



The influence of regional head candidates quality towards political participation of society in the local election

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Abstract

Aim: This study aims to analyse how the calibre of the candidates running for regional heads affects voter turnout in local elections.

Method: Interviews and careful observation were used as part of this study's qualitative methodology. Primary and secondary sources were used to compile the data. Because of its interpretive and semantic compatibility with the proposed research problems, this research strategy has been chosen and is considered appropriate.

Findings: The democratic process in Indonesia relies heavily on voter turnout. Voter turnout is a good indicator of how politically engaged a community is, so when it rises, so does the quality of our democratic system. Several factors, including the calibre of the candidates running for the regional head, can influence voter turnout.

Implications/Novel Contribution: Multiple studies and surveys have failed to uncover any literature on the effect of candidate quality on voter turnout, and this lack of knowledge extends to Indonesia. The research community, therefore, agrees that this essay contributes something new to the scientific discourse.

Keywords: Local Election, Candidates for Regional Heads, Political Participation.

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INTRODUCTION

There are national and regional elections in Indonesia, each of which chooses a new regional governor. As opposed to the previous election, in which local elections were held on a region-by-region basis according to varying schedules and rules, in 2015, all elections will be held simultaneously. The first round of voting took place simultaneously in 260 districts and 9 provinces. The General Elections Commission handled every aspect of regulating and supervising the simultaneous elections (KPU). Even though elections have been held in Indonesia many times, that doesn't necessarily mean everything goes without a hitch on election day.

There is a problem in the modern world because voter turnout has been dropping by about 10 per cent every election. Voter turnout for the 2015 local elections fell short of expectations across all three voting windows. While 77.5% turnout is the goal for local elections, only 69.0% actually show up to vote (Barus, 2015; Saahar, Sualman, Hashim, & Mohamed, 2017).

Surabaya City is one of some areas with low voter turnout. Tri Rismaharini, the mayor of Surabaya, has accomplished a lot in the past, but she hasn't managed to boost voter turnout in Surabaya by 77%, as was promised by KPU Surabaya. In Surabaya's local elections, Voter turnout increased from 43.4% in 2010 to 51.3% in 2015 (Azhar, 2015; Syamsi, 2015). This suggests that Risma's popularity inspires citizens to exercise their right to vote.

McAllister (2016), for example, examined how political candidates influenced voters' decisions at the ballot box, and they aren't the only ones who have studied this topic. Candidates have a very large role in determining voters' political decisions, especially given the existence of television as a medium that can image politicians. As the influence of social structure on the vote has decreased, voters have realigned away from their traditional party attachments, and mass memberships of political parties have declined. What factors influence voters was also studied by Barton, Castillo, and Petrie (2014). According to the data, the most effective way to influence voters is

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through direct communication rather than by changing the substance of the message itself. Voters put more weight on a candidate's visits and actions than their campaign rhetoric.

Researchers have looked high and low for a study or article discussing how candidate quality affects voter turnout but have come up empty, even in the case of Indonesia. For this reason, the scientific community views this piece as the original.

With this context in mind, the authors wish to investigate The Influence of Regional Head Candidates' Quality towards Political Participation of Society in the Local Election.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Qualified Election

Qualified leaders are born from a quality process as well. Elections as a form of power transformation in bringing new leaders to the executive and legislative bodies become the momentum which is expected by society to bring change in every dimension of nation and state life. In the process of leadership change through elections, there are some things that can be used as an indicator of the success for election. First, it is the question of the integrity of election organizers and election participants. Not only the electoral organizers who are required to have integrity, but also election participants are required to apply in accordance with the objectives of the election outlined by the law. Successful election will not be achieved if only the election organizer alone has integrity, without involving election participants. Conversely, success will also not be achieved if only the election participants have integrity without organizers with integrity.

Second, is the level of people's political participation in the General Election? If the political participation of the community in the General Election is higher then the quality of the General Election will be higher as well, because the community is the giver of legitimacy or mandate.

