Dynamics of Online Campaign Implementation in Regional Head Elections (Case Study of the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections in Semarang)

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ABSTRACT: The covid-19 pandemic has caused the implementation of the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections in Semarang to face a few challenges. All stages must adapt to health protocols. Including the campaign stages which must be online-based. With this new method, many party doubt about the effectiveness. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to examine how the dynamics of the implementation of online campaign stages in the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections in Semarang, as well as to find out what problems still need to be fixed.

KEYWORDS: Online Campaign; 2020 Simultaneous Regional Elections; Semarang City

I. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has become a scary specter for many countries in the world. How could it not be, many sectors are affected. Starting from health, economy, education, social, culture and others. Like it or not, lifestyle patterns must change. In order to suppress the number of infections. Even further to stop the spread of this disease.

Indonesia is one of the countries that has also been affected by this pandemic. Since the beginning of March 2020 until now, countless people have been exposed and even died. Even through Presidential Decree (Keppres) Number 11 and 12 of 2020, the Covid-19 Pandemic was designated as a Corona Covid-19 Public Health Emergency and the Covid-19 Non-Natural Disaster as a National Disaster. The government continues to strive to suppress these numbers so that they do not continue to increase with various policies. Such as Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB), Transitional PSBB, Strict PSBB, Implementation of Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM) in Java-Bali, Micro PPKM, Emergency PPKM until now the latest PPKM based on levels from one to four (Desi Permatasari, 2021). All of this is done solely to prevent people from gathering. Thus reducing the potential for widespread transmission. Given that the Covid-19 can be transmitted easily. Namely through droplets that can spread through the air.

The public must comply with the policy. All for the common good. Because they are also worried about being exposed to the disease. Crowds are starting to be rarely seen. It can be seen from the quiet markets and various crowded centers when the policy was first implemented. Everyone is turning to using technology. To be able to meet needs. Such as online shopping and so on.

When focusing on implementing the restriction policy, the Indonesian Government faces challenges. Namely when faced with something urgent. Where if it is done, the potential to attract a very high crowd occurs. Namely the implementation of the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections. Yes, based on KPU data, there are 270 regions participating in the 2020 Regional Head Elections with details of 9 provinces, 224 regencies, and 37 cities.

As it is known, the Regional Head Elections can be said to be a people’s democracy party. Where many efforts are made by candidate pairs to gain public sympathy and support. Various events such as grand concerts, grand declarations and others will be very common. Which of course invites hundreds or even thousands of people. This is a problem. Because the implementation of the 2020 Regional Head Elections was carried out during the extraordinary conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic. Of course, the government must think about it. There was also a discourse to postpone the Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) schedule from what it should have been until the pandemic subsided. However, this is also unwise. Moreover, it is not yet known when the exact date of the pandemic will subside. This will later cause a power vacuum which will have an impact on less than optimal regional performance.

The government continues to calculate. Ultimately, the General Election Commission as the organizer of the Pilkada proposed three new options. To replace the postponed implementation time. Namely on December 9, 2020, March 7, 2021 and September 29, 2021. With these options, the government accepted and held discussions with various parties and related agencies regarding the right date for the Pilkada. And after going through a long discussion between the Ministry of Home Affairs, General Election
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Commission (KPU), General Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), People’s Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia (DPR RI), Election Organizer Honorary Council (DKPP), finally the President issued Presidential Decree Number 22 of 2020 where the implementation time for the Pilkada (voting) was officially changed. From the original date of September 23, 2020 to December 9, 2020. (Publication of the Ministry of Home Affairs, 2020). After that, the Government issued Law Number 6 of 2020 as the legal basis for the implementation of Pilkada in the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

After the date was set, various preparations were made. Starting from thinking about the procedures for implementation, preparing regulations, implementing health protocols, mechanisms for all stages and many others. All of them are solely to create a safe Pilkada for both organizers and citizens as participants. And to accommodate it, the KPU issued 21 KPU Regulations. Where the contents contain technical changes to the implementation of Pilkada in the midst of the Pandemic.

From many stages of the election, one of the stages that will steal attention and requires careful consideration is related to the campaign implementation mechanism. As it is known in general elections, candidate pairs often take advantage of the campaign momentum to gather large numbers of people. In order to gain support. However, during a pandemic like this, it is impossible to do it. And as a result, so that the campaign can continue, the KPU is looking for a way out. Where they issued KPU Regulation number 13 of 2020.

