HIGH VOTER PARTICIPATION DURING THE PANDEMIC COVID-19 (PUBLIC COMMUNICATION SUCCESS OR MASS MOBILIZATION OF SINGLE CANDIDATES)

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ABSTRACT

Politics in Boyolali Regency is controlled by the PDI-P with control of 35 seats for DPRD members in parliament, followed by the Golkar Party with 4 chairs, PKS with 3 chairs, PKB with 2 chairs and the Gerindra Party with 1 seat. With the majority of the number of DPRD members in parliament, PDI P rallied with all parties that won seats in parliament to nominate the incumbent as the sole regent candidate, except for the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) which was neutral. Although only one pair of candidates participated, and it was carried out during the Covid-19 outbreak, the voter turnout rate in Boyolali was very high. This researcher will see, if the high participation is due to the success of political communication between the candidates and the KPU or whether there is a mass mobilization movement from the candidate for regent. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. The results of the election of a single candidate against an empty box are unattractive because there is no competition or power struggle. Even though it wasn’t interesting, people still came to the polling station due to massive socialization from the Boyolali KPU.

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1. Introduction

Changes in interaction in society during the COVID-19 pandemic have also led to dependence on technology and information. Community interaction during a pandemic has become very dependent on information technology in every activity attended by many people, such as schools, office activities or community activities that are gathering a lot of people. One of them is the 2020 simultaneous regional election in Boyolali Regency, Central Java. However, when the form of interaction changes, there is a phenomenon where the level of citizen participation to come directly to vote for regional heads increases.

Although the regional head election was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, and only had a single candidate. However, the level of community participation in coming to polling stations for TPS is very high, even the highest in Central Java compared to 35 districts/cities in the region.
Central Java which reached 89.53%. This high participation exceeds the national target of 77.50%.

The implementation of regional head elections in 2020, both governors and regents/mayors in regencies/cities, poses a threat to election organizers and the public because of the large number of people exposed to Coronavirus Disease 2019 or COVID-19. In addition, the level of voter participation to come to the polls (TPS) will decrease as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been proven that the ferocity of COVID-19 during the pilkada stage has had an impact on election organizers and election participants who have been affected by Covid-19.

Two candidates for regional heads in East Kalimantan died after being exposed to COVID-19. Both were Berau Regent Muharram as the incumbent Regent Candidate and Bontang Mayor Candidate Adi Darma. Judging from the distribution of the region, almost evenly in the territory of Indonesia.

The high distribution and exposure to COVID-19 made the low voter participation also influenced by the presence of a single candidate in the regional head election in Boyolali district. The single candidate was caused by the large coalition run by the PDI-P by buying up all political parties that had seats in the DPRD. In the 2019 legislative elections, the parties that won seats in the DPRD were PDI-P with 35 seats, Golkar Party with 4 seats, PKB with 2 seats, PKS with 3 seats, and Gerindra with 1 seat. In addition to the party wholesale action carried out by the PDI-P, a single candidate occurred due to the decision of PMK No. 2 of 2015 which was changed to PMK No. 2 of 2017 which legalized a single candidate to take part in the 2020 simultaneous regional head elections. This decision was followed by mobilizing major powers by major parties, to support a party in that only one pair of candidates participated.

Although the local elections were held during the Covid-19 outbreak and a single candidate, the voter participation rate in the 2020 simultaneous regional elections in Boyolali Regency was very high, reaching 89.53 percent, exceeding the target set by the Indonesian KPU of 77.50%. The high political participation of voters will be the object of research, whether the success of communication and socialization of the KPU in carrying out election socialization or mass mobilization of a single candidate to choose a single candidate pair. This research is different from previous research, namely to investigate the high participation of Boyolali residents in the 2020 simultaneous regional elections which were held during the Covid-19 pandemic, and single candidates against empty boxes.

2. Method

The research, entitled Case Study of High Voter Participation in the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Elections in the Middle of the Covid-19 Outbreak and Single Candidate in Boyolali Regency (KPU Communication Success or Mass Mobilization of Single Candidates?) will be the study of researchers. The research was conducted in Boyolali Regency, with the object of research being the voters who were registered in the DPT permanent voter list from the Boyolali KPU. The method used in this study is a qualitative type of research method to answer a phenomenon that occurs in society in the form of behavior, perception, or motivation holistically and by way of description in the form of words and language in a special context by utilizing various scientific methods (BAWASLU RI, 2020).

