

DECONSTRUCTING PARTICIPATORY SUPERVISION: A STUDY OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES BY THE ELECTION SUPERVISOR BOARD (BAWASLU) IN THE 2024 MAYORAL AND VICE MAYORAL ELECTION IN KUPANG CITY

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Abstract

This study aims to explain the strategy and form of implementation of participatory supervision carried out by Bawaslu Kupang City in the implementation of the 2024 Pilkada. Using a qualitative research approach method, with a total of 15 informants, consisting of the Chairman of the Bawaslu Kupang City Commissioner, Coordinator of the Prevention, Community Participation and Public Relations Division of Bawaslu Kupang City, Bawaslu Secretariat Staff, Representatives of Bawaslu civil society organizations and community participants in the village/supervisory program. Interviews were conducted with informants selected by purposive sampling, namely those who were considered to best understand the context and have direct involvement in participatory supervision. The results of the study show that participatory supervision carried out by Bawaslu Kupang City in the 2024 Pilkada has shown a paradigm shift from a bureaucratic and hierarchical supervision model to a collaborative model involving the community as supervision partners, through various programs such as the Citizens Forum, Village/Sub-district Supervision, and Participatory Supervision Cadre School (SKPP). The level of public participation in election supervision is still dominated by symbolic and consultative forms of participation, as depicted in Arnstein's ladder of participation, where citizen involvement has not yet fully reached the level of equal partnership or citizen control (citizen power). Deconstruction of participatory supervision also opens up space for conceptual reconstruction, where election supervision is understood as a deliberative process based on communicative action, which demands rational dialogue, equality, and trust between Bawaslu and the community to strengthen the legitimacy of electoral democracy at the local level.

Keywords: *Deconstruction, Bawaslu, Regional Elections, Kupang City*

INTRODUCTION

In the modern context, democracy is not solely measured by the existence of state institutions, but more deeply seen from the extent to which society has equal opportunities to participate in the public decision-making process. In Dahl's view (1989:221), substantive democracy is not only characterized by the existence of formal institutions, but also by the fulfillment of effective participation of all citizens in the public decision-making process, as well as the guarantee of equality in voting at every decisive stage. Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) are a concrete manifestation of electoral democracy at the local level. Effective election implementation is a crucial indicator of democratic governance. According to Diamond and Linz (1996), election effectiveness is measured not only by the technical success of the implementation, but also by the extent to which the process reflects the principles of professionalism, openness, and meaningful public participation. Democratically managed elections strengthen political legitimacy and broaden public trust in state institutions.

Based on Law No. 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections, the General Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) is given the primary mandate to maintain election integrity through three main functions, namely prevention, supervision, and enforcement. The legal basis for the prevention function is stated in Article 93 letter a and Article 101 paragraph (1), which emphasizes that Bawaslu has the authority to take preventive measures to avoid violations. This function is translated into educational and socialization strategies, the preparation of the Election Vulnerability Index (IKP), and participatory programs such as the Supervisory Village and the Participatory Supervisory Cadre School (SKPP) which aim to build critical public awareness.

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Furthermore, Bawaslu's oversight function is legally based on Article 93 letter b and Articles 94 and 95 of Law No. 7/2017, which detail the oversight obligations at every stage of the election, from updating voter data to vote counting. Bawaslu implements an inherent oversight strategy by deploying election supervisors who work in a hierarchical and structured manner. In practice, the quality of regional elections (Pilkada) is measured not only by the voting process but also by the integrity of the entire process, from the nomination stage to the announcement of the results. Various studies have shown that regional elections in Indonesia are often marred by classic problems such as vote buying, smear campaigns, violations of civil servant (ASN) neutrality, and weak public oversight. Research in several regions indicates that vote buying remains a structural problem in every electoral contest. For example, research in South Sulawesi found that the distribution of money and in-kind aid ahead of election day is still considered a normal political strategy by the majority of voters, thus undermining the quality of democracy and weakening voter rationality (Hamson, 2024). A similar phenomenon was also seen in a study in Central Java, which confirmed that vote buying is not only caused by low levels of public political education but also by weak law enforcement against election violations (Rizki, 2023).