In the regulation, Article 58 stipulates that political parties, candidate pairs, campaign teams, and/or other parties prioritize the campaign method of limited meeting and face-to-face meeting and dialogues through social media and online media during the Pilkada carried out in the midst of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Considering that this method is the safest way to limit contact with many people. In addition, it is more effective and efficient. Considering that it can be done anywhere, such as through social media or electronic media. In this case, the KPU emphasized the change in the way of campaigning from face-to-face to online.

Not all groups immediately accepted the proposed method. There are many negative and positive assessments from various groups regarding online campaigns. On the one hand, online campaigns facilitate the development of technology to be applied in the Indonesian Regional Head Elections system. Where this is in accordance with the flow of modernization and globalization. It is also the most possible to do during a pandemic because it does not bring together large masses directly. However, on the other hand, this method is considered ineffective. And risky to harm the candidate pair. Because the candidate pair is considered less able to interact with the community. So they cannot understand the demands of the people for a new leader. At the same time, they are less able to control the support base for themselves.

But what can we do? The pandemic inevitably forces everyone to comply with the procedures that have been designed. And various electoral districts are required to implement it. Including in Semarang. The KPU of Semarang City must also socialize the stages of the online campaign as stated in the KPU Decree. And as a result, online campaigns were carried out in the 2020 Regional Head Elections.

Then after the Pilkada was implemented, a statement emerged. How is the evaluation of the online campaign scheme? Is the scheme still feasible to be maintained for the next Pilkada which is planned to be held simultaneously in 2024?

The writer will analyze the evaluation of the implementation of online campaigns, especially in the implementation of the 2020 Regional Head Elections by taking a sample from the Regional Head Elections in Semarang. In order to find out how the potential for its implementation in the future can be known

II. METHOD

This research is a socio-legal research is conducted with a legislative approach and a case approach. Where this research will take a sample case of the dynamics of implementing online campaigns in the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections in Semarang. As well as examining existing problems by using the prevailing laws and regulations. The data collection method was carried out by observation and interviews with related parties regarding the implementation of the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Semarang. After that, the data will be presented in the form of analytical description and analyzed using qualitative methods

III. DISCUSSION

A. DYNAMICS OF ONLINE CAMPAIGN IMPLEMENTATION IN THE 2020 REGIONAL HEAD ELECTIONS OF SEMARANG CITY

Indonesia is one of the countries that adheres to a democratic system. And one of the characteristics that can be seen is the routine holding of general elections. The election itself functions to elect anyone who will fill a certain political position. (Fajlurrahman Jurdi, 2018). Starting from the president, vice president, regional leaders from the central level to small regions and legislative members. This is done so that the candidates who are elected later can carry out the people’s mandate in order to achieve the goals of the country. One of them is to prosper the people.

As explained above, according to its importance, the Election is divided into several. It is the Presidential Election (Pilpres), Legislative Election (Pileg), Regional Head Elections (Pilkada), and many others. All of them are important to be held on time.
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Especially approaching the end of the previous official’s term of office. Because if not, there will be a power vacuum that will affect the performance of the related government.

This is what the Government of the Republic of Indonesia is aware of. In 2020, approximately 270 political positions in the regions entered their term of office. Willy-nilly, the Pilkada had to be held. But unexpectedly the pandemic came. And disrupted the Pilkada scheme that had been designed long ago.

The government also continues to coordinate with the election organizers. And finally it was decided that the Pilkada would still be held. It’s just that it has been postponed from the initial schedule. From the original date of September 23, 2020 to December 9, 2020. The impact of this decision, the government must also be ready to adapt health protocols in the Pilkada implementation scheme during the pandemic. For example, increasing the budget for the procurement of health protocol equipment, increasing the number of election committees and supervisors, adapting health protocols at each stage of the Pilkada and many others.

Of course, everything has its own challenges. Because in every stage starting from the Formation of the Voting Supervisory Committee (PPS) and the Voting Organizing Group (KPPS), data collection of the Permanent Voters List (DPT), registration and determination of candidates, campaign, voting, dispute resolution to the determination of the Pilkada results have their own problems. And one of the most problem-prone stages is the campaign stage.