The scientific method here is in the form of a case study technique by investigating a phenomenon in the field using interviews, photos, videotapes, personal documents, and notes.
Researchers get initial data and then choose according to the research theme to answer a problem in the field in the form of graphs, narratives, and texts obtained in the field to be arranged logically and systematically. So the results can be a conclusion.

3. Results and Discussion

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a threat to the world's population, including Indonesia. Starting to the findings of the World Wellbeing Organization (WHO) on December 31, 2019, many residents in one area suffered from pneumonia (lung infection) with a new type not previously found in Wuhan City, Hubei Area, China, and spread to several cities in China. On January 30, 2020, COVID-19 has declared an Open Wellbeing Crisis of Worldwide Concern (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2020).

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed that Covid-19 was a global epidemic. This decision. Considering, the coronavirus has hit 118 countries and has attacked 121,000 people in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and America. (Kompas.com, 2020). The country of Indonesia was also affected by the virus attack, and on March 2, 2020, there were 2 residents who were positively exposed to Covid-19. As of April 25, 8,211, 689 positive cases and 1,002 people died. (KEMENKES RI, 2020).

Data from the Ministry of Health shows that the spread of Covid-19 is starting to become violent and at an alarming level. Almost all provinces in Indonesia show a red color or a high risk of spreading Covid-19. The Central Java region ranks 4th in the national distribution of Covid-19 with details of 215 people who died, 4,738 were exposed to COVID-19, 2,956 were treated, and 1,567 recovered.

Data obtained from the Ministry of Health shows that the Province of East Java has the highest number of cases in Indonesia, followed by DKI Jakarta, South Sulawesi, Central Java, and West Java. According to Riyanda (2021), four indicators will continue to be reviewed against data on the development of Covid-19 in the face of the 2020 simultaneous regional head elections, namely a) the rate of increase in patients, b) the death rate, c) the rate of healing, d) the distribution of Covid-19.

Although four indicators have occurred and are raging in various regions in Indonesia, the implementation of the 2020 simultaneous regional elections will continue.

The major coalition between parties that have seats in the DPRD and the incumbent regent candidates in the regions creates an unequal and fair democracy in Boyolali district in the 2020 simultaneous elections. In the regional head election in Boyolali district, only a single incumbent candidate was chosen against the empty box M Said Hidayat-Wahyu Irawan. Boyolali KPU data in this election, the incumbent candidate supported by the big coalition of PDIP, Golkar, PKB, Gerindra won 95.60 percent of valid votes with details of 662,068 votes or 95.6 percent, empty boxes 30,552 (4.41 percent) and no votes. 20,827 (2.92 percent) valid (Detik.com 9/12/2020).
A single candidate against an empty box makes the local election not run democratically and fairly. Robert Dahl (1971; 3) in his theory POLYARCHY; Participation and Opposition explains that an area can be said to be a democracy, there are at least seven conditions; 1) Freedom to organize, 2) Freedom to express ideas or ideas 3) The right to channel their choices, 4) Public testing for officials, 5) The right to get support, 6) Get a balanced source of information, 7). Free and fair elections.

Afan Gaffar in Inggried Fena Meyliana & Dewi Erowati (2020) describes the level of success of democracy in a region must meet the following indicators; a) Every decision issued by a public official must be used as a guide for the community, b) The process of electing regional heads must be carried out consistently, fairly and democratically, c) Elections are conducted openly, d) The election of leaders must be carried out through local elections or direct elections. ) People must be given a democratic choice to express their opinions and choices.

In the context of the election of a single candidate against an empty box, it is contrary to democratic theory, the public is not given a choice and fair treatment by political parties, namely freedom of choice, and party leaders do not provide good political education for the community. The case in Boyolali in the form of a single candidate also occurred in Pati district, where the incumbent was promoted by the majority political party so that he received resistance from the residents and prioritized the owners of capital over the Pati community in the construction of a cement factory. So that it does not give opportunities to other candidates (N.H Sardini & Fitriyah; 2018).

A single candidate also occurred during the mayoral election in Makassar. However, the empty box won against the Munafri-Rachmatika Dewi pair. This defeat was caused by the empty box movement, which was mobilized under the name Rewako Movement which rejected a single candidate because it showed an attitude of arrogance, ambition, thirst for power and did not provide opportunities for other candidates to participate in the 2018 Makassar mayor and deputy mayor elections, Saputro, Aan Arman (2020).

