POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND VOTER PARTICIPATION IN THE 2020 REGIONAL HEAD ELECTIONS IN BANGLI REGENCY

I Wayan Sedia[1], I Putu Gede Suwitha[2], I Nyoman Weda Kusuma[3],
I Nengah Punia[4]

[1]Mahendradata University, [234]Doctoral Program, Cultural Studies Program, Faculty of Cultural Studies, Udayana University

E-mail: [1]wayansedia11@gmail.com, [2]putu_suwitha@yahoo.co.id,
[3]weda_kusuma@yahoo.com, [4]nengah_puniah@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This research analyzes political communication in voter participation during the 2020 simultaneous regional head elections in Bangli Regency amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. It examines forms of political communication, underlying ideology, and implications. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews and document studies, applying theories such as persuasive communication, critical hegemony, social practice, and power-knowledge relations. Findings indicate that online political communication during the pandemic facilitated interaction between election actors and voters but had drawbacks. Issues included limited election information, outdated voter data, and inaccurate permanent voter lists. Additionally, budget constraints, insufficient personal protective equipment, and health protocol violations were significant challenges. The ideology behind political communication was the hegemony of community figures, political elites, and successful teams over voters, resulting in power-knowledge relations and transactional political practices. Elderly and disabled voters in mountainous areas were particularly marginalized. Practical findings show that online political communication limited voter references, reducing freedom in choosing candidates. Theoretical findings indicate that online political communication disrupts social interaction during Covid-19, and hegemony theory is effectively applied in the Bangli community, which practices local culture. However, power- knowledge relation theory cannot be universally applied, as traditional figures dominate voters and the central executive board determines coalitions and candidate pairs.

Keywords: political communication, participation, regional elections, Bangli Regenc

INTRODUCTION

Regional autonomy has provided a very broad space for the government and communities in the regions to determine the direction and goals of development according to the needs, capabilities of the region and the regulations above it. The regional government has broad duties and authorities in designing regional development.

The ability of the regional government to explore regional revenues and fight for budgets to the central government is the key to the successful implementation of the development programs that have been planned. Therefore, the role of the community is very important in determining a leader who understands the potential and conditions of the region. Socialization of the Regional Head Elections is the first step in developing a political culture by providing understanding to the community who has voting rights. Persuasive socialization as a way of conducting political communication carried out by the KPU, coalition political parties and traditional elites in various forms, can provide references related to the stages and procedures for participating in the Regional Head Elections. However, there are many challenges and obstacles in carrying out socialization according to the plans and applicable regulations. The limited facilities and infrastructure of the KPU, there are still multiple voter data, voters who are not included in the Permanent Voter List (DPT) and the dominance, ideology and power-knowledge relations of the actors in the Regional Head Elections as well as many other challenges and problems related to the Regional Head Elections. Based on the research background above, the problems are focused on 3 (three) formulations as follows; (1) What are the forms of political communication and voter participation in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Bangli Regency? (2) What is the ideology behind political communication and voter participation in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Bangli Regency? (3) What are the implications of political communication and voter participation in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Bangli Regency?

This research is to analyze, describe, and interpret political communication in the socialization of the 2020 Regional Head Elections, during the Covid-19 period in Bangli Regency, in depth, so that researchers can find out the aspects of cultural studies contained, especially regarding social and political practices in the Regional Head Elections that have taken place. This research is expected to develop insights, thoughts, information and knowledge for the community regarding political communication and voter participation in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Bangli Regency. This research is expected to be a reference and consideration for further researchers, especially related to political communication and voter participation in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Bangli Regency. The results of this research are expected to provide various inputs for the Bangli Regency government, especially for the General Election Commission (KPU) in policy making related to political communication in increasing voter participation during abnormal Regional Head Elections, in the future. Finally, this research is expected to be

a reference for voters, and political parties, related to the dynamics, obstacles, forms, ideologies and implications of political communication and participation in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Bangli Regency.

