

# Civic Engagement in Simultaneous Local Elections During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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## **Abstract**

*The spread of covid-19 is widespread throughout the world, including Indonesia. The covid-19 pandemic affects all aspects of life, including the political aspect. Indonesia held simultaneous regional elections in 2020 amid the covid-19 pandemic. The local elections are conducted with strict health protocols in accordance with government regulations. There is controversy with the election in the middle of the pandemic. Pandemic certainly affects the civic engagement of Indonesian people. This article wants to know the level of civic engagement in the community as voters in the local elections simultaneously in the middle of the Pandemic. The purpose of this article is also to see the impact of pandemics on citizen awareness. This study uses the method of library study approach with an qualitative descriptive method. In this study the data was obtained using primary data. The main data used are books related to the author's research focus, and previous research journals.*

Keywords: civic engagement; political participation; elections; pandemic covid-19.

## **Introduction**

The spread of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization since March 9, 2020. That is, the covid-19 virus has spread widely in the world including Indonesia. President Joko Widodo designated Covid-19 as a national

disaster through presidential decree No. 12 of 2020 concerning the Determination of Non-Natural Disasters spreading CORONA VIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19) as a National Disaster. Therefore, the implementation of regional head elections (regional elections) is postponed. The Electoral Commission (KPU) as the organizer

of the previous regional elections has chosen the postponement of the ongoing election stage by issuing Decree No. 179/PL.02-Kpt/01/KPU/III/2020.

The local elections should be held on September 23, 2020. After the postponement decision on March 30, 2020, Commission II of the House of Representatives, Mendagri, The Electoral Commission, Bawaslu and DKPP held a meeting whose agenda discussed the implementation of elections in 2020.

The postponement of the local elections did not last long. The issuance of legal certainty regulation on the implementation of local elections during the pandemic, namely with Perpu No. 2 of 2020 which is set to become Law No. 6 of 2020 marks the election during the pandemic. The local elections were finally held on December 9, 2020. The 2020 local elections are the fourth local democratic party based on the list of events, previously the first simultaneous elections were held in 2015, the second simultaneous elections in 2017 and the third simultaneous elections in 2018. In 2020, there are 270 districts that conduct the local elections covering 9 provinces 224 districts and 37 cities. With this amount means that 60% of regions in Indonesia conduct, the local elections.

The simultaneous local elections in 2020 will be held during the covid-19 period, which is spreading evenly throughout Indonesia, including in the regions that conduct the local elections. This makes the implementation of the local elections

different from the previous year. There are specificities and changes in the stages of implementation regulated in Election Commission Regulation No. 13 of 2020 concerning the Implementation of Elections of Governors and Deputy Governors, Regents and Deputy Regents, And/or Mayors and Deputy Mayors Simultaneously Continue In Non-natural Disaster Conditions Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) and Bawaslu Regulation No.4 Year 2020 on Supervision, Handling violations, and Dispute Resolution Elections of Governors and Deputy Governors, Regents and Deputy Regents, as well as Mayors and Deputy Mayors Simultaneously Continued in Non-Natural Disaster Conditions Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19).

In the process of organizing the elections during the pandemic there are 60 candidates who were declared positive for Covid-19 after conducting health tests as a condition of candidates (Sari, 2020). This is a problem according to KPU RI Member, Hasyim Asy'ari said that there are consequences for prospective candidates who are positive of COVID-19. Potentially the withdrawal of candidates from the schedule of paslon determination on September 23, 2020 (Kartika, 2020). Although it has been arranged that there are restrictions on the campaign because it is adapted to the conditions of the covid-19 pandemic, but the campaign stage is also prone to create crowds that can trigger the spread of covid-19. The important stage of voting and recapitulation of votes also opens up a room for a

decrease in voter participation (Supriyadi, 2020).

