Strategy of the General Election Commission of Mandailing Natal Regency in Socializing the 2024 General Election

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Abstract

This study focuses on the challenges in socializing the 2024 General Election in Mandailing Natal Regency, influenced by the diverse geography, ranging from coastal to mountainous regions. This creates accessibility issues, especially in remote areas, requiring extra time and cost and having limited infrastructure. The research aims to analyze the strategies the General Election Commission (KPU) implemented in socializing the 2024 General Election and the barriers faced. Based on Chandler's theory (2015), the results show that the KPU's strategies have been effective, with volunteer programs involving religious communities, such as Islamic boarding schools. The appropriate actions also contribute to increasing public understanding of the election process. However, resource allocation presents a challenge, as evidenced by Adhoc Committee members' lack of emotional attachment, not having strong ties to the organization, limited funding, and insufficient understanding among Adhoc members. More intensive training is needed to address these challenges.

Keywords: Strategy; General Election; Socialization

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INTRODUCTION

Democracy is a form of government in which all citizens have the equal right to make decisions that can change their lives (Alav, 2016; Dahl & Zainuddin, 2001; Zaini, 2018). General elections are the process by which people are elected to a particular political office (Jurdi, 2018; Perbawa, 2014; Wardhani, 2018). These positions vary from president and parliamentarians at various levels of government to village heads. Elections are one of the efforts to influence the public persuasively (not coercively) through rhetorical activities, public relations, mass communication, lobbying, and other activities. Soedarsono (2010) states, "General elections are the minimum requirement for democracy, and the goal is the election of parliamentarians, regional representatives, and presidents to form a democratic government."

The General Election Commission is a government agency that organizes general elections in Indonesia. Rizkiyansyah (2007) also explained that the General Election Commission (KPU) is a special institution regulating Indonesia's election process. Based on the mandate of the 1945 Constitution, the General Election Commission is a special body that organizes national, permanent, and independent general elections. Although agitation and propaganda are strongly criticized in democracies, candidates or politicians in election campaigns often use agitation and propaganda techniques as a means of political communication.

In 2024, simultaneous elections will be held referring to Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 10 of 2016 concerning the second amendment to Law Number 1 of 2015 concerning the stipulation of government regulations instead of Law Number 1 of 2014 concerning the election of Governors, Regents, and Mayors. The election of the Regional Head will be held on November 27, 2024, and the legislative election will be held on February 14, 2024. Simultaneous elections are held because Indonesia is a democratic country where the country requires its people to choose their leaders by voting.

General problems in socializing the 2024 Election in Mandailing Natal Regency include geography with diverse topography, ranging from coastal areas to mountains that are difficult to reach. This causes accessibility to be a significant obstacle in socializing elections, especially in remote areas that require extra time and cost to achieve; the existence of limited infrastructure, such as damaged roads and lack of communication facilities, makes it difficult to disseminate information evenly (Fahrudin, 2013; Hajad, 2016; Subiakto, 2015). Affecting the effectiveness of the delivery of socialization materials to the community, the existence of varying levels of education and low political literacy in some communities lead to a lack of understanding of the importance of participation in elections.

Minimal political education also affects the reception of information delivered by the KPU; the lack of access to information does not mean all citizens have adequate access to mass media or the internet, which is a means of disseminating election information (Cahyani, 2019; D. Dumitrescu, 2016; Y. Miaz, 2012). This requires the KPU to find other, more effective alternatives that can reach all levels of society. Language barriers are obstacles, especially in areas that use regional languages as everyday language. The local population sometimes does not understand the socialization material delivered in Indonesian.

The Indonesian state held simultaneous elections for the first time in history. For this reason, election laws must be able to facilitate the implementation of elections because the 2024 elections will require sufficient costs and human resources as well as appropriate government programs to make the 2024 simultaneous elections a success (Arrsa, 2016; Pirmansyah et al., 2023). This

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simultaneous election is expected to stabilize the wheels of government. In contrast, the previous year, the election of leader candidates was different from the region and from year to year, so it is considered one of the reasons for influencing the government.

