

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION EDUCATION FOR BEGINNER VOTERS IN CONVENIENT REGIONAL HEAD ELECTIONS IN 2024

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Abstract: The Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu) of Subang Regency plays an important role in carrying out the function of political communication education for novice voters. This study aims to find out the strategy carried out by Bawaslu in political communication education, as well as communication barriers in conveying political messages at the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections. This study uses a qualitative research method with a qualitative descriptive research approach. The data was collected through in-depth interviews, literature studies, and observation. The research results show that the Political Communication Education Strategy for beginner voters in the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections begins with Establishing a Participatory Supervisory Cadre School (SKPP) to facilitate information flow and optimize information. Using social media platforms such as Instagram and websites, carrying out outreach activities through the "Go to School" program, and collaborating with the General Election Commission (KPU) in conducting political communication education. The challenges faced include low participation of first-time voters, limited resources that hinder the ability to implement the Bawaslu program, technological barriers that impede the optimization of communication education, and socio-cultural challenges that impede the political participation of first-time voters.

Keywords: Political Communication Education, Political Communication Strategy, Subang Regency Bawaslu

INTRODUCTION

In Regional Head Elections (Pemilihan Kepala Daerah), the involvement of citizens in political decision-making, both directly and indirectly, is one of the characteristics of democratic governance (Labolo & Hamka, 2012; Lestari et al., 2022). The realization of democracy essentially aims to empower the role and participation of the population regarding the expression of their political and social rights, which are constitutionally guaranteed. In other words, a democratic state is one in which decisions are made by the people and for the people. Regional Head Elections also serve as a means of political assessment and public oversight of a regional leader and the political forces supporting them. In West Java alone, 27 regencies or cities hold Regional Head Elections, including Subang Regency, which comprises 30 districts, 245 villages, and 8 urban wards. Subang Regency has already conducted four Regional Head Elections, beginning with Drs. H Eep Hidayat, M.Si (2003-2008) in the first term, followed by (2008-2013), continued by H. Ojang Sohandi, S.STP., M.Si (2013- 2018), and most recently, H. Ruhimat, S.Pd., M.Si. (2018-2023). The polling for the simultaneous Regional Head Elections is scheduled for Wednesday, November 27, 2024, encompassing the election of governors and vice governors, regents and deputy regents, mayors and deputy mayors (<https://jabar.bawaslu.go.id/>).

First-time voters are young individuals who will vote for the first time in a general election (Irma & Fajriyah, 2021). First-time voters hold significant potential in the upcoming 2024 Regional Head Elections. With the increasing political awareness among the younger generation, first-time voters can substantially impact the election outcomes. However, there are differences between first-time voters in large cities and small towns. The enthusiasm of first-time voters is closely related to their level of education and political knowledge (Bass et al., 2022). In large cities, first-time voters tend to be more open to diverse viewpoints and value preferences regarding progressive issues, inclusivity, human rights, and multiculturalism. On the other hand, first-time voters in small towns tend to prioritize cultural values, social stability, and community connections (Stockemer, 2015).

Political communication education becomes crucial in increasing the participation of first-time voters because it effectively involves young people in the political process. First-time voters can learn how political information is conveyed, evaluated, and used for decision-making based on a better understanding, identify key issues, address biased information, and participate in political debates and discussions constructively (Willeck & Mendelberg, 2022). Through political communication education, first-time voters can feel more confident in their rights and responsibilities as active citizens in the democratic process, which can positively impact participation rates in the 2024 regional head elections. Political communication education is important to help individuals understand

political information, identify media biases, and develop a deeper understanding of the political process (Ullah et al., 2020). Political communication education for first-time voters is a significant transformative process in how political messages are received, interpreted, and utilized by individuals newly involved in the political process. Through this education, first-time voters change how they understand political issues, candidates, and party platforms. First-time voters are taught to understand communication techniques used in political campaigns, including rhetoric, framing, and the use of social media.

There are several studies on the involvement of first-time voters in politics and regional head elections, including political education and literacy (Rafni & Suryanef, 2017; Ridha & Riwanda, 2020), perceptions and attitudes of first-time voters towards elections (Carvalho et al., 2023, Sani & Sari, 2021), and the role of social media as a learning tool for first-time voters (Betton et al., 2015; Ekawati, 2021; Most of these studies focus on literacy, perceptions, attitudes of voters, and the role of social media as preferences and learning tools for first-time voters. However, research on political communication education for first-time voters in the 2024 regional head elections has not been extensively explored, making it an interesting area for further investigation.