The definition of civic engagement means the duty or activity of a citizen voluntarily doing work for community service in the surrounding environment. The definition of civic engagement is a joint activity or activity that is often interpreted as a joint involvement in the form of citizen collaboration to improve local environmental conditions. Another definition emphasizes the political aspects of citizenship and means that civic engagement is not only an activity for the common good but also includes activities for the sake of individual interests in the political sphere. According to Putnam in analyzing the level of civic engagement includes many things that citizens do including reading articles in newspapers or magazines, political participation, social networks, and interpersonal trust to the association engagement (Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2018).

In this article will focus on civic engagement in the political aspect of political participation. Looking at the various issues mentioned above, the purpose of this article is to know the level of civic engagement awareness of Indonesian citizens in the frame of the 2020 Regional Elections. This article also looks at how the covid-19 pandemic affects the civic engagement of citizens

## **Method**

### *Setting and Participant*

This research is a study that uses literature study because the data is obtained through literature studies. Literature study is another term of literature review library review the theoretical literature review or literature study. What is meant literature research is research that is analyzed only based on writing, and also the results of research that has been published or that has not been published (Zed, 2008)

### *Data Collection*

The data obtained from reviewing the literature is analyzed in depth. The data source for this study is an accurate source of journals, proceedings, articles, and so on. The subject in this study was elections during the pandemic. The way to analyze the data in this literature is to use qualitative analysis. This means that analysis is described by comparing the journal results from previous research and existing data. Qualitative analysis is used because in the literature study there is a description data that compares and brings together the findings of the data that have been found. The data obtained will be analyzed. The steps in analyzing data are:

1. Data reduction

Data reduction is the process of selecting formulations and simplifying abstracting or transforming discussions that arise from records in conducting research. In this study the data obtained through interviews is then summarized and selected so

as to provide a clear picture for the author.

2. Presentation of data

Data presentation is a collection of transformations that are arranged so as to provide the possibility to draw conclusions and take action, after the data is fulfilled will be used in the form of systematic descriptions.

3. Verify conclusions

Drawing conclusions is a complete configuration activity conclusions are also verified in order to get conclusions in the form of the core of the results of research

### **Result and Discussion**

One of the main concepts in community civic is civic engagement which focuses on citizen involvement in various aspects of life. Civic Engagement in Indonesian is citizen of engagement. Civic engagement is narrowly defined as voluntary community service working in the local community, as something close to duty for all citizens. Civic Engagement is composed of two words namely: civic and engagement. In some sources of literature, the word civic is interpreted as citizen or nationality. Then an engagement is defined as work discipline-based engagement (coursework, research projects, internships, field jobs, clinical placements and so on) that occurs in non-academic communities (local, national, global) (Karliani, 2016).

With the above understandings, it can be interpreted that civic engagement is related to the

involvement of citizens, either individually or in groups with general or social issues. The concept of civic engagement is inseparable from democratic and political life. The use of the word "citizenship" is a citizen associated with involvement in democratic and political life. Civic engagement in this article is understood as how the level of involvement of citizens in the democratic and political aspects is simply in the participation of elections. While some experts assess the involvement of citizens of the country related to the conditions during the general election. To understand Civic Engagement as a common disposition among citizens that facilitates participation, is defined as contrary to the civil release, or political apathy. (Dahlgren, 2016).

Civic engagement in civil society is appropriate not only for the benefit of democracy, but also for individual development. Some experts argue that civic engagement has relevance to politics and civil society, arguing that democracy depends on the good functioning of both. "Civic Engagement" is sometimes used as a synonym for civic participation. What distinguishes engagement and participation according to Ekman and Amna distinguishes between real "political participation", which includes formal political behavior as well as extraparliamentary protests or political actions, and less direct or "latent" forms of participation, conceptualized as "civic engagement" and "social

engagement" (Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2018).

