

# Community Political Participation at the Election of Regional Head in Indonesia

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## To cite this article:

Arief Januwarso, Agus Sukristiyanto, Arief Darmawan. Community Political Participation at the Election of Regional Head in Indonesia. *Humanities and Social Sciences*. Vol. 9, No. 6, 2021, pp. 229-233. doi: 10.11648/j.hss.20210906.13

**Received:** October 16, 2021; **Accepted:** November 12, 2021; **Published:** November 23, 2021

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**Abstract:** The lack of public participation in the Election of Regional Head (Regent) is a big challenge that must be resolved by the government, especially the General Election Commission (KPU), as happened in the 2014 simultaneous elections. Regional General Election Commission (KPUD) has made various efforts to increase public participation in regent election and minimized the number of abstentions. This study aims to determine the participation of the people of East Java in the election of regents, especially in Bojonegoro Regency in 2018, and in Tuban and Lamongan regencies in 2020, after various efforts were made by the KPU in the regions to increase community participation. The study used a qualitative-descriptive approach; research data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews and document analysis. The results of the study showed that there were increases in public participations in the regent elections, namely, in Bojonegoro Regency by 8%, Tuban Regency by 24%, and Lamongan Regency by 15%; however, none of the vote support for the elected pair reached 50% plus 1. The percentages of participants, from the total voters in the Final Voter List (DPT), were only 28% in Bojonegoro Regency, 25.6% in Tuban Regency, and 32% in Lamongan Regency. There is a concern that this condition may reduce the legitimacy of the authority of the elected pairs; in other words, the elected pairs may not have received adequate public support.

**Keywords:** Participation, Legitimacy, Regent Election, Regional Head Election

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## 1. Introduction

Indonesia is a democratic country that needs to uphold democratic values. According to Henry B. Mayo, democratic values cover 6 aspects, namely: resolving problems peacefully and institutionally, guaranteeing peaceful changes, organizing regular changes of leaders, limiting the use of violence to a minimum level, recognizing diversity and ensuring justice [1]. These democratic values should be highly reflected in general elections, including the election of regional heads. Unfortunately, awareness of the value of democracy in our society is very low [2-6].

Almost every general election in Indonesia experiences the same problem in terms of high abstention rate, which often reaches 50% of the total regional population who have the right to vote [7]. This high abstention rate is often caused by low community participation in the regions, due to the lack

of socialization and active political education offered by political parties and higher education institutions (East Java KPUD, 2014) [KPUD: Komisi Pemilihan Umum Daerah (Regional Election Commission)] [8].

Data from the recapitulation of Regional Head Elections in several regencies in East Java in 2014 showed that the level of community participation was quite low. Examples could be found in Bojonegoro, Tuban, and Lamongan regencies. Referring to the data recapitulation from the Bojonegoro Regency KPU [Komisi Pemilihan Umum (General Election Commission)], the votes for the elected pair, namely, Suyoto and Setyo Hartono, only reached 44.38%, while the abstention rate reached 29%. If the number of abstentions was added up to the number of voters who did not elect in the Pilkada [Pemilihan Kepala Daerah (Regional Head Election)], the overall rate would be more than 50%.

A similar condition occurred in the Pilkada of Tuban Regency, where 47.75% of the people did not exercise their

right to vote; these were referred to as Golput [Golongan Putih (Abstentionist Group)]. The rest, 52.25% of the people, used their right to vote, but the votes were still split for two pairs of candidates for regional heads. Therefore, the elected candidate pair only received public support from 60.82% of the total people who exercised their right to vote.

The situation was not much different in the regional head election in Lamongan Regency. Even though the community participation rate in the Regional Head General Election in Lamongan Regency reached 62 percent, looking further, the votes for the elected pair did not reach 50% plus 1.

Based on the above phenomena, the level of community participation in regional head elections was shown to be very low. There was a concern that the low level of community participation might affect the legitimacy of the elected regional leaders [7, 9]. In other words, the elected regional heads did not get the support from 50% of the people, particularly from those who had the right to vote. In this respect, the regional heads and deputy regional heads, who were directly selected through the general election of regional heads and deputy regional heads, have moral and political responsibilities to the people who have elected them. The support and trust given by the people in the election constitutes an important capital for the regional heads and deputy regional heads. The reason is that this political support provides political legitimacy for the regional heads and deputy regional heads in running the government [10].

