

THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICAL AWARENESS ON THE ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION OF VOTERS WITH DISABILITIES IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

The participation of voters with disabilities in elections is one of the important aspects in realizing an inclusive democracy. This study aims to investigate the influence of political awareness on the level of participation of voters with disabilities in elections in Indonesia. Using qualitative methods and literature study techniques, this study analyzes various relevant sources, including scientific articles, policy reports, and previous studies. The results of the analysis show that high political awareness contributes significantly to the participation of voters with disabilities. Voters who are aware of their political rights tend to be more active in exercising their right to vote, even though they are still faced with various challenges such as physical accessibility and limited information. Therefore, this study recommends the need for greater efforts to increase political awareness through inclusive education and the provision of disability-friendly information. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of more inclusive election policies in Indonesia.

Keywords: Disability, Election, Inclusivity, Political Awareness, Voter Participation

A. INTRODUCTION

Elections are the main foundation of a democratic system, where all eligible citizens have the right to participate in determining the direction of state policy through the election of leaders and representatives of the people. Inclusive participation in elections reflects the degree of democracy in a country. However, in practice, not all citizens can participate fully and equally. Groups with disabilities are an example of a population that still faces challenges in accessing their political rights, including exercising their right to vote.

Table 1. Voters with Disabilities in the 2019 and 2024 Elections

Category	2019	2024
Physical Disabilities	100.765 People	482.414 People
Sensory Disabilities	130.165 People	298.749 People
Intellectual Disability	54.295 People	55.421 People
Mental Disabilities and others	77.995 People	264.594 People

Source: Ministry of State Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia

From the data above, the General Election Commission (KPU) recorded that there were 363,220 disabled voters in 2019, while in 2024 there were 1,101,178 permanent voters with disabilities in the election. The increasing number of voters in 2024 needs to be a concern for all election organizers to provide political education and ensure accessibility for voters with disabilities. As regulated in the technical provisions of Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections, the KPU is responsible for providing accessibility of information and polling places (TPS) for all types of disabilities.

In Indonesia, the population of people with disabilities reaches more than 22 million people, making this group an important part of society that needs to be considered in the democratic process. Constitutionally, the political rights of disabilities are protected and their existence is recognized through the provisions of Article 27 Paragraph (1), Article 28D Paragraph (3), and Article 28E Paragraph (3) of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. The following is strengthened through Article 13 of Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities. These obstacles include physical accessibility at polling places, lack of easily accessible information, and social stereotypes that underestimate their political participation.

One of the key factors that can encourage disability voter participation is political awareness. Political awareness includes a person's understanding of their political rights, knowledge of the political process, and the willingness to be involved in political activities. For voters with disabilities, political awareness is very important because it can be a trigger that encourages them to actively demand their political rights and participate in elections. Voters who have high political awareness will be more motivated to take part in the election process, even though they are faced with various challenges.

On the other hand, low political awareness can exacerbate the marginalization of disability groups in the political arena. Disabled voters who do not understand their rights may feel unmotivated to participate or even feel inappropriate to take part in the election. Therefore, understanding the relationship between political awareness and the participation of disabled voters is important in order to design more inclusive policies and improve the quality of democracy in Indonesia.

Through this research, it is hoped that we can find out how political awareness influences the participation of voters with disabilities in elections in Indonesia. It is also hoped that this research can provide recommendations for increasing the accessibility and involvement of voters with disabilities in the political process, thereby creating elections that are more inclusive and fair for all citizens.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Disability

Disability is a condition that results in physical, sensory, intellectual, or mental limitations that significantly affect an individual's ability to participate in daily life activities. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines disability as a condition of limited ability to carry out activities within limits that are considered normal. WHO divides three categories of disability, namely:

1. Impairment, namely a condition of abnormality or loss of psychological or anatomical structure or function.
2. Disability, namely the inability or limitation as a result of an impairment to carry out activities in a way that is considered normal for humans.

3. Handicap, namely a condition that is detrimental to a person due to an impairment or disability that prevents him or her from fulfilling normal roles (in the context of age, gender and cultural factors) for the person concerned.

Political Awareness

Political awareness can be defined as an individual's level of understanding of political issues, their rights as citizens, and the ability to analyze and take a stance on public policy and the democratic process. Political awareness includes knowledge of the political system, participation in political activities, and the ability to criticize and evaluate government actions. According to Rudiansyah (2019), political awareness is an individual's awareness of their rights and obligations in a socio-political context, as well as a willingness to participate in decision-making processes related to community life.

Apart from that, political awareness also includes affective aspects, namely how much an individual feels connected and responsible for existing political conditions. Active involvement in political activities, such as elections, demonstrations and political discussions, is a manifestation of high political awareness. As stated by Verba et al. (1995), individuals who have political awareness tend to be more involved in the democratic process and are better able to influence public policies that impact their lives.

