

Problems of the Campaign Period on the Level of Voter Participation in the 2024 Election in Medan City

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ABSTRACT

The campaign period for the 2024 Indonesian elections may pose several challenges to voter turnout. Low voter turnout in Medan City is an ongoing problem. With the time for the 2024 General Election being shorter than the previous campaign period, it is undoubtedly a challenge. The purpose of this study is to analyze the problems of the 2024 General Election campaign period affecting the level of voter participation in Medan City. The qualitative research method was applied in this study. The data obtained was then analyzed descriptively. Qualitative techniques were used to collect primary and secondary data. The data were combined by analyzing the patterns found in the field data and discussing them with the research problems to conclude. The length of the campaign period can affect voters' ability to understand their candidate and the candidate's vision, mission, and program for the future. The campaign period should take place at the right time interval and by the needs of the Indonesian people in getting to know their candidates. The campaign period is an essential factor that influences the amount of public political participation. In the 2024 General Election in Medan City, the campaign period of 75 days can be a special consideration for candidates to significantly improve the campaign and gain more votes, thereby increasing election participation.

INTRODUCTION

The campaign period in Indonesia's 2024 elections may pose several challenges for voter participation. Despite a vibrant electoral process, Indonesian democracy is still dominated by political, business, and military leaders, which can create barriers to entry for new players and affect fair competition (Mulyanto, 2024). Active participation from the public is essential to ensure fair and transparent elections (Firdaus et al., 2024). In addition, the campaign period for voter participation in the 2024 elections in Indonesia is a topic of discussion. The focus of the discourse on public participation in the electoral process is on the voter turnout rate (VTO).

Indonesia's General Election Commission (KPU) has developed a Voter Participation Index (IPP) for the 2024 election. The IPP is a tool to measure public participation in the electoral process. The 2024 election is predicted to increase the number of young voters who significantly influence election results (Iswanto & Pamungkas, 2023). Meanwhile, the 2024 election campaign period in Indonesia, which lasted for 75 days, significantly impacted voter participation. Some of the impacts include (Basyari, 2023; Krismantari & Ramadhani, 2023):

1. Increased political noise: Shortening the campaign period leads to less clarity in the ideas and narratives presented by political parties, candidates, and election participants. This makes it difficult for voters to make decisions.
2. Limited information: Long socialization periods tend to be used by something other than election participants or candidates to provide election information to voters. This results in voters needing more information about the candidates they will vote for at the polling station.
3. Young voters: Half of Indonesia's population is under 30 years old, and many are first-time voters. A study by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in August 2022 showed that only 1.1% of young people expressed interest in politics, and many were undecided or pessimistic about the political situation.
4. Logistical challenges: The 2024 elections will be held during the rainy season, which can pose severe logistical challenges, such as floods and landslides, especially in Indonesia, where heavy rains can quickly trigger such disasters.
5. Election rules: Democracy in Indonesia is dominated by political, business, and military leaders who have set electoral rules to ensure fair competition among themselves while creating unfair entry barriers for new players.

Furthermore, low voter turnout in Medan City is a persistent problem, where the voter turnout rate in Regional Head Elections could be much higher. For example, in the 2005 local elections, the number of participating voters was 54.70%, dropping to 38.28% in 2010 and 25.38% in 2015 (Nasution et al., 2020). However, there was a slight increase in voter turnout in 2020 due to disruptions caused

by the pandemic. The causes of low voter turnout include the perceived ambiguity of government policies and the low desire of Medan residents to exercise their right to vote. The impact of COVID-19 on democratic processes, including local elections, is well known, but the specific factors contributing to low voter turnout in Medan City are complex and diverse (Fauzan, 2021).