Based on this civic engagement can be interpreted by the actions of citizens, both individually and in groups related to participation in the existence of government policy making and the involvement of social activities. Civic engagement is divided into three major indicators, namely civic indicators, electoral indicators, and indicators of political voice (Keeter et al., 2002). Electoral indicators of its activities include: voting in general, inviting or persuading, contributions to campaigns and volunteers in political organizations. In this article civic engagement will focus on voting activities in the 2020 Regional Elections. The building democratic engagement is important in relation to a civic engagement. His involvement is described in the following figure (Karliani, 2016):

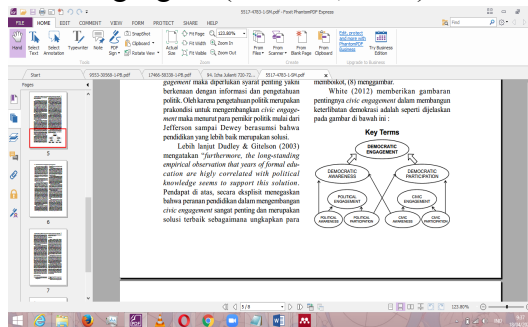


Figure 1. The Democratic Engagement

can be explained awareness and participation of citizens become a factor forming the civic engagement. The involvement of citizens is carried out sincerely based on initiative without any compulsion to involve themselves in an activity. Can be explained awareness and

participation of citizens become a factor forming the civic engagement. The involvement of citizens is carried out sincerely based on initiative without any compulsion to involve themselves in an activity.

### The Concept of Political Participation

Many notions of political participation. Here are some expert opinions on political participation. According to Herbert McClosky political participation is a voluntary activity conducted by the community in the form of them taking part in the election stage of the officials / rulers either directly or indirectly and participate in the process of policy formation. Political participation according to Ramlan Surbakti is the participation of citizens in decision-making that affects his life.

In relation to the developing world, Samuel P. Huntington and Joan Nelson interpreted widely by explicitly including violence and illegal acts. Political participation is a citizen's activity that personally, intends to influence the decisions made by the government. It can be individual or collective, organized or spontaneous, peacefully or by a use of force (Supriyadi, 2020). Thus the way of thinking about political participation, at least implicitly opened to the analysis of activities that include not only voting behavior, but also for example: demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, and other forms of protest behavior. Brady stressed that we should think of political participation, as a real and observable action or activity that

people take voluntarily. Both "people" mean ordinary citizens, not political elites or civil servants. Third, the concept refers to a deliberate attempt to influence people in power, to make a difference (Dahlgren, 2016).

Ramlan Surbakti categorizes political participation into two categories: active political participation and passive political participation. Active political participation is an activity in the form of proposing for problems or general policies, providing solutions to common policy problems, paying taxes, providing constructive criticism for a common policy and co-electing leaders. The opposite is passive political participation, in the form of accepting activities, obeying the government and just implementing government rules.

From various concepts of political participation can be concluded that political participation is an activity that is voluntarily carried out by individuals/ groups to play an active role in government decision making (policy) including active participation in voting in elections.

#### *Election Participation before Pandemic*

Before the covid-19 pandemic, the Indonesian state had conducted 3 simultaneous regional head elections in 2015, 2017 and 2018. Of the three elections, of course, the voter participation rate is volatile and unstable. Political participation in a democratic country is most easily seen from participation during a

democratic party (An election). A country whose democratic life is stable, usually the level of political participation does not change drastically and is very stable. This article will try to analyze the participation rate of local elections during three simultaneous local elections in Indonesia.

#### *The 2015 Local Elections*

A total of 269 districts consisting of 9 provinces, 224 districts and 36 cities held elections for governors, regents and mayors in 2015. Based on KPU data, in general the voter participation rate is lower than the target of only 64.23% whereas the target is 75.5% participation. There are areas where participation is low, and there are also areas with high participation. Some districts/cities with low participation are Surabaya with 52.18%; Tuban Regency with 52.25%; Regency of Serang with 50.48%; Medan with 26.88%; and Jember Regency with 52.19%. Some areas with high participation are as follows; North Konawe with 88.24%; Tomohon city with 88.4%; Central Mamuju Regency with 92.17%; West Papua with 89.92%; and Bolaang Mangondow East with 88.83%.