As it is known, the campaign itself is the most strategic stage in the implementation of the Pilkada. As explained by Roger and Storey, a campaign is organized communication with the aim of creating a certain effect on sustainable targets in a certain period. (Ruslan, 2020). And for the Candidate Oriented Campaign type, the goal is none other than to gain supporters’ votes in order to win a political activity in government.

This is what makes the campaign an event for candidates to mobilize many of their political machines to be able to help gaining support from the community so that they can vote for them. Of course in various ways. Such as with grand concerts, grand declarations, dialogues and gatherings between candidates and supporters and many others. And most of them definitely involve a large number of people.

This is a potential problem in the Pilkada in the midst of a pandemic. Where large mass gatherings are strictly prohibited. In order to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Then seeing this problem, the KPU as the organizer of the Pilkada also overhauled the campaign rules scheme. So that it is safe to implement during a pandemic. All of which are stated in KPU Regulation number 13 of 2020 Article 58.

In the article, the KPU instructs political parties, candidate pairs, campaign teams, and/or other parties to prioritize limited meeting campaign methods and face-to-face meeting and dialogues through social media and online media during the Pilkada carried out in the midst of the Covid-19 Pandemic. This is certainly expected that candidate pairs and their supporters can adapt technology such as social media and other digital platforms to communicate with the public. So that direct contact can be limited and prevent the spread of the disease.

With these rules, each candidate pair is obliged to comply. The same thing happened in the Election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Semarang. It should be noted that in the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections, Semarang City only had a single candidate who was the incumbent. Namely Hendrar Prihadi and Hevearita Gunaryanti Rahayu. They will be up against an empty box.

This is certainly an advantage in itself. Because the candidate pair can maximize support without any competitors. And this is what Hendri-Ita took advantage of. Even though they used online media, the campaign was still carried out on a large scale. Based on data from the General Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) of Semarang City, in the 2020 Regional Head Elections, the Candidate Pair, Hendri-Ita, submitted a total of Campaign Notification Letters (SPK) to the Big City Police Resort (Polrestabes), KPU and Bawaslu of Semarang City that they would hold 234 online campaigns spread across 16 sub-districts throughout Semarang City.

The online campaign content was also made as attractive as possible to attract public sympathy. Such as holding virtual urban farming training for mothers by Ita (Kompas.tv, 2020), implementing a virtual grand campaign (Detik.com, 2020), campaigning via virtual box at the sub-district office and many others.

The virtual campaign content is also diverse. The candidate pair, Hendri-Ita, and their winning team have also designed interactive content to gain support from Semarang residents. Starting with promoting work programs, education and training for certain work programs to holding interactive dialogues with various influencers. Which in fact have relatively many fans on social media.

This was also quite successful. Although many parties doubted the ineffectiveness of online campaigns, in Semarang the public’s enthusiasm for participating in the campaign was very high. One of them was the grand virtual campaign held via the zoom application on September 4, 2020. At that time, based on the report of the cyber division and the publication of Hendi-Ita’s winning team, there were 7200 accounts with more than 26,832 people participating in the activity. Not to mention the campaign via the virtual box installed in the sub-district office. Where it can definitely be watched by every citizen in various regions.

The peak of the success of online campaign in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Semarang was also seen in the implementation of voting. Where based on data from the Semarang City General Election Commission (KPU), the level of public participation in voting has increased from the previous Pilkada period. From the beginning it was only 65 percent, now it has increased to 68.62
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percent. With a total of 805,524 votes entered from the total Permanent Voters List of 1,174,068 people. The total of 782,764 votes were declared valid while 22,760 were declared invalid.

And with a precise strategy in utilizing online campaigns, the Candidate Pair, Hendi-Ita, was able to gain maximum votes. Namely reaching 716,693 votes. In contrast to the empty box which received 66,071 votes (KPU Publication, 2020). This result finally led to Hendi-Ita being re-elected as Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Semarang for the period of 2020-2024. And they were inaugurated by the Ministry of Home Affairs who was represented by the Governor of Central Java, Ganjar Pranowo on February 26, 2021 at Gedung Grandika Bhakti Praja, Komplek Gubernur Jawa Tengah.

