

GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES IN INCREASING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN GENERAL ELECTIONS

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Abstract

In modern democracies, voter turnout is an important indicator of the health and legitimacy of the system. This research aims to evaluate the government's strategy in increasing voter participation through an in-depth literature review. The results show that inclusive and sustainable voter education can increase people's awareness and understanding of the electoral process and the importance of participation in voting. Voter education is effective in mobilizing younger and underrepresented groups of voters, including women and minorities. Furthermore, strategies to improve accessibility and ease of voting - such as electronic voting technology, more flexible polling location arrangements and the provision of disability-friendly facilities - have been shown to increase voter turnout. Finally, trust in the electoral system is another important factor. The analysis found that transparency of the electoral process and prompt action against indications of fraud can increase public trust, which in turn encourages higher turnout.

Keywords: Government Strategy, Public Participation, General Election.

Introduction

Public participation in elections is an important indicator of the health of a democracy. The electoral process gives citizens the opportunity to influence policy and shape government through their voting rights. High levels of participation are expected to reflect the legitimacy of government and strong political awareness among the public (Lutskov, 2022).

Public participation in elections refers to the active involvement of citizens in the voting process to elect their representatives in government institutions. This participation is not only limited to the act of voting on polling day, but also includes prior activities such as following campaigns, getting to know candidates and their programs, discussing and disseminating information about elections, and participation in public debates or forums that provide space for political discussion (Mahyudin et al., 2023). Participation in these activities helps to ensure that elections are democratic, representing the true voice and will of the public, and reinforces the principle of accountability that elected leaders must exercise (Shayo, 2021).

The importance of public participation in elections cannot be underestimated, as it is the foundation of a healthy and resilient democracy. High participation reflects the active involvement of citizens in the political process and demonstrates the legitimacy and strong representation of the government formed (Garanova, 2021). In addition,

comprehensive and inclusive participation ensures that the various voices and interests in society are taken into account, so that the policies and programs produced by the government are more responsive and reflect the needs and aspirations of the people. By doing so, public participation not only strengthens democracy, but also contributes to more equitable and sustainable socio-economic development (Anggoro et al., 2021).

In various countries including Indonesia, it has been observed that public participation in elections fluctuates and sometimes decreases. This can be caused by various factors, such as distrust of the political system, lack of political awareness, logistical hurdles, or political apathy (Rahmawati & Munir, 2022).

Low levels of participation can lead to serious problems, including the underrepresentation of people's interests in public decision-making and a potential decline in the quality of democracy. Therefore, increasing voter participation remains a major focus of the government and EMBs (Marhamah, 2020).

The government, through its electoral body and in cooperation with other agencies, has attempted to design and implement strategies to increase the level of public participation. Some of these initiatives include awareness campaigns through mass media, voter education, and simplifying procedures and improving access at polling stations (Husain et al., 2024).

The development of these strategies requires an in-depth understanding of the factors that influence public participation in elections, as well as a critical assessment of the effectiveness of any strategies that have been implemented. Understanding these dynamics is important to ensure that every eligible citizen is able to cast their vote unhindered, thus maintaining the integrity and legitimacy of the democratic process (Patra, 2022).

The study of strategies to increase public participation is crucial, given the challenges that continue to evolve with socio-economic and technological changes. Therefore, a critical investigation into the effectiveness of existing strategies is expected to yield useful insights for improving electoral participation in the future.

Research Methods

The study in this research uses the literature research method. The literature research method is a research approach that is carried out by collecting, reviewing, and analyzing information that is already available in the form of scientific publications such as journals, books, articles, papers, research reports, and other official documents. This method aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic under study, identify research gaps, and develop arguments or theoretical frameworks for research (Firman, 2018); (Suyitno, 2021).

Results and Discussion

Community Participation

Community participation can be defined as the process by which individuals or groups in society take an active part in decisions or activities that affect their lives (Jemaru, 2023). It encompasses various forms of involvement, ranging from direct participation in policy formulation to contributions in program or project implementation. This approach emphasizes the importance of empowering communities to participate in development and decision-making, thereby increasing the effectiveness and sustainability of development initiatives (Kurhayadi, 2023).