This study also shows that factors such as perceived popularity, electability, and campaign strategies of candidates can influence voter turnout. In addition, the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the democratic process, including regional head elections, is also the subject of study (Yunita et al., 2023). With the time for the 2024 General Election being shorter than the campaign time of the previous period, it is undoubtedly a record and challenge in itself. Many pros and cons are essential points that must be considered for their impact in several sectors, especially voter turnout in Medan City. Seeing this phenomenon, the author wants to analyze how the problems of the 2024 General Election campaign period's problems affect voter participation in Medan City.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research methods were applied in this study. The qualitative method is a research procedure that uses recording and recording techniques to provide descriptive data through observation and interview procedures. Descriptive research describes all data or conditions of the subject or object of research. Analyses and compares them based on current reality, then seeks to provide solutions to these problems and can provide the latest relevant information (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Hamzah, 2021).

In general, descriptive research seeks to paint a picture or explain an event or symptom methodically, factually, and well organized. The data obtained is then analyzed descriptively and qualitatively using the ideas of relevant scientists. Qualitative techniques were used to collect data and news references from books, journals, and reputable internet news sources. Furthermore, the domains were combined by analyzing the patterns found in the field data and discussing them based on data and facts related to the research problem (Saldana, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Voter Participation in the Context of Elections and Regional Head Elections in the Last Five Years

Elections manifest democracy in which there is an obligation to regenerate power. An essential element of concern in the implementation of elections is the people's political participation. Voter participation / political participation in elections is the most important political instrument in launching a democratic party. The level of voter participation can indicate the high interest of voters in the

candidate pairs being promoted. Meanwhile, the number of voters present to vote on election day is the level of voter participation or voter turnout. The significance of voter participation is that it will build a political climate and democracy that encourages people to be actively involved in the administration of the State. In this case, voters are Indonesian citizens who have the right to vote in a leadership election.

A high voter turnout is a public acceptance of implementing the democratic system in Indonesia and a hope for the country's progress. In contrast, a low voter turnout can indicate a form of distrust and apathetic behavior toward the political process and state life. This can also hurt the country's continuation in running the State's life. Voter turnout can also be used as a barometer and indicator to measure several things, such as assessing the success of an election, the political awareness of the people/community, or the legitimacy of winning election participants.