METHOD

Wisnumurti's dissertation (2005), entitled "Local Political Dynamics in the 2005 Direct Regional Head Elections in Badung Regency". In this study, a cultural studies analysis has been carried out with the main subject related to the very fluid dynamics between political party institutions and community ideology in Badung Regency. Knowledge and power are not limited to political elites, but also operate in society based on communicative actions. Ray Misno's Thesis, "Political Participation of the People of Denpasar City in the 2020 Regional Head Elections, a Cultural Studies Perspective". This research specifically describes voter participation and the obstacles faced in the 2005 Regional Head Elections in Denpasar. This research also highlights the problems of the Regional Head Elections from a cultural studies perspective which was carried out during the Covid-19 period. Ray's research focuses on discussing the forms of political participation, the factors that influence political participation and the impact of political participation of the people of Denpasar City on the 2020 Regional Head Elections. Artha's research (2007) in his thesis "The Role of Media in the Regional Head Election Campaign in Badung Regency". The news coverage of the Regional Head Elections was packaged to hegemonize the voting community and as a priming, agenda setting and imaging of one of the candidates competing in the Regional Head Elections in Badung Regency. Artha's research has similarities in observing the dynamics of the Regional Head Elections and the practice of hegemony in determining regional leaders. However, it mostly discusses the role of the media in packaging campaign issues related to one of the candidates. The difference is that this research critically and deeply describes the forms, ideologies and implications of the socialization of the Regional Head Elections conducted during the Covid-19 period by the Bangli Regency KPU.

Political communication is largely determined by the purpose of conveying political messages. Political communication is the delivery of messages in the form of ideas, plans, programs, and information about public policies from government agencies as communicators to the community as communicants. Socialization as a way of conducting political communication in general elections aims to provide political education which forms and fosters political personality and awareness, as well as

people's political participation". In this research, the focus of the researcher is political communication during the Regional Head Elections during the Covid-19 pandemic in Bangli Regency. Socialization is important for voters to obtain optimal and valid information about the Regional Head Elections. Participation is the involvement of a person or group in an activity carried out by a group or institution. Participation always involves someone to carry out predetermined goals, and tends to be driven by certain motives. Likewise, voter participation in the Regional Head Elections, voters have personal and general goals to be achieved. Voter participation is very effective as a means of control for political actors and the legitimacy of democratic institutions. The Regional Head Election (Pilkada) is a momentum for the people to determine their future through the leaders they choose. Choosing the right leader will be able to make changes and improvements. From the point of view of the regular rotation of local leadership power, direct Regional Head Elections are a continuation of previous election practices, but have laid a new foundation for the mechanism of regular elite exchange.

There are four theories used in dissecting the problems in this research. The following four theories are presented eclectically in dissecting the three problems. The persuasive communication theory is to approach the problems of forms, ideologies, and implications of political communication in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Bangli Regency, during the Covid-19 period. The KPU and other actors carried out persuasive communication in using various socialization methods. Hegemony theory to dissect the ideology contained in every behavior of the actors in political communication in the forms, ideologies, and implications of political communication during the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Bangli Regency. Social practice theory to analyze the role of capital in studying the forms, ideologies, and their implications that determine the success of political communication and the victory of candidate pairs in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Bangli Regency. Ownership of social capital, economic capital, symbolic capital and cultural capital determines who dominates and who is dominated in the socialization of the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Bangli Regency.

The theory of power-knowledge relations, to analyze the role of individuals and groups outside the institutional structure and social structure, but are able to condition and control those within the power structure such as traditional elites being able to control coalition political parties and candidate pairs when determining the time and place of simakrama. The theory of power-knowledge relations is also used to unravel problems related to the forms and ideologies that exist in political communication in the

2020 Regional Head Elections during the Covid-19 period in Bangli Regency. At that time, an officer from the Covid-19 task force could control the KPU, political parties, and candidate pairs, by postponing or even canceling face-to-face socialization.

The research approach used in this research is qualitative, namely data in the form of words and sentences from in-depth interviews with informants, as well as descriptions such as narratives or descriptions regarding the research topic obtained through interviews, observations and other related documents. The selection of Bangli Regency as the research location is based on the idea that, although geographically Bangli Regency is an area dominated by valleys and hills, with a relatively distant distance between residents, and limited internet network, voter participation in the 2020 Regional Head Elections was very high, and even higher than in 2015 Regional Head Elections.

Research data sources come from primary data obtained from the chairperson of the KPU, KPU staff and Bawaslu, community leaders, political parties supporting the Regional Head Election candidates, voters, and community elites in Bangli Regency. Secondary data, namely research data obtained through documentation such as socialization guidelines, socialization activity reports, election laws, archives, online media information. The online data in question is like discussions of voter communities and responses from practitioners and community elites related to the Regional Head Elections on social media.