#### *The 2017 Local Elections*

In 2017, there were 101 regions that conducted local elections with details of 7 Provinces, 18 Cities and 76 Districts. The election takes place on Wednesday, December 15, 2017. Here are the regions that conducted the election:

Table 1. The Provinces that held elections in 2017

No.	Province	Number of TPS	Number of voters
1	Aceh	9.592	3.431.582
2	Bangka Belitung	2.698	915.853
3	DKI Jakarta	13.023	7.108.589
4	Banten	16.540	7.734.485
5	Gorontalo	1.979	791.129
6	Sulawesi Barat	432	136.765
7	Papua Barat	2.855	701.891

Table 2. The city that held elections in 2017

No.	City	Number of TPS	Number of voters
<b>Aceh Province</b>			
1	Banda Aceh	415	151.105

<b>Aceh</b>			
2	Lhokseumawe	210	126.694
3	Langsa	278	108.380
4	Sabang	65	24.634
<b>Sumatera Utara Province</b>			
5	Tebing Tinggi	289	106.940
<b>Sumatera Barat Province</b>			
6	Payakumbuh	210	84.329
<b>Riau Province</b>			
7	Pekanbaru	1.796	572.029
<b>Jawa Barat Province</b>			
8	Cimahi	980	375.722
9	Tasikmalaya	1.120	474.061
<b>Jawa Tengah Province</b>			
10	Salatiga	386	129.930
<b>DIY Province</b>			
11	Yogyakarta	794	298.989
<b>Jawa Timur Province</b>			

12	Batu	426	147.9 75
<b>NTT Province</b>			
13	Kupang	660	235.2 65
<b>Kalimantan Barat Province</b>			
14	Singkawan g	405	155.5 14
<b>Sulawesi Tenggara Province</b>			
15	Kendari	520	179.4 14
<b>Maluku Province</b>			
16	Ambon	675	237.6 27
<b>Papua Province</b>			
17	Jayapura	629	308.7 75
<b>Papua Barat Province</b>			
18	Sorong	420	158.1 21
<b>Lampung Province</b>			
2	Lampung Barat	533	214.64 8
<b>Tulang Bawang Province</b>			
3	Tulang Bawang	754	299.03 2
<b>Tulang Bawang Barat Province</b>			
4	Tulang Bawang Barat	553	197.26 3
<b>Pringsewu Province</b>			
5	Pringsewu	821	315.04 6
<b>Jawa Barat Province</b>			
6	Bekasi	3.958	1.974.8 31
<b>Jawa Tengah Province</b>			
7	Banarnega ra	1.742	777.95 7
<b>Batang Province</b>			
8	Batang	1.388	597.02 5
<b>Jepara Province</b>			
9	Jepara	1.805	858.95 8
<b>Pati Province</b>			
10	Pati	2.295	1.034.2 56
<b>Cilacap Province</b>			
11	Cilacap	3.217	1.466.8 69
<b>Brebes Province</b>			
12	Brebes	3.001	1.522.5 60
<b>DIY Province</b>			
13	Kulonprog o	937	332.21 1
<b>Bali Province</b>			

Table 3. The Districts that held elections in 2017

No.	District	Number of TPS	Number of voters
<b>Lampung Province</b>			
1	Mesuji	279	141.63 4



14	Buleleng	1.086	583.38 1
<b>NTT Province</b>			
15	Flores Timur	439	154.42 4
16	Lembata	226	72.415
<b>Kalimantan Barat Province</b>			
17	Landak	1.006	253.57 9
<b>Kalimantan Tengah Province</b>			
18	Barito Selatan	320 TPS	92.398
19	Kotawaringin Barat	591 TPS	176.56 5
<b>Kalimantan Selatan Province</b>			
20	Hulu Sungai Utara	697	158.62 9
21	Barito Kuala	608	218.95 1
<b>Sulawesi Utara Province</b>			
24	Bolaang Mongondow	346	167.55 1
25	Kepulauan Sangihe	299	105.19 3
<b>Sulawesi Selatan Province</b>			
26	Takalar	351	205.41 8
Gorontalo			
27	Boalemo	265	99.412
<b>Sulawesi Tenggara Province</b>			
28	Bombana	326	99.855
29	Kolaka Utara	340	93.026
30	Buton	213	71.527
31	Muna Barat	119	51.495
32	Buton Tengah	204	76.582
33	Buton Selatan	161	52.828
<b>Maluku Province</b>			
34	Seram Bagian Barat	398	147.52 2
35	Buru	259	94.688
36	Maluku Tenggara Barat	184	72.091
37	Maluku Tengah	623	311.13 6
<b>Papua Province</b>			
38	Nduga	421	94.071
39	Lanny Jaya	397	113.04 3