This study aims to analyze the strategy of the General Election Commission (KPU) of Mandailing Natal Regency in socializing the 2024 general election and identify the factors inhibiting this strategy. Based on a literature review, election socialization strategies have been widely studied previously, focusing on various contexts and methods used.

Dewi Sri Lestari's research (2020) shows the success of the KPU's collaboration with democracy volunteers and community organizations in increasing political participation. Instead, Ichwan (2002) and Azis (2023) highlighted the importance of formulating long-term strategies, including using social media and establishing Election Smart Houses. These studies provide a relevant conceptual framework for this study to understand the formulation of strategies, selection of actions, and resource allocation by the KPU of the Mandailing Natal Regency.

The framework of this research is based on Chandler's (1994) theory, which identifies strategy formulation as long-term goals, action selection, and resource management as key elements in the success of socialization programs. Through these indicators, this study not only seeks to identify the strategies implemented but also explores obstacles that arise from an internal perspective, such as limited human resources and budget allocation, and externally, such as low political awareness of the community. With this approach, this research is expected to make a new contribution to optimizing the KPU's strategy in socializing the 2024 election in Mandailing Natal.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this study is a qualitative approach with a descriptive type. The qualitative approach aims to deeply understand phenomena by collecting holistic data and describing the subject's behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and actions in a natural context. As explained by Sugiyono (2015), descriptive research seeks to provide a systematic, actual, and accurate picture of the facts and relationships between observed phenomena. In this context, the study aims to analyze the General Election Commission's (KPU) strategy of Mandailing Natal Regency in socializing the 2024 general election and its inhibiting factors.

The data sources of this study include primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through direct observation and interviews with key, main, and additional informants selected based on their involvement and knowledge of the KPU strategy. The primary informants include the Chairman of the Mandailing Natal Regency KPU, the commissioner of the voter education socialization division, community participation, and the technical division of the implementation. Additional informants include local communities to enrich the perspective of the research. Secondary data in the form of official documents, report records, and archives relevant to the KPU program.

The data collection process involves observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation is used to observe the KPU's socialization activities directly and record phenomena and interactions. Structured interviews are used to gather in-depth information from informants, while documentation complements the data through historical records, activity reports, and visual materials related to election socialization. Observation techniques allow researchers to understand strategies directly, while interviews provide constructive data to explain strategies and obstacles faced.

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Data analysis is carried out through several stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions drawn. The collected data is analyzed by summarizing it, focusing on important things, and looking for relevant patterns and themes. Data reduction helps researchers filter out significant information, while data presentation is done narratively to facilitate understanding of the relationship between variables. Finally, conclusions are drawn based on data analysis verified with relevant theories.

In the final stage, the researcher drew conclusions that answered the formulation of the research problem, namely how the strategy of the Mandailing Natal KPU in socializing the election and the obstacles faced. Data verification is carried out to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the findings. With this approach, the research not only provides a comprehensive overview of the KPU's strategy but also presents practical recommendations to improve the effectiveness of election socialization programs in the future. This systematic analysis is expected to make a theoretical and practical contribution to understanding and optimizing the role of the KPU in increasing public participation in elections.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Strategy of the General Election Commission of Mandailing Natal Regency in Socializing the 2024 General Election

General problems in socializing the 2024 election in Mandailing Natal Regency include geography with diverse topography, ranging from coastal areas to mountains that are difficult to reach. This causes accessibility to be a significant obstacle in socializing elections, especially in remote areas that require extra time and cost to achieve; the existence of limited infrastructure, such as damaged roads and lack of communication facilities, makes it difficult to disseminate information evenly, which affects the effectiveness of the delivery of socialization materials to the community. To find out the informant's response to how the results of the Mandailing Natal Regency General Election Commission in socializing the 2024 general election, in this case, the author analyzes using the theory Chandler (1994) as follows:

Formulation and Long-Term Goals

Clarity in the preparation of the Mandailing Natal Regency KPU strategy can be seen from the formulation of long-term goals that consider the objectives of the implementation of socialization, program goals, and the identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Mr. Muhammad Ikhsan Matondang, Chairman of the Mandailing Natal Regency KPU, stated that the program was designed to increase awareness and educate the public as voters. This reflects the KPU's efforts to prioritize inclusive political education.