In the context of the Kupang City Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), citizen forums serve as deliberative spaces that provide opportunities for the public to play an active role in the election oversight process. However, the effectiveness of these forums still faces a number of structural and cultural obstacles. Several studies have emphasized that low political literacy (Marzuki, 2017; Rahman, 2019), limited supporting resources (Suhenty, 2024), and uneven outreach (Yuliani, 2021) are factors that hinder optimal public participation in oversight. Consequently, some citizens still view the oversight function as the sole responsibility of the election-holding institution, rather than as a collective responsibility of citizens in maintaining the integrity of electoral democracy. Previous research has tended to emphasize Bawaslu's strategy from a normative and procedural institutional perspective (Nurdin, 2020; Wicaksono, 2022). Public participation is often reduced to formal and passive engagement. The concept of participatory oversight, on the one hand, promotes citizen empowerment (Pateman, 2012), but on the other hand, is often manipulated as a tool to legitimize formal institutional policies (Derrida, 1997). Furthermore, in several oversight socialization forums, invitations appear to be more often reached through networks of acquaintances, friends, or family, so that the potential for broader community participation has not been fully tapped.

METHOD

This research was conducted in Kupang City, focusing on the implementation of Participatory Supervision in the 2024 Regional Head Election in Kupang City. In addition, the main focus of this research is on the strategy of community involvement in the implementation of participatory supervision by Bawaslu Kupang City in the 2024 Regional Head Election. This research examines in depth how the form, meaning, and practice of participatory supervision are constructed and implemented in the local socio-political context of Kupang City. This research uses a qualitative approach. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply understand the meaning constructed by individuals and groups towards a complex social phenomenon. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research is an approach to explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups base on a social or humanitarian problem. In this study, interviews were conducted with informants selected by purposive sampling, namely those who are considered to best understand the context and have direct involvement in participatory supervision. The informants interviewed include

No	Informan	Position	Total
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1	Chairman of the Commissioner of the Kupang City Election Supervisory Agency	As the main actor in formulating community involvement strategies in participatory supervision	1
2	Coordinator of the Prevention, Community Participation, and Public Relations Division of the Kupang City Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu)	As the main implementer in the implementation of participatory monitoring programs in the field	1
3	Staff of the Bawaslu Secretariat of Kupang City	As the administrative and technical implementer of monitoring activities Participatory	3
4	Representatives of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) Bawaslu Partners	As a collaborative partner in outreach activities, voter education, and joint monitoring	5
5	Community Participants in the Village/Sub-district Supervision Program	As a representative of citizens who are directly involved in monitoring activities Participatory	5
Total			15

With the data collection technique in the form of observation, this observation is a way to examine all elements in the research area. Interviews are the main technique in qualitative research because they allow researchers to dig deeply into the views, experiences, and interpretations of participants towards the phenomenon being studied. According to the views of Creswell and Creswell (2018). As well as Documentation, Documentation is: "A written report of an event whose contents consist of an explanation and thoughts on an event written intentionally to store or pass on information about the event, with this writing we can include minutes of report cards, advertisements and so on into the definition of documents ". (Surachman, 1978: 125).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the Research Site

In the context of regional institutions, historical and regulatory dynamics indicate that the role of the Kupang City Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) has shifted from a merely symbolic function to a strategic one in maintaining election integrity through more proactive oversight of election stages, including preventing violations of the neutrality of State Civil Apparatus (ASN) and tracking reports of violations down to the lowest level (ANTARA News Kupang, June 30, 2024). The Kupang City Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) not only acts as a technical implementer of election stage supervision, but also as an institutional actor with legal legitimacy and formal authority to uphold the principles of electoral justice, including receiving and following up on reports of violations and resolving election process disputes in accordance with the authority strengthened by law (Ibad et al., 2024; Elviandri & Safitri, 2024). Administratively, the establishment and strengthening of the Kupang City Election Supervisory Agency reflects the decentralized design of election supervision, where the supervisory function is no longer centralized at the national level, but is attached to the administrative region where the election is held, in order to increase the effectiveness of supervision and sensitivity to the local social and political context (Santoso, 2012; Surbakti & Supriyanto, 2013). This is in line with the public administration perspective that emphasizes the importance of strengthening local institutions as a primary prerequisite for increasing the effectiveness of public policy, including in the context of election supervision (Dwiyanto, 2018).

