


The Gap in Public Understanding of Law Number 10 of 2016 on Regional Head Elections at the Regency Level: Efforts toward Legal Dissemination

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Abstract:

Local elections (Pilkada) is a fundamental mechanism in strengthening local democracy and citizen participation. However, public understanding of the legal framework of local elections often experiences gaps, resulting in uneven participation and lack of public legal awareness. This study aims to: (1) analyze the level of public understanding of Law No. 10 of 2016 on regional elections, (2) identify the effectiveness of law socialization programs in increasing democratic awareness, and (3) formulate policy recommendations for strengthening election law education at the local level. The research method uses a qualitative approach through focus group discussion (FGD) and in-depth interviews with Pekon Tegalsari community as the main participants, as well as analysis of related policy documents. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns of understanding gaps and barriers to socialization. The results showed that there is a significant gap between the design of election policies and public understanding, especially on the aspects of the rights and obligations of voters. The existing socialization Program has not optimally reached all segments of society, especially marginal groups. These findings emphasize the importance of an inclusive legal socialization approach, involving synergies between local governments, educational institutions, local media, and civil society organizations to strengthen democratic legal awareness and active participation in local elections.

Keywords: Pilkada; Legal Awareness; Socialization; Democratic Participation; Pringsewu Regency

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Introduction

Elections in Indonesia is a democratic process that involves public participation in choosing leaders and representatives of the people (Wibowo et al. 2022). Elections are one

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of the important mechanisms in the Indonesian government system to determine policy and political decision-making. Elections can be considered as "people's parties" because they involve the active participation of all citizens in determining the leaders and representatives of the people who will hold strategic positions in the government. The electoral process is a manifestation of the principle of democracy, in which political decisions are taken by the majority through the voting mechanism. Elections serve as a means for the people to express their aspirations, thoughts and hopes about the future of the country and the well-being of society. In the process, citizens have the opportunity to vote for a candidate or political party that they think has the vision, program and commitment to bring prosperity and progress to the whole society. In Indonesia, there are several types of elections, including:

- 1) Presidential and vice presidential election: this election is conducted every five years by the people of Indonesia to elect the president and vice president.
- 2) Election of members of the House of Representatives: elected by the people to represent a particular constituency. Elections for members of the House of Representatives are held every five years.
- 3) Election of members of the House of Regional Representatives: is a legislative institution that represents the regions in Indonesia. Its members are elected by popular vote.
- 4) Regional elections: elections of regional heads, such as governors, regents, and mayors, are conducted to elect leaders at the provincial and district/city levels. Local elections are held every five years.
- 5) Legislative elections: in addition to electing the president or regional head, the people of Indonesia also elect members of the House of Representatives and the House of regional representatives through legislative elections.

The election process in Indonesia is controlled by the Election Commission which is responsible for supervising, organizing, and conducting elections in a fair and transparent manner. In addition to the Election Commission, there is also an election supervisory body that serves as an independent supervisor to ensure integrity and credibility of elections (Priandi and Roisah 2019). Elections in Indonesia have also undergone various changes along with the Times and the demands of society. In

elections, active participation from the public is essential to ensure the electoral process runs well and produces leaders who represent the aspirations of the people. However, please keep in mind that this information corresponds to knowledge up to September 2021. To get the latest information on elections in Indonesia, it is advisable to look for more recent reliable news sources.(Satria 2019b)

Elections are prone to disputes. Disputes in general elections can arise for various reasons, including differences in political views, alleged violations of election rules, accusations of fraud, sensitive election-related issues, and fierce competition between candidates or political parties.(Erick and Ikhwan 2022). Several factors that contribute to the high incidence of disputes in elections include the fact that elections often witness fierce competition between candidates or political parties. (Ansori 2019). Several factors that contribute to the high incidence of disputes in elections include the fact that elections often witness fierce competition between candidates or political parties. (Ambarini 2017). Sometimes, in the process of elections, there are allegations of violation of election rules by one of the parties involved. These violations can include illegal campaigning, money politics, ineligible voters voting, or manipulation of voter data. Distrust of the integrity of the electoral system, both on the part of election participants and voters, can lead to disputes. This can be triggered by a lack of transparency, unfairness, or concerns about errors in the vote counting process.(Polii 2021)

Of the various types of elections, the Regional Head election (Pilkada) is one that gets more attention from the public than the election of the president and Vice President. This is because the Regional Head is a position that is directly related to the area that is taken care of as an extension of the Central Government. Although the role of the Regional Head is important for the continuity of local government, there are still many people who take the Regional Head election lightly. Regional elections (Pilkada) is one

an important moment in Indonesian democracy, where the people have the right to choose their regional leaders directly, publicly, freely, confidentially, and honestly. In order to realize a quality and democratic election, active participation of all elements of society is required. The phrase "democratically elected" is flexible, so that it includes the definition of the head of the region directly by the people or by the DPRD as is generally practiced in the regions based on the provisions of applicable legislation. This provision provides an opportunity to interpret that the election of regional heads should be carried out democratically. If the clause "elected democratically" is paralleled with the process

of electing the President and Vice President at the national level, then direct elections for regional heads can also be held in the regions.(Asshiddiqie 2022).