The Commissioner of the KPU Division of Socialization, Voter Education, and Community Participation, Mr. Ilu Prima Sagara, added that limited time and the ability to reach the community are the main challenges. Therefore, the Mandailing Natal KPU compiles a priority scale based on community conditions to ensure the effectiveness of the program's implementation.

The Commissioner of the Technical Division of Implementation, Mr. Muhammad Yasir Nasution, explained that the religious people of Madina are the primary consideration in the socialization strategy. This is evidenced by a religious-based approach, such as socialization programs involving Islamic boarding schools. Another target is novice voters, as conveyed by Mr. Muhammad Rizky Lubis, who revealed that the KPU conducts socialization in high school schools to bring the election closer to the younger generation.

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In addition, Mr. Ibrahim Lubis, one of the community leaders, emphasized the importance of highlighting aspects of strong family customs and ceremonies in Madina. This approach is an effective formula for conveying socialization messages to the wider community.

In conclusion, the Mandailing Natal Regency KPU's socialization strategy for the 2024 election has been prepared by considering the community's various social, cultural, and religious aspects. This priority-based approach demonstrates the strategy's effectiveness in reaching various segments of society, although challenges still exist.

Action Selection

The General Election Commission (KPU) of Mandailing Natal Regency adopted various socialization methods to reach different segments of voters and make the 2024 General Election a success. Direct approach to the community is one of the primary methods, as explained by the Chairman of the KPU, Mr. Muhammad Ikhsan Matondang. This socialization is carried out through direct interaction and the implementation of election-themed events to increase public awareness.

Mr. Ilu Prima Sagara, Commissioner of the Socialization Division, added that various methods are used to attract public interest, such as face-to-face meetings and the distribution of brochures, attributes, mascots, and door prizes. This approach creates a more attractive atmosphere and encourages voter enthusiasm. In addition, Mr. Muhammad Yasir Nasution, Commissioner of the Technical Division of Implementation, explained that the targeted segments include the general public, college students, and high school students, with methods tailored for each group.

Another approach was explained by the local community, such as Mr. Muhammad Rizky Lubis, who mentioned that the KPU also interacts through people's party events to educate the public about the importance of using voting rights and correct election procedures. In addition, according to Mr. Ibrahim Lubis, methods through electronic and print media are also used despite facing obstacles such as the elderly group's lack of understanding.

Based on this interview, Mandailing Natal KPU's socialization strategy has been carried out well through various creative and collaborative methods. The direct approach, use of media, and organization of events support socialization's success. However, challenges such as lack of understanding among the elderly remain a concern that needs to be addressed to ensure socialization's inclusivity. This strategy is expected to increase voter participation in the 2024 election.

Resource Allocation

The General Election Commission (KPU) of Mandailing Natal Regency uses various socialization methods to reach multiple segments of voters to make the 2024 General Election successful. One of the primary methods is a direct approach to the community, as revealed by the Chairman of the KPU, Mr. Muhammad Ikhsan Matondang, who stated that socialization is carried out through direct interaction and the organization of election-themed events to increase public awareness.

According to Mr. Ilu Prima Sagara, Commissioner of the Socialization Division, efforts to attract public interest are carried out through the face-to-face distribution of brochures, attributes, mascots, and door prizes. This step aims to create a more attractive atmosphere to encourage people to use their voting rights. Meanwhile, Mr. Muhammad Yasir Nasution, Commissioner of the Technical Division of Implementation, explained that the socialization target includes the general public and high school students, with methods adapted for each group.