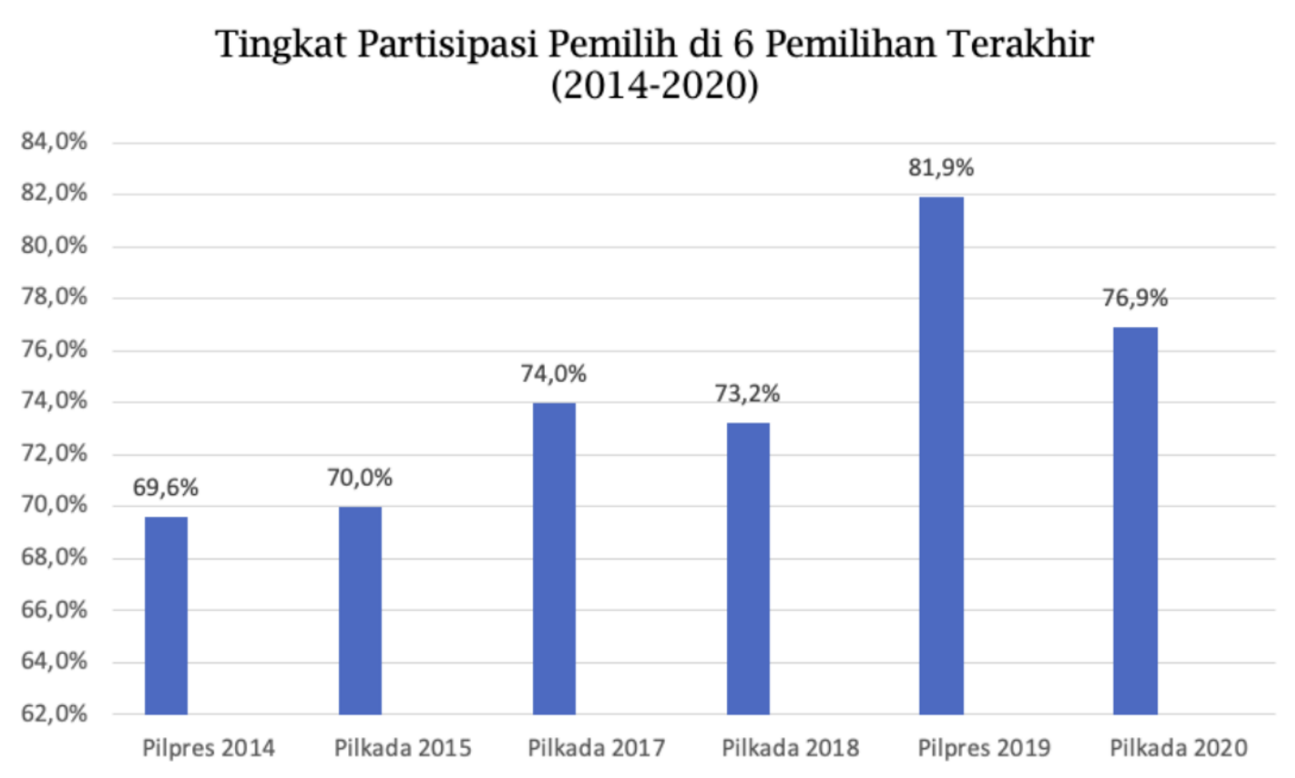


Figure 1. Voter Participation Levels in the Last Six Elections in Medan City (2014-2020)

Source: (Karim, 2019; Databoks.katadata.co.id, 2023)

According to the source that the author researched from the Ministry of State Secretariat website, the following chart shows the level of public participation in elections. The data presented showed an increase in the presidential election, which rose from 69.9% in 2014 to 81.9% in 2019. Meanwhile, at the local election level, there was a massive increase in awareness of the political process through the elections. The data reviewed explained an increase of 70% in 2015, increasing to 74% in 2017, and increasing again in 2020 to 76.9%. Thus, it can be seen that there is an increase in

public awareness of the democratic party that takes place both for the level of regional heads and heads of State (Databoks.katadata.co.id, 2023 Karim, 2019).

Voter Participation in Medan City

To delve deeper, the researcher tries to examine more literature studies that discuss the level of voter participation in Medan. According to the General Election Commission (KPU) Sirekap data, in the 2020 Medan mayoral election, of the total DPT for the 2020 Medan Regional Election of 1,601,001 names, the valid votes totaled 736,013. That way, the participation rate in this year's Medan City Regional Election is around 45.97 percent. Compared to the 2015 Medan City Pilkada, this number increased by 50.39 percent or doubled. In 2015, voter participation was only 25.35 percent or 507,350 votes out of a total DPT of 1,998,835. Before the general election was postponed, the number of first-time voters in Indonesia was 3,061,000. However, due to the postponement, additional first-time voters were submitted on 18 July 2020 by the Ministry of Home Affairs, totaling 456,256 people who were exactly 17 years old on 9 December (Molana, 2020).

Meanwhile, the exact number of beginner voter data in the 2020 regional elections in Medan City still needs to be released. However, according to the data division of the Medan KPU commissioner, Nana Miranti, the number of DPT consists of 781,953 male voters and 819,048 female voters with 4,303 polling stations. This data includes the number of first-time voters who turned 17 on 9 December 2020. (DPT for the Medan regional election is 1.6 million (News.detik.com, 2020). The acquisition of existing data clearly shows that there has been an increase in voter participation in the implementation of elections, specifically in the Medan mayoral election in 2020 compared to 2015. Of course, many factors can influence this public participation, including the researchers' hypothesis. Researchers suspect that one of the factors is the campaign period.