Third, the political awareness of the community becomes an intelligent voter. There are many factors that encourage people to vote in the elections. There are rational reasons, but there are also emotional reasons. Rational reasons are suspected because the voters are smart, and there are also indications of money politics. For the third group, which is the underlying voter choice on emotional factors, it is difficult to expect to be picky smart.

Fourthly, a conducive regional climate will ensure that people can exercise their right to vote democratically. The public must be guaranteed to be free from any intimidation, threats, and unfavorable situations when electing in elections. To that end, the government must provide a secure and conducive situation guarantee when the election takes place.

Fifth, are the participants, organizers, election observers and supervisors. Is it coordinating or overlapping? The relationship of election stakeholder institutions is very important in encouraging the successful implementation of elections. When these institutions reach their maximum coordination, they will produce reliable, and qualified elections. According to [Sigit \(2012\)](#), qualified elections can be seen from professional, independent and credible organizers. Independent means that the organizers are able to keep the same distance with various political actors, whether in power or not. In addition, some other indicators are the right to vote for every qualified citizen, the level of literacy (literacy) of good community politics, parties with strong programs, candidates with a positive track record, fast and independent election courts, voice conversion and the right, and fair competition ([Bhp Umy, 2012](#)). [Indriyani \(2017\)](#), National Coordinator of the Voter Education Network for the People (JPPR), stated that the quality of the election can be measured from five indicators. The first and second indicators are the independence of the organizers and the bureaucracy. Furthermore, the third indicator is high voter participation with awareness and honesty in determining its choice with a sense of responsibility and without coercion. Then the fourth, the election participants to the process of crafting prospective candidates who are democratic and qualified and do not use money politics in all stages of the election. The fifth is the selection of democratic and qualified candidates who will increase the electability level of the electorate.

The impact of the selection process of qualified candidates will give birth to candidates who are also qualified, have integrity and have a high level of electability. So, the impact will give birth to the fifth indicator of the election of the executive and legislature who have a strong legitimacy and quality. With the election of legislative and executive who has strong and qualified legitimacy, there will be active, critical and rational voter participation. The impact of the selection process of qualified candidates will give birth to candidates who are also

qualified, have integrity and have a high level of electability. So, the impact will give birth to the fifth indicator, namely the election of executives and legislatives who have a strong legitimacy and quality. With the election of legislative and executive who has strong and qualified legitimacy, there will be active, critical and rational voter participation (Tribun News, 2012).

According to Hall, Hyde, and Wellman (2015) quality elections will affect public confidence in political institutions. In fact the number of electoral manipulations will reduce trust to the government. When the election is considered qualified then public confidence will emerge and they will voluntarily come to the polls to vote.

Political Participation

Ramlan (1992) argued that political participation is a form of participation of ordinary citizens in determining any decisions affecting or influencing their life. According to Miriam (2008), political participation is the activity of a person or group of people to actively participate in political life, among others by choosing the leadership of the state and directly or indirectly influence the government policy (public policy).

Ramlan (1992) classifies political participation into two namely: First, Active participation, ie activities oriented to the process of input and political output. Included in the active participation is to propose a general policy, to propose different public policy alternatives to government policies, to criticize and refine policies, pay taxes and elect government leaders. Second, Passive participation, which is an activity oriented to the output process. Activities that include passive participation are activities that obey the government, and accept, and implement only any government decisions.

Political participation in countries that implement democratic political systems is a citizen's right, but not all citizens participate in the political process. In the opinion of some experts some factors that cause people to want or do not want to participate in politics, among others are, (1) Social and economic status; (2) Political situation; (3) Parental political affiliation; (4) Organizational experience; (5) Political awareness; (6) Trust in government; And (7) stimulating participation through mass media socialization and informal discussions (Hendrik, 2010).

In relation to political participation in the form of voting, Nimmo and Rakhmat (2000) decreases voting into four alternative actions, namely (1) Rational voting, (2) Reactive voting, (3) Voting responsive and (4) Active voting.

METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative method with interview and observation techniques. The data collection included primary and secondary data. This research method is selected and considered appropriate because it is relevant and compatible with the research problems proposed through a process of interpretation and meaning.