Levels of community participation can be viewed along several dimensions, often summarized in models that show a spectrum from passive to active participation (Dairul et al., 2021). At the lowest level, participation can be passive, where communities are only informed or are beneficiaries of a policy or program without active involvement in the decision-making process. The next step is consultation, where communities are invited to provide input or feedback, but without any guarantee that their views will be used in decision-making (Haruni, 2022).

A higher level includes collaborative engagement where communities play an active role in planning, implementing and evaluating programs or policies. This includes close cooperation between the community and policy makers or program developers, where there is a genuine effort to include the opinions and needs of the community in the decision-making process (Laksito & Saputra, 2023). At its apex, community participation takes the form of empowerment, where communities have full control over the processes and decisions that affect them, with the capacity for independent initiative and action. This approach recognizes the intrinsic value of participation as a development goal, assisting in building a more participatory democracy and promoting inclusive and sustainable development (Lussier & Sherman, 2022).

Factors that influence community participation in development initiatives and programs can be very diverse, depending on the social, economic and political context. Key factors include community awareness and education (Denver & Garnett, 2021). Communities that are better informed and more educated tend to be better able to recognize problems, articulate their needs and views, and participate effectively in development activities. In addition, economic factors such as the availability of resources also play an important role. Communities that have better access to resources may be more able and willing to invest time and effort in active participation (Kamaly et al., 2023).

Another factor that influences community participation is support from government and non-governmental organizations. Policies that support community engagement, such as laws that facilitate public participation in planning and decision-making, greatly influence the level and effectiveness of participation. On the other hand, social and cultural structures also influence participation (Othman et al., 2022). For

example, cultural norms that support egalitarianism and collaboration will favor broader participation from the public compared to norms that are more hierarchical or authoritarian. Therefore, approaches to development and community participation must take into account these local dynamics to achieve effective and inclusive outcomes (Mamikonyan, 2023).

In conclusion, community participation is a critical component in sustainable and effective development, enabling solutions that are more inclusive and responsive to local needs. Factors such as awareness and education, availability of economic resources, policy support from governments and institutions, as well as social and cultural norms, all play an important role in determining the level and effectiveness of community participation. Therefore, development strategies should be designed with these factors in mind, to facilitate active and empowering community engagement. By supporting favorable conditions for community participation, development can be more durable, equitable, and better able to meet the needs and aspirations of local communities.

General Election Overview

The history of elections in Indonesia began after the country's independence from Dutch colonization. The first general election was held on September 29, 1955, which aimed to elect members of the constituent assembly that would form Indonesia's definitive constitution and members of the House of Representatives (Mustapha & Omar, 2020). This election is considered one of the most democratic and honest elections, although it was held in unstable conditions after the war of independence. The 1955 elections were a manifestation of post-independence direct democracy, where public participation was very high with 39 political parties and a number of independents taking part. The results showed significant political diversity in Indonesia, but unfortunately, did not result in a permanent constitution as planned (Bullock & Owen, 2021).

After the 1955 elections, Indonesia experienced a period of political instability and social upheaval that led to the discontinuation of election-based democratic practices. Elections were suspended and replaced with a system of guided democracy under President Soekarno. It was not until the New Order era under the leadership of President Soeharto that general elections were re-established in 1971 and subsequently held every five years (Ankeli, 2023). However, elections in this era were criticized for their lack of freedom and manipulation in favor of the government and the ruling party, Golkar. Things changed after the fall of Soeharto in 1998, which marked Indonesia's transition back to democracy. The political reforms undertaken paved the way for freer and fairer elections, starting with the 1999 elections. This reform era marked a new chapter in Indonesia's democratic history, where elections were held in a fair and open

manner with the participation of various elements and political parties (Goldstein, 2022).

After the Reformasi era, elections in Indonesia underwent a series of innovations and improvements to ensure a more transparent and fair process. Subsequently, elections held in 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019 saw significant changes in Indonesia's electoral system. 2004 marked the year when, for the first time, Indonesians directly elected the President and Vice President, as well as members of the DPR and DPD (Adofo, 2022). This was a major step forward in the practice of democracy in Indonesia, giving more direct power to the people in determining the direction and policies of government (Wu et al., 2022).