In Boyolali district, the single candidate as well as the incumbent M.Said Hidayat-Wahyu Irawan was supported by a large coalition, namely PDI. Struggle with 35 seats in the DPRD, P.Golkar with 4 seats, PKB with 2 seats and Gerinda with 1 seat in the Boyolali DPRD. Only one party, namely PKS with 3 seats, did not carry it in the 2020 simultaneous elections in Boyolali district. In this election, the incumbent was able to outperform empty boxes with 662,068 votes or 95.6 percent, while empty boxes were 30,552 (4.41 percent) and 20,827 invalid votes (2.92 percent).

Research by Inggried Fena Meyliana & Dewi Erowati (2020); Ika Prawitasari & Erowati (2021) also show that participation will decrease following the high number of residents exposed to COVID-19 and the implementation in December is the peak of the uncertain weather when residents go to polling stations. This finding is also corroborated by research by Matteo Picchio & Raffaella Santolini (2021) from the IZA Institute of Labor Economics, which examines the level of participation in elections in Italy. Research results show that the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced the level of public participation in public events, including elections and local elections, by 0.5 points because it increases the risk of death among the elderly. These findings prove the dangers of the Covid-19 outbreak if there is a crowd. However, the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, issued Presidential Decree No. 22 of 2020 regarding the voting day for the Governor and Deputy Governor, The Regent and Deputy Regent as well as the Mayor and Deputy Mayor in 2020 have been set to fall on December 9, 2020.
Seeing this legal construction, the KPU as an institution that is authorized to carry out
general elections including regional head elections conducts safe socialization for organizers
and the community in all provinces in Indonesia (Ali Ismail Shaleh & Raihana Raihana, 2021).

4. Conclusion

There is a finding that the high voter participation in the implementation of the 2020
Regional Head and Deputy Regional Head Elections based on informant interviews, the results
of the election of a single candidate against an empty box are unattractive because there is no
competition or power struggle. Even though it wasn’t interesting, people still came to the
polling station due to massive socialization from the Boyolali KPU.

Massive KPU socialization in all RTs and villages involved PPK officers at the sub-district
level, PPS at the village level, and KPPS officers at the RT level. Dissemination of information
either through the door-to-door conducted by election organizers as well as ASN apparatus,
Police, sub-district, and village officials, to the head of the RT. Socialization of the
implementation of the 2020 Regional Head and Deputy Regional Head Elections to the
community is not only about the stages of holding the Regional Head and Deputy Regional Head
Elections but also socialization about health protocols, providing masks, hand sanitizer, gloves,
keeping a distance at polling stations among voters, checking body temperature and crowd
prevention by scheduling the voters

To attend at the appointed time. This strict health protocol step for election organizers
is an effort to ensure that voters are not afraid to come to polling stations and get infected with
Covid-19. The existence of a guarantee of health protocols from the election organizers, the
government, and the discipline of the community in preventing the spread of Covid-19 has
made people flock to the polling stations according to a predetermined schedule. Considering
that at the time of the 2020 regional head election, Boyolali Regency was included in the Covid-
19 red zone category.

Socialization from election organizers and the existence of health facilities to prevent the
transmission of Covid-19 in the form of providing masks, gloves, and hand sanitizers,
maintaining distance, and checking body temperature. The results of interviews with
informants also revealed that there was a directive movement from volunteers and the success
team of the incumbent candidate, namely Muhammad Said Hidayat - Wahyu Irawan to win the
candidate. Ways to do this include offering transportation money to come to the polling station,
and guidance from the success team at the cadres’ homes to vote for the candidate for regent.
These movements and directions, based on information from informants, were carried out in
their respective villages. In addition, prizes in the form of livestock and other physical
assistance are also given if the village wins a candidate for regent. This method turned out to
make the residents very enthusiastic about coming to the polling station and winning the
candidate for Regent Muhammad Said Hidayat-Wahyu Irawan who won against an empty box.
Another finding from this study also obtained data, that the arrival of the voting community to
the polling station was due to the very high public awareness of the election. People are aware
that choosing a leader is a right that must be channeled to choose one candidate by choosing
to vote at the polling station
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