B. EVALUATION OF THE ONLINE CAMPAIGN IMPLEMENTATION IN THE 2020 REGIONAL HEAD ELECTIONS IN SEMARANG

As discussed earlier, the assumption that online campaigns in the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections would be less than optimal in gaining support was proven not to apply in Semarang. Despite using this method, public enthusiasm for participating in the democracy party remained high. Even higher than the Regional Head Elections during normal situation.

This is triggered by several factors. Such as more and more citizens, especially the younger generation, are updating about technology, more and more older generations are becoming tech-savvy, the existence of situational factors such as globalization and pandemics that inevitably make people adapt and many others. This is also in line with data from the Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association (APJII), where the number of internet users in Central Java is ranked 2nd. With users reaching 26,536,320 people. And big cities like Solo and Semarang are the biggest contributors.

With all these achievements, the online campaign method can also be a recommendation in the implementation of the next Pilkada. Moreover, as time progresses, the technological knowledge of the community also increases. However, there is still homework that needs to be completed first. One of them is related to supervision.

In the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Semarang itself, it does not mean that the online campaign system ran smoothly without any obstacles. There were several violations recorded by the Bawaslu of Semarang City. And made them have to take firm action.

The first is related to administrative violation regarding the permit to implement a virtual campaign. Initially, the Hendi-Ita’s Winning Team submitted the Campaign Notification Letter (SPK) to the Semarang Polrestabes, KPU and Bawaslu of Semarang City that they would hold 234 online campaigns spread across 16 sub-districts throughout Semarang City. However, in its implementation, Bawaslu found 36 Virtual Campaigns without SPK. Which have been spread across 11 Sub-districts. The details are as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>Sub-Districts</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Banyumanik</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Gajahmungkur</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gayamsari</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Semarang Tengah</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Semarang Timur</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mijen</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Genuk</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Pedurungan</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Semarang Barat</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Semarang Utara</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ngaliyan</td>
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This is certainly considered a violation. Because based on Article 38 of KPU Regulation (PKPU) Number 4 of 2017 concerning the Pilkada Campaign, Pilkada participants are required to submit written notification regarding limited meeting campaigns and face-to-face meeting and dialogues to the local police with a copy submitted to the KPU and Bawaslu according to the level. And in Government Regulation Number 60 of 2017 concerning Procedures for Licensing Supervision of Public Crowd Activities, and Other Community Activities. Article 17 states that political activities that will be carried out in public must be notified to the police.

Bawaslu as the election supervisor is also obliged to intervene to resolve this matter. They, through 11 Sub-district General Election Supervisory Committees together with the police, finally took preventive measures to stop the activity. This is in accordance with the provisions of Article 67 paragraph (3) point A of PKPU No. 11 of 2020, which states that the Indonesian National Police and/or the Provincial Bawaslu or the Regency/City Bawaslu have the authority to regulate or disband campaign activities carried out by individuals or volunteers or other parties or campaign teams or campaign officers who are not registered with the Provincial KPU/Aceh Independent Election Commission (KIP) or the Regency/City KPU/KIP.

The warning from Bawaslu was immediately realized by the winning team of the candidate pair. And after that they were willing to disband themselves as a follow-up effort. At the same time proving compliance with the rules by the Activity Implementers.
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Next, the second is related to the violation of the neutrality of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN). The Bawaslu of Semarang City noted that it received reports that five ASN OPD (Regional Device Organization) of Semarang City violated the neutrality of ASN. By liking the status of the personal account of the mayoral candidate. In addition, there was one ASN who served as a lecturer at one of the state universities in Semarang who violated the neutrality of ASN. The form of violation was by participating in the campaign to support the single candidate pair with their social media. They declared themselves as millennial ustadz inviting millennials to support Hendi-Ita. Of course, this is not allowed. Because based on Article 71 of Law No. 1/2015 concerning Regional Head Elections which reads: “State Officials, State Civil Apparatus Officials, and Village Heads or other titles/Lurah are prohibited from making decisions and/or actions that benefit or harm one of the candidates during the campaign period. And besides that, violating the neutrality of ASN is the same as violating the Law Number 5 of 2014 concerning ASN and Government Regulation Number 42 of 2004 concerning the Development of Corps Spirit and the Code of Ethics for Civil Servants.