Data Sources

The data sources were obtained from the primary and secondary data. The primary data were taken from interviews and observations. Secondary data were captured through the study of documentation and literature. This research only uses relevant data.

The informants were selected based on purposive technique, that is only those who understand this study were used as informants. The interviews were conducted on a number of informants, such as:

- a. Researcher and political observers from Padjadjaran University.
- b. Researcher from Ministry of Home Affairs, Indonesia.

Data Collection Method

The process of data collection in this study is adjusted to the type of research. The data collected in this study was in the form of words, documents, situations, and events which indirectly reviews in the secondary data.

Data Validation Technique

The data validity is based on certain criteria. The criteria are the degree of credibility and accuracy of data obtained from the literature or documents, correctness of descriptions and conclusions, and explanations derived from the

conformity of the text to other important documents.

The validity testing of the study aims to guarantee the credibility and accuracy of the research. This test includes the credibility standard that was used to achieve the credibility level of the findings by comparing those findings with the dual reality, the persistence of observation, the finding of elements with the situation characteristics that are relevant to the issues, and providing the study with more detail and thoroughness. Test of data validation in this study uses triangulation. This is a technique to test the data validation by checking the data accuracy obtained by researchers from other parties who can be trusted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Indonesia has two types of elections, namely national elections and regional elections. If national elections are held to elect legislative members (DPR, DPD, DPRD) and the president and vice president, regional elections are held to elect the regional head (governor and deputy governor, regent and deputy regent or mayor and deputy mayor). In contrast to national elections held simultaneously throughout Indonesia, regional head elections are conducted in accordance with the respective regional authorities. However, gradually starting in 2015, the election will be held simultaneously throughout Indonesia. This is done with the aim of making the elections more efficient and reducing the saturation of the people because of too frequent elections. It is feared that it will reduce the level of voter participation as happened in the national elections. Therefore, many parties, such as political parties, are competing to find candidates for regional heads who can attract people to come to the polls. Among these figures there are the heads of achievers.

One of the phenomenal regional heads is Jokowi. Starting from the Mayor of Surakarta, then became a Governor of DKI Jakarta, and in the end can become President of the Republic of Indonesia for 2014-2019. When he decided to participate in Surakarta Mayor Election in 2005, the voters participation was 72.32% and then in 2010, it rises to 71.80% (Makruf, 2011). Then in 2012, when Jokowi became a candidate for Jakarta Governor, the public participation in the first round of local election was 64.6%, and in the second round voters' participation reached 66.8% (Afifah, 2012). In addition to Jokowi, there are still some other outstanding regional heads and who were able to make the region better, they are awarded both domestically and abroad. Some of the heads of the area are: Tri Rismaharini (Mayor of Surabaya), Abdullah Azwar Anas (Banyuwangi Regent), Suyoto (Regent Bojonegoro), Ridwan Kamil (Mayor of Bandung), and Ahmad Heryawan (Governor of West Java) (Mariana, 2017).

Tri Rismaharini's accomplishments include building many city parks, improving health-care services, and ousting the localization of Dolly, which is said to be the largest localization in Southeast Asia. While the Regent of Banyuwangi, Abdullah Azwar Anas was able to make transparency in budget management, improving the quality of human resources civil servants (PNS) and fully support the exciting tour in Banyuwangi. Suyoto as the Regent of Bojonegoro succeeded in making the regional regulation (Perda) on oil and gas exploration and exploitation aimed at providing prosperity to the surrounding community, empowering the community through smart and healthy villages, managing public transportation well, and eradicating the flood in Bojonegoro. Ridwan Kamil as Mayor of Bandung got some awards and changed the city of Bandung into a smart city and builds some city parks. Ahmad Heryawan as Governor of West Java succeeded in bringing the provincial government and obtained two awards as the best province (Mariana, 2017; Ratya, 2017; Witarsa, 2017).