Election Participation and Campaign Period

For the success of elections, the instruments encourage not only citizens' political participation but also The campaign period, which is an element that affects the amount of public political participation in the election. Campaigns become a place for self-introduction, exposure of programs and vision and mission, and a political marketing process to introduce and encourage voters to feel close and then choose the candidate. Although Indonesia has clear rules and time for the implementation of campaigns, the amount of campaign time is often a matter of discussion about its impact. In addition, candidates/politicians often conduct campaigns outside the set schedule to brand themselves to the public.

Given the influence of the campaign on voters' recognition of their candidates, voters need an ideal time to understand the candidates they support correctly. The length of the campaign period can be a benchmark for voters in exploring the vision and mission and future candidate programs. For this reason, the researcher raises interrelated research hypotheses in this case. Researchers suspect the influence of the campaign period on the intensity of people's participation in the existing political process.

Lessons from the Campaign Period on Participation Rates in the 2015 and 2020 Regional Elections in Medan City

Referring to the hypothesis, the implementation of regional elections in Medan City in 2015 and 2020 differed in the campaign period. In 2015 alone, the campaign period in Medan lasted 100 days and was won by Ir, Dzulmi Eldin as the legitimate mayor. Meanwhile, the Medan Regional Election Campaign Period in 2020 lasted for 70 days and was won by Bobby Nasution (Amar, 2016).

Looking at the data, there has been an increase in voter participation, accompanied by a campaign period that has decreased by around 30 days. If you look at the theoretical study, the campaign period is considered a period for candidates to approach voters, so it needs the right and ideal time, not too long and fast, to support political marketing and the political process, a good democratic process. In the case of the Medan city election, this certainly raises its political problems. However, this contradiction does not guarantee and reference that a shorter campaign period will encourage more participation. Other factors, such as COVID and the demands of new leaders in the Covid Era with a handful of existing problems, should also be considered to increase voter turnout in Medan City. In addition, the birth of a politically capable and politically literate young generation is also a consideration that encourages increased voter participation in Medan City.

The Effect of the Campaign Period on the Participation Rate of the 2024 Election

Considering theoretical studies, the author has tendencies and hypotheses leading to voter turnout. Even though the subject of discussion leads to the mayoral election as an example of the reality of participation in the 2020 Medan regional elections, it still correlates with the picture of voter participation in the 2024 presidential election. After making the release, the KPU and DPR agreed to hold a 2024 election campaign within 75 days. Of course, the number of days is different from previous years, which was in the range of 70 days or 75 days. Even though it is in the middle threshold, this time can be a special consideration for candidates to improve their letters significantly. The total

campaign time of around 75 days is hoped to gain more votes and increase election participation in 2024.

As a means of approaching voters, the campaign period should take place at appropriate time intervals and by the needs of the Indonesian people in getting to know their candidates. Less time can cause difficulties for the candidate and a lack of time to be more mature in discussing the candidate's future vision and mission. Meanwhile, a campaign time that is too long can also disrupt the ongoing political and democratic process. People will also feel fed up with political mechanisms that seem old. For this reason, precise mapping is needed so that the ongoing campaign period is genuinely in line with the needs of the people and increases the capacity of the number of voters.

CONCLUSIONS

The campaign period is an essential factor that influences the level of community political participation. It serves as a place for candidates to introduce themselves, explain their programs and vision, and encourage voters to feel close to them. The length of the campaign period can influence voters' ability to understand the candidate and the candidate's vision, mission, and future programs. In the Medan City Pilkada, the campaign period in 2015 was 100 days, while in 2020, it was only 70 days. Even though the campaign period was reduced, there was an increase in voter participation in the 2020 election. However, this does not guarantee that a shorter campaign period will encourage greater participation. Other factors, such as the impact of COVID-19 and the demands of new leaders in the COVID era, must also be considered.

The campaign period should occur at appropriate time intervals and by the needs of the Indonesian people in getting to know their candidates. Thus, voter participation is an essential element in democratic elections. The campaign period is an important factor that influences the level of community political participation. In the 2024 elections in Medan City, the 75-day campaign period can be a special consideration for candidates to significantly improve their campaigns and win more votes, thereby increasing election participation.

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