The real implementation of existing democratic rights is contained in law No. 10 of 2016 regarding the Second Amendment to law No. 1 of 2016 on government regulation in lieu of Law No. 1 of 2014 on the election of governors, regents, and mayors. UU No. 10 of 2016 aims to strengthen democracy in Indonesia by ensuring active and meaningful participation of the people in the election process. This law regulates the stages of regional elections in detail, from preparation to implementation. In addition, this law provides equal opportunities for all citizens to nominate and be nominated as regional heads. (Simanjuntak 2017).

In recent years, the socialization of local elections has become more important due to the increasing public awareness of the importance of democracy and their rights as citizens. This socialization has been carried out by various parties, including the government, community organizations, and the mass media, to ensure that citizens have clear and accurate information about the election process. In synthesis, socialization for local elections regarding democratic rights is very important to raise public awareness of their active role in the electoral process. This socialization ensures that citizens have clear and accurate information about the electoral process, as well as allowing them to participate more actively in the electoral process. Thus, this socialization allows citizens to choose regional leaders who fit their needs and expectations, as well as to increase their confidence in the democratic system.

Methods

This community service program uses a participatory approach with andragogical learning methods to increase the understanding of democratic rights policies in the regional elections in the Tegalsari Village, Pringsewu Regency. The activities are designed not only to transfer knowledge but also to raise legal awareness and encourage positive attitudinal changes toward democratic participation.

The implementation integrated three learning methods. First, socialization and lectures to systematically convey factual information about: (a) the importance of citizens' democratic rights and obligations in regional elections; (b) the impact of democratic participation on local political stability; and (c) mechanisms for preventing voting rights abuse and voter protection. Second, open discussions to clarify complex concepts in Law

No. 10 of 2016 concerning Regional Elections, identify specific obstacles for local communities, and build constructive dialogue between facilitators and participants. Third, practical demonstrations and simulations related to regional election procedures at polling stations, violation reporting mechanisms, and interactive role-plays to increase voter confidence.

The learning materials are structured into three integrated modules: Module I covers understanding Law No. 10 of 2016, the principles of regional elections, and the rights and obligations of voters; Module II analyzes the impact of democratic participation on the quality of regional governance and social stability; Module III focuses on preventive strategies to identify and address practices that threaten the integrity of regional elections.

Through this integrated approach, the community of Pekon Tegalsari is expected to achieve: increased knowledge regarding the Regional Election Law, increased legal awareness of the importance of active participation, positive changes in attitudes that encourage informed participation, and the development of a collective commitment to maintaining the integrity of local democracy.

Result and Discussion

1. Efforts to Increase Public Understanding of Democratic Policies in Facing Regional Elections

Democracy is a system of government that grants every individual the freedom to participate in decision-making that impacts their shared life. Democratic rights, such as the right to vote, express opinions, and participate in government, are not only symbols of political freedom but also serve as the main foundation for efforts to achieve community welfare, especially at the regional level (Bawamenewi 2019). With the proper implementation of democratic rights, communities can actively participate in determining policies relevant to their needs, thus creating inclusive and equitable development. Regional governments play a strategic role in determining the direction of local development that aligns with the needs of the local community. Through democratic rights, communities have the opportunity to elect regional leaders. Communities can elect regional heads who are considered capable of bringing positive change and have a vision that aligns with their needs.

The right to express opinions through deliberation mechanisms, citizen forums, or social media allows the public to directly participate in development planning. The right to monitor and criticize regional policies ensures that the government operates in accordance with the people's mandate. When citizens actively exercise these rights, regional leaders will be encouraged to carry out their duties more responsibly and transparently, thereby creating policies that are truly oriented towards the people's welfare (Cerdas and Afandi 2019) . Democracy provides a significant opportunity for the public to fight for their welfare through fair mechanisms.