Indonesia's electoral system continues to evolve, with the implementation of updated technologies and systems to improve the integrity and efficiency of the voting process. One aspect of concern is the transparency of vote counting and result announcement, which is better addressed through the use of information technology. Although there are still challenges such as money politics, political polarization, and disinformation, efforts to overcome these problems continue (Saleha & Wulandari, 2023). The General Election Commission (KPU), as an institution responsible for organizing elections, continues to innovate and strive to strengthen Indonesian democracy through a clean and fair electoral process. Elections are one of the pillars of democracy, and their development towards a more democratic and inclusive system demonstrates Indonesia's commitment to strengthening democratic principles. Going forward, the challenges of perfecting the electoral process will continue, but the hope for continuous improvement to achieve a mature democracy is also growing (Luthfianto et al., 2021).

Indonesia's electoral system and mechanism continue to evolve in accordance with political dynamics and the needs of society. In the electoral system, Indonesia adheres to an open proportional system, where voters choose political parties and legislative candidates directly from the list available on the ballot paper. This system allows voters to have a more direct say in determining their representatives in parliament (Suemo et al., 2023). For the election of the President and Vice President, the system is direct election using a simple majority system. If no candidate pair obtains more than 50% of the votes plus one of the total national valid votes in the first round, then a second round is held (if needed) between the two candidate pairs with the most votes. This system is considered to provide strong legitimacy to the winner of the election because it must get majority support from voters (Edowar, 2020).

The general election mechanism involves various stages, starting from updating voter data, nomination, election campaign, quiet period, voting, vote counting, to the announcement of results. The entire process is overseen by the General Election Commission (KPU) at the central and regional levels, as well as an independent election supervisory body to ensure the integrity of the process. Voting is conducted by voters

casting their votes in a secret ballot booth, which are then counted and announced transparently (Czapiewski, 2021). In addition, information technology is also utilized to improve the quality and speed of election data management and results announcement. Although Indonesia's electoral systems and mechanisms have undergone many improvements, challenges such as voter turnout, abuse of power and fraud are still concerns that must be addressed (Tino et al., 2020).

General elections are the backbone of democracy because this process provides an opportunity for the people to directly participate in determining the direction and policies of their government. Through general elections, people have a voice in choosing representatives who will sit in legislative and executive institutions, including the president and vice president who become the head of state and government (Trojan et al., 2023). This process also enables the creation of a system of government that is transparent, accountable and sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the people. Without elections, democratic values such as equality, freedom and justice are difficult to realize. Therefore, general elections serve as the main mechanism in the realization of popular sovereignty, where the supreme power is in the hands of the people realized through a fair and honest electoral process (Garnett et al., 2020).

Strategies to Increase Community Participation

To increase public participation in elections, the first strategy that can be implemented is through effective and sustainable political education. This political education is not only limited to providing information on how and when to vote, but also emphasizes the importance of participation in elections as a concrete form of democratic participation (Berman et al., 2021). This education can be delivered through cooperation with educational institutions, civil society organizations, and the use of mass media and social media to reach various levels of society. Providing an understanding of how each vote can affect public policy and the future of the country can motivate more people to actively engage in the electoral process (Igiebor, 2023).

The second strategy is to improve the accessibility and ease of the electoral process. This can include expanding the reach of polling stations, adjusting to more flexible operating hours, and providing facilities that are friendly to vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people with disabilities, and those in remote areas. In addition, the use of technology, such as electronic voting systems, can be introduced to speed up and simplify the election process. The implementation of these more modern and efficient methods needs to be balanced with the strengthening of security systems to maintain the integrity of voters' votes (Sa'adawisna & Putra, 2023).

Third, it is important to build public trust in the electoral system. This strategy involves transparency and accountability from all parties involved in the electoral process, including the government, political parties and electoral institutions. Public participation is often hampered by negative perceptions such as fraud or manipulation

in elections (Sugiyatno, 2020). To overcome this, election organizers need to proactively convey information about holding elections that are fair and free from manipulation and increase supervision and sanctions for election violations. Ensuring that each stage of an election is conducted honestly and fairly can increase public trust and encourage participation (Ashbee, 2020).

Voter empowerment through the use of social media and online platforms is an important strategy in today's digital era. Building creative and engaging political awareness campaigns through social media can reach a wider audience, especially young people who tend to be active on social media (Yudhy & Nur'aeni, 2023). This two-way interaction on digital platforms also provides a space for voters to ask questions, discuss and get accurate information about the election process, candidates and related issues. This strategy not only increases awareness but also triggers enthusiasm and active participation in elections (Utari et al., 2023).

