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Serang Regency General Election Commission Socialization Level of First-Time Voter Participation in the 2024 Legislative Election Case Study of the Serang Regency General Election Commission Office

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the form and implementation of outreach activities conducted by the Serang Regency General Elections Commission (KPU) in preparation for the 2024 Legislative Elections. The study uses a normative method combined with an empirical approach, including interviews with KPU officials and field data collection. The study focuses on the effectiveness of outreach strategies, both directly through the "KPU Goes to School" program and indirectly through social media and digital content. Research findings indicate that the outreach strategy implemented by the Serang Regency General Elections Commission (KPU) has adapted to technological developments and the communication patterns of the younger generation. The use of digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube has proven effective in engaging first-time voters. However, several challenges remain, including budget constraints, lack of support from some schools, and unequal access to digital infrastructure across the region. Factors supporting the effectiveness of the outreach program include regulations from the central government, the active involvement of democracy volunteers, and established collaborations with several schools. The tangible impact of this outreach strategy is evident in the increased participation rate of first-time voters, which reached 71% of the total number of first-time voters on the Serang Regency Permanent Voter List (DPT). This achievement demonstrates that an approach tailored to the characteristics of the younger generation can encourage their more active involvement in the democratic process. Based on the research findings, it is recommended that the General Elections Commission (KPU) conduct regular evaluations of its outreach methods, increase the capacity of democracy volunteers, and strengthen collaboration with educational institutions and digital communities. Furthermore, increasing budget allocation and providing adequate technological infrastructure are also important considerations to ensure more inclusive and high-quality political participation among first-time voters in the future.

Keywords: Election Socialization, Serang Regency KPU, First-Time Voters

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INTRODUCTION

General elections (Pemilu) are the primary instrument in a democratic system for realizing popular sovereignty. The quality of democracy is determined not only by professional election organizers but also by the level of public participation as voters. In Serang Regency, one of the biggest challenges in the 2024 Legislative Elections is increasing the participation of first-time voters, namely the younger generation exercising their right to vote for the first time. Low levels of political literacy, apathy towards political issues, and limited knowledge about election mechanisms often lead to suboptimal participation by first-time voters(Sugiwa et al., 2016). The Serang Regency General Elections Commission (KPU), as the election organizer, plays a strategic role in providing political outreach and education to first-time voters(Rahyu et al., 2025). These efforts are crucial for ensuring that young people understand that their votes have a significant impact on the direction of policy and national development. Through innovative outreach programs, the KPU is expected to build political awareness, foster a sense of responsibility, and minimize the potential for white

ballots (golput) among first-time voters. Thus, outreach activities are a determining factor in creating more participatory and inclusive elections(Vonna & Abyan, 2024).

However, the reality on the ground shows that various obstacles remain. The lack of interest among first-time voters in participating in outreach activities, the limited communication media suited to the characteristics of the younger generation, and the influence of conflicting information on social media present serious challenges for the Serang Regency General Elections Commission (KPU). Therefore, a more creative, adaptive, and needs-based outreach strategy is needed to increase their participation in the 2024 Legislative Elections and contribute to strengthening democracy in Indonesia(Barokah et al., 2022).

General elections (Pemilu) are a vehicle for realizing popular sovereignty in a democratic country like Indonesia. In a democratic political system, active public involvement at every stage of the election is the primary foundation for the legitimacy of power and the formation of a government that reflects the will of the people(Rantau, 2019). Therefore, encouraging increased public participation, particularly among first-time voters, is a crucial factor in ensuring the success of the 2024 Legislative Elections(Pimus Fransiskus Loda Bhera et al., 2025).

First-time voters are citizens who are eligible to vote for the first time, generally aged 17 to 21. This group holds significant potential in determining the direction of the nation's future development. However, they are also among the segments most vulnerable to political apathy, the spread of misinformation, and a lack of political understanding. In this regard, the role of the General Elections Commission (KPU) is crucial, particularly in election outreach efforts to increase awareness, understanding, and active participation among first-time voters(Hevriansyah, 2021).