40	Sarmi	104	26.672	54	Aceh Jaya	183	60.672
41	Mappi	230	69.809	55	Bener Meriah	278	96407
42	Tolikara	582	216.261	56	Pidie	820	296.096
43	Kepulauan Yapen	264	104.319	57	Simeulue	180	55.635
44	Jayapura	348	132.094	58	Aceh Singkil	237	70.853
45	Intan Jaya	185	79.337	59	Bireun	708	298.718
46	Puncak Jaya	409	179.144	60	Aceh Barat Daya	250	102.338
47	Dogiyai	292	126.739	61	Aceh Tenggara	428	143.973
<b>Papua Barat Province</b>				62	Gayo Lues	245	63.529
48	Tambrauw	217	24.998	63	Aceh Barat	430	131.372
49	Maybrat	258	28.261	64	Nagan Raya	352	119.294
50	Sorong	385	85.899	65	Aceh Tengah	466	130.528
<b>Aceh Province</b>				66	Aceh Tamiang	610	186.050
51	Aceh Besar	802	255.335	<b>Sumatera Utara Province</b>			
52	Aceh Utara	1.051	420.480	67	Tapanuli Tengah	553	230.775
53	Aceh Timur	771	278.203				

<b>Sumatera Barat Province</b>			
68	Kepulauan Mentawai	228	52.436
<b>Riau Province</b>			
69	Kampar	1.323	480.96 7
<b>Jambi Province</b>			
70	Muaro Jambi	840	266.53 2
71	Sarolangun	586	190.94 0
72	Tebo	669	220.24 2
<b>Sumatera Selatan Province</b>			
73	Musi Banyuasin	1.464	464.90 9
74	Bengkulu Tengah	213	80.380
<b>Maluku Tenggara Province</b>			
75	Pulau Morotai	108	46.653
76	Halmahera Tengah	74	33.188

Public participation in the 2017 Regional Elections was around 75%. Of course this figure has increased compared to 2015 which is only 65-70% (Nugroho, 2017). Although the increase in voter participation still did not meet the KPU target of 77.5%.

#### *The 2018 Local Elections*

Simultaneous local elections in 2018 were held in 171 regions in Indonesia, covering 17 provinces, 115 districts and 39 cities. The participation target in 2018 is 77.5%, while the overall voter participation rate in the governor's election is 72.66% which is 69.90% male voters and 75.93% female voters. Furthermore, participation in the regent election percentage is 75.56%. The mayoral election, participation 73.82% (Nurita, 2018).

Awareness of volatile voter participation is seen from the 2015 Regional Elections, the 2017 Concurrent Elections and the 2018 Concurrent Elections. Participation rates change every year, in 2017 increased from 2015. While the participation rate in 2018 decreased compared to 2017.

#### *Election Participation during the Covid Pandemic*

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted almost every aspect of life around the world including Indonesia. The covid-19 pandemic also affects the election of regional heads. Local elections must still be held in the midst of the covid-19 pandemic with strict health protocols. Based on data from the KPU, the 2020 Regional Elections were held in 270 regions covering 9 provinces, 224 districts and 37 cities. As a result of the local elections, the KPU claimed voter participation increased by 7% from the 2015 local elections. In the 2020 election, voter participation was 76.09%. Participation in 2020 is even the

highest participation since the 2015 Regional Elections. Of course this is a positive thing considering that the elections are held during the covid-19 pandemic (Mashabi, 2021).

