

## Political Participation of Fishermen Community Voters Amidst COVID-19 in the Local Election

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**ABSTRACT** - This study examines fisherman community voters' political engagement in Covid 19 in the 2020 Regional Head Election in Tritiro Village, Bontotiro District, Bulukumba Regency. This qualitative research method analyses primary and secondary data using interview, observation, and documentation. According to the study, (1) Active Participation: The fishing community participates in the post-conflict local election by campaigning for certain candidates openly, placing banners for candidate pairs, socialising the programme for the next 5 years if mandated by the community, and most of the fishing communities choose one Paslon because of the 4 existing candidates, one may change and (2) Passive Participation: the fishing community participates passively because the problem occurs almost every general election and events have not been adequately analysed for the next participant. First, political parties' candidates are old. (2) campaign promises are not fulfilled with political realities, (3) post-conflict local election organisers lack socialisation, (4) candidate candidates are considered too much talk and not realised after taking office, and (5) the community participates passively because each community has a different perspective. (6) There are more pressing issues and (3) the Abstain group (Golput) or apathetic groups: Fishing communities rarely skip district head elections in Bulukumba Regency this year. Even if fishing villages are apathetic and think an election is pointless, they believe their one vote cannot influence the outcome.

*Keywords: Political Participation; Fisherman Community; Local Election*

### Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has acted as a catalyst for substantial global transformation, affecting multiple aspects of life, including the political sphere. The impact was significant, giving rise to a remarkable surge of transformation in the fundamental principles of democracy, particularly in Indonesia. Within the framework of democracy, society serves as the primary foundation that plays a crucial role in influencing the mechanisms of political processes, and its impacts are evident across multiple dimensions of social and political existence, particularly in relation to political engagement (Harjanto, 2011; Kodyat & MS, 2021). The active participation of society in the political process significantly influences both the formulation of policy direction and the development of democracy's essence.

The pandemic has assessed the degree to which democracy can be all-encompassing and receptive to the interests and ambitions of individuals. Society's strategic role in overseeing and initiating required reforms in the political system is evident via significant shifts in political dynamics, especially during times of uncertainty (Ekman & Amnå, 2012; Serrat et al., 2018; Triono, 2017). The pandemic has resulted in a paradigm shift in the understanding and implementation of democracy, demanding a more active participation and critical thinking from the society. Therefore, it is crucial to continuously promote the empowerment of communities in political participation to ensure that democracy not only endures but also evolves and provides better solutions in facing challenges.

The role of politics is crucial in establishing the essential dynamics necessary for the preservation of democracy (Roberts, 2016; Sinkkonen, 2021). However, fisherman residing in coastal regions encounter significant obstacles when it comes to engaging in political activities (Foale & Manele, 2004). The disparity in focus on fishing communities at large is a notable hindering element, leading to diminished levels of political engagement within these areas.

The majority of these limitations can be primarily ascribed to two key factors. Initially, fisherman frequently have time limitations due to their primary focus on commercial endeavours. The pursuit of non-economic pursuits, such as political participation, is frequently impeded by urgent economic priorities. Furthermore, a lack of proficiency in organising serves as an additional obstacle, rendering political engagement more intricate and less organised (Fachrozy, 2002). The significance of comprehending these two hindrances within the framework of fishermen's political engagement underscores the necessity for tangible endeavours to surmount these impediments. Enhancing fishermen's political participation and bolstering local democracy can be achieved through strategies such as providing more time, offering organisational training, and addressing their economic and political concerns comprehensively. Nevertheless, the political participation of individual fisherman cannot be only attributed to their social qualities. Other multidimensional elements, including socioeconomic environment, educational attainment, and information accessibility, also influence their patterns of political engagement. Hence, comprehending the political engagement of fishing communities necessitates a comprehensive approach that encompasses all facets of their existence.

In light of the intricacy of these aspects, it is imperative to take strategic measures to comprehend and surmount hurdles. Further extensive endeavours are required to delve into a full comprehension of the social and economic reality of fishing villages. Customising political education to suit the specific requirements and circumstances of a given locality, enhancing the availability of information, and enabling communities to assert their authority can prove to be a highly successful remedy (Sabarisman, 2017; Yuliarta & Rahmat, 2021). Recognising and surmounting these barriers is a crucial measure in enhancing the political engagement of fishing communities. By doing so, their participation can have a greater impact and be more meaningful in expressing their opinions and desires within the democratic framework of Indonesia. Consequently, the establishment of a political atmosphere that is both inclusive and receptive to the many societal requirements enhances the fundamental principles of democracy at the grassroots level.

