

Conference Paper

Local Elections in the Social Media Era (Socialization of Local Election through Social Media for Beginner Voters by Garut Regency Election Commission in 2018 Regional Election)

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Abstract

The low voter turnout in the Regional Elections (Pilkada) in Garut Regency in 2008 and 2013, made the Pilkada take place in two rounds. This happened because of a lack of awareness of voters to vote. This situation was then followed up by the Regional Election Commission (KPUD) of Garut Regency by using social media for socialization, especially for beginner voters among students.

In this regard, a study is needed to identify factors that influence KPUD in socializing 2018 regional elections for beginner voters, as well as how the challenges faced in utilizing social media. This study was conducted through qualitative descriptive approach to identify existing challenges and to understand the factors that influence the use of social media by KPUD as methods for socializing the local elections. Data collection techniques were conducted through interviews to seven informants and seven month observations of research.

The results revealed that the challenge of using social media in the local elections was the low level of digital literacy of beginner voters and account administrators of KPUD because the content was not managed specifically and routinely. The use of social media on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube contain informative content in the form of socialization activities but has not led to a message of persuasion to novice voters.

Keywords: Social Media, Election Socialization, Beginner Voters

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1. Introduction

Election (General Election) is an election process carried out by the people to determine their people's representatives in occupying certain positions. There are several types of elections in Indonesia including the Presidential Election (Pilpres), Legislative Elections (Pileg), and Election of Regional Heads (Pilkada) held every five years. In the implementation of this election, political participation from the community is needed. Michael

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Rush and Philip Althoff (Ratnamulyani & Maksudi, 2018) identify forms of political participation, namely: (a) occupying political or administrative positions; (b) seeking political or administrative positions; (c) become an active member in a political organization; (d) become a passive member in a political organization; (e) become a passive member in a semi-political organization; (f) become an active member in a semi-political organization; (g) participation in general meetings, demonstrations, etc.; (h) participation in internal political discussions; and (i) participation in voting.

The problem that often arises is low voter participation. Based on Perludem's data in 2014, that in the 2014 legislative and presidential elections there were 43% of voters in the beginning voters and the low participation of voters due to a lack of political awareness of voters to exercise their voting rights due to lack of political education for beginner voters (Lestari & Arumsari, 2018). Thus, the conduct of a conducive Pilkada is inseparable from the effectiveness of information provided by the organizing committee through appropriate methods of socialization, wherein the context of the digital era social media use is one of the appropriate means of targeting political understanding of voters, especially beginner voters.

According to Law No. 10 of 2008 concerning General Elections, what is meant by voters is an Indonesian citizen who is even 17 years or older or has/had been married. Whereas beginner voters are people who have fulfilled the requirements to vote and have only used their right to vote for the first time. Beginner voters are usually students or students aged 17-21 years or other groups who will first use their voting rights in elections that in the previous period have not even reached the age of 17 years (KPU, 2010).

Based on research conducted by the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), it shows that 60.6% of generation Z or young people born in 1995-2005 access news related to politics through social media, which shows that social media has a major influence on political choice in young generation (Setyowati, 2018). And related to the use of digital media, digital literacy skills are needed. Digital literacy involves more than the mere ability to use software or operate a digital device. A new conceptual framework for the concept of digital literacy, incorporating five types of literacy: (a) photovisual literacy; (b) reproduction literacy; (c) information literacy; (d) branching literacy; and (e) socio-emotional literacy. (Eshet-Alkalai, 2004).

Concerning the digital era, where almost all aspects of modern society use information technology, the Garut Regency Election in 2018 also uses information technology as a solution to overcome the problem of low voter participation in regional elections, especially to encourage the political participation of beginner voters. This is as directed

by the Head of Sub-Directorate of Government Institution Facilitation and Ministry of Home Affairs Representative Dedi Taryadi that the dissemination of information related to the Election is currently focused on the younger generation who will become beginner voters where special methods are needed in socializing the election to novice voters who are not necessarily open meetings or activities in one room. In the digital era that is already very mobile, then through social media, information can be conveyed to beginner voters (Rachman, 2018).