In relation to this qualitative research, the main subject is the researcher himself by conducting field interviews using interview guidelines and voice recordings to record during the interview and note-taking tools, in order to record the answers given by informants, so that no data is missed. Determination of informants in this study used a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a technique for taking informants or resource persons with a specific purpose using personal considerations according to the research topic. In this study, the author chooses informants who are well- informed about information related to the discussion of the problems of political communication and voter participation in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Bangli Regency.

The qualitative research data is collected in the form of events, incidents, and others, expressed in words and sentences. Technically, the data in this research were collected through (1) structured and unstructured interviews, (2) document studies. The data analysis technique is the process of systematically compiling data from interviews and documentation related to the research. Data analysis in qualitative research is carried out during the process and after data collection. The results of the data analysis

obtained in the research on political communication in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Bangli are presented descriptively, namely providing an explanation of the data presented in the form of narratives and tables. The presentation of the results of the analysis is complemented by attachments related to the research results. In addition to presenting data, the presentation of research results is accompanied by interpretations to answer research problems related to the forms, ideologies and implications of the Regional Head Elections held during the Covid-19 period.
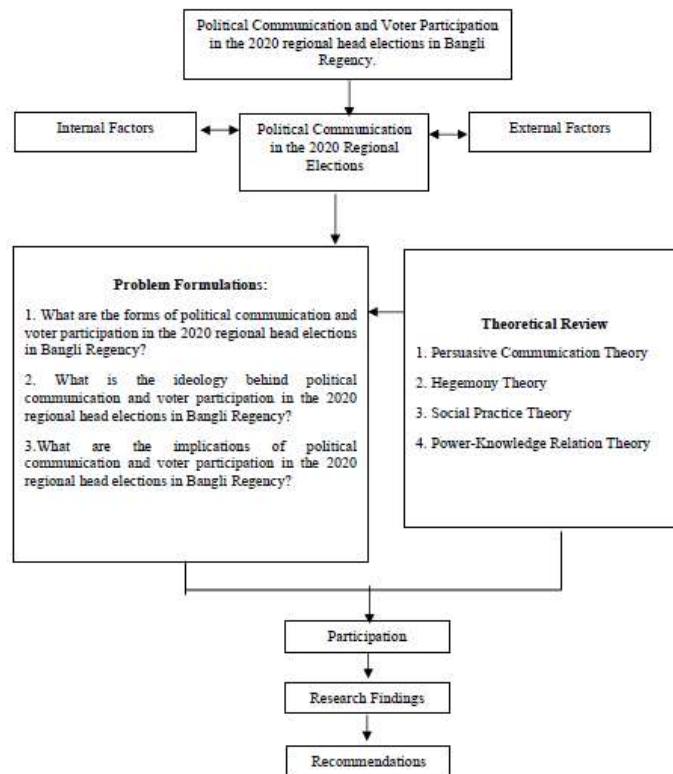
Figure 2.1. Research Model, Political Communication, and Voter Participation in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Bangli Regency

→ : Influences

↔ : Mutually Influences

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The name Bangli comes from the Kehen inscription issued by King Shri Adi Kunti Kentana in Saka 1126 or 1204 AD. The history of Bangli Regency has unique origins and regional traditions that are different from other regions. The origin of the name Bangli comes from the Kehen C inscription issued by King Shri Adi Kunti Kentana in Saka 1126 or 1204 AD. In accordance with a series of inscriptions, since 1991 the Bangli Regency

Government has designated May 10 as the city's anniversary. The kingdom in Bangli was founded after the fall of the Majapahit Kingdom which had an impact on the Gelgel Kingdom (region of Bali and Lombok). Dewa Agung Ketut, the ruler of Bali and Lombok, divided his territory into vassal kingdoms. Bangli became one of the vassal kingdoms which was under the direct central government of the Gelgel Kingdom with the appointment of I Gusti Wija Pulada as Anglurah in Bali in 1453. Then, in 1686 Bangli separated from the Gelgel Kingdom and became a sovereign kingdom along with the rebellion of I Gusti Agung Maruti in Gelgel. Puri Bangli was founded as the center of the Bangli kingdom by I Dewa Gde Bencingah around 1576 AD.