The level of voter engagement among residents of the fishing community in Tritiro Village, Bontotiro District, Bulukumba Regency, who reside along the coastline, is extremely low. The absence of assistance for fishermen directly impacts the limited engagement of coastal communities. Coastal communities and fishermen have a restricted amount of time available for engaging in non-economic activities, and they possess a limited level of expertise in fishermen's organisations. To enhance the negotiating power of coastal communities in the policy-making process, it is imperative to impart political education to ensure their awareness of their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Political education can be conducted via political and community organisations, as well as universities. This is naturally carried out in accordance with the objective of augmenting revenue. In addition, there are individuals who do not engage in fishing and choose not to use their voting rights due to job or other constraints. However, there are also non-fishing individuals who actively participate in the voting process. The author's focus lies in doing a thorough analysis of the political engagement of voters from the fishing community during the 2020 regional elections in Tritiro Village, Bontotiro District, Bulukumba Regency, amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **Method**

This research adopts a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to provide an in-depth description of the various problems that are the focus of the research (Dodgson, 2017), taking into account the experiences experienced by the informants. The main data source was obtained through direct interview and observation techniques, while secondary data was obtained from research-related documents. The research informants consisted of members of the General Election Commission (KPU) Bulukumba, the Tritiro Village community shop, and the Tritiro Village fishing community.

The data collection process was carried out through in-depth interviews, direct observation and document analysis, which were then arranged in a series of systematic steps. After data collection, data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing are carried out. The data reduction process involves selecting and abstracting relevant information from interviews, observations, and documents. Furthermore, the data is presented in a systematic way to facilitate analysis and interpretation. Conclusions are drawn based on the findings that emerge during the research process. The validity of the data in this research was examined from several aspects, including data sources, data collection techniques, and research time. The accuracy of information is considered through checking data sources to ensure their credibility. Interview, observation and documentation techniques are arranged in such a way as to avoid bias and ensure data validity. In addition, a sufficient research time span ensures that the data obtained reflects relevant and contextual circumstances. Thus, it is hoped that this holistic approach can produce rich and in-depth findings regarding the political participation of fishing communities in the context of general elections in Tritiro Village, Bulukumba.

## **Result and Discussion**

Community political participation is an essential need in maintaining the continuity of democracy and the smooth running of the political system (Croke et al., 2016; Haluana'a et al., 2020). General and regional head elections (Pemilukada) play a crucial role as democratic instruments that link the voice of the people as owners of sovereignty with the granting of mandates to representatives or rulers who will lead the government. The level of public participation in post-conflict regional elections often reflects the extent of the public's legitimacy and trust in their representatives or individuals who have the mandate to manage government and formulate policies. It is not surprising, therefore, that participation levels are critical in assessing the health of democracy and public trust.

In this context, the research entitled "Political Participation of Fisher Community Voters in the Midst of Covid-19 in the 2020 Regional Election in Tritiro Village, Bulukumba Regency" focuses on three main aspects as main indicators, namely: (1) Active Participation, which involves direct involvement of fishing communities in selection process; (2) Passive Participation, which highlights a less active and minimal level of involvement; and (3) Abstain group (Golput), which refers to fishing communities who chose to abstain from the election process. Analysis of primary and secondary data in this research provides a more detailed picture of the dynamics of political participation of fishing communities in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic in the 2020 regional elections in Tritiro Village, Bulukumba Regency.

## Active Participation

Political participation in the context of "Political Participation of Fisher Community Voters in the Midst of Covid-19 in the 2020 Regional Election" refers to the involvement of individuals or groups in political life, especially related to the Regional Head Election (Pemilukada) in Bulukumba Regency. This region is an important arena because it holds regional elections simultaneously, showing significant political dynamics at the local level.

The 2020 Bulukumba Regency Pilkada marks the presence of regent candidates who have a striking political profile, including figures who have been successful at the district level and even have fame at the provincial level. The candidate pair for regent and deputy regent number one, Andi Hamzah Pangki and Andi Murniati Makking, as members of the Bulukumba Regency DPRD, creates a dynamic of its own. Meanwhile, deputy regent candidates number two and four, Arum Spin and Andi Edy Manaf, who are members of the DPRD of South Sulawesi Province, as well as candidate number four Muchtar Ali Yusuf and deputy regent number three, Andi Makkasau, who are successful entrepreneurs, further enriching the diversity of the selection.