### *The Impact of Pandemic on Civic Engagement*

The covid-19 pandemic affects all areas of life including Civic engagement. In this article will review a civic engagement that focuses on awareness of citizen involvement in the 2020 Regional Elections. The influence of covid-19 is very visible in the 2020 Regional Elections.

The influence of covid-19 related to citizen awareness is seen in health protocols while at polling stations ( TPS ). Voters must adhere to these health protocols. There are 15 differences in polling station (TPS) during the Covid-19 pandemic, namely:

1. Wearing a Mask: Voters who come to the polling station (TPS) must wear a mask.
2. Measuring body temperature: Body temperature check is performed before entering the TPS.
3. Keep your distance: When at the polling station the voter must keep a distance with others at least 1 meter.
4. Hand washing: Before and after the TPS, the voter must wash their hands first at the handwashing place that is already available at the TPS.
5. Dry wipes: dry tissue is provided when in TPS.

6. Gloves: Voters will be given plastic gloves while at the TPS.
7. Stationery itself: Voters are required to bring their own stationery in the form of Pens for the presence of the list of present at the TPS.
8. Voter Settings: The arrival of voters to the TPS is scheduled so that the TPS is not full.
9. Special voting booths: There are special voting booths for voters who when coming to the polling station have a high body temperature, which is above 37.3 degrees Celsius.
10. Fixed Voter List (DPT) of TPS : The number of Fixed Voter Lists per TPS is set to a maximum of 500 DPT.
11. Personal Protective Equipment: KPPS uses personal protective equipment to be safe, namely masks, rubber gloves and face protectors.
12. Healthy Voting Organizing Group (KPPS): Voting Organizing Groups must follow health checks first.
13. TPS Disinfectant: There is disinfectant spraying in TPS.
14. Ink drops: In elections/elections before the pandemic, fingers are dipped in ink after exercising suffrage. But in elections during the pandemic, ink is given by drip to the finger.
15. No shaking hands: no shaking hands to avoid the spread of the covid-19 virus.

Many new things related to health protocols that must be applied in polling station (TPS). Related to voter participation in the 2020 Regional Elections, which is 76.09%.

The participation rate is highest when compared to the previous Concurrent Elections in 2015, 2017 and 2018. According to the KPU statement, this increase in voter participation is a sign of the success of the socialization strategy conducted by KPU. KPU socializes with online and offline media. This is very good considering the increase in voter participation rate by 7% from the 2015 Regional Elections

### Conclusion

The influence of the covid-19 pandemic on aspects of life is inevitable. Aspects of democracy are also affected by the covid-19 pandemic. In Indonesia in the aspect of democracy that is most affected is the implementation of democratic parties, namely the 2020 Regional Elections. Adaptation is needed in order for local elections to continue. Based on the results of adaptation research conducted in Indonesia in the form of strict health protocols in the stage of organizing elections. The stages of organizing elections during the pandemic are regulated in Election Commission Regulation No. 13 of 2020 concerning the Implementation of Elections for Governors and Deputy Governors, Regents and Deputy Regents, And/or Mayors and Deputy Mayors Simultaneously Continued In Non-Natural Disaster Conditions Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19).

Based on the results of this study, it appears that the level of civic engagement reviewed from political participation during the

2020 Regional Elections has increased. The increase was seen from a 7% increase in voter participation from the 2015 election to 76.09%. The increase is a good impact. It can be concluded that the level of civic engagement of citizens in elections during the Covid-19 pandemic is high. Awareness of citizens to implement health protocols in polling stations on polling day on December 9, 2020 is also high. This is certainly a positive achievement from various parties, both election organizers, namely KPU, Bawaslu and DKPP as well as citizens as voters. The author's advice, it is necessary to conduct further research to find out the contributing factors to the high civic engagement during the Simultaneous Elections during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The results of this study can be a reference for further research.

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