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Another approach, as explained by Mr. Muhammad Rizky Lubis, involves participation in people's party events to bring the community closer to the election process and provide education on the correct election procedures. In addition, according to Mr. Ibrahim Lubis, the socialization method through electronic and print media is also applied, although there are obstacles such as the elderly community's lack of understanding.

Based on the interview, Mandailing Natal KPU's socialization strategy is effective because it combines various creative and collaborative methods. A hands-on approach, media use, and participation in community events have supported the success of this effort. However, challenges such as lack of understanding in older age groups need to be addressed more seriously to ensure socialization inclusivity. This strategy is expected to increase public participation in the 2024 election.

Obstacles to the Strategy of the Mandailing Natal Regency General Election Commission in Socializing the 2024 General Election

Obstacles in implementing the General Election Commission (KPU) of Mandailing Natal Regency to socialize the 2024 General Election were revealed through the statements of several speakers. Based on the interview results, the public's perception of political activities is one of the main obstacles conveyed by Mr. Muhammad Ikhsan Matondang, Chairman of the Mandailing Natal Regency KPU. He explained that people tend to associate political activities with money-orientation. This makes it difficult to distinguish between the role of election organizers, who are supposed to be neutral, and election participants. This condition causes misunderstandings and reduces public trust in election organizers.

On the other hand, Mr. Ilu Prima Sagara, Commissioner of the KPU Division of Socialization, Voter Education, Community Participation, and Human Resources, added that the cultural approach is one of the strategies to overcome this obstacle. He emphasized the importance of using time effectively and efficiently to convey relevant information to the public. The cultural approach provides a personal touch and improves public perception of the KPU as an institution that carries out independent duties in the election process. This effort is expected to increase public participation, especially among novice voters who are strategic targets in the socialization program.

Based on this statement, the main obstacle in the socialization strategy of the Mandailing Natal Regency KPU is the public's perception of the difference between the organizers and election participants. This perception is influenced by the experience of people who often see politics as a money-oriented arena. To overcome this challenge, the KPU implements a culture-based approach strategy designed to create better relationships with the community through personalized communication and respect for local wisdom.

This strategy also includes efficient use of time. The KPU focuses its efforts on segments of society that are considered strategic, such as novice voters. This move aims to change public perceptions and encourage their active involvement in the electoral process. With this approach, the KPU hopes to better understand the public's role as voters and the importance of participation in determining the future of democracy.

However, these obstacles show that continuous efforts are still needed to improve political education in the community. The socialization program designed to answer misperceptions and build public trust in election organizers is an essential step in ensuring the success of the 2024 elections. Thus, the efforts made

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by the Mandailing Natal Regency KPU not only impact voter participation but also strengthen democracy as a whole.

CONCLUSION

The strategy of the General Election Commission (KPU) of Mandailing Natal Regency in socializing the 2024 Election faces several challenges, such as diverse geographical conditions and limited infrastructure. However, the KPU has formulated clear long-term goals, including raising public awareness and political education, considering local communities' strengths, weaknesses, and potential. A religious, customary-based approach and a focus on novice voters is a priority in the socialization strategy. The KPU also adopts various methods, such as direct interaction, distribution of brochures, people's party events, and print and electronic media. Although effective in attracting the public's attention, obstacles such as lack of understanding among older people remain challenging. Overall, this strategy is expected to increase voter participation in the 2024 election by accommodating various segments of society and overcoming existing obstacles.

The main obstacle in the socialization strategy for the 2024 Election by the Mandailing Natal Regency KPU lies in the perception of the public who associate politics with money, which obscures the role of election organizers as neutral parties. This leads to misunderstandings and reduces trust in the KPU. To overcome this challenge, the KPU applies a more personal culture-based approach that respects local wisdom. This approach aims to improve public perception and increase participation among first-time voters. The KPU also uses time efficiently by focusing on strategic segments. Although there are obstacles in political understanding, this step is expected to improve political education and build public trust so that public participation in the 2024 election can be higher and democracy is stronger.

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