Implementation of the Citizens' Forum Program, Participatory Supervisory Cadre School (SKPP), and Supervisory Villages/Sub-districts

The operational implementation of participatory oversight in Kupang City is realized through the active implementation of Bawaslu's national programs, namely the Citizens' Forum, the Participatory Supervisory Cadre School (SKPP), and the Village/Sub-District Supervision Program. These three programs form a systematic, structured, and hierarchical institutional architecture for participatory oversight, aimed at broadening the social base of election oversight. These programs serve not only as a means of socialization but also as a mechanism for

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institutionalizing public participation in the election oversight system. The Citizens' Forum was developed as a deliberative space that allows for two-way dialogue between Bawaslu and the public. In this forum, the public is positioned not as an object of socialization but rather as a subject of oversight with the analytical capacity to identify potential violations and understand reporting mechanisms. This was emphasized by the Head of Bawaslu Kupang City, Yuniar Adichandra Nange, S.I.P., in an interview:

"The citizens' forum isn't just about public awareness. We're creating a dialogue space so the public understands the election stages, potential violations, and how to report them. So they're not just spectators, but part of the oversight system."

Community capacity building is also carried out through the SKPP, which functions as a participatory supervisory cadre program. The SKPP is designed to develop local actors with a normative, technical, and ethical understanding of election supervision. HP2H Division Coordinator, Muhammad Fathuda, S.Kom., explained:

"We position the SKPP as a long-term investment. These cadres are not just for the 2024 elections, but also for building a culture of sustainable oversight in the community."

Non-Budget Initiatives in Response to High Public Participation

In addition to implementing a participatory oversight program supported by formal budget allocations, the Kupang City Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) has also developed various non-budgetary initiatives as a form of policy adaptation to rapidly evolving field dynamics, particularly during the campaign phase for the 2024 Kupang Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral Elections. These non-budgetary initiatives emerged in response to the high demand for oversight, increasing public enthusiasm for involvement, and budget constraints that were unable to fully accommodate all requests for citizen participation. This phenomenon demonstrates that in practice, the implementation of election oversight policies cannot always proceed linearly following formal budget planning. Instead, institutional flexibility and the use of administrative discretion are required to ensure optimal oversight functions. The Head of the Kupang City Election Supervisory Agency, Yuniar Adichandra Nange, S.I.P., explained this situation in detail in a research interview:

"Public demand for citizen forums is very high, especially during the campaign period. Many communities want to be facilitated to discuss oversight, campaign regulations, and vote buying. Planning-wise, not everything is included in the allocated budget. However, as a supervisory agency, we see a real need for oversight in the field, so even though it's not budgeted, we still facilitate it to the best of our ability."

Partnership with Scouts (Saka Adhyasta) as an Educational and Persuasive Strategy

The partnership between the Kupang City Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) and the Pramuka Movement, through the formation and strengthening of Saka Adhyasta, represents an innovative form of participatory oversight that prioritizes educational and persuasive approaches. This collaboration is based on the recognition that election oversight is not always effective if it relies solely on formal legal approaches and bureaucratic mechanisms. In the social context of Kupang City, with its strong community structure and close social relations, a character education-based approach is seen as more capable of reaching the public broadly and sustainably. The Coordinator of the Public Participation and Inter-Institutional Relations (HP2H) Division of the Kupang City Bawaslu explained that Pramuka was chosen as a strategic partner because its values align with the spirit of participatory oversight. He stated:

"Scouts have a moral foundation, discipline, and close ties to the community. This makes them ideally suited for educational, not repressive, supervision. They exist not as officers, but as part of the community itself."

Strengthening Digital Participation through Social Media and Reporting Applications

In line with the increasing penetration of digital technology and changes in public communication patterns, the Kupang City Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) is strengthening its participatory oversight strategy through the use of social media and digital-based reporting applications. This transformation is a response to the increasingly digitally connected nature of society, particularly the younger generation and urban residents, who are more actively interacting through online platforms than through traditional face-to-face channels. In this context, election oversight is no longer limited by space and time, but can be conducted in real time and with broad participation.

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The Coordinator of the Public Participation and Inter-Agency Relations (HP2H) Division of the Kupang City Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) explained that social media is a strategic instrument for bridging the gap between oversight institutions and the public. He said:

"Social media has been incredibly helpful in reaching the public, especially the younger generation. Reporting has become quicker and easier because people don't need to understand complicated procedures. Simply send a photo, video, or message, and we'll follow up."