Active political participation by first-time voters, especially in simultaneous regional head elections, is essential to ensure inclusive representation and leaders who genuinely represent the community's aspirations. However, first-time voters often face challenges understanding political dynamics and the election process. In facing the Simultaneous Regional Head Elections in 2024, the focus on political communication education for first-time voters becomes increasingly relevant. Understanding how media, campaign messages, and political rhetoric operate can equip them with critical skills to assess and comprehend candidates and related issues. This research aims to analyze the strategies and obstacles of the Subang Regency Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu) in political communication education, especially in empowering first-time voters, leading to more active participation and information based on the simultaneous regional head elections in 2024. Active political participation by first-time voters, especially in simultaneous regional head elections, is essential to ensure inclusive representation and leaders who genuinely represent the community's aspirations. However, first-time voters often face challenges understanding political dynamics and the election process. In facing the Simultaneous Regional Head Elections in 2024, the focus on political communication education for first-time voters becomes increasingly relevant. Understanding how media, campaign messages, and political rhetoric operate can equip them with critical skills to assess and comprehend candidates and related issues. This research aims to analyze the strategies and obstacles of the Subang Regency Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu) in political communication education, especially in empowering first-time voters, leading to more active participation and

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METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach to understand phenomena that do not require quantification (Creswell, 2003). The selection of informants in this research was carried out using Purposive Sampling techniques. The Purposive Sampling technique is used because not all samples meet the criteria relevant to the phenomenon being studied (Sugiyono, 2018). Informants in this study included the coordinator of the supervisory and inter-agency relations section, the technical staff for the supervision and inter-agency relations section, the Youth Youth Organization of Karanganyar Village, AL Munawaroh Vocational High School (SMK) students, and Karangtaruna. Sukasari village youth. Data analysis techniques in this research include data reduction, data presentation, concluding, and testing conclusions. Data analysis techniques in this research include data reduction, data presentation, concluding, and testing conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Political communication education plays a significant role in internalizing values, attitudes, and behaviors that form the basis of educational essence (Prabowo et al., 2020). First-time voters are a group that requires special attention in efforts to increase political participation. Bawaslu, as the general election supervisory institution, adopts various strategies for political communication education to equip first-time voters with knowledge about the election process, their rights and obligations as voters, and the importance of participation in democracy. Bawaslu also plays a role in providing easily accessible and understandable information about candidates and political issues.

Research findings show that Bawaslu Subang collaborates with other institutions to gather, curate, and present information related to Candidate profiles, visions and missions, and the programs they offer. Bawaslu also presents clear and objective information about relevant political issues to help first-time voters understand the implications and positions of various issues in the context of elections.

Based on the data collected in this research, several findings have been obtained that the education process in political communication activities has been carried out by the Subang Regency Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu). Bawaslu Subang collaborates with the Subang Regency General Election Commission (KPU) to conduct political communication education for first-time voters. Bawaslu and the Subang Regency General Election Commission (KPU) are crucial in implementing an effective political communication education process. Collaboration between these two institutions creates a synergy that has the potential to enhance the understanding and active participation of first-time voters in the democratic process. Bawaslu and KPU jointly develop comprehensive and accurate educational materials, including information about the stages of the election, voter rights and responsibilities, and candidate criteria. This information can be presented in various formats, including print materials, online guides, or social media content, making it accessible to a wider audience.

Easily accessible to novice voters. The Bawaslu (Election Supervisory Board) and KPU (General Election Commission) of Subang Regency organize educational events together, such as workshops, seminars, and open debates focusing on the political process's critical aspects. Political communication education is conducted through interactive discussion sessions with candidates, allowing novice voters to ask direct questions and gain a deep understanding of the candidates' visions and programs. (Bawaslu, Subang 2022). Referring to the population data of Subang Regency, the productive age group is predicted to dominate in the 2024 elections. The population projection for Indonesia in 2024 is similar to the current population. In that year, Indonesia is predicted to have 282,246,600 residents. The productive age group, which is 15- 64 years old, will dominate, with 191,570,000 people or 67.9% of the total population. Meanwhile, the non-productive age group, which includes those under 15 and above 64 years old, will amount to 90,676,600 people, equivalent to 32.1% of the overall population (Katadata, 2022).