In addition, recognition and appreciation of voter participation is also an important factor. Creating a system that recognizes and possibly rewards people for their participation in elections can be an additional motivation. This recognition can take the form of certificates of participation, community awards, or even small incentives that are legal and do not influence voters' decisions (Yusuf & Kurniasih, 2023). Highlighting success stories of individuals or communities who actively participate in elections can inspire others to do the same.

Finally, it is crucial to address issues or barriers that may reduce people's interest in participating in elections. This includes addressing information gaps, skepticism towards the effectiveness of elections, and practical issues such as difficulties in accessing polling stations. Through an inclusive and holistic approach that targets the specific causes of low participation, these strategies can be more effective in increasing people's engagement in democratic processes. People's active participation in elections is key to a strong and responsive democracy, and efforts to increase it should continue to be a priority for all relevant stakeholders.

Effectiveness of Government Strategy

The effectiveness of government strategies in increasing public participation in elections depends largely on how well they are designed and implemented. Effective strategies usually include a comprehensive approach, ranging from voter education, improving accessibility and convenience in voting, to ensuring the integrity of the electoral process (Lestari & Rodiyah, 2023). Continuous and inclusive voter education, for example, can significantly increase people's awareness and understanding of the importance of electoral participation, ultimately encouraging more people to exercise their right to vote. However, challenges such as reaching politically apathetic or skeptical groups remain, and require creativity and initiatives that go beyond traditional approaches (Hikmat, 2022).

In addition, improving the accessibility and ease of the election process is also an important influence in increasing voter turnout. By adjusting the operating hours of polling stations, providing disability-friendly facilities, and introducing more modern voting methods such as electronic systems, governments can lower the physical and psychological barriers that hinder voter participation (Dzisah, 2020). These strategies should also be accompanied by efforts to maintain the security and integrity of the vote, as the application of new technologies in elections is often accompanied by concerns about potential manipulation and fraud (Abdulyakeen & Yusuf, 2022).

Finally, building public trust in the electoral process is another crucial aspect. Transparency in managing elections, openly communicating the process, and cracking down on all forms of fraud are important steps to strengthen public trust (Rukmana et al., 2020). When people feel confident that their votes are counted fairly and can make a difference, the motivation to participate in elections tends to increase. In this context, government efforts to involve non-governmental organizations and independent observers in overseeing the electoral process can provide additional validation of electoral integrity and fairness (Waluyo, 2020). In the long run, a combination of approaches focusing on voter education, accessibility improvement and trust-building can effectively increase voter turnout and strengthen the foundations of democracy (Artayasa et al., 2020).

Thus, the effectiveness of government strategies in increasing voter turnout relies heavily on a holistic and multi-faceted approach. This includes inclusive voter education, increasing the accessibility of voting, and strengthening trust in the integrity of the electoral system. Education helps make the importance of electoral participation clear, while improved accessibility ensures all groups, including people with disabilities and those living in remote areas, can vote more easily. Finally, building trust through transparency and fairness strengthens the public's belief that their vote has real influence. Effective implementation of these strategies can pave the way for increased voter participation, which is key to a healthy and responsive democracy.

Conclusion

Government strategies to increase voter turnout are effective when they include comprehensive and integrated measures that focus on education, accessibility and trust in the electoral system. Continuous voter education is important to raise awareness and understanding of electoral procedures and the importance of civic participation, targeting all segments of society including young and marginalized groups. It aims to encourage more people to exercise their right to vote and increase active participation in the democratic process.

Improving the accessibility and convenience of voting is also crucial, including the use of modern voting technologies and the adaptation of polling stations to be more inclusive. These efforts reduce the physical and administrative barriers that often

discourage participation. In addition, the security and integrity of the electoral process must be maintained, given that the implementation of electoral technology may raise new concerns about potential manipulation and fraud.

Public trust in the electoral system plays a vital role in increasing voter participation. Transparency in the electoral management process and communication to the public about how the process is being conducted increases confidence that every vote is counted fairly. Decisive action against any form of electoral fraud reinforces this trust. Strategies that involve civil society and independent observers in election monitoring can also bring extra validation to the integrity of elections, which in turn increases turnout.

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