Geographically, Bangli Regency is the only district in Bali Province which is limited by 5 (five) districts without beaches, with an area of 52,081 Ha or 9.24% of the total area of Bali Province (563,666 Ha). Administratively, Bangli Regency is divided into 4 sub-districts and 68 villages and 4 sub-districts, namely: Susut District which consists of 9 villages, Bangli District with 4 sub-districts and 5 villages, Tembuku District with 6 villages and Kintamani District with 48 villages. The area of Bangli Regency is 52,081 Ha or 9.24% of the area of Bali Province which is 563,666 Ha. Administratively, Bangli Regency is divided into 4 sub-districts and 68 villages and 4 sub-districts, namely: Susut District which consists of 9 villages, Bangli District with 4 sub-districts and 5 villages, Tembuku District with 6 villages and Kintamani District with 48 villages. The area of Bangli Regency is 52,081 Ha or 9.24% of the area of Bali Province which is 563,666 Ha. The capital of Bangli Regency is the Bangli urban area, which includes Kubu Village, Cempaga Village, Kawan Village and Bebalang Village.

As the largest agricultural area in Bali province, Bangli Regency has various varieties of food crops that are suitable for development, especially dry land crops such as coffee, oranges, bananas and cocoa. Orange plants with high productivity contribute to improving the standard of living of the Bangli people. The fertile nature and highlands make the air relatively cool compared to other districts and cities in Bali Province. The factors above encourage Bangli people to work more as farmers, although in the last ten years some have shifted to become artisans, construction workers and small businesses. Such conditions have influenced people's behavior in interacting and involvement in organizations, both social and political organizations. Bangli society, like most agricultural societies, does not like polemics and conflict, so they try to avoid the option of organizing in a political party which is full of dynamics.

Political communication is aimed at providing understanding to the community regarding the stages, how to vote, and things that need to be avoided in choosing regional leaders. Socialization is an effort by the state to provide information to the people in the regions so that they know the techniques and processes of recruiting leaders that they want according to the development needs in the region. The breadth of the community to determine leaders according to the mandate of Law no. 23 of 2014 concerning regional government. In this law, elected leaders are given the authority and obligation to plan and implement development programs according to the potential and capabilities of the region. Socialization during the Covid-19 pandemic, which was held by the Bangli Regency KPU, coalition political parties, and traditional elites in various ways such as through social media, limited face-to-face, loudspeakers, banners and billboards. Socialization using social media was aimed at targeting voters who have smartphones, while limited face-to-face socialization with a maximum of 25 (twenty-five) people was intended for voters who did not understand the internet, especially those living in rural and mountainous areas of Kintamani District. Billboards, banners and loudspeakers were means of socialization intended for road users and voting communities that were not reached by socialization through social media and face-to-face.

The ideology that the KPU launched to carry out socialization in accordance with constitutional provisions. Success in carrying out the Regional Head Election socialization is an added value for the assessment of their future careers. The success of the KPU in organizing the Regional Head Elections is also material for strengthening the recommendations of the DPRD in every determination of the budget for each KPU program. The ideology of the coalition political parties was the loudest heard in the community, as a benchmark for the popularity of the party and the electability of the party in the community. The victory of the coalition's candidate pair will open up a lot of room for ease of cooperation between the executive and legislative for the sake of community empowerment. Likewise, party administrators as individuals will find it easier to obtain facilities, business opportunities and careers.

The ideology of the candidate pairs is certainly the victory that can be achieved with a dominant vote. Through socialization, the candidate pairs can introduce themselves and their programs to the community. In addition to mastering the program to be implemented when serving, adequate funds are also needed to finance during socialization and campaigns, both related to operational costs and punias during

socialization. Victory is an intermediate goal to gain power and with power they can realize their ideas and ideas to develop the region including cultivating personal wealth. The ideology of the winning team, voters, and traditional villages is very dominant in coloring the implementation of socialization and the Regional Head Elections in general. The winning team certainly has personal goals ideally participating in developing the region through empowering political democracy, but there are also hidden goals such as obtaining smooth relations and other benefit relations for personal gain.

Various implications arising from the implementation of political communication during the Regional Head Elections in Bangli Regency, which affect the quality of the output of efforts to develop democracy. The democratic space as ordered by law is often influenced by subjective factors of political elites. The implementation of democracy in Bangli Regency is still colored by various problems, causing implications for society and the development of democracy. The problems of socialization of the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Bangli Regency were mainly still constrained by limited resources, both facilities and organizing officers, and the poor political culture of the community. The high cost of implementing the stages of the Regional Head Elections and the costs incurred by candidate pairs is a recurring problem in direct Regional Head Elections, especially in the 2020 Regional Head Elections during the Covid-19 pandemic. Political communication carried out by the elites is often not well understood by voters, which leads to different understandings, perceptions and actions in the field. Limited ownership and social media networks encourage public apathy towards the implementation of socialization. Political culture is influenced by the still low literacy of some communities towards elections. Public interest in politics is still not balanced with interest in other sectors, such as the economy and tourism. The community still believes that politics belongs only to politicians who are full of competition, intimidation and turmoil. This perception has led to fear, so they will avoid anything related to politics.