Based on data from the Garut Regency Election Commission, the implementation of the elections in 2008 and 2013 was carried out in two rounds due to the low participation of voters, as in the following table:

TABLE 1: Number of Voters in Garut Regency Election in 2008 and 2013

No	Year	Election round	Number of Voters	Using Voting Rights	Not Using Voting Rights	Percentage of Voters
1	2008	1	1.581.504	1.040.007	541.497	66.3%
		2	1.583.659	985.898	597.761	62.3%
2	2013	1	1.767.593	1.145.987	614.143	65.11%
		2	1.767.593	1.071.523	688.607	60.88%

Source: Garut Regency Election Commission 2018

Thus, information literacy is an important part in the use of social media as a means of communication and political socialization. However, with regard to the characteristics of voters in Garut Regency which are mostly rural people, a study is needed that can identify any challenges and how the process of utilizing social media conducted by Garut Regency Election Commission in the socialization of the 2018 elections, considering internet users based on rural characteristics only 48.25% (APJII, 2017). As well as the results of research related to media use behavior in rural communities in Garut, it shows that the intensity of the use of internet media in rural communities is only at level 2 ie only a few are able to use the internet (Raturahmi, 2018).

To be able to find out how the ability of the Election Commission of Garut Regency in facing the challenges of socializing Pilkada on social media in the digital era, the scale of the media used in this study using scores 1-6, according to the scale of response measurement for the media proposed by Worsnop (1996) where the scale of each performance level is explained as follows: Level 1 does not understand; Level 2 does not meet expectations; Level 3 consistently meets expectations; Level 4 usually meets expectations; Level 5 consistently meets and sometimes exceeds expectations and Level 6 consistently exceeds expectations. (Juditha, 2013).

Based on the background of the research, several problems can be identified, as follows:

1. What are the challenges faced by the Garut Regency Election Commission in utilizing social media for the 2018 Pilkada socialization activities?
2. How is the implementation of the election socialization through the use of social media by the Garut Regency Election Commission?

2. Method

The study was designed with a qualitative descriptive method to collect data and facts about the process of utilizing social media carried out by the Garut Regency Election Commission and explained the challenges faced in socializing the elections through this social media. The study was conducted for seven months, in which the research data was collected through in-depth interviewing techniques to four Garut Regency Election staff and three voters representing the criteria of novice voters with differing backgrounds as farmworkers, students, and private employees. Observations were made in the process of managing the situation and the use of social media accounts by the social media admin of the Garut Regency Election Commission. As well as literature studies carried out to obtain secondary data relating to the development of communication and information technology, and various concepts and theories that provide an understanding of the use of media in political activities. The validity of the data is examined through data source triangulation techniques to political communication experts.

3. Discussion

Some stages of communication carried out by KPU Garut Regency include situation analysis, strategies (planning and programming), implementation (actions and communication), and evaluation. Through this research, the results of the readiness of the Election Commission of Garut Regency are faced with challenges and factors that influence the use of social media as a means of socializing 2018 regional elections, namely:

3.1. Voter Participation

To increase voter participation, the Garut Regency Election Commission has a strategy so that voters are willing to be involved in the success of the Garut regional election in 2018. Based on the forms of political participation proposed by Rush and Althoff, this socialization activity is to increase voter participation in voting. The initial step taken by the KPU is to search for data where it is found that most voters are students. The situation analysis carried out by the Garut Regency Election Commission starts from registering the voters as the basis for setting targets in the communication strategy carried out by the Garut Regency Election Commission. Concerning voters spread in Garut Regency, the socialization program is then adjusted to the target group and forms of socialization media that are appropriate for beginner voters.

Related to the communication strategy in this case socialization to voters, to further socialize the 2018 simultaneous local elections to the people of Garut, KPU Garut Regency also held various socialization activities. In general, there are six methods of socialization carried out by KPU Garut Regency in the form of face-to-face socialization, socialization through mass media, public relations, media centers, and social media, events, as well as through dissemination of socialization materials, and socialization through election ambassadors. All methods of socialization are adjusted to HR readiness, and operational costs are suitable for the condition of Garut regency. Informants from the Garut Regency Election Commission stated that they could not reach the voters as a whole, but could only invite the nodes and hope that the information they had obtained could be disseminated again.

Therefore, taking into account the people who are in the digital era, the Election Commission of Garut Regency uses internet media to socialize through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. The use of this social media application is because social media has a broad reach, and is cheaper and more attractive than using promotional media through banners, baligo, and other outdoor publication media. This also takes into account the large number of students who on average have used internet media to find information and interact through various social media applications. The use of this social media is a means for KPUDs to build political communication and political participation that are more dynamic to beginner voters.