In a democratic system, the public has the right to participate in development planning, such as in the preparation of the Regional Budget (APBD) or the Development Planning Conference (Musrenbang). With public involvement, development can be more targeted, such as improving infrastructure, enhancing health and education services, which directly impact the people's welfare. Through the democratic process, the public can elect competent and virtuous regional leaders (Gaffar 2013) . Leaders elected through a healthy democratic process tend to have a greater commitment to implementing programs that prioritize community needs, such as poverty alleviation, local economic empowerment, and environmental protection. Democratic rights also include the public's role in overseeing the implementation of regional policies. Through oversight, the public can ensure that public funds are managed transparently and used for the public interest, not for the benefit of a select few. (Hadi and Zamroni 2023) .

A well-functioning democracy can encourage the creation of equitable policies, such as social assistance programs for vulnerable groups, affirmative action policies for indigenous communities, or the empowerment of small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Such policies can reduce social and economic disparities in the regions. Although democratic rights have great potential to improve prosperity, the practice of money politics faces a number of challenges: Money politics can diminish the quality of democracy by electing incompetent leaders or those who only prioritize personal interests (Harahap 2021) . Many people are apathetic about politics because they feel their votes do not bring meaningful change. Public misunderstanding of democratic rights is often exploited by certain parties for unhealthy interests.

To address these challenges, strategic steps are needed, including improving democratic education. Local governments and community organizations must actively provide political education to the public, especially in remote areas. Strict law

enforcement against vote buying practices is crucial to maintaining the quality of democracy. The government must create more inclusive spaces for participation, such as public discussion forums, policy surveys, or online complaints, so that the public feels involved in the decision-making process. Several regions in Indonesia have demonstrated that properly utilized democratic rights can bring prosperity to their communities. For example, village fund allocation policies directly monitored by the community through democratic mechanisms have successfully improved the quality of infrastructure in rural areas (Hardjanti and Hartono 2016) . Furthermore, the success of several regional heads in reducing poverty and improving the quality of education also serves as clear evidence that democracy can be a tool for creating prosperous societies.

Democratic rights play a crucial role in realizing the well-being of local communities. Through active participation in electing leaders, expressing aspirations, and overseeing government operations, citizens can ensure that policies truly reflect their needs. However, to maximize this potential, challenges such as vote buying, apathy, and low political education must be addressed. With a shared commitment from the community, government, and other stakeholders, democracy can be an effective pathway to equitable and sustainable development in the regions (Helen 2019)

Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) are a crucial form of democracy in Indonesia, where every citizen has the right to directly elect their leaders. However, the public often doesn't fully understand the importance of their participation in this process. In Tegalsari Village, Pringsewu Regency, public awareness of democratic rights in Pilkada still needs to be increased to ensure optimal implementation and the production of quality leaders. (Hulain 2023) . Therefore, various efforts can be made to raise this awareness. One important step in raising public awareness is to conduct political education programs. Local governments, together with social institutions and community organizations, can conduct outreach activities explaining citizens' voting rights, the importance of participation in regional elections, and the correct election mechanisms (Irrubai 2014) . This outreach can be conducted through various media, such as direct outreach at the village level, banner installations, and social media that can reach a wider audience. In these programs, the public is also given an understanding of the consequences of their absence from the regional elections, which can affect the quality of the elected leaders.

Easy access to information related to the regional elections is also a crucial factor in raising public awareness. The Tegalsari Village Government can collaborate with the

General Elections Commission (KPU) to provide adequate information facilities, such as locations for announcing voter data verification results and scheduling election activities. Furthermore, providing information on regional head candidates, their visions and missions, and their proposed programs can help the public make informed choices. Establishing information centers in each village or sub-district can facilitate access to the information they need (Ningtyas 2021) . Community leaders play a crucial role in raising awareness about the importance of the regional elections. Community leaders, including village heads, religious leaders, and youth leaders, can be agents of change in increasing political participation. Through direct communication with residents, they can explain the importance of voting rights and how to choose the right leader according to the community's needs. Strengthening communication networks between community groups in Tegalsari Village can also expand the reach of information about the regional elections and strengthen a sense of social responsibility to participate in voting (Olivia 2020) .

In today's digital age, technology can be leveraged to increase political participation. The Tegalsari Village Government can utilize social media as a tool to educate the public about regional elections and facilitate public access to information about prospective leaders and the election process. (Pardede 2014) . Furthermore, mobile applications that provide information about regional elections and election procedures can be developed, so that citizens no longer feel confused or have difficulty participating. Democratic awareness must be instilled not only in adults but also from an early age. One way to involve the younger generation in the world of democracy is to include democracy education in the school curriculum. Through extracurricular activities, seminars, or discussions about democracy, students can be given an understanding of their voting rights and responsibilities within the political system (Polii 2021) . Thus, in the future, they will be more concerned about the regional election process and more aware of the importance of their role in determining leaders who will advance their region.