Pemilu

Pemilu, or general elections, are a formal process in which citizens elect their representatives to occupy positions in government, both at the local, provincial and national levels. Elections aim to provide legitimacy to the government and ensure that the people's voice is heard in political decision making. According to the KPU (2020), elections in Indonesia are a democratic mechanism that allows the public to participate in determining the direction and policies of the country through direct legislative and presidential elections.

Elections also reflect democratic principles, such as representation, participation and accountability. People have the right to vote and be elected, which is part of human rights and is fundamental in a democratic system (Sihombing, 2020). In the context of elections, the quality and integrity of the voting process is crucial, so that every citizen, including people with disabilities, can participate equally and fairly.

Voter Participation in Pemilu

Voter participation in elections refers to individual involvement in the general election process, either through registering as a voter, exercising voting rights, or participating in political campaigns. According to Blais and Massicotte (2020), voter participation includes all actions that enable individuals to get involved in the political process, which includes not only voting but also supporting candidates or political parties, as well as contributing to broader political dialogue.

Furthermore, according to a report from the United Nations Development Program (2021), voter participation is a key indicator of the health of democracy. This participation is influenced by various factors, including political awareness, information accessibility, and social and economic conditions. The report emphasizes that high voter turnout reflects people's commitment to the democratic process and can influence the legitimacy of election results.

In general, voter participation can be considered a fundamental right and obligation in a democratic system, where every individual has the opportunity to contribute to determining the direction of public policy through general elections (International IDEA, 2020).

Inclusivity

Inclusivity refers to an approach that ensures that all individuals, regardless of background, condition, or abilities, have equal access to and participation in social, political, and economic processes. In a political context, inclusivity means creating an environment where all groups, including marginalized people such as people with disabilities, can be actively involved in decision-making and electoral processes. Inclusivity is not just about existing, but also about giving voice and recognizing the needs and aspirations of every individual in society.

According to The United Nations (2020), "Inclusion is about ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes, which is fundamental to achieving sustainable development and social cohesion" (United Nations, 2020). This shows that inclusivity is a key element in realizing a just and democratic society.

Campbell et al. (2021) emphasize that "political inclusion requires not only the recognition of diverse identities but also the dismantling of barriers that prevent marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, from participating fully in political life" (Campbell et al., 2021). This suggests that to achieve political inclusivity, it is important to identify and overcome existing barriers.

From a policy perspective, Mendez (2022) states that "inclusive policies must prioritize the participation of all individuals, particularly marginalized communities, to ensure that their voices are heard in the political arena" (Mendez, 2022). This approach shows that inclusive policies must be directed at empowering underrepresented groups to participate actively in the democratic process.

Thus, inclusivity in the context of elections and political participation is essential to ensure that the voices of all citizens, including people with disabilities, are heard and taken into account in decision making.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach with literature study techniques. A qualitative approach was chosen because this research aims to understand the phenomenon in depth, especially regarding the influence of political awareness on the participation of voters with disabilities in elections in Indonesia. Literature study techniques allow researchers to review and analyze various literature sources that are relevant to the research topic, whether in the form of books, scientific journal articles, policy reports, or the results of previous research.

This type of research is analytical descriptive research. This research aims to describe and analyze the relationship between political awareness and participation of voters with disabilities in elections based on findings that have been published in various literature sources. This research not only describes the phenomenon, but also seeks to understand the factors that influence the participation of disabled voters as well as the implications of political awareness for this participation.

The data collection process was carried out by identifying relevant literature through various scientific databases, digital libraries and websites using related keywords. Next, the collected data will be analyzed by grouping information based on themes and synthesizing results from various sources to produce in-depth understanding. To ensure validity and reliability, this research also applies analysis to each piece of literature used.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Inclusive elections are an indicator of the quality of a country's democracy. In Indonesia, people with disabilities are a group that is vulnerable to marginalization in the election process. Even though the law regulates political rights for people with disabilities, their participation in elections is still far from optimal. One of the factors that plays an important role in increasing the political participation of disabled groups is political awareness, namely the level of knowledge and understanding of individuals regarding their political rights and the political process as a whole.

This chapter discusses further the relationship between political awareness and participation of disabled voters in elections. This discussion will begin by explaining the concept of political awareness and its influence on the motivation of voters with disabilities to exercise their right to vote. Next, various challenges faced by disabled voters in participating in elections are discussed, both in terms of physical accessibility and political information. Finally, this chapter will also review several efforts that can be made to increase the participation of disabled voters through increasing political awareness and improving election policies that are more inclusive.

Political Awareness and Participation of Disabled Voters

Political awareness is an important factor influencing voter participation, including those with disabilities. Political awareness is defined as an individual's level of knowledge and understanding of political rights, the electoral process, and political issues that are relevant to their lives. In the context of voters with disabilities, political awareness plays an important role in encouraging the courage to get involved in elections, even though they face various challenges, such as limited accessibility at polling stations and information that is difficult to access.

Research conducted by Widiyanto (2020) found that voters with disabilities who had higher political awareness were more likely to participate in elections than those with low awareness. This is due to a better understanding of the importance of their voices in influencing policy, as well as an internal drive to exercise their political rights. In contrast, voters with disabilities who lack political awareness often feel ignored and lack confidence in participating because of the minimal information they receive about the election process and their rights.