In addition, it is also known that the majority of novice voters do not have the readiness to make a choice because they do not know the candidate for the Garut Regent, and there is a factor in distrust regarding the changes that occur when choosing in the regional election. So based on the lack of knowledge and awareness of the political

rights of the beginner voters, Garut Regency Election Commission encourages political education through the use of social media to inform the importance of using suffrage in elections by socializing: (1) Vision and mission and track record of candidates for regional heads. (2) Administrative requirements as voters. (3) Election concept, and (4) Pilkada election schedule and activities.

Pilkada socialization is a political communication activity, so in this communication activity, there are communicators, media, and political messages. The three communication components can influence the success of election socialization by paying attention to how to package messages on social media to attract the attention of voters as communicants. Social media was chosen as a means of socializing local elections to attract the attention of beginner voters who tend to like short and interesting messages. And this can be effective to socialize the program, vision, and mission of the candidate, as well as important information relating to administrative requirements that must be met if you want to vote on polling day. KPUD provides a brief socialization room on the vision and mission of the candidates so that voters have a picture of the program that will be implemented by prospective regional heads. Besides, the contents of the socialization message aimed at students in social media are packaged with short, colorful sentences, using animated images, and considering the cultural background of the novice voters who are from a Sundanese cultural background. This is consistent with the characteristics of young people who like interesting and up-to-date things.

Referring to the conducive election results (Maysagita, 2014), the appropriate communication strategy is one of the main factors in voting for voters to participate in voting where in this study, the effective communication strategy for beginner voters is to recognize the message audience, drafting and the determination of the method of socialization through social media so as to produce a garut regional election that is conducive and able to encourage beginner voters to exercise their right to vote

3.2. The Challenge of Using Social Media by the Garut Regency Election Commission

The decision to use social media is certainly influenced by certain factors and also accompanied by challenges in the use of social media. The results of the research found in this study include:

1. The contents of the socialization message are still considered less attractive and not quite persuasive by the beginner voters.

Based on interviews with informants, it is known that informants only pay attention to the contents of the message at a glance but are not very fond because the display is boring and uninteresting, although it is acknowledged that the contents of the message are quite informative about things that beginner voters must pay attention to. This also shows that in accordance with the characteristics of the Z generation of young people, they prefer to access information through social media and the information they get gives a major influence on their political preferences in voting.

2. Low and irregular frequency of message impressions.

Based on the results of observations it is known that the admin of social media accounts displays material, not regularly. Content material is created and aired based on content that is not much different from printed publications outside the material. While on the video show material, it covers coverage of KPUD activities which are then aired on YouTube and Instagram. Although the Election Commission has cooperated with several programs of Garut to encourage voter participation, it does not significantly increase the frequency of message delivery because the average program only posts 1 time on content that is socialized in the election.

3. There are still novice voters who do not know there is socialization through social media.

Based on the conceptual framework of digital literacy, there is a problem in the information literacy element of social media users that they use social media not to search for information but to seek entertainment. This also shows that according to APJII 2017 data, where the people of Garut Regency have characteristics of rural communities who are not fully internet users, that is, many of them are still searching for information through the mainstream mass media, not through the internet.

Therefore, it takes a skill in the use of social media, especially for the younger generation, because there is a possibility of misinterpretation of the content of messages in social media, and this is related to information literacy in the context of digital literacy as stated by Eshet-Alkalai. This shows that on the aspect of media literacy, especially on the use of social media, both communicators and communicants are only able to show little interaction with the content of messages on social media, especially those related to political messages, and do not show commitment to messages characterized by low frequency and response to message.

4. Conclusion

The conclusions of this study are:

1. In utilizing this social media, the Garut Regency Election Commission considers things that are in accordance with the background of the Sundanese culture of the voters and the characteristics of the message that the communicant likes by packing interesting and concise messages containing information about the administration of elections, voting time, conditions for choose, and a brief vision and mission offered by the regent candidate. However, the contents of messages in the media are only informative and have not led to persuasive messages.

2. There are several challenges faced in the use of social media, including message content, frequency of use, and low media literacy skills, especially in digital media that show levels that do not meet expectations, where there are little interaction and low commitment to the content of media messages.

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