The involvement of experienced politicians and community figures with diverse backgrounds is a characteristic of this post-conflict regional election. These political developments involving different actors give rise to various dynamics, both in terms of political platforms and public responses. Therefore, analysis of the political participation of fishing communities amidst the Covid-19 pandemic in the 2020 regional elections in Bulukumba Regency is important to gain an in-depth understanding of the factors that influence their political choices amidst this challenging context. By looking at the existing candidates. In Bulukumba district which is taking part in the 2020 regional elections, can the fishing community actively participate in looking at the various options that can fight for the voice or interests of the fishing community? involvement of fishing communities in the post-conflict local elections in Bulukumba Regency is of the view that it is something very important to do because this is a matter for the future of the general public, then the fishing community is also highly anticipated and it is hoped that their involvement, apart from being able to serve as an example for other communities, also greatly influences the direction of support for one of the candidate pairs, as can be seen from the enthusiasm of the community in campaigning for one of the pairs they think can change the lives of fishermen in the future.

The community participated in giving their choice in the 2020 post-conflict regional elections in Bulukumba Regency because they considered one of the 4 candidates to be the favorite candidate who could be trusted to bring better changes in the next 5 years. Then the Bulukumba Regency KPU as the organizer carried out its duties well in accordance with the existing mechanisms. Maximizing its functions well, even during the Covid-19 pandemic like this, the KPU is very confident that it will hold regional elections in accordance with regional election regulations.

As for the brief characteristics of community political participation in the implementation of the 2020 regional elections in Bulukumba district, based on a survey conducted by Saefulmujani (2019), Tomy Satria Yulianto at the time of the survey had the greatest chance of retaining the regent's seat. However, support for Tomy Satria Yulianto has not been special. Special candidates usually have support of above 50% with a difference of more than 30% in simulations involving themselves and their closest rivals. Tomy Satria Yulianto's support in the semi-open simulation is still below 50% and the gap with his closest rival is below 20%. If you look at the results of this survey, only Askar HL is a comparable opponent to Tomy Satria Yulianto. The opportunity is big enough to provide tough competition for Tomy Satria Yulianto if Askar HL's popularity is the same.

On Wednesday 9 December 2020, regional elections were held simultaneously throughout Indonesia. Various regional head candidates who were not favored during the regional elections suddenly succeeded in getting the highest number of votes in the regional election calculation results. One of the regional head candidates who was not favored in the Bulukumba regional elections was the pair Muchtar Ali Yusuf-Andi Edy Manaf.

Candidate pair for Regent and Deputy Regent number 4 Muchtar Ali Yusuf- Andi Edy Manaf (Andy Utta-Edy Manaf) won with 92,978 votes, followed by pair number 2, Askar HL-Arum Spink with 67,855 votes, pair number 3 , Tomy Satria Yulianto-Makkasau with 63,672 votes and pair number 1, Andi Hamzah Pangki-Andi Murniyati with 12,517 votes. Candidate pair Muchtar Ali Yusuf-Andi Edy Manaf won in seven sub-districts, namely Ujung Bulu sub-district, Bonto Bahari sub-district, Bontotiro sub-district, Herlang sub-district, Kajang sub-district, Bulukumpa sub-district and Rilau Ale sub-district. Meanwhile, the Askar HL-Arum Spink pair excelled in two sub-districts, namely Gantarang District and Kindang District. Meanwhile, Tomy Satria Yulianto-Andi Makkasau only excelled in Ujungloe District ( [pilkada2020.kpu.go.id](http://pilkada2020.kpu.go.id)).

### **Passive Participation**

Passive participation or lack of regular participation is caused by several things, including candidate pairs not meeting community expectations. Meanwhile, people want quick changes and improvements for their regions, and things like this often happen in every regional election and even general elections in every region. As well as the phenomenon of society being indifferent to the democratic process in this country.

It cannot be denied that people participate passively because the causes of the problem almost occur in every general election and events have not really been evaluated to improve subsequent participation. Moreover, this regional election event was held during the Covid-19 pandemic where there were limited access to socialization and a ban on crowding. However, as an organizer, he is always active in socializing the regional elections, even though he uses various media.

The people who chose to be passive in the post-conflict regional elections in Bulukumba district were because of the leadership candidates themselves. Those who have taken lessons from elections in previous years or previous periods, where there was a lack of responsibility and commitment by the candidate pairs who had been elected. This participation could be caused by candidate pairs not meeting community expectations. Society wants rapid change and improvement. Because the candidate pairs did not match their wishes, many voters did not come to the polling station.