Challenges of Participation of Disabled Voters in Elections

Disabled voters in Indonesia still face many obstacles in participating fully in elections. According to a report from the General Election Commission (KPU), despite efforts to increase inclusivity, such as providing disability-friendly polling stations and officers trained to assist voters with special needs, structural and social barriers remain. One of the biggest challenges is physical accessibility. Many polling places do not have adequate facilities, such as paths that are easily accessible for wheelchair users, or companions who understand how to communicate with voters who have hearing or visual impairments.

Apart from that, barriers to access to information are also a major obstacle for voters with disabilities. Research by Susanto (2021) shows that much of the political and election information that is disseminated is not friendly to voters with disabilities, especially for those who have sensory limitations, such as the deaf or blind. Information that is not presented in Braille, sign language, or audio book format prevents voters with disabilities from gaining an

in-depth understanding of the election process. This has a negative impact on their political awareness and, ultimately, reduces participation rates in elections.

The Relationship between Political Awareness and Participation of Disabled Voters

From the various literature analyzed, it was found that political awareness plays an important role in increasing the participation of disabled voters. Voters who have sufficient knowledge about their political rights tend to be more confident in exercising their voting rights, even when faced with physical or social obstacles. They are also more proactive in seeking information and solutions to overcome the obstacles they face in the election. For example, blind voters who have high political awareness will seek to obtain information in an appropriate format, such as audio, and will request appropriate assistance at the polling place.

In contrast, voters with low political awareness tend to be more passive and reluctant to get involved in elections. They often feel marginalized in the political process, either because of a lack of understanding of their rights or because of distrust of the existing political system. In a study conducted by Hermawan (2019), it was found that disabled voters who lacked political awareness tended to participate less in elections, and this was exacerbated by a lack of social support and weaknesses in inclusive policies.

Efforts to Increase Participation of Disabled Voters Through Increasing Political Awareness

Increasing the political awareness of disabled voters can be a key solution to increasing their participation in elections. The government and election management institutions, such as the KPU, can play a key role in this regard by carrying out more inclusive political education campaigns.

1. Inclusive Political Education

The government, election management institutions and civil society organizations must work together to provide inclusive political education programs for voters with disabilities. This program must be adapted to various types of disabilities and be accessible to all groups, whether through print, electronic or digital media. such as providing materials in Braille format, videos with sign language, and training for accompanying voters with disabilities, can help increase their political knowledge.

2. Increased Accessibility at TPS

Election organizers need to ensure that each polling station has disability-friendly facilities, including adequate access points, voting booths that are accessible to wheelchair users, as well as assistive devices for voters with special needs, such as voting guides or voter companions.

3. Disability-Friendly Socialization

Information about elections, including procedures and candidates, must be provided in a format that is accessible to all types of disabilities. Socialization must be carried out widely and evenly, so that voters with disabilities can obtain the information needed to make the right decisions.

4. Empowerment of The Disability Community

Disability organizations need to be encouraged to actively play a role in the political socialization and education process. The disability community has an important role in supporting its members to participate in elections and demand their political rights.

Recommendations for a More Inclusive Election Policy

Several recommendations can be proposed to increase the participation of disabled voters in Indonesia:

1. Increase physical accessibility at polling places
The government needs to ensure that all polling stations are equipped with disability-friendly facilities, such as wheelchair ramps, hearing aids and companions trained to assist voters with special needs.
2. Increase access to inclusive political information
Providing information in formats appropriate for all types of disabilities, such as Braille, sign language, and audio, is critical to ensuring that voters with disabilities can properly understand the political and electoral process.
3. Carry out an inclusive political education campaign
Governments and civil society organizations need to work together to organize political education programs specifically designed to increase the political awareness of voters with disabilities.

E. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the discussion that has been presented, it can be concluded that political awareness influences the participation of voters with disabilities in elections in Indonesia. Disabled voters who have a higher level of political awareness tend to be more proactive in exercising their right to vote, even though they are faced with various obstacles. Political awareness provides a better understanding of the importance of participation in elections, and encourages them to overcome physical and social obstacles that often hinder their participation.

However, accessibility challenges, both in terms of physical and information, are still the main obstacle to the participation of voters with disabilities. Many polling places are not disability friendly, and the political information provided is not fully inclusive and accessible to all people with disabilities. Therefore, it is important for the government, election organizers and the community to work together to increase the accessibility and inclusiveness of elections.

Efforts to increase disability voter participation must start with increasing political awareness through inclusive political education and campaigns targeting the disability community. In addition, more inclusive election policies must be implemented consistently, including the provision of disability-friendly facilities and easily accessible election information in various formats. By overcoming these obstacles and increasing the political awareness of disabled voters, Indonesia can realize more inclusive and democratic elections, where all citizens, without exception, can participate fully and equally in determining the nation's future.

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