Statistical data reveals that the age group between 15 and 24 years, particularly the range of 20 to 24 years, holds a significant proportion in the participation of the 2024 General Election. They are categorized as novice voters who will experience casting their first votes in the regional elections in Subang Regency in 2024. This productive age group plays a strategic role in the election process because their decisions will directly impact the outcome, making them one of the determining factors

in the victory or defeat of competing Regional Head candidates. The active and informative participation of these novice voters will shape the significant dynamics of the election in realizing democracy at the regional level.

Political Communication Education Strategies

Categorized education strategy variables into three parts: a. organizational strategy, b. delivery strategy, and c. management strategy. (Fadhillah & Nuryadi, 2021) Political information literacy identified several educational strategies that can be used to educate the public about political literacy and communication, including political education media and utilizing information and online technology.

The political communication education conducted by the Bawaslu (Election Supervisory Board) of Subang Regency for novice voters includes knowledge about communication and political processes, the democratic system, their rights and responsibilities as voters, and the ability to analyze political information. The Bawaslu of Subang Regency has also established the Participatory Supervisor Cadre School.

(Sekolah Kader Pengawas Partisipatif or SKPP) To facilitate the flow of information to novice voters and collaborate with student and youth organizations as leading sectors.

Bawaslu also conducts face-to-face socialization activities with novice voters, known as the "Sosialisasi Go to School" program, held in various schools and madrasahs. Face-to-face socialization activities like the "Sosialisasi Go to School" program conducted by the Bawaslu of Subang Regency are important in supporting the participation and political understanding of school-going novice voters. Through this program, Bawaslu can directly interact with students in an educational environment, providing information about the election process, voter rights and responsibilities, and the importance of participation in democracy. According to Hirokawa in his book "Communication and Group Decision Making" (2014), good political education prepares individuals to develop reflexivity in communication and organization (R. Hirokawa & Poole, 2014).

Novice voters need to possess organizational and political communication reflexivity. Political communication reflexivity refers to the ability to critically and consciously reflect on received political messages, identify information sources, and understand the impact and context of those messages. By having political communication reflexivity, novice voters can avoid information manipulation, better understand political issues, and make more informed and knowledgeable decisions in the election process (R. Y. Hirokawa & Laybon, 2021). Political communication reflexivity helps novice voters recognize political rhetoric, information framing, and communication

techniques used by political campaigns. This helps them avoid falling into the trap of manipulative or biased messages. By contemplating how specific interests and goals can influence political messages, novice voters can form a more balanced and critical perspective.

The Election Supervisory Board (Badan Pengawas Pemilihan Umum or Bawaslu) of Subang Regency plays a crucial role in fostering reflexivity and political communication education, which serves as a stock of knowledge for novice voters. Bawaslu as the institution responsible for supervising and regulating the implementation of general elections, can equip novice voters with the knowledge and skills needed to participate informatively and critically in the political process. Here are some roles of Bawaslu Subang in conducting political communication education for novice voters:

Table 1. Some of the roles of Bawaslu Subang in political communication education for novice voters

No. Role of Bawaslu in Political Communication Education for Novice Voters	
1	Organizing political communication education programs specifically for novice voters.
2	Initiating educational campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of political participation and the rights and responsibilities of voters.
3	Disseminating political communication education information through social media with easily accessible and understandable materials.
4	Conducting training in discussions and debates to equip novice voters with critical thinking and effective communication skills.
5	Ensuring that political campaigns are conducted ethically and avoiding spreading false information that could influence novice voters.
6	Collaborating with educational institutions and political communication experts to develop education materials suitable for the needs of novice voters.
7	Monitoring the implementation of political communication education and measuring its effectiveness in enhancing the understanding and skills of novice voters.
8	Encouraging the participation of novice voters in various discussion forums, seminars, or workshops to support the formation of deeper understanding.
9	Providing guidance to novice voters on accessing accurate and verified political information.
10	Serving as a reliable source of information for novice voters to understand the election process and political issues.