For this violation, the Bawaslu of Semarang City immediately took action. Where based on the Pilkada Law they do have this authority. As stated in Article 103 point H and G, the Bawaslu of Semarang City has the authority to exercise other authorities in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations. Including monitoring violations by ASN in the 2020 Regional Head Elections. After conducting identification, the Bawaslu of Semarang City then referred the problem to the State Civil Apparatus Commission. To be followed up and decided immediately. What sanctions will be given to the ASN. As it is known, the Bawaslu does not have the right to impose sanctions. Because based on Article 30 paragraph (1) letter B of Law No. 5 of 2014 concerning ASN, the State Civil Apparatus Commission (KASN) has the authority to decide on sanctions for the neutrality of ASN.

At that time, KASN decided that the violation of the ASN teacher was proven to violate the neutrality of ASN and recommended the imposition of moderate disciplinary sanction. Where based on Government Regulation Number 53 of 2010 Article 7 paragraph (3), the punishment can be in the form of a periodic delay in salary increases for one year, a delay in promotion for one year and a demotion to a lower level for one year. With the issuance of the KASN recommendation, the Inspectorate of the Ministry of Religion which is the parent institution where the ASN is located, carried out a follow-up by coordinating with the Bawaslu of Semarang City. In order to be able to consider which sanctions will be applied to the two ASN.

From the two cases of violations during the online campaign during the Regional Head Elections of Semarang City, this proves that the implementation of the existing concept is not yet completely perfect. There needs to be improvement in terms of both the system and human resources if technology is to be implemented in the campaign stage. The government must prepare qualified technology so that it can immediately detect violations of online campaigns such as violations of the neutrality of ASN who use social media for covert campaigns. This is important, because the widespread use of social media is indeed prone to violations. In addition, as supervisors and organizers of the Pilkada, Bawaslu and KPU must continue to upgrade their human resources with qualified technological capabilities. Don’t let them be caught out by the candidate’s winning team who could be smarter in compiling a technology-based campaign that violates existing rules.

Although there are weaknesses, it does not mean that the concept of online campaigns is not worth adapting to the next Pilkada. In fact, this concept is good for adapting to the development of the times and the pace of globalization. Where many countries are starting to implement technology in their election systems. Such as the United States, European countries, Japan and many others. It’s just that it is necessary to upgrade and improve the system and human resources first so that the implementation can run smoothly. And minimizing violations during the campaign. And the Covid-19 pandemic can be a momentum for revival. Where Indonesia inevitably has to try a new technology-based concept in organizing elections. So that this concept can be applied in the future. And it provides benefits and helps Indonesia to advance the democratic system like other countries.

CONCLUSIONS

The 2020 simultaneous regional head elections were a democratic party full of challenges. Given the Covid-19 pandemic, all stages must adapt to a new system. Namely based on health protocols. Starting from the registration of candidate pairs to the determination of elected candidates, they adapted this method. No exception for the campaign stages that rely on an online basis.

In its implementation, the concept of online campaigns has many positive and negative values. On the positive side, online campaigns can actually increase public participation in voting. Like in Semarang, from the beginning, public participation in voting during the 2015 Regional Head Elections was 65 percent, during the 2020 Regional Head Elections it increased to 68.62 percent. In addition, this concept also encourages people to be technology literate. Where in the current era of globalization, mastery of technology in all aspects must begin to be adapted.

However, it is undeniable that the negative side still exists. The lack of readiness of the existing system and human resources makes violations prone to occur during the Pilkada. Such as in Semarang, there are still administrative violations that have resulted in illegal campaigns that do not have permits in 11 sub-districts. In addition, there are also violations of the neutrality of ASN that support candidates through social media. This is what needs to be anticipated. If we really want to apply the concept of online campaigns in the Pilkada in the future.
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The concept of online campaign is indeed time to be adapted by Indonesia. This can make Indonesia not lag behind other countries which have implemented technology in their election systems much earlier. Even so, it must be realized that evaluation and improvement must continue to be carried out in every implementation. Because after all, Indonesia must have a qualified system and human resources. In order to reduce the risk of violations occurring in the application of technology in the implementation of the Pilkada in Indonesia.

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