. Fourth, the Makassar City KPU needs to build a networking strategy with universities and survey institutions to support efforts to increase voter participation. Fifth, on a regular basis, the Makassar City KPU should always carry out outreach related to election-related activities, not just when the election is about to be held. By implementing these suggestions, it is

hoped that the Makassar City KPU can continue to increase voter participation in a sustainable manner.

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