Source: Bawaslu, 2023

One of the strategies employed by the Bawaslu (Election Supervisory Board) of Subang Regency in conveying political messages to novice voters is adopting a multiplatform approach that includes social media, online campaigns, and direct interactions. Through social media, Bawaslu Subang disseminates political education information that is easily accessible to novice voters, such

as infographics about the election process, voter rights and responsibilities, and how to identify fake news. Creative online campaigns can also capture novice voters' attention, utilizing short videos, memes, or interactive content to convey political messages in an engaging and easily digestible manner. Additionally, Bawaslu organizes live events such as webinars or public discussions that involve novice voters in direct dialogue with election organizers and political experts. According to Friedman and Hechter, state institutions significantly shape individual political participation through political sociology and political access (Arniti, 2020). The role of Bawaslu as a state institution is crucial in influencing the political participation of novice voters.

Political Communication Ethics and Media Analysis Education

The next finding in this research is that the Election Supervisory Board (Badan Pengawas Pemilihan Umum or Bawaslu) of Subang Regency collaborates with the General Election Commission (Komisi Pemilihan Umum or KPU) in conducting political communication ethics education in various schools and madrasahs in Subang Regency. Bawaslu provides information and political education related to political issues and the ethics of participating in political discourse to students in vocational schools (SMK) and madrasahs. Through the Participatory Supervisor Cadre School (Sekolah Kader Pengawas Partisipatif or SKPP), which consists of students and university students, Bawaslu provides education and training on election monitoring, democratic literacy, the use of social media, and media analysis. This includes not using offensive, provocative, pornographic, or hate speech language and not posting false articles or content. This education aims to enhance digital literacy and social media ethics in the post-truth era. Through this education, Bawaslu also seeks to provide the public with an understanding of political contestation in the new media space.

The Bawaslu of Subang Regency also conducts education on online media content analysis to understand the political communication styles used by political figures, such as Ahok, in online media. They also analyze the forms of political communication used by Sandiaga Uno on the Twitter social media platform to understand the function of language choices and communication styles in political communication. Political communication education aims to enrich the "stock of knowledge" by providing relevant information, training in political communication skills, and an understanding of how political messages are conveyed and received by voters. Communication media also play a role in influencing the decisions of novice voters (Fatmarina et al., 2019).

Social media is used for learning, communication, and discussion among students (Rizki, 2023). Bawaslu leverages social media as a crucial tool in political education and the participation of novice voters. Through social media platforms, Bawaslu can provide easily accessible political education materials to students and explain the general election process, voter rights and responsibilities, and

important political issues. Furthermore, social media enables Bawaslu to communicate directly with students, answer their questions, and conduct online discussions on current political issues.

The Subang Regency Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu Kabupaten Subang) conducts political education through Instagram and its website to enhance digital literacy on social media. The social media accounts for educating novice voters include the Instagram account Bawaslu_Subang, Twitter.com/Subang, and <https://subangkab.bawaslu.go.id/>. Through these three accounts, Bawaslu consistently carries out knowledge transformation and program socialization to improve the literacy, awareness, and participation of novice voters in the democratic process in Indonesia. Some students who served as informants in this research mentioned that the Participatory Supervisor Cadre School (Sekolah Kader Pengawas Partisipatif or SKPP) plays a significant role in understanding the role of participatory supervision in democracy. Students and university students feel that this program has equipped them with the skills and knowledge needed to participate in election monitoring and the political process in general.

Additionally, the SKPP program provides a platform for novice voters to collaborate with fellow students and other stakeholders in promoting integrity and accountability in elections. The Participatory Supervisor Cadre School is considered a crucial means of training the younger generation to actively engage and enrich their preferences when participating in the 2024 regional elections. Bawaslu strives to create a fair and transparent election process to enhance community involvement in elections (Ma'arif et al., 2022).

Challenges in the Political Communication Education Process Creating elections with integrity and implementing principles of good election governance is necessary. This process heavily relies on an independent and autonomous election supervisory body, the Election Supervisory Board (Badan Pengawasan Pemilihan Umum or Bawaslu)(Primadi et al., 2019). The Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu), especially in Subang Regency, is crucial in providing political communication education to novice voters. However, In its education and socialization process, Bawaslu also faces several challenges in carrying out its duties. Research findings indicate that one of the main obstacles Bawaslu encounters in conducting political communication education for novice voters is the lack of interest in political matters. Novice voters often show little concern for the political process, considering it irrelevant or complex. This can make it difficult for Bawaslu to create messages that capture the attention of novice voters and inspire them to participate in the Regional Head elections. Bawaslu plays a role in motivating novice voters to understand the importance of political participation and educating them about the significance of novice voters' voices, which significantly

impact democracy. Some of the obstacles faced by Bawaslu in the process of political communication education, along with the solutions offered to novice voters, include:

Table 2. Bawaslu Obstacles and Solutions in the process of political communication education

No.	Communication Challenges	Solutions
1	Lack of Interest Among Novice Voters in Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create engaging and relevant educational campaigns for novice voters. • Invite popular youth influencers or figures to participate in political education activities. • Utilize social media and digital platforms to disseminate information and political messages that are easily accessible and understandable for novice voters.
2	Limited Political Knowledge Among Novice Voters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop simple and easily understandable political education materials, including videos, infographics, and interactive content. • Organize workshops, seminars, or public discussions involving novice voters to discuss relevant political issues. • Provide online resources such as political information portals accessible to novice voters.
3	Influence of Social Media and Disinformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an understanding of how to recognize and avoid fake news (hoaxes) and disinformation. • Encourage critical thinking among novice voters when consuming information on social media and the internet. • Partner with social media platforms to provide reliable and accurate information.
4	Limited Resources for Education Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek additional funding through sponsorship, donations, or partnerships with private institutions. • Utilize volunteers or community members in the implementation of political education programs. • Collaborate with civil society organizations and educational institutions to share resources and experiences.
5	Technological Challenges in Reaching Novice Voters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop mobile applications or platforms downloadable by novice voters for accessing political information. • Promote novice voter participation through technology-based campaigns such as online fundraising or electronic voting. • Conduct webinars or live streaming for direct interaction with novice voters online.
6	Dynamics of Political Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that messages conveyed are always neutral and do not support any political party.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Involve various youth groups and novice voters in the process of crafting political messages to represent diverse perspectives.• Organize open and transparent discussion sessions involving novice voters, Bawaslu, and other stakeholders.
7 Social and Cultural Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct targeted education and awareness programs for communities and novice voters.• Engage Local Authority Figures: Involve respected local figures or leaders in political education efforts.• Collaborate with Social and Religious Organizations: Partner with the community's influential social and religious organizations.

Source: Research Results, 2023

CONCLUSION

The Subang Regency Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu Subang Regency) has a crucial role in forming a "stock of knowledge" or a source of knowledge related to the political communication education process for novice voters. Bawaslu functions as a provider of objective information regarding elections, political regulations, and the rights and responsibilities of voters. Bawaslu provides guidance, educational materials, and trusted sources of information to voters, including first-time voters, to help them better understand the election process, the importance of the right to vote, and voting procedures. In its capacity, Bawaslu acts as a political education agent that shapes public knowledge, especially first-time voters, about democracy and political participation. Research on political communication education for first-time voters in the 2024 Pilkada in Subang Regency reveals several important findings. The political communication education strategy implemented by the Subang Bawaslu aims to increase voter political participation. Like many other regions in Indonesia, Subang Regency has a history of relatively low political participation, especially among young voters. However, through effective political communication education efforts, first-time voters can be empowered to understand better the election process, relevant political issues, and the importance of their right to vote. This can create a more informed and engaged electorate in local democracy.

Furthermore, the findings of this research emphasize the importance of adapting political communication education strategies to accommodate technological changes and social trends. Like other regions, Subang Regency has also felt a significant impact from technological advances, especially the use of social media. Therefore, the political communication education strategy

implemented by Bawaslu includes forming a Participatory Supervisory Cadre School (SKPP), implementing the "Go to School Socialization" program, collaborating with the General Election Commission (KPU), and providing digital media literacy training. , and promote information critical thinking skills. These initiatives aim to enable first-time voters to identify and evaluate the political information they consume.

Some of the challenges faced by Bawaslu include the low level of participation of first-time voters, limited resources that can hinder the implementation of a comprehensive political communication education program, technological obstacles that prevent Bawaslu from utilizing political communication education optimally, as well as cultural and social challenges which influence voter political participation. Bawaslu and the KPU are important in organizing political education, fostering inclusive political discourse, and collaborating with educational institutions, civil society organizations, local media, and community leaders. This collaboration can expand the reach and effectiveness of political education and ensure that the messages conveyed reflect the needs and context of the people of Subang Regency. By involving all stakeholders, political communication education can be a more effective means of building healthy political understanding and active participation in the 2024 regional head elections in Subang Regency.

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