

# Community Involvement in the Democratic Process Analysis on General Elections in Indonesia

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## Abstract

Elections (Pemilu) are one of the important mechanisms in a modern democratic system that allow citizens to elect their representatives in government. Community involvement in the general election process in Indonesia has always been an interesting topic for research. This article aims to analyze community involvement in the democratic process in general elections in Indonesia, especially in terms of voter participation and the role of civil society in overseeing elections. The research method used is a qualitative descriptive approach by analyzing secondary data from literature and related documents. The results of the study show that voter turnout in elections in Indonesia is relatively high, although there are several challenges in terms of election supervision and integrity. On the other hand, the role of civil society in overseeing elections in Indonesia is growing and becoming more active, although there is still a lack of access to information and capacity. This research shows that community involvement in the democratic process in general elections in Indonesia has experienced positive developments, but further efforts are still needed to increase the integrity and more active participation of the people in elections.

**Keywords:** Community involvement, General Elections, Democracy, Indonesia.

## 1. Introduction

A kind of governance known as democracy is one in which the people themselves have the political authority. People have the power to choose who will represent them in government under a democratic framework. One of the tools that democracy use to select its leaders and the people who will represent their interests in government is the general election (Riskiyono, 2013). The President and Vice President of Indonesia, as well as members of the People's Representative Council, Regional Representative Council, and Regional People's Representative Council, are elected at general elections in Indonesia that are conducted periodically every five years (Novianti, 2013).

Indonesia as a democratic country has adopted the general election system as a way to elect state leaders and people's representatives. Since the 1998 reform, political participation in Indonesia has increased significantly, especially in voter turnout in general elections (Miaz, 2012). However, even though the adoption of the general election system has provided an opportunity for the people to choose the leaders they want, there are still some obstacles in the implementation of elections, such as violations, fraud, and lack of transparency (Ardipandanto, 2019)

Community involvement in general elections is important because people's participation is one of the important indicators in strengthening the democratic system. Communities have an important role in selecting quality leaders who can represent their interests. This is also a way for the people to express their political rights. High voter turnout can

help ensure that elections are conducted in a democratic and transparent manner. However, low voter turnout can jeopardize the credibility of the election results and trigger discontent and distrust of the government (Arniti, 2020).

Since the reform in 1998, there has been a significant increase in voter turnout at general elections in Indonesia. This trend continued after the elections in 1999, when the turnout reached 94.3%. In the election of 2004, voter participation dropped to 77.1%, but in the election of 2014, voter participation once again increased to 75.1%. The participation rate of voters in the elections held in 2019 was 81%, suggesting an increase in voter participation in recent years (Nazir et al, 2020). Yet, the holding of general elections in Indonesia faces a number of challenges in its implementation. One of them is the fact that there are violations and fraud in elections, such as the misuse of authority and the influence of money in politics. The public's perception of the honesty of elections is harmed as a result of occurrences such as these, which is bad for the state of democracy in Indonesia (Surbakti et al, 2011).

In the context of election monitoring, the involvement of civil society in overseeing elections is extremely crucial to guarantee the honesty and openness of the electoral process. The participation of members of civil society in the monitoring of the electoral process, beginning with the casting of ballots and continuing through the tallying of votes. In spite of this, they continue to experience a great deal of difficulty in efficiently carrying out their responsibilities. One of the most significant difficulties is the restricted availability of information.

Information that is necessary for civil society to gain or access in order to monitor the progress of elections can be difficult to obtain or access at times (Solihah et al, 2018).

Limited access to information in general elections for civil society refers to conditions where civil society faces difficulties in obtaining the necessary information to understand the general election process and oversee its implementation. This information includes information about the stages of the general election, voting procedures, vote counting, as well as the rules and regulations governing the implementation of general elections. This limited access to information can be caused by various factors, including the lack of publication of information about elections, especially in remote areas or areas that are not well-reached by the mass media, limited access to the internet or social media, and the lack of socialization carried out by election organizers (Lengkoan et al, 2022).

The capacity and human resources of civil society are also still limited. Many members of civil society do not yet have sufficient knowledge about election procedures, including in terms of election rules and regulations, so they find it difficult to monitor and oversee the implementation of elections. Limited human resources are also an obstacle in terms of the number and quality of supervisors needed in elections (Lengkoan et al, 2022).

In addition, civil society often experiences intimidation and violence from irresponsible parties in carrying out their duties. Intimidation and violence against civil society often occurs in remote or conflict-prone areas. Intimidation can be in the form of physical, psychological or social threats aimed at stopping or limiting the activities of civil society in monitoring the election process. This intimidation can be carried out by various parties, including by members of the security apparatus, unscrupulous political parties, as well as by irresponsible individuals (Sahbana, 2017).

