

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Analysis Of Public Information Services At The General Elections Commission (KPU) Of Bengkulu Province

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze public information services provided by the General Elections Commission (KPU) of Bengkulu Province in an effort to increase community participation in the 2024 elections. A descriptive qualitative approach was used, with data collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Agustinus' strategy theory (1996), which includes strategy formulation, implementation, and control, served as the analytical framework. The results indicate that KPU Bengkulu implements public information services through a main strategy based on KPU Regulation No. 9 of 2022. Information is disseminated through various channels, including social media (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube), the E-PPID portal, and direct outreach programs such as goes to campus and goes to pesantren. These strategies are considered effective in conveying electoral information and encouraging public participation, particularly among first-time voters. However, challenges remain in building public trust in the importance of political engagement.

Keyword: public service, public information, election commission, political participation, communication strategy.

Introduction

General Elections (Pemilu) are the main mechanism in a modern democratic system that allows people to participate in determining the direction of the country's politics. In Indonesia, elections are not only used as an instrument to elect people's representatives, but also as an indicator of democratic maturity that reflects the level of participation and political awareness of the community (Nugroho, 2015). Public involvement in elections is very important because it concerns the legitimacy of the government and trust in the democratic process. In this context, election organizers such as the General Election Commission (KPU) have a great responsibility in providing public information services that are open and accessible to all levels of society. The importance of public information services in organizing elections has become a major highlight, especially in the digital era and openness of information like today. The KPU as an independent institution is not only required to run elections technically, but must also be able to build effective communication through the delivery of information that is accurate, inclusive, and easy to understand by the wider community (Setiawan & Handayani, 2020). Openness of information is believed to contribute to increasing political participation, forming positive public opinion, and strengthening the legitimacy of election institutions. Bengkulu Province is one of the areas facing challenges in increasing voter participation. Based on data from the Bengkulu Provincial KPU, the number of Permanent Voters List (DPT) for the 2024 Election reached 1,494,828 people. However, in the 2019 Election, public participation only reached 85.32%, while the abstention rate was still at 14.65% (Bengkulu Provincial KPU, 2023). This inequality

shows the need for a more adaptive and responsive public information service strategy in responding to doubts and political apathy that are developing in society.

The phenomenon of low participation is often caused by negative perceptions of elections, minimal political education, and lack of access to relevant information. Some people think that elections are just a political routine without any real impact on their lives (Hasibuan, 2019). At this point, the role of public information services becomes very strategic in rebuilding public trust in the democratic process. The steps that have been taken by the Bengkulu Provincial KPU include the use of social media (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube), the e-PPID platform, and direct socialization to campuses, schools, and Islamic boarding schools. This strategy refers to KPU Regulation Number 9 of 2022 concerning Public Participation. This approach targets strategic groups, especially new voters and vulnerable groups, who have often been marginalized from the reach of election information. The formulation of the problem raised in this study is: "How is the public information service implemented by the Bengkulu Provincial Election Commission in an effort to increase public participation in the 2024 Election?". The focus of the question is directed at the extent to which the effectiveness of the public information service strategy that has been implemented and what are the challenges faced in its implementation. The purpose of this study is to determine, analyze, and evaluate the public information service strategy carried out by the Bengkulu Provincial KPU and assess its effectiveness in encouraging voter participation. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach which is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of public information services at election organizing institutions. This study not only contributes to the development of public information service policies based on data and community needs, but also expands the space for academic discussion in the fields of public administration and political communication. Inclusive and sustainable information services are believed to be able to strengthen electoral democracy and form citizens who are more aware of their political rights and responsibilities (Widianingsih, 2021).

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Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to describe in depth the process of public information services at the General Election Commission (KPU) of Bengkulu Province in relation to increasing public participation in the 2024 Election. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the meaning behind the actions, perceptions, and strategies used by the KPU in conveying public information. Qualitative research is naturalistic and emphasizes understanding based on the context and experiences of research participants (Creswell, 2013). The main focus of this study is to describe how information service strategies are designed, implemented, and controlled by the Bengkulu KPU. Data were collected through three main techniques: direct observation of information service activities such as face-to-face socialization and digital media; in-depth interviews with four key informants consisting of the head of the technical division, the head of the community participation subsection, and two KPU staff; and documentation studies that include activity archives, social media publication materials, and official documents such as KPU Regulation Number 9 of 2022 concerning Community Participation. Informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques based on their experience and involvement in the information service process. Data validity was strengthened through triangulation of sources and techniques to ensure that the information obtained reflects the actual conditions (Patton, 2002). The data analysis process followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, namely through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions simultaneously. Data reduction was carried out to sort out relevant information from the results of interviews and observations. The reduced data was then arranged in the form of a thematic narrative and presented based on indicators from the theory of public communication strategies. Drawing conclusions was carried out repeatedly to ensure consistency and compatibility between empirical data and the theoretical framework (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The analysis process also included cross-verification between interview data and official documents to increase the reliability of the findings. The study took place for four months at the Bengkulu Provincial KPU office and the location of external socialization activities. The decision to select the research location was based on the KPU's strategic function as an election organizer and provider of public information. Researchers played an active role in observing field activities, interviewing informants directly, and recording the dynamics that occurred during the information service process. The hope of this method is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the public information service practices carried out by the KPU and the extent to which the strategies implemented have an impact on public participation in the 2024 Election.

