

## Politics and Political Participation of “Grass-Roots” in General Election 2019, Bandar Selamat Regency, Medan, Indonesia

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**Abstract** : Ahead of the 2019 general election which is divided into two stages, namely the Legislative election and the Presidential election. This event is the right moment to find out the political participation of the people at the grass-roots level while at the same time seeing the interaction between the people in the grass-roots and political parties. The interaction that wants to be seen is what forms of political behavior and community participation at the grassroots, as well as how political parties behave in interacting with this community. Then the important point that is also seen is how political parties behave in involving and seeking to raise support from the community. In the end, through this research, it will be known the quality of political participation from the public and electoral political parties in 2019.

**Keywords** : general election 2019; democracy; political participation; grass-roots; social exchange theory; rewards; options.

### I. Introduction

The reform that took place in Indonesia in 1998 was a new chapter for Indonesian democracy, there was a wind of change that was expected to lead Indonesia to become a more democratic country. Because from the beginning in accordance with the ideals of the founding fathers of this nation, the Indonesian republic must become a democratic country in an effort to achieve people's welfare. But as it is known that these hopes are not working as expected, prosperity and social justice are still far from reality. As a democratic country, efforts to achieve a democratic and prosperous country, prosperous and just, cannot be separated from the role of political parties and political participation from the public. This is in accordance with the statement of Charles Andrian and James Smith in Marijan (2016: 111) who say "public participation basically consists of passive participation, participation and participation that looks more expressive as seen in protest activities, boycotts and petition signing.

The expected climate of democracy and prosperity is far from reality as desired by those ideals. The democratic and economic climate runs asymmetric in Indonesia. In the old order the democratic space was so wide open for public participation, but economic conditions were so bad. These poor conditions were finally complemented by Indonesia's guided democracy, a disaster for Indonesian democracy.

Furthermore, when the new order came to power to replace the old order the situation also did not bring Indonesia into a more democratic country. This condition can be witnessed through the restraint of political participation in society by the adoption of a political party fusion policy by the new order government. Not only that, after the implementation of the political party's fusion policy, it was followed by the application of a mass floating party policy. In fact, not only was the freedom of the press restricted and closely monitored. Even the banning of the press criticizing the new order government was also carried out, where the government had the authority to do so.

It is seen that this condition is the same as the Dutch colonial era (Nederland Indie) which also implemented it. Not only that, even in the name of state development often commits abuses against the community. Likewise economic inequality and unequal inter-regional development are evident, in languages that are popular in the era of liberal democratic governments called Java and outside Java or the center and regions (Bangun, Payung: 1996: 42). The lack of leveling of development is one of the features of the new order government.

Returning to the initial topic of the discussion over reform in Indonesia was the hope for improvement in political life or democracy which during the old and new order governments were repeatedly misused. . However, after twenty years of reforming the conditions of democracy, Indonesia still has an acute problem. The quality of democracy is questionable, the climate of freedom after reformation did not lead to improved quality of understanding and awareness of democracy in the people. It is said that many political parties and the owners of the same vote are also wrapped up in problems, which are of poor quality. Where the characteristics and signs of poor quality are mainly emphasized on the poor political behavior possessed.

This condition can be seen in the rise of transactional political behavior (money politics) at democratic party performances at various levels. Then another feature is that the presence of political parties at the grassroots level is known to be almost only present for a period of every five years, the presence of which is easily marked by the crowded colors of the attributes of political parties in the midst of the community. Regarding the existence of this phenomenon as the basis for discussion, it is known that political participation is, "the activities of a person or group of people to participate actively in political life, among others by choosing state leaders, directly or indirectly and influencing government actions" (Budiarto: 2007: 367).

At this point the focus of the study will be emphasized, First, namely the desire to know the political behavior and current political participation of the people at the grassroots or grassroots level ahead of the upcoming elections in 2019. Where the focus on participation and political behavior referred to in this research is the desire to know and see how the voting rights held by the owner of the vote will be used. What is the motive or the basis of the voice of the owner in making a choice. Second, besides that, it will also be traced to how the understanding or knowledge of the people or voters in knowing the meaning of the symbols and colors of the flags of various political party parties that exist. What is the motive or basis in making choices.

Once again, the two research questions raised above are based on the desire to know and see community participation at the lower level, because in a democracy that adheres to the principle of one person one vote (improvement in the quality of democracy requires the involvement of all parties not only in involvement at a certain level that is at the elite level merely as a determinant. Public participation at the lower level can be seen from the political orientation first as stated by Almond and Verba, political orientation is the attitude of citizens towards the political system including the various segments, and their attitudes towards the role of personal self in the system "(Wisdom: 2010: 147)

It is also known that the owners of votes at lower levels in democracies who were just born after the second world war were actually the largest number of voters. And usually because the social class structure created by the colonial government was politically tiered

between the elite and lower classes it would there was also a similarity in the economic status of the community. So that it has a significant impact on the development of democracy in Indonesia in particular. The above statement is in accordance with the following fundamental statement, "political participation is reflected through the fact that the most obvious measure of democracy is universal suffrage: namely the right of every citizen to vote" (Rodee, Carlton Clymeer, et al: 2014: 218).