The aim of this article is to analyze community involvement in elections in Indonesia and the role of civil society in overseeing elections. This article also aims to discuss the challenges faced in terms of access to information and civil society capacity, as well as steps that can be taken to increase participation and electoral integrity in Indonesia. Thus, this article is expected to contribute to efforts to increase political participation and democracy in Indonesia.

## 2. Methods

This research uses descriptive-analytical method. The descriptive approach can be interpreted as a way of solving problems that are investigated by displaying a picture of the state of the subject or research object such as individuals, institutions, groups and society at the present time based on visible facts and so on (Nawawi, 2015). The descriptive approach, according to Nazir (2013), is a technique for assessing the current status of a group

of people, an object, a set of conditions, a system of ideas, or a sequence of occurrences. This descriptive investigation aims to produce a systematic, factual, and accurate description, portrait, or painting of the facts, qualities, and relationships between the examined events. This study utilizes data from primary and secondary sources, including scientific journals, related papers, and the results of previous polls on community involvement and the role of civil society in Indonesian general elections.

## 3. Results and discussion

### 1. Civil society involvement in elections

Every democratic event or general election held by the Republic of Indonesia has an impact on the development of progress in national and state life. In actuality, political elites provide competent political education to the public, thereby increasing the knowledge of democracy in many circles. If the community is actively involved in granting its members' rights, democratic consciousness will be elevated.

Consequently, public consciousness to participate constructively in the existing political system, if a person feels in harmony with his environment. If the scenario is reversed, political attitudes and behavior that appear weird or unpleasant will emerge; for instance, if a person is accustomed to living in a democratic political environment but is placed in a feudal or undemocratic society, he would encounter challenges in the adaptation process (Pharisees, 2020).

Increased community participation in the implementation of General Elections (Pemilu) indicates the strengthening of a country's democratic structure. Democracy demands the participation of the people in every aspect of governmental governance. Because democracy is fundamentally based on the logic of equality and the notion that government requires the consent of those who are governed, the people are positioned as significant players in a democratic society. Community participation is a fundamental aspect of democracy. Thus, holding elections as a method of achieving democracy cannot be isolated from community participation (Tadanugi, 2020).

Increasing public involvement in general elections in Indonesia can be observed from voter participation where there is an increase in the level of voter participation in general elections in Indonesia from time to time. For example, in the 2014 election, the voter turnout rate reached 75.1%, while in the 2019 election, the turnout rate increased to 8.1 %. It is expected that in the 2024 election the involvement of the community in the general election will be held. There are several things that lead to an increase in community involvement, including:

1. The role of social media: The use of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, has had a major influence on people's involvement in elections. In the last few elections, social media

has been used as a platform to introduce candidates, mobilize support and raise public awareness about the importance of their voting rights.

2. Political awareness: Indonesian society's political awareness is increasing, especially among the younger generation. The amount of information and understanding about the importance of voting rights and the right to choose the best leader for the country can be one of the factors that make people more aware of using their voting rights in general elections.

3. Freedom and transparency: Increasing freedom and transparency in general elections in Indonesia can also be a factor in increasing citizen involvement. Freedom of the press and transparency in information allows the public to know more about their future leaders and choose them based on accurate and timely information.

Overall, increasing citizen involvement in Indonesia's elections can be influenced by many factors, including the level of political awareness, freedom and transparency, and the influence of social media. However, despite increasing community involvement, there are still challenges in overcoming the still high abstentions rate.

Community involvement in holding general elections (elections) can be done in various forms, including:

1. Voter registration: Voter registration is the most basic form of community involvement in elections. In this case, people must actively register as voters, so that their right to vote can be recognized in elections.

2. Campaign: Communities can carry out campaigns in the form of disseminating information about the candidates or political parties they support. This campaign can be carried out in various ways, such as talking directly to other people, creating banners, and using social media.

3. Election monitoring: The public can also participate in election monitoring as election observers or witnesses. In this case, the community has an important role to play in monitoring the election process and reporting violations that occur.

4. Voting: Community involvement in elections is also seen in the form of voting. The community has the right to vote for the candidate or political party that is considered most suitable to their wishes and needs.

5. Helping election organizers: The public can also assist election organizers in various ways, such as preparing election logistics and helping provide information about elections to the public. In all of the above forms of participation, the public plays a very important role in maintaining the integrity and security of elections. Therefore, support and active participation from the public are needed to maintain the integrity of elections and create a better democracy in Indonesia.

## 2. Challenges of Community

## Involvement in Monitoring the Implementation of General Elections

Community involvement in the holding of General Elections (Pemilu) is indeed an important indicator in measuring how strong the democratic order is in a country. The higher the level of community involvement, the stronger the democracy that is formed in the country. However, community involvement in elections is not easy and always runs smoothly. There are many challenges faced by civil society in monitoring and overseeing the course of elections (Akbar, 2016).