The low level of community participation is caused by several factors. The first is administrative reason, where a voter does not vote because he/she encounters a difficulty with administrative procedures, such as not knowing that his/her name is registered in the voter list, or not having received a voter card or an invitation card. The second is technical reason, where someone decides not to vote because there is no time to vote, due to having to work on election day, having another business, having to go out of town on election day, and so on, or because he/she is lazy to go to the polls. The third is political reason, in which a voter decides not to exercise his/her rights because he/she consciously decides not to vote. In this respect, the Pilkada (Regional Head Election) is seen as useless, not bringing change, or not offering preferred regional head candidate [11, 12].

The low level of community participation above may serve as an important evaluation material for the Regional Election Commission (KPUD) in carrying out various efforts to reduce the number of abstentions [13]. These efforts include collecting correct and accurate data for the Permanent Voter List [12], conducting socialization and political education for novice voters [12, 14], conducting regional head elections outside working days, or on holidays [12], preparing the locations of the polling places that are easily accessible to the public, as well as instilling awareness on the importance of the voter's vote and the benefits of the election for the community [12].

Based on the above background, the study aims to reveal the participation of the people of East Java in the Regional Head Elections, especially in Bojonegoro Regency in 2018,

and Tuban and Lamongan Regencies in 2020. The results of this study are very significant to determine the increase in community participation in the Regional Head Elections in East Java in 2020.

## 2. Method

This research used a qualitative-descriptive approach, with a phenomenological basis. Thus, the collected data were in the forms of words and pictures, and not numbers. The research sites were located in 3 regencies in East Java, namely, Bojonegoro, Tuban and Lamongan. The three locations were chosen on the grounds of low voter participation in the regional head elections in the three regencies.

The informants in this study were local election organizers, including the chairpersons of the KPU and Bawaslu [Badan Pengawas Pemilihan Umum (General Election Supervisory Body)] of Bojonegoro, Tuban, and Lamongan Regencies. The research period was focused on the time span after the 2018 Regional Head Elections for Bojonegoro Regency and the 2020 simultaneous Regional Head Elections for Lamongan and Tuban Regencies [15].

Research data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews and document analysis. Furthermore, the data were analyzed using several steps, namely: reduction and elimination of data that did not meet the researcher's criteria, interpretation of data on information collected from informants, and data categorization.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Community Participation in Regional Head Election in Bojonegoro Regency

The Regional Head Election in Bojonegoro Regency, which was held in 2018, went well with a significant increase in community participation. Based on the Bojonegoro Regency Bawaslu report regarding the 2018 Pilkada, it was known that the first thing to do in the Bojonegoro Regent and Deputy Regent Election was to update the voter list.

To produce an accurate and valid voter list, there was a need for hard work from all parties, starting from the DP4 [Daftar Penduduk Potensial Pemilih Pemilihan (List of Potential Electoral Voters)]-which was issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, KPU, Disdukcapil [Dinas Kependudukan dan Pencatatan Sipil (The Agency for Population and Civil Registration)], to the officers of Pantarlih [Panitia Pendaftaran Pemilih (Voter Registration Committee)] / Coklit [Pencocokan dan Penelitian (tentang data pemilih)] {The Matching and Researching (of voter data)}. For this reason, the KPU had assigned a special officer to collect data, match, study and compile a voter list at the TPS [Tempat Pemungutan Suara (Voting Place)] level. The officer was PPDP [Petugas Pemutakhiran Data Pemilih (Voter Data Update Officer)] [15].

In the simultaneous 2018 regional elections in Bojonegoro Regency, after Coklit was carried out in the DPS [Daftar

Pemilih Sementara (Temporary Voter List), the voter composition was as follows: male voters: 513,143; female voters: 520,529; total: 1,033,672 voters. Potential Non-E-KTP [Kartu Tanda Penduduk (Identity card)] voters consisted of males: 17,654, females: 17,122; total: 34,776. From the DPS data, the data collection, research and revision were then updated into the DPSHP [Daftar Pemilih Hasil Perbaikan (Improved Voter List)] by PPS [Panitia Pemungutan Suara (Voting Committee)] and PPK [Panitia Pemilihan Kecamatan (Sub-district Election Committee)]. Furthermore, the DPSHP by the Bojonegoro Regency KPU was determined as the DPT [Daftar Pemilih Tetap (Permanent Voter List)] with the following voters: males: 509,497; females: 516,732; total: 1,026,229 [15].