In the 2024 Legislative Elections, the General Elections Commission (KPU) is responsible for ensuring that all citizens, including first-time voters, receive adequate information and can exercise their right to vote optimally(Nimrah dan Sakaria et al., 2015). As the institution that organizes elections, the KPU is obligated to disseminate information about election implementation and provide political education to the public. This obligation is stated in Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections, specifically Article 14 letter (c), which states that the KPU has the task of "carrying out the socialization of the implementation of elections and increasing public participation in elections. Furthermore, in Article 269 paragraph (1) of the Law, it is emphasized that the implementation of election education is the responsibility of the KPU and is aimed at all elements of society, including women's groups, people with disabilities, first-time voters, and indigenous communities2. This provision is emphasized through KPU (PKPU) No. 15 of 2023 concerning Socialization, Voter Education, and Public Participation, which regulates in detail the forms, methods, and targets of socialization activities organized by the KPU at all levels, including at the Regency/City KPU level. At the regional level, the Serang Regency KPU plays an important role in carrying out the mandate stated in the legislation(Rahmatika, 2021). However, based on initial observations, the level of participation of first-time voters in Serang Regency in the 2024 Legislative Election has not experienced a significant increase. This condition This raises questions about the effectiveness of the outreach efforts conducted by the Serang Regency General Elections Commission (KPU) to first-time voters(Rudi Hermanto, 2020). Several identified obstacles include the use of traditional outreach methods and the limited use of digital media appropriate to communication patterns(Arniti, 2020). The lack of collaboration with educational institutions and the younger generation pose challenges to optimally achieving the goal of voter outreach. In addition to low political literacy and the suboptimal use of community-based outreach approaches, another crucial challenge is the lack of integration of digital approaches that align with the information consumption patterns of young people. First-time voters, particularly those at the school and university levels, tend to actively access information through social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Unfortunately, the outreach programs implemented by the General Elections Commission (KPU), including the Serang Regency KPU, are still dominated by traditional methods, such as banners and billboards, and one-way face-to-face seminars. This situation makes outreach messages less relevant and incapable of reaching first-time voters optimally(Arniti, 2020).

Article 3 of KPU Regulation Number 15 of 2023 explicitly recommends the use of information technology in outreach and voter education activities, including through digital and social media.4 However, in practice, many KPUs in Serang Regency lack a structured digital strategy or a solid media team to run innovative, sustainable, and effective digital campaigns. Furthermore, the internal institutional aspects of the General Elections Commission (KPU) at the regional level also require attention(Firmadi & Purwaningsih, 2016). Limited budget allocation, disparities in human resource availability, and a lack of ongoing technical training are structural barriers that impact the quality of outreach activities. In practice, outreach activities are often conducted only in the lead-up to the campaign period, without being accompanied by ongoing political education programs. This situation reflects the lack of institutionalization of voter education as part of a long-term strategic agenda, particularly in reaching first-time voters(Artina, 2016).

From a sociological perspective, the KPU's approach thus far has not fully considered the local social and cultural diversity in Serang Regency. For example, several sub-districts are still inhabited by communities with limited access to information and limited opportunities for discussion regarding the urgency of the election. Without comprehensive social mapping, outreach activities tend to be general in nature and do not address the specific needs of local communities(Siswanto & Ahwan, 2024).

METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach. The type of research used in this study is a causal relationship or cause-and-effect relationship. Data is obtained from the results of a *survey* where by distributing questionnaires to respondents who are the object of research. Causal research is research that aims to determine the cause-and-effect relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable (Sugiyono, 2018) . The population in this study were all employees at the Agam Regency Land Office as many as 70 people. In this study using sampling techniques, namely saturated samples. Saturated sample is a sampling technique where the entire population is used as a sample (Sugiyono, 2018). Based on the description above, the researcher made the entire population of 70 people the sample in this study. In this study using the *Structural Equation Modeling* (SEM) analysis tool using the *partial least square* (PLS) program. PLS is a component-based approach to testing structural equation models or commonly called SEM. PLS is based on the idea that has two iterative procedures that use least squares estimation for single and *multi-component* models. By applying the procedures, the algorithm aims to minimize the *variance of* all dependent variables, therefore the cause and direction between all variables need to be clearly defined. PLS is divided into measurement models and structural models(Kadir, 2014).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The research results show that the Serang Regency General Elections Commission (KPU) has conducted various outreach programs for first-time voters, utilizing various media, both face-to-face and digital. Face-to-face outreach programs were conducted through activities at schools, campuses, and youth forums, while digital outreach programs utilized social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. This approach was deemed effective because it was able to adapt to the characteristics of the younger generation, who are more familiar with information technology(Barokah et al., 2022). However, attendance at in-person activities remained relatively low, thus suboptimal effectiveness. In addition to the media used, the KPU's communication strategy also emphasized educational messages regarding the importance of political participation and procedures for exercising their right to vote. First-time voters who participated in outreach programs reported a better understanding of voting procedures and the role of their vote in determining the direction of regional and national development. This indicates that outreach programs have a positive impact on increasing political literacy among first-time voters, although awareness of voting and exercising their right to vote still faces obstacles such as apathy and social influences(Basri, 2021).