The Election Commission targets participation in 2015 direct local elections by 77% but its only reaches about 69%. There are 10 regions with low voter participation rates, such as Medan City (27 percent), Batam (50 percent), Serang (51 percent), Waringin Timur (52 percent), and Jember (52 percent). In addition, there are also Tuban (52 percent), Surabaya (52 percent), Krimun (54 percent), Padang Pariaman (55 percent), and Agam (55 percent) (Barus, 2015). From the ten regions with low voter participation, there is Surabaya City, whereas the Mayor of Surabaya, Tri Rismaharini, is a mayor who has various achievements in the previous period. Some of Tri Rismaharini's achievements include: (1) Citynet's best city of Asia Pacific in 2012; (2) ASEAN sustainable city awards, Environmentally Award 2012; (3) Entered into the nominees of 10 most inspiring women of 2013, Forbes Magazine version of 2012; (4) Received 2 categories of Asia Pacific awards in FutureGov Award 2013; (5) In 2013, Bungkil Park was awarded The Asian Townscape Award from the UN; (6) Major of the Month as the best mayor in February 2014; (7) Awarded Socrates Award in the Future City category from the European Business Assembly (EBA) in April 2014 (Jpnn Nwes, 2015). Tri Rismaharini's achievements have not been able to increase the amount

of voters' participation as targeted by the KPU, which is 77%. However, when compared to the elections in 2010, the figure of Risma was quite able to attract people to exercise their voting rights. In 2010 the participation of Surabaya residents in the mayoral and vice mayoral elections was 43.4%, then increased by 7.94% to 51.34% in the elections held simultaneously in 2015. This indicates that the quality of candidates for regional heads can at least be affecting political participation in the elections, although not significantly influencing them.

However, in other regions the quality of spouse heads cannot affect the political participation of the community. This can be seen from Banyuwangi community participation in the election of regents and vice regents, which decreased by 2.05%, from 61.26% (in 2010) to 59.21% in 2015 (Radar, 2015). Similarly in Bojonegoro, in the election of regents and vice regents in 2007 the voters' participation was 75.21%, and in 2012 it became 71.37%, which means decreased by 3.84% (Kpu, 2012).

In countries with democratic systems, generally higher community participation will serve as a benchmark to see the quality of democracy. This is demonstrated by the high level of the desire of citizens to follow and understand the political issues, as well as engaging in political activities. Given this condition, the government regime will also have high legitimacy. Therefore, the former restrictions, such as the payment of election taxes (measures to restrict the participation of blacks in the United States) or elections made by men alone (the new Swiss women given the right to vote in 1972) are now being abandoned. While the low level of political participation is generally regarded as a sign which is not good, because it can be interpreted that many residents do not pay attention to the affairs of state. Moreover, it is feared that if various opinions in society are not raised, the state leadership will be less responsive to the needs and aspirations of the community, and tend to serve the interests of some groups only. In addition, in general, low participation is considered to indicate low legitimacy as well.

A form of participation that is most easily measured by intensity is citizens' behavior in the general election, which is the percentage of people voting turnout compared with the number of citizens entitled to vote. Voter participation is the percentage of registered voters who exercise their right to vote. The invalid votes are still counted as the turnout for voters to use their right to vote even though his voice was not valid. The calculation is obtained from the number of voters exercising their rights divided by the number of registered voters. The most easily measured form of political participation is the percentage of people exercising voting right at the election rather than the number of eligible citizens" (Mariana, 2017).

Participation is a form of participation caused by a person's interest or curiosity about something. So it can be interpreted that participation in the election is an act of a person to grant the right to vote based on the will of themselves without being forced by others. However, in giving the right to vote during the election (Pilkada), the participation is influenced by several factors, namely:

First, because of the similarity of religious background. In some groups of voters, the religious similarity between the elector and the person to be elected becomes the basis of special consideration because it feels a sense of pride or common perception and doctrine about the terms of the leader. Secondly, because of the similarity of local background, voters sometimes feel proud if the leader is a person who comes from one region and is expected to represent his aspirations. Thirdly, because the chosen leader is the son of the region, the consideration of this choice is also very logical and tends to be a trend because the "native son of the region" is assumed to know a lot about the issue of the area to be led. Fourth, due to experienced leads, the lead experience is closely related to the ability to lead a region so that the acceleration of development of a region can be optimized. This factor is also sometimes a key to the success of a candidate because his/her leadership has been perceived by the community so that people more easily dropped his choice. Fifth, because of the level of education of candidates, it cannot be denied that the level of education is one mirror of one's intelligence. Leading a region requires intelligence in managing pluralism in society. Sixth, because of the economic level of the candidates, in some societies the economic level of the candidates is considered that a candidate with a high economic level will reduce the risk of a candidate trapped in a corrupt action (Syamsi, 2015). From several studies it is known that in certain regions conducting the elections, the quality of candidates for regional heads has not been able to attract voters to exercise their voting rights at polling stations (TPS). Whereas one of the things that affect the presence or absence of voters is the party and candidate factors, based on the background, reputation, image, ideology and quality of the party or candidate in accordance with the views of the voters. The figure of a political figure or candidate figure becomes a

consideration for the voter in determining his/her choice. Sometimes people do not participate in the elections, due to internal factors and external factors. Internal factors, among others, are technical factors and work factors. Technical factors are technical obstacles that prevent voters from using their suffrage, such as illness, other activities of an important nature and concerns of personal affairs. While the work factor is the daily work. Job factors make some people who have the right to vote prefer to work at the time of elections, the reason is to earn an income. External factors that lead to lack of political participation in the elections, include administrative, socialization and political factors. Administrative factors are factors related to administrative aspects, which result in a person not being able to exercise his/her right to vote. Among them are ones not registered as voters, who do not get the election card, and do not have identity cards (KTP). Such administrative matters make voters unable to participate in elections. In addition, the importance of socialization in order to succeed the implementation of elections and minimize the number of golput (people who do not want to vote) in every election. Apart from that, the population in Indonesia as a large is in the countryside, therefore disseminating election information is considered important, especially for people who are far from access to transportation and information. Mouth-to-mouth socialization is a key factor in reducing the number of golput. Meanwhile, political factors are the reasons or causes generated by the political aspect so that people do not want to vote. Like mistrust of the party, have no choice of candidates available or do not believe that the elections will bring change and improvement. This condition encourages people not to exercise their right to vote (Arianto, 2011).

Thus, in outline there are 4 aspects that cause low political participation of the community. First, administrative. Someone does not vote because it is bumped with administrative procedures, such as not listed in the voter list, not getting an invitation and so forth. Second, technical. Someone decides not to vote because there is no time to choose, such as having to work, there is a need to go out of town and so forth. Third, low involvement or interest in politics. A person does not choose because he/she is not interested in politics, is indifferent and does not view elections as critical. Fourth, rational calculation. Voters decide not to exercise their right to vote because they consciously decide not to vote. Elections are seen as pointless, not bringing meaningful changes or no favored candidates and so on.

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Voter participation in elections is important in Indonesia's democratic system. If the level of public participation is higher then the democratic system is getting better, because the high participation of voters reflects the high level of political awareness of the community. Many things can affect the political participation of the community in the elections, including the quality and track record of the candidates for regional head. The quality of candidates for regional heads is one of the factors that voters consider to exercise their right to vote. As in the elections of Surabaya City, the voter participation rate in the 2015 election increased compared to the elections in 2010, although the increase has not met KPU targets.

However, this does not apply in Banyuwangi and Bojonegoro, because the opposite happens, ie the level of political participation of the community has decreased. The same thing happened in Surakarta, in the 2010 election there was a decrease in voter participation rate compared to the 2005 election. Whereas the regional candidates who participated in the election were people who had good track record. Jokowi, Tri Rismaharini, Abdullah Azwar Anas, Suyoto, Ridwan Kamil and Ahmad Heryawan are the names of leaders who are considered to be able to change the region for the better, but in some areas, the quality of the candidates is still not able to attract citizens to come to the poll (TPS) to exercise their voting rights. Several factors influenced the decreasing of the political participation of the community in the local elections although the regional head candidate is a qualified figure, some of which are due to administrative reasons, technical reasons and rational calculations of voters. But, in order to increase the political participation of the community and the quality of democracy, the candidate of the regional head must have good qualities and qualifications.

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