In relation to the use of the right to vote, in the election of the Regent and Deputy Regent of Bojonegoro, the number of voters who exercised their rights to vote comprised 799,916 (seven hundred ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and sixteen) voters, or 78% of the total DPT. The voters, in details, consisted of 380,856 male suffrage users and 419,060 female suffrage users. They were spread out over 28 sub-districts, 430 villages/ wards and 2,408 polling stations [15]. This participation rate, which was higher than the rate from the previous regional head election (71%), constituted an increase of 8% [14].

The increase in the number of voters who exercised their rights to vote was the result of comprehensive socialization efforts, including the introduction of the Election Awareness Family Movement, by maximizing the opportunity to meet voters when distributing invitations to vote or the C6 forms. In addition, there was a strategy of actively involving stakeholders and the role of netizens in the socialization of the 2018 Regional Head Election [16, 17]. Not less important was the support through budget or grants for the implementation of regional elections from the Bojonegoro Regency Government [15].

Unfortunately, the increase in the number of voters in the Bojonegoro Regent election still failed to make the elected pair to get more than 50% public support. Evidently, the number of votes obtained by this pair consisted of only 236,358 votes, or only about 28% of the total DPT. Thus, the legitimacy of the authority of the elected pair still did not meet the minimum standard of 50% plus 1.

Participation constitutes one of the successes in the political or the democratic process. If participation is below 50%, many people think that legitimacy is still lacking because the majority of people do not vote in the election process.

### **3.2. Community Participation in the Regional Head Election in Tuban Regency**

The Tuban Regency Regional Head Election should have been held in 2019. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic that hit all nations in the world-including Indonesia, the regional head election was postponed until December 9, 2020.

KPU [Komisi Pemilihan Umum (The General Election Commission)] for the 2020 Tuban Regency Pilkada declared that the candidate pair for Regent and Deputy Regent, namely, Aditya Halindra Faridzki and Riyadi, led the provisional vote

acquisition, based on official calculations from the KPU. As a result, Aditya Halindra Faridzki and Riyadi, who were supported by three political parties-namely the Golkar Party, the Democratic Party, and the Prosperous Justice Party, led with 60% of the votes, or around 241,560 voters.

In the election for the Regent of Tuban, there were 942,519 voters in the DPT; however only 76.5%, or around 721,089 people, used their votes. When compared with the number of voters in the previous Pilbub [Pemilihan Bupati (Regent Election)] period, the increase in public participation in the 2020 Pilbub in Lamongan Regency was very significant, namely, more than 24%.

Unfortunately, the very significant increase in the number of voters and the high percentage of the electorate for the elected pair did not cause the number of public supports for the elected pair to reach 50% plus 1. Based on the number of voters for the Aditya-Riyadi candidate pair in the 2020 Pilbub, which amounted to 241,560 votes, the rate of community support was only about 25.6% of the total number of DPT. As the participation rate was below 50%, many people might think that the legitimacy was lacking because the majority of the community did not support the chosen pair.

Nevertheless, the increase in public participation by up to 24%, in the 2020 Tuban Pilbub, was certainly an extraordinary achievement for the Tuban Regency KPU. Moreover, the election was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several strategies carried out by the KPU to boost voter interest during the pandemic included: developing communication and technical strategies to encourage interest and providing convenience for voting, developing maximum online socialization by the organizers through the platforms of various forms of social media, offering incentive to voters by organizers through the provision of masks when voters come to polling stations, as a form of concern from the organizers to insure the health of each voter [18].

### **3.3. Community Participation in Regional Head Election in Lamongan Regency**

The 2020 Lamongan Pilkada constituted one of 224 elections for Regents-Vice Regents that were held in the 2020 simultaneous Regional Head Elections. Lamongan was also one of 19 regencies/cities in East Java Province that carried out such election. The election was held with 1,038,756 residents in the Permanent Voter List (DPT). The 2020 Lamongan Pilkada became a stage for the competition among 3 candidate pairs [Paslon {pasangan calon (candidate pair)}].