Another finding suggests that the Serang Regency KPU's greatest challenge is limited resources, both in terms of budget and personnel, which means that not all schools or youth communities can be equally reached by outreach programs. Furthermore, the rapid flow of information on social media, which often contains political hoaxes, also hinders the formation of a correct understanding among first-time voters. This situation has caused some young voters to hesitate or even become uninterested in participating in the election, despite receiving formal information from the General Elections Commission (KPU)(Irfandi et al., 2022).

Overall, the results of this study confirm that the Serang Regency KPU's information dissemination efforts play a crucial role in increasing first-time voter participation. However, more creative, collaborative, and sustainable strategies are still needed. The involvement of schools, youth organizations, community leaders, and the use of more interactive information technology are key to expanding the reach and effectiveness of information dissemination. Therefore, the success of increasing first-time voter participation depends not only on the KPU but also on the synergy of various parties concerned with the quality of democracy in Indonesia(Adeodatur et al., 2020).

The discussion of the research results indicates that the socialization conducted by the Serang Regency General Elections Commission (KPU) played a strategic role in increasing the political awareness of first-time voters. The finding that social media use was the primary tool favored by the younger generation aligns with the digital native characteristics of first-time voters. This aligns with political communication theory, which emphasizes the importance of selecting communication channels relevant to the target audience. Therefore, the KPU's strategy of integrating a digital approach can be seen as an adaptive step to the development of information technology in a democratic context. However, the effectiveness of the socialization was not fully optimal due to the low level of direct participation in face-to-face activities. This indicates a gap between understanding information and willingness to exercise the right to vote. Political participation theory emphasizes that political awareness is not always directly proportional to electoral participation, as it is also influenced by psychological, social, and environmental factors(Salim & Sitabuana, 2024). In other words, although socialization increased political literacy, apathy and lack of trust in the political process remained barriers to participation. In addition to internal factors for first-time voters, the KPU's limitations in terms of budget, personnel, and territorial coverage also posed significant challenges. This demonstrates that election organizers cannot work alone to increase participation, but rather require collaborative support from schools, universities, youth organizations, and community leaders. The theoretical framework of governance in election administration emphasizes that young people's political participation will grow more easily if supported by a democratic ecosystem involving various actors, not just election organizers(Wahidin, 2020).

Therefore, this discussion confirms that the success of increasing first-time voter participation in the 2024 Legislative Election in Serang Regency is determined not only by the intensity of the KPU's outreach efforts, but also by the quality of the communication strategy, the relevance of the media used, and the involvement of other stakeholders. Collaborative and innovative efforts are key to fostering sustainable political awareness, so that young people not only participate in a single election but also commit to continuing their involvement in the democratic process in the future(Salim & Sitabuana, 2024).

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the socialization conducted by the General Elections Commission (KPU) of Serang Regency plays a crucial role in increasing political literacy and awareness among first-time voters in the 2024 Legislative Elections. Through the use of digital media and face-to-face activities, the KPU is able to provide an understanding of election procedures and the importance of political participation, although its effectiveness still faces obstacles such as low direct involvement, limited resources, and the influence of apathy among the younger generation. Therefore, increasing first-time voter participation requires a more creative, sustainable, and collaborative socialization strategy involving schools, youth organizations, and community leaders, so that young people's political participation can be more optimal in supporting the quality of

democracy in Indonesia. Based on the research findings, several recommendations can be put forward. First, the Serang Regency KPU needs to strengthen its digital-based socialization strategy with more interactive content, such as short videos, podcasts, or creative campaigns on social media that suit the communication styles of the younger generation. Second, increased collaboration with schools, universities, and youth organizations as strategic partners is needed to expand the reach of socialization. Third, the KPU needs to optimize democracy volunteers as information delivery agents close to first-time voters. Fourth, the local government is expected to provide adequate budgetary support and facilities to ensure that outreach activities can be carried out evenly throughout Serang Regency. Implementing these recommendations is expected to significantly increase first-time voter participation in the upcoming election..

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