Limited access to information in general elections for civil society refers to conditions where civil society faces difficulties in obtaining the necessary information to understand the general election process and oversee its implementation. This information includes information about the stages of the general election, voting procedures, vote counting, as well as the rules and regulations governing the implementation of general elections. This limited access to information can be caused by various factors, including the lack of publication of information about elections, especially in remote areas or areas that are not well-reached by the mass media, limited access to the internet or social media, and the lack of socialization carried out by election organizers (Kartika, 2016).

The impact of this limited access to information is that civil society will have difficulty understanding the general election process and supervising its implementation. This can have an impact on the integrity of the general election, because civil society, which is not well informed and cannot monitor properly, cannot prevent fraud in elections. To overcome limited access to information, efforts from the government, election organizers and civil society are needed. Some of the efforts that can be made include increasing the publication of information about elections, especially in remote areas, increasing access to the internet or social media, and increasing outreach about elections conducted by election organizers and civil society. The government and election organizers can provide clear and easily accessible information about the stages of elections, candidates contesting elections, and how to conduct elections. This can be done through various information channels, such as mass media, official websites, or public information services. In addition, civil society can form advocacy groups that have a focus on advocating for voter rights and disseminating information related to the election process.

Apart from the challenges of access to information and intimidation, there are also other challenges faced by civil society in overseeing elections, namely limited capacity and human resources. Limited capacity and human resources in supervising election implementation refer to the limitations faced by civil society institutions, voter groups, and individuals in terms of the knowledge and technical

skills needed to carry out election supervision properly (Solihah et al, 2018). In this context, these limitations may include:

1. Limited human resources: Some civil society groups or organizations may not have sufficient personnel to carry out effective election oversight. This may be due to a lack of financial support, organizational policies that do not support election supervision, or a lack of awareness about the importance of election supervision.

2. Limited technical capacity: Conducting election supervision requires certain technical skills, such as an understanding of voting procedures, vote counting and vote counting technology. Some civil society groups may not have sufficient technical capacity to carry out effective election oversight.

These limitations can hinder community involvement in election oversight and affect the integrity of the election as a whole. To overcome these limitations, support is needed from various parties, including the government and international institutions to increase capacity and human resources in carrying out effective election supervision. In addition, counseling and education campaigns also need to be carried out to increase public awareness and involvement in election supervision.

To increase the capacity and human resources of the election organizers, it is necessary to provide training and outreach to the public regarding their participation in general elections. Civil society can also conduct training and outreach to community groups around them. The election organizers also need to ensure that the number of KPPS officers and TPS supervisors is sufficient and properly trained.

The next challenge is the intimidation and violence experienced by the people in elections is one of the serious challenges faced by civil society. In fact, there are many cases of intimidation and violence that occur during elections in many countries around the world. Irresponsible parties, who may be political groups or certain interest groups, often use intimidation and violence as a tool to threaten and frighten the public so that they do not carry out their duties as election supervisors (Murafer, 2018).

This form of intimidation and violence can take the form of threats, physical attacks, or verbal attacks with the aim of forcing people not to take action or to report violations that occurred during elections. This can have an impact on people's trust in the electoral process and ultimately reduce their participation in the process. Intimidation and violence can also influence election results unfairly, as people who are afraid or intimidated may choose not to vote or vote unequally.

Therefore, it is important for the government and related institutions to take preventive and decisive action to protect the public from intimidation and violence. This can be done through strong law enforcement against parties who commit these acts, as well as through strict monitoring of the election process. In addition, civil society also needs to be equipped with adequate knowledge and skills in

reporting and overcoming intimidation and violence that occurs during elections. Thus, community involvement in elections can be guaranteed and trust in the democratic process can be maintained.

In terms of support, related parties, such as election administrators and security forces, need to provide sufficient and sufficient support for civil society in carrying out their oversight duties. In addition, it is also necessary to carry out a campaign to increase public awareness regarding the importance of participation in elections and their role in maintaining the integrity of elections. With increasing public involvement in elections, it is hoped that the integrity of the elections can be maintained properly and that the election results can be trusted by all parties. In addition, active community involvement in elections can also strengthen democratic structures and strengthen people's trust in democratic and accountable government.

#### 4. Conclusion

Community involvement in general elections is very important in strengthening the democratic system. Civil society has an important role to play in ensuring the integrity and transparency of elections. However, there are still challenges in terms of access to information and the capacity of civil society to oversee elections in Indonesia. Therefore, greater effort is needed from civil society, government, and related institutions to address these challenges. Efforts that can be made are increasing access to information related to elections, including access to data and information from related institutions. In addition, the training and capacity of civil society in election supervision must also be increased, including through intensive and periodic training programs. To overcome intimidation and violence against civil society overseeing elections, the security forces must ensure security and comfort for election observers. Apart from that, the existence of strict sanctions and law enforcement against those who commit intimidation and violence must also be strengthened. In order to increase community involvement in general elections, there is a need for close collaboration and communication between civil society, the government and related institutions. Thus, general elections in Indonesia can run democratically and can be recognized internationally as free, fair and transparent general elections.

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