Then the research methods used are active participant observation, interviews and documentation in the domain of the qualitative research approach with data collection techniques and data validity testing through the snowball approach (Moleong: 2004: 5). Then below will be divided into two categories, the list of informants interviewed, first informants from the background of high school education to the lower level and the second is from higher education backgrounds, respondents who have Diploma and Bachelor education backgrounds, respondents with higher education skills. intended to be used

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## **II. Result and Discussion**

Bandar selamat reGENCY which is in the administration of Medan city and precisely located in Medan Tembung sub-district geographically borders the north with Percut Sei Tuan sub-district, South with Bantan sub-district, West side with Tembung Village and east side with Medan Tembung sub-district. Kelurahan this mixed population, however, there are various ethnicities that inhabit this kelurahan. But since the post-Dutch colonial administration or since independence Indonesia this region has been identified as a sacred enclave of ethnic Mandailing in addition to other ethnic groups such as Javanese, Minangkabau, Acehese, Toba Batak, and Chinese ethnic groups who began to move to shift the settlement of these people. This means that this area is a multicultural area.

Ahead of the general election in 2019, political activity began to pick up. Talks about the election of the President and Legislative members began and have been widely discussed. To find out how appropriate political behavior can be referred to the following statement, "political behavior is always oriented to values or trying to find goals, values and objectives formed through the political process. Political behavior aims to reach out to the future, is anticipatory, relates to the past, and is always concerned about past events" (Mufti: 2012: 87). In the first respondent's statements, their views and answers to democracy and how we can form their involvement through the following expressions. Housewives generally give expressions like this "We already want to vote for the DPR with the President, but the candidates have not yet appeared". When explored further what the legislative candidates

meant by the housewives concerned was, the candidates for the House of Representatives had not yet come to distribute food or money.

Then it was found another expression, "the success team has not yet been seen", the meaning of this statement implicitly describes the activities of the political party officials who in their perception have not revealed activities that bring material benefits directly to them. Like the following short phrase for example, "for what to choose if there is no money". Firm and clear, money is the determinant of their involvement in the 2019 general election in general. "

Interestingly, many of these people were seen giving prices for all the objects and spaces they had to be rewarded with money, for example a home page could be offered as a post, a shop or a shop to place banners, billboards and banquets, trees for a place nailing and fixing the flagpole at its peak, as well as paddle rickshaws and engine rickshaws not escaped as a place to attach campaign props. There is something interesting about the installation of banners from legislative candidates who come from different political parties in the people's shops or stalls. Namely the publication of the names of the stalls or taverns through campaign props from the legislative candidates.

This is because the name of the owner of the shop is adjacent to the image of the legislature and his party as one of the reasons or precisely the mode as well as a reward for the installation of the banner in the shop. Then in addition to the benefits as explained by the shop owner, they still get basic benefits in the form of cash.

In addition, the success teams from the legislative candidates are also trying to hold meetings directly with voters by holding meetings at home residents. Where the meeting place is usually carried out at home residents who have an influence on the community in the neighborhood. Of course the owner of the house will be given fees and rewards for the implementation of the socialization. Judging from the forms of political participation that occur above can be understood through the views of the following communication theory which suggests, "that people evaluate their relationships with others by considering the consequences, especially of the rewards obtained and efforts that have been made, people will decide to stay in the relationship or leave it".

Then when traced their views (society) about democracy, the answers obtained from them in general are superficial, they have very little understanding of democracy. In fact, it can be said that not a few of them were found to have absolutely no understanding of democracy, they did not understand the meaning of the word democracy. The same is true of the word democracy itself, it is found a situation where democracy for them is a new vocabulary, a word for the first time they have just heard.

Then it was also found that the understanding of the people at the lower levels of the flags and symbols contained in it was also very minimal. Then to emphasize their level of understanding of the existence of flags and symbol symbols attached to the flag, the same thing was found, namely the low and limited level of their understanding of the meaning of the color of the party. There is no knowledge or information about the meaning of the various flag colors of the party after tracing it because they consider it not important to know it and that color is something that has become the taste of the party itself, as people also have their own tastes towards color.

While the answers found from respondents who have a college education background found more varied answers about how they view the general election, their motives in making

choices and voting. The opinion found was that not a few of the respondents interviewed were still hoping that the 2019 general election would bring change and improve the economy. But not a few also have an apathy towards the national election. It was found that their understanding of democracy was generally adequate, at least they understood the substance of democracy itself.

### III. Conclusion

In the end it was found that the level of understanding of voters at the grassroots level in the Bandar selamat regency in Medan about their knowledge and self-awareness of democracy and elections was still very low or minimal. For them democracy and general elections are limited to the election of the President and legislators. There is no adequate understanding that general elections are a political process that is directly related to themselves. They have an attitude of apathy that elections are only a process that only benefits participants involved as legislative candidates and mere success teams. It was also found that their behavior and involvement in political activities in the elections in 2019 was very dependent and had a tendency towards direct cash income or material benefits.

Furthermore, it was found that the knowledge of grassroots voters in the Bandar selamat regency on the meaning of party symbols or party party flags was minimal. There was no understanding of the meaning of this grassroots voter on ideological meanings that were portrayed through the symbols that the party party possessed. Even though political ideology is strongly related to the form of a country's political system, so also ideology and political systems are closely related to political communication (Arifin, Anwar: 2011: 19). The statement above proves that political participation is very closely related to political ideology.

Furthermore, it is known that grassroots voters rarely see and are aware of the activities of the political party officials in carrying out political education or regeneration at the lower levels to their cadres or sympathizers. In addition, it was also discovered that existing political parties rarely or almost never socialized the new policies born by the government directly related to the interests of voters at the grassroots level.

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