The results of the election of the Regional Head (Regent) of Lamongan showed that Dr. H. Yuhronur Efendi, MBA., and Drs. KH. Abdul Rouf received the highest vote, namely, 42.6%; meanwhile, the other two pairs received, respectively, 37.5% (Ir. H. Suhandoyo, SP., and Dra. Astiti Suwarni) and 19.9% (Dra. Hj. Kartika Hidayati, MM, M. HP., and Sa'im, S. Pd.).

In the 2020 Lamongan Regent election, as many as 804,561 people exercised their rights to vote, and they comprised about 77.6% of the total DPT [19]. In fact, this figure exceeded the national target for public participation in the 2020 simultaneous elections, which was 77.5%. When compared

with the number of voters in the previous Pilbub period, this number meant an increase in public participation in exercising their voting rights by 15%.

However, the increase in public participation did not generate support for the elected pair to reach 50% plus 1. Based on the results of the Pilbub released by the KPU of Kabupaten (Regency of) Lamongan, it was revealed that the number of supports obtained by the selected pair was 336,154 votes [20], or only about 32% of the total DPT. Therefore, as the rate of community support did not reach 50%, the legitimacy of the selected pair might be considered as lacking.

The increase in the number of voters in the 2020 Lamongan Pilbub must be appreciated, although it did not significantly increase the number of votes for the elected pair. This success was influenced by the success of the socialization and also the tight competition among the three contestants [21].

## 4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it was found that there were increases in community participations in the elections of Regional Heads (Regents) in Bojonegoro, Tuban and Lamongan Regencies, East Java Province. There were increases of public participations in the elections, namely, in Bojonegoro Regency by 8%, in Tuban Regency by 24%, and in Lamongan Regency by 15%.

However, even though there were increases in the number of people who exercised their rights to vote, from the perspectives of the elected pairs, whose legitimacy were manifested by the votes that they received, the supports were still very low, as no pair managed to accumulate 50% plus 1 vote. The proportions of people who supported the elected pairs comprised only 28% of the total DPT in Bojonegoro Regency, 25.6% of the total DPT in Tuban Regency, and 32% of the total DPT in Lamongan Regency. There was a concern that the number of community supports, which did not reach 50%, might reduce the legitimacy of the authority of the elected pairs; or, in other words, the elected pairs did not receive adequate public supports.

## 5. Recommendation

This research can be developed into a more in-depth analysis, through research in the field, about things that affect the level of election participation in each region in Indonesia. Some of the problems that cause the level of electoral participation to decline can be analyzed in more depth and can be used as input for the evaluation of upcoming election activities in Indonesia. In addition, further researches can also provide recommendations to anticipate and minimize problems that cause the level of election participation to decline.

## Abbreviations

Indonesian abbreviations (written in italics) used in this article:

Bawaslu: Badan Pengawas Pemilihan Umum: Election Supervisory Body

Coklit: Pencocokan dan Penelitian (tentang data pemilih): Matching and Research (on voter data)

Disdukcapil: Dinas Kependudukan dan Pencatatan Sipil: Agency for Population and Civil Registration

DP4: Daftar Penduduk Potensial Pemilih Pemilihan: List of Potential Electoral Voters

DPSHP: Daftar Pemilih Hasil Perbaikan: Improved Voter List

DPT: Daftar Pemilih Tetap: Permanent Voter List

Golput: Golongan Putih: Abstentionist Group

KPPS: Kelompok Penyelenggara Pemungutan: Voting Organizing Group

KPU: Komisi Pemilihan Umum: General Election Commission

KPUD: Komisi Pemilihan Umum Daerah: Regional Election Commission

KTP: Kartu Tanda Penduduk: Identity card

Pantarlilh: Panitia Pendaftaran Pemilih: Voter Registration Committee

Pilbup: Pemilihan Bupati: Regent Election

Pilkada: Pemilihan Kepala Daerah: Regional Head Election

PPDP: Petugas Pemutakhiran Data Pemilih: Voter Data Update Officer

PPK: Panitia Pemilihan Kecamatan: District Election Committee

PPS: Panitia Pemungutan Suara: Voting Committee

TPS: Tempat Pemungutan Suara: Voting place

WIB: Waktu Indonesia Barat: Western Indonesian Time.

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