Often, low participation rates in regional elections are caused by economic and social factors, such as the inability to leave work or residence to vote. Therefore, policies are needed to facilitate access for people living in remote areas or with economic limitations (Priandi and Roisah 2019) . For example, providing free transportation to polling stations or scheduling elections at more flexible times is expected to increase public participation. Furthermore, transparent and fraud-free oversight of the regional

election process is also crucial (Satria 2019a) . People who feel confident that elections are conducted fairly and honestly will be more motivated to participate. The government, along with election supervisory bodies, needs to increase oversight of potential fraud, such as voter money politics or voter intimidation. Strict law enforcement against these violations will increase public trust in the regional election system.

Raising public awareness regarding the exercise of democratic rights during the regional elections in Tegalsari Village, Pringsewu Regency, requires a collaborative effort between the government, community leaders, educational institutions, and technology. With appropriate educational programs, adequate access to information, empowerment of local leaders, and the use of advanced technology, it is hoped that the public will increasingly understand the importance of their participation in the regional elections (Simanjuntak 2017) . Furthermore, strict oversight and law enforcement are also crucial to creating a fair and fraud-free electoral environment. All of these steps will help create a more sustainable and high-quality democracy in Tegalsari Village.

2. Policy for Increasing Legal Literacy of Democracy in the Tegalsari Pekon Community: Implementation Standards and Mechanisms for Preventing Political Manipulation in Regional Elections

Regional head elections are one of the main mechanisms of democracy, providing the people with the opportunity to directly elect their leaders. As a form of local democracy, regional elections reflect the extent to which democratic principles are implemented in a region (Susanto, n.d.) . However, their implementation often faces various challenges, such as low voter participation, the practice of money politics, and conflicts between candidate supporters. Therefore, ideal democratic policies are needed to ensure that regional elections run smoothly, produce competent leaders, and advance public welfare.

1. Principles of Ideal Democratic Policy

The ideal democratic policy in regional elections must be based on the following principles:

- a. **Transparency:** The regional election process must be transparent, from candidate registration to vote counting.

- b. Participation: All elements of society, including vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and the disabled, must be involved in the regional election process.
- c. Honesty and Fairness: Regional elections must be free from data manipulation, intimidation, or money politics practices.
- d. Accountability: The government and election organizers must be responsible for the smooth running and results of the election.

2. Ideal Policies in the Regional Election Stages

To implement these principles, an ideal democratic policy must include several main aspects in the stages of the regional elections:

- a. Public Education and Outreach: Political education for the public is crucial to increasing participation and understanding of the regional elections. The government, the General Elections Commission (KPU), and civil society organizations must provide clear information about the candidates, their visions and missions, and their work programs. Create voter education programs that focus on the importance of voting intelligently and responsibly. Use various platforms, such as social media, citizen forums, and direct campaigns, to reach all levels of society.
- b. Regulations to Prevent Money Politics: Money politics is a serious threat to democracy. To prevent it, firm policies are needed, such as imposing severe sanctions on those involved in money politics, both those who give and receive it. Strict oversight of campaign activities by the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) and the public. Public education to reject all forms of bribery in regional elections is essential.
- c. Improving Accessibility for Voters: Ideal democratic policies should ensure that every citizen has easy access to participate in regional elections, including providing polling stations (TPS) that are accessible to people with disabilities and the elderly. Simplifying procedures for voters living in remote areas or those who are traveling, such as by providing online voting facilities or postal ballots.

- d. Transparency in Campaign Fund Management: Campaigns are often a time of opaque spending, creating disparities between candidates. An ideal policy should include limits on campaign funding to create fair competition, a requirement to report the sources and uses of campaign funds to the public, and strict oversight by independent institutions to prevent misuse of funds.
- e. Security and Order Protection: Conflicts during regional elections, both physical and digital, must be anticipated with appropriate security policies, such as increasing security in conflict-prone areas by involving law enforcement officers. Firmly handling the spread of hoaxes or hate speech on social media. Building good communication between candidate supporters to maintain peace during the election process.
- f. Strengthening the Role of Election Organizers: The KPU and Bawaslu must strengthen their roles to ensure that regional elections run according to regulations. Ideal policies include increasing the capacity of election organizers through comprehensive training. Granting Bawaslu broader authority to prosecute violations during regional elections. Ensuring the independence of election organizers from political interference.