Based on the descriptions in the previous chapters related to political communication in voter participation in the 2020 Regional Head Elections during the Covid-19 pandemic, in Bangli Regency which includes the forms of political communication, the ideologies of the actors contained in political communication and their implications, three conclusions can be drawn as follows;

1. The forms of political communication and voter participation in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Bangli Regency, namely the forms of political communication of the coalition political parties in the 2020 Regional Head

Elections, the forms of political communication of the KPU in the 2020 Regional Head Elections, the KPU socialization process in the 2020 Regional Head Elections, digitization of socialization materials for the 2020 Regional Head Elections, props and budget for socialization of the 2020 Regional Head Elections and Bawaslu's political communication in the socialization of the 2020 Regional Head Elections.

2. Although various efforts were made by the KPU and political parties as official institutions, there were still things that caused political communication to be less than optimal, such as many voters who did not have cell phones, poor communication networks in certain areas, especially in Kintamani District, public apathy towards elections, voters still determining their choices with compensation, limited officers and facilities, multiple identities were still found, deceased voters were still listed on the Permanent Voter List (DPT), and new voters who were not included in the DPT.

3. The ideology of political actors in political communication and voter participation in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Bangli Regency was difficult to avoid amid the ongoing crisis. Various hidden motives from every actor involved in political communication. The interests that come from the actors not only disrupt the course of socialization, but also affect the principles of democracy and voter participation. The KPU's ideology in political communication for the 2020 Regional Head Elections was aimed at increasing voter political participation, being able to improve public political understanding, and securing the hidden ideology of each commissioner. Meanwhile, the ideology of political parties interested in socialization is to disseminate the identity, vision, mission of the party, for the popularity and electability of the party and the victory of the nominated candidate pair. The interest of the successful team is certainly to make the victory of the supported candidate pair a success so that the goals of the group and individuals can be bridged in the future. Bawaslu's ideology is to ensure that political communication in the socialization of the Regional Head Elections takes place in an orderly, safe manner in accordance with applicable regulations.

The implications of political communication and voter participation in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Bangli Regency are that many voters with disabilities, elderly

and those without cell phones did not understand the socialization of the Regional Head Elections. Many voters were unwilling to attend limited socialization for fear of contracting Covid-19. Likewise, people who were in the hospital and people with disabilities/disabilities were largely not reached by the socialization of the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Bangli Regency. The 2020 Regional Head Elections, during the Covid-19 period, have encouraged the rise of pragmatism among voters. Some voters will exercise their rights if they receive compensation from the candidate pairs.

CONCLUSION

Based on the descriptions in the previous chapters related to political communication in voter participation in the 2020 Regional Head Elections during the Covid-19 pandemic, in Bangli Regency which includes the forms of political communication, the ideologies of the actors contained in political communication and their implications, three conclusions can be drawn as follows.

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The findings of this research show two categories, first, practical findings. First, online political communication limits the references for elderly and disabled prospective voters residing in mountainous areas. Second, the ideology of the actors in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Bangli Regency has reduced the freedom of voters to choose candidate pairs. Third, the occurrence of power-knowledge relations of community elites, in political parties, and the KPU institution in determining the schedule and place for socialization.

Second, theoretical findings. First, persuasive communication theory is less effectively applied to online political communication, and online communication limits social interaction during Covid-19. Second, hegemony theory is very effectively applied to the Bangli community who consistently practice local culture. Local cultures such as selunglung sebayan taka, nyame braya, dadia, influence voters in determining their choices. Third, the power-knowledge relation theory cannot be applied to all socio-political conditions, as evidenced by the dominance of traditional figures over voters in

determining choices, and the authority of the central executive board in determining the direction of coalitions and candidate pairs.

Researcher's suggestions to the local government, to increase facilities, human resources and efforts to foster a political culture in the community in Bangli Regency. Adequate facilities and human resources are able to improve the quality of the implementation of democracy. Ensure the neutrality of the civil service, law enforcement officers and traditional administrators in the election and regional head election process to avoid vested interests, undermining the principles of political democracy and violating citizens' rights. The implications of the 2020 Regional Head Elections have broadly changed people's thoughts, attitudes and behaviors. Likewise, the behavior of formal and informal institutions involved in political communication in the socialization of the Regional Head Elections.

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