Results and Discussion

The results of this study reveal that public information services carried out by the General Election Commission (KPU) of Bengkulu Province are one of the main strategies in encouraging public participation in the 2024 Election. Based on the results of interviews and documentation, the public information service strategy implemented by the KPU refers to KPU Regulation Number 9 of 2022 concerning Public Participation. This regulation is a formal basis for implementing various forms of public communication activities, including delivering information through face-to-face forums, utilizing online media, and strengthening electoral literacy through social media and the e-PPID platform. The selection of this approach shows that the Bengkulu KPU not only carries out administrative obligations, but also realizes the importance of building two-way communicative relations between organizers and the public (KPU of Bengkulu Province, 2023). At the strategy

formulation stage, there was no indication that the Bengkulu KPU developed strategic innovations independently outside of central guidelines. However, adjustments to the local context were still carried out by mapping audience segments based on demographic characteristics such as age, educational background, and access to information technology. Interviews with the head of the technical division stated that socialization programs such as Goes to Campus, Goes to School, and Goes to Pesantren were developed to reach new voters and voter groups whose participation was considered low (Huzaery, interview, 2024). This strategy utilizes the advantages of face-to-face communication in creating emotional closeness and strengthening substantive messages about the importance of voting rights in democracy. In addition, the material presented in these forums was developed contextually to suit the needs of local voters, such as the use of simpler language and illustrations based on people's daily experiences. The implementation of the public information service strategy shows a fairly high intensity from the Bengkulu Provincial KPU in carrying out socialization tasks. Based on the results of observations, the implementation of socialization activities took place regularly and included various communication formats, both directly and through digital media. The Bengkulu Provincial KPU actively utilized official social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube to distribute election information content. The content presented was in the form of educational videos, infographics of election stages, and live broadcasts of socialization activities. Public participation staff stated that social media has become the main tool in reaching young voters, who are more familiar with digital channels than formal forums (Widiarti, interview, 2024). In addition, the use of the e-PPID platform has become a formal mechanism in fulfilling requests for more technical information, such as voter data, procurement documents, and activity reports. However, the results of the study also revealed that monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the public information service strategy has not been implemented in a structured manner. The strategy control stage, as stated in the Agustinus (1996) model, has not been equipped with a clear performance indicator-based evaluation system. Although the KPU has set a participation target of 92% in the 2024 Election, there are no quantitative or qualitative measuring instruments that can explain how much the information service strategy has contributed to achieving this target. Information obtained from interviews with public relations staff shows that evaluations have so far only been carried out in the form of activity reports without any analysis of the effectiveness of the media used or the level of public understanding of the messages conveyed (Burnades, interview, 2024). The absence of a systematic monitoring and evaluation system is a challenge in itself in the context of accountability for public information service programs. The effectiveness of information services should be measured through indicators of audience participation, message accessibility, and public perception of the quality of information provided. Researchers also noted that activity documentation focuses more on administrative outputs than outcomes that indicate changes in people's political behavior. This shows the need for integration between public communication strategies and organizational performance management so that the public information services carried out not only fulfill formal aspects but also have an impact on strengthening substantial electoral democracy (Widianingsih, 2021).

Discussion

Public information services organized by the General Election Commission (KPU) of Bengkulu Province represent a strategic effort to foster electoral participation of the community as an integral part of strengthening procedural democracy. From a public administration perspective, information services are not merely a fulfillment of normative obligations based on Law Number 14 of 2008 concerning Openness of Public Information, but rather a democratization instrument that distributes knowledge, strengthens transparency, and forms reciprocal relations between the state and citizens (Widodo, 2010). Field findings show that the Bengkulu KPU actively seeks to disseminate information through two main channels: conventional communication based on direct meetings and the use of digital channels such as social media and the e-PPID platform. Analysis of the stages of strategy formulation, as interpreted through the approach of Agustinus (1996), shows that the Bengkulu KPU has not fully designed a locality-based strategy. Strategy formulation is still predominantly based on central policies through KPU Regulation Number 9 of 2022, which nationally regulates the mechanism of community participation in organizing elections. However, this institution made operational adjustments by initiating programs such as Goes to Campus, Goes to Pesantren, and Goes to School, which substantially showed audience segmentation based on priority voter categories, especially first-time voters. This strategy is in line with the thinking of Kotler and Roberto (1989), who stated that the effectiveness of social communication is determined by the institution's ability to segment, target, and position the target audience. The process of implementing information services shows integrative symptoms between interpersonal approaches and digitalization of communication. The Bengkulu Provincial KPU utilizes platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube as a medium for distributing messages that are educational, informative, and participatory. This reflects the adoption of the principle of symmetrical two-way communication as stated by Grunig and Hunt (1984), where institutions not only convey information but also open up space for interaction and response from the public. However, based on the results of observations and confirmation from sources, the implementation of digital strategies is still limited to the intensity of message delivery, not including systematic measurements of its reach and impact. The absence of quantitative and qualitative data-based evaluative instruments means that the effectiveness of digital media in increasing political literacy and electoral awareness in the community cannot be scientifically verified.