Conventional Participation: Attendance at Socializations, Citizen Forums, and Coordination Meetings

Conventional public participation in the supervision of the 2024 Kupang Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral Election is reflected through direct citizen involvement in various face-to-face activities, such as election socialization, citizen forums, and coordination meetings facilitated by the Kupang City Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu). Based on Bawaslu's internal data, throughout the election stages, 23 participatory monitoring activities were recorded with more than 1,500 participants, coming from various social backgrounds, including community leaders, youth, women, community organizations, and first-time voters. This figure indicates that conventional participation mechanisms remain the primary channel for building public awareness and involvement. The Head of the Kupang City Election Supervisory Agency, Yuniar Adichandra Nange, S.I.P., explained that:

"Public attendance at these activities is an early indicator of the success of the participatory oversight strategy. Although it hasn't been measured quantitatively, we don't yet have a statistical indicator to standardize public participation. However, in practice, public attendance at outreach events and citizen forums has been very high. In many activities, attendance even exceeded the target. This demonstrates public interest and concern in election oversight."

Unconventional Participation: Reporting Alleged Violations

In addition to conventional participation, oversight of the 2024 Kupang Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral Election was also marked by increased non-conventional public participation, particularly in the form of reporting alleged election violations. During the campaign period, the Kupang City Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) recorded 72 reports of alleged violations from the public. This figure is an important indicator of citizen involvement in substantive oversight, as reporting is a form of participation that directly contributes to the enforcement of election regulations. The Head of the Kupang City Election Supervisory Agency, Yuniar Adichandra Nange, S.I.P., emphasized that:

"Public reports are the backbone of participatory oversight. We rely heavily on them. Every report we receive serves as a starting point for our supervisors to conduct investigations. From these reports, we can determine whether violations have occurred and how to take action."

New Participation: Utilizing Social Media and Digital Applications

Advances in information technology have also given rise to new forms of participation in election oversight in Kupang City, namely through the use of social media and digital applications. Channels such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) Super App are being used by the public to monitor, provide initial information, and report suspected violations quickly and flexibly. This digital participation is an important complement to conventional and non-conventional mechanisms. The HP2H Division Coordinator explained that digital participation significantly contributes to the effectiveness of oversight:

"We receive many initial reports via WhatsApp or social media. People send photos, videos, or brief information, which we then follow up formally."

The Head of the Kupang City Election Supervisory Agency also emphasized the accessibility aspect of digital participation:

"With apps and social media, people don't need to come to the Bawaslu office. They can participate in oversight from anywhere."

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The Community as a Strategic Partner in Election Supervision

These various forms of participation, conventional, non-conventional, and digital, demonstrate that the Kupang City community is no longer positioned merely as an object of socialization, but as a strategic partner in overseeing the 2024 Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral Election. The relationship between Bawaslu (Elections Supervisory Agency) and the community is evolving toward partnership governance, where there is a complementary and mutually reinforcing relationship. The Head of Bawaslu Kupang City stated firmly:

"We don't see the public as mere recipients of information. They are our partners. Without public involvement, oversight will be ineffective."

1. Strategy and Form of Participatory Supervision Implementation The Kupang City Bawaslu implements a hierarchical-yet-adaptive participatory supervision strategy, combining a national policy framework with contextual adjustments according to local socio-cultural characteristics. This strategy is implemented through structured programs such as the Citizens' Forum, Participatory Supervisory Cadre School (SKPP), and Village/Sub-district Supervision, which are designed to actively involve the community in monitoring the stages of the 2024 Pilkada. Bawaslu also builds collaborations with non-state actors, including civil society organizations, traditional leaders, churches, and youth groups such as the Scouts (Saka Adhyaksa), and utilizes digital platforms such as social media and reporting applications to expand the reach and speed of response. This approach is not only preventive and educational, but also responsive to local dynamics, including non-budgetary initiatives to facilitate participation that goes beyond the limitations of the official budget.
2. The level of public participation in election supervision is still dominated by symbolic and consultative forms of participation, as depicted in Arnstein's ladder of participation, where citizen involvement has not fully reached the level of equal partnership or citizen control (citizen power).
3. The construction of participatory supervision tends to be normative and procedural, so that community participation is often positioned as a complement to institutional legitimacy, not as an autonomous subject that has substantive power in the supervision process.
4. The power relations between Bawaslu and the public in oversight practices still demonstrate inequality, both in terms of access to information, decision-making space, and control over the oversight agenda, which limits the development of critical and emancipatory participation.
5. Deconstruction of participatory supervision opens up space for conceptual reconstruction, where election supervision is understood as a deliberative process based on communicative action, which demands rational dialogue, equality, and trust between Bawaslu and the community to strengthen the legitimacy of electoral democracy at the local level.

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