The ideal democratic policy for regional elections (Pilkada) is one that ensures the election process is transparent, inclusive, fair, and accountable. This requires collaboration between the government, election organizers, the public, and various related parties to create a quality democratic system (Thohir 2017) . By implementing appropriate policies, regional elections will not only be a forum for electing leaders but also a means to strengthen public participation and build more prosperous regions. Regional head elections (Pilkada) are a crucial mechanism in Indonesia's democratic system, providing the public with the opportunity to directly determine their leaders. However, the public's level of understanding of democratic policies often hinders ensuring effective and participatory elections. In Tegalsari Village, Pringsewu Regency, efforts to improve public understanding of democratic policies are urgently needed, particularly in fostering informed and responsible participation.

Democratic policies involve principles such as freedom of choice, transparency, and accountability. Without a proper understanding of these policies, the public is vulnerable to practices that undermine democracy, such as vote buying, smear

campaigns, or information manipulation (Wahyuni and Desiandri 2024) . Improving public understanding of democratic values will help them make decisions based on rationality and integrity, rather than simply emotional influence or social pressure.

The government, the General Elections Commission (KPU), and civil society organizations must consistently disseminate information about democratic policies. This program can include educating the public about the importance of voting rights, the electoral process, and the role of the community in monitoring the election process. This outreach should be conducted directly through group discussions, village hall meetings, or through local media that can reach a wider audience. Local religious, traditional, and youth leaders have significant influence in shaping public opinion. By involving them as agents of change, messages related to democratic policies can be conveyed in a way that is more easily accepted by the public. Involving local leaders can also foster a sense of ownership in the democratic process, making the public feel they are a vital part of the election process.

Technology can be leveraged to increase public understanding of democratic policies. Educational campaigns can be conducted through social media with engaging content such as infographics, short videos, and online discussions. Information about regional election policies, voter rights, and election procedures can be easily accessed by the public through these digital platforms. Providing simple and easy-to-understand educational materials, such as leaflets, posters, and short videos, can help the public understand democratic policies. These materials should be tailored to the needs of the Tegalsari Pekon community, who may have varying levels of education or access to information. Democratic education can be provided not only through formal institutions but also through the family environment. Parents can instill democratic values in their children, such as the importance of respecting differences of opinion and respecting the rights of others. In schools, activities such as election simulations or group discussions about democratic policies can help students grasp these concepts from an early age.

Increasing the understanding of the Pekon Tegalsari community regarding democratic policies in facing the Pilkada is an important step to strengthen democracy at the local level.

Through ongoing education, the involvement of community leaders, the use of technology, and education in families and schools, it is hoped that the public will better

understand and appreciate democratic values. This will make their participation in regional elections more meaningful, and the election results will reflect the true aspirations of the people. All parties, including the government, educational institutions, and the community, need to work together to achieve this.

Conclusion

Increasing awareness and understanding of democratic law in the Tegalsari Pekon community, Pringsewu Regency, is not merely a voluntary program, but a public policy imperative to break the chain of political manipulation and produce substantial, democratic leaders. Awareness of the distribution of democratic rights is the foundation. The community must be aware of the importance of active participation and be able to use their voice wisely. Strategies for achieving this include: (1) ongoing socialization integrated into the education system and community forums; (2) mobilizing local figures as peer educators for marginalized segments; (3) utilizing accessible local and digital media; and (4) contextual education using local languages and dialogical methods. Understanding democratic policy is instrumental: the community must understand the Regional Election Law and voter protection mechanisms so they are able to critically evaluate prospective leaders, identify manipulation, and conduct active oversight. Strategies for achieving this include: (1) structured formal and informal education; (2) involving multiple stakeholders (religious leaders, youth, community organizations); and (3) emphasizing the ability to identify and reject money politics practices and empty promises. Both complement each other: awareness creates motivation for participation, understanding provides the capacity to become informed and critical electors. Without both, regional elections will continue to produce leaders with formal legitimacy but no substantive ones. Commitments that regional governments must make: (a) Allocate adequate resources for ongoing socialization and education, (b) integrate democratic legal awareness into the formal education system and community forums, (c) involve civil society organizations as implementation partners, (d) set measurable targets and conduct periodic evaluations, and (e) create *feedback mechanisms* for sustainable development.

With this strategy and commitment, the people of Pekon Tegalsari will become an electorate that is aware, informed, and critical in maintaining the integrity of local

democracy and ensuring that the regional elections produce leaders who represent the will of the people.

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