The problem is more apparent at the strategic control stage. The Bengkulu Provincial KPU does not yet have an adequate evaluative framework to measure the extent to which public information services have an impact on increasing voter participation. The monitoring process emphasizes more on activity-based reporting than on result-based evaluation. The absence of key performance indicators that can link socialization activities and changes in people's political behavior creates a vacuum in evidence-based policy making. In fact, in the framework of contemporary public management, program management must be accompanied by an assessment system based on outcomes, not just the quantity of activities (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). The weakness of this evaluation function has implications for the inability of institutions to carry out strategic reflection and continuous improvement based on institutional learning.

From a theoretical perspective, public information services are not only seen as technocratic products of institutions, but also as a form of substantial political communication in the process of democratic consolidation. The concept of public participation in elections is not an entity that is formed spontaneously, but rather the result of systematic, educational, and communicative interventions from election organizing institutions (Verba, Nie, & Kim, 1978). Therefore, public information services must meet the elements of information

relevance, source credibility, channel accessibility, and public involvement. Partial implementation without adequate evaluative system support can create the illusion of transparency without a strong participatory essence.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study provides a comprehensive overview of the dynamics of public information services carried out by the General Election Commission (KPU) of Bengkulu Province as a strategic instrument in increasing public participation ahead of the 2024 Election. Based on empirical findings and theoretical analysis, it can be concluded that the information service strategy implemented by the KPU is still normative and oriented towards compliance with national policies, especially KPU Regulation Number 9 of 2022 concerning Public Participation. Although there are local initiatives in the form of community-based socialization programs such as Goes to Campus and Goes to Pesantren, the formulation of autonomous strategies that consider the complexity of the demographic and geographic characteristics of the region has not been optimally realized. The implementation of a public communication strategy that combines conventional and digital approaches reflects institutional awareness of the importance of media diversity in reaching various voter segments. However, the effectiveness of digital media utilization cannot be measured accurately due to the absence of a systematic and performance indicator-based evaluative mechanism. This shows that the implementation of public information services is still dominated by operational logic, not based on impact evaluation or impact-based governance. The success of information delivery has not been fully transformed into an increase in electoral awareness and participatory behavior of the community that is scientifically measurable.

The most significant weakness lies in the evaluation and control stages of the strategy. The absence of an evidence-based monitoring and evaluation system (evidence-based assessment) has hampered the institution's ability to reconstruct a more relevant and adaptive communication strategy. Evaluation of activities is still quantitative-descriptive and has not entered the realm of qualitative evaluation that is able to explain changes in public knowledge, attitudes, and behavior towards the importance of elections as a democratic mechanism. In the context of contemporary public administration, this condition shows a gap between program implementation and the achievement of substantive results that are the goals of public services.

Theoretically, public information services should be positioned as an instrument for strengthening participatory democracy, not just a technocratic socialization activity. The Bengkulu Provincial KPU has a strategic role in accelerating public political literacy through participatory, transparent, and local needs-based public communication practices. For this reason, the transformation of information services towards a more reflective, measurable, and critical evaluation-based approach is a must, so that the strategy implemented does not stop at fulfilling administrative obligations, but is also able to create a transformative effect on the electoral behavior of the community.

The suggestions are:

- 1) Expansion of locality-based strategy formulation:
The Bengkulu Provincial KPU is advised not to only rely on central regulations, but also to develop a communication strategy that is tailored to the socio-cultural characteristics of the Bengkulu community. Mapping information needs based on region, age, and social group will strengthen the effectiveness of message delivery.
- 2) Strengthening the monitoring and evaluation system for information services:
It is necessary to develop measurable performance indicators to assess the effectiveness of the socialization program, both quantitatively (audience reach, digital engagement) and qualitatively (understanding and attitudes towards election information). Participatory

evaluations involving information recipients also need to be implemented periodically.

- 3) Optimizing the use of data-based digital technology: Social media and e-PPID that have been actively used need to be strengthened with real-time analysis of community reachability and response data. Digital technology must not only function as a channel for disseminating information, but also as a tool for monitoring public opinion and adapting communication strategies.
- 4) Development of public communication human resource capacity: Community participation and public relations staff need to receive regular training in the fields of digital communication, political literacy, and public information data management. This competency is crucial in ensuring the success of a long-term information service strategy.

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