Lack of participation was apparently also caused by several factors, including that all the candidates were the same from the previous election and even from the same family, so it seemed like a dynasty system . Not only that, it turns out that the lack of socialization regarding the vision and mission can also influence the lack of community participation in the post-conflict regional elections in Bulukumba district. This is closely related to the terms political awareness and trust in the government (political system). What is meant by political awareness is awareness of the rights and obligations as citizens. This concerns a person's knowledge of the social and political environment in which he lives. What is meant by attitude and trust in the government is a person's assessment of the government, that is, a person's assessment of whether the government is trustworthy and can be influenced or not.

## Abstain Group

The majority of non-voters believe that state officials and established political parties are uncommunicative and biased towards their own interests in the realm of politics (Evelina & Angeline, 2015; James, 2011). So, it is better not to vote for anyone than to vote for an existing party or regional head candidate. They think that the existing parties will behave badly if they win the election. The abstain group (golput) is not an organization regulated by regulatory instruments. This is also not coordinated through the management system. The abstain group (golput) is just a term for the accumulation of individuals who did not participate in the election or took part in the election but by destroying the ballot papers.

It can be assessed that the involvement of all levels and groups of society is actually very strategic because it is a good example for society in general to be involved in all processes, from nominations to inviting people to vote for candidates they support or who they believe will bring change in the next 5 years. And there are also people who are not actively involved in the post-conflict regional elections and it is legal to do so according to political behavior guaranteed by law whether they vote or not. There were also several people who dared to declare themselves to be abstentions.

It can be said that the people in Bontotiro District really care about politics as seen from their participation in the 2020 regional elections in Bulukumba District. And even if there are people who have an apathetic attitude, they tend to think that an election is a futile exercise, as a single individual, people think that the participation they provide is unable to influence the course of an election. This lack of political stimulation makes people think that politics is not interesting to them. The political promises given by each pair of candidates have not been able to inspire the hearts of the fishing community voters as a whole to use their vote participation to carry out an election, so that the fishing community considers apathy to be the best way for them.

Public fishermen choose \_ For abstention can started from a number of reason . Firstly , there is possibility that they No listed in list voters keep , create obstacle administrative obstacles \_ right choose they . Besides that , level awareness low politics \_ And unconsciousness to regulations applicable in the country This Can become reason abstention . A number of from they Possible think that in areas that recognize principle democracy , abstention No prohibited , and even Possible considered as something form right For No choose .

Approaches to political participation reflect the principle that choosing not to participate is itself a form of choice. Individuals have the right to refrain from making a choice if they evaluate that none of the available options align with their political principles. In light of the conditions mentioned above, four types of political participation can be identified. First, individuals with high political awareness and trust in the government tend to participate actively. Conversely, those with low political awareness and low trust in the government tend to experience passive-repressed political participation, often referred to as apathy. The third type of political participation is militant-radical, characterized by high political awareness but very low trust in the government. Lastly, individuals with very low political awareness but high trust in the government experience non-active or passive political participation. Analyzing these types of participation provides a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of political participation among the public, particularly fishermen, amidst the complex political and social issues in their area.

## Conclusion

Regarding the political engagement of fishing communities, there exist three primary patterns that indicate the degree of participation in the 2020 Regional Election in Tritiro Village, Bulukumba:

First, some fishing communities showed active participation by openly supporting certain candidate pairs, putting up banners and socializing the program for the next five years. The majority of fishing communities are also active in voting for one of the candidate pairs, believing that a particular pair has the potential to change and improve Bulukumba Regency in the next five years. Second, there is a Passive Participation Pattern where some fishing communities participate passively. The causal factors involve the figure of a candidate who comes from a political party with a familiar face, the inconsistency of campaign promises in political reality, a lack of socialization from post-conflict regional election organizers, and the perception that candidates often only talk without realizing it after taking office. Other factors include differences in community views, other activities that are considered more urgent, and the number of candidates that are considered too large. Third, there is the Abstain group (Golput) or apathetic group. Although they are rare, if any, fishing communities who abstain tend to view participation in elections as a futile effort. They felt that their contribution would not be significant in influencing the election results.

As a suggestion, it is recommended that regional election organizers make improvements based on the results of the evaluation of the post-conflict regional election stages to increase the participation of fishing communities in the next election. The public also needs to be given an understanding of the importance of political participation and encouraged to remain consistent in monitoring the political change agenda by actively participating in electing quality regional leaders. Apart from that, political parties are expected to act as a forum for political education for politicians by continuing to prepare the best cadres, so that the figures promoted are the hopes of society in general.

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