

Empowering Overseas Indonesian Citizens: Voter Education Training for First-Time Voters

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ABSTRACT

This discussion focused on the participation of first-time Indonesian voters abroad, particularly in Spain, in the 2024 general election. These voters hold great potential to shape the political and policy direction of their home country but face challenges such as limited access to information and a lack of understanding of domestic politics. To address these issues, a community service program was implemented to provide targeted political education, leverage technology and social media, and foster collaboration with local Indonesian communities. The program's methods included a series of online workshops, informative social media campaigns, and partnerships with local organizations to enhance political literacy. The results of the program demonstrated a significant improvement in voter knowledge and engagement, with a marked increase in voter registration and political awareness among first-time voters compared to pre-program levels. This effort aims to ensure that the voices of all Indonesian citizens, regardless of location, are heard and contribute to the democratic process, ultimately strengthening Indonesia's democracy.

Keywords: Participation, Young voters, Overseas

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of democracy and voting systems from ancient Greece to the present age has undergone substantial changes. Georg Sorensen defines democracy as a concept derived from the Greek word *demos*, meaning "the people," and *kratos*, meaning "government." Democracy is a system of governance established and driven by the populace, with the primary objective of serving the people's interests (Bennion and Laughlin, 2018). Initially, in Athens around 600 BC, democracy emerged as a direct form of governance wherein city residents convened to make political decisions collectively. However, participation was limited to specific demographics, primarily adult males, and this engagement fluctuated during the Peloponnesian War. Subsequently, in Rome, while not a pure democracy, the Roman Republic

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allowed citizens to actively participate in decision-making processes. The medieval age saw the rise of oppressive feudal regimes, yet the Renaissance revived democratic ideals, which were further developed by Enlightenment thinkers like Montesquieu and Rousseau in the 18th century. Their philosophies influenced the American and French Revolutions, leading to the creation of constitutional frameworks that embraced democratic principles. In the 19th century, democracy progressed as suffrage expanded to previously marginalized groups, and in the 20th century, representative democracy became the dominant form, where citizens elect representatives to make political decisions on their behalf. The expansion of global democracy was further influenced by decolonization, the establishment of the United Nations, and the spread of democratic ideals after World War II (Saepudin et al., 2023).

With the 2024 election on the horizon, Indonesia faces substantial challenges and opportunities to fortify its democratic framework. This upcoming election is expected to be a significant milestone for evaluating the nation's democratic development. Ensuring fair, transparent, and fraud-free elections is critical for strengthening the government's legitimacy. A major objective is to enhance voter turnout, particularly among key demographics such as young voters and women. Authorities must ensure the integrity and accountability of the electoral process, from voter registration to vote counting. Additionally, election campaigns will focus on critical issues such as the economy, environment, and social welfare, prompting wide-ranging discussions (Peltoniemi et al., 2022). The 2024 election provides an opportunity for Indonesia to reinforce its democratic foundations, increase civic engagement, and address the evolving needs of society. Achieving successful elections is essential for consolidating democracy, but the country must also remain committed to overcoming challenges and upholding democratic principles across all aspects of national life (Lin, 2016).

A key factor in bolstering democracy ahead of the 2024 elections in Indonesia is the active engagement and awareness of first-time voters, particularly those living abroad. According to Law No. 10 of 2008, specifically Chapter IV, Article 19, paragraphs 1 and 2, as well as Article 20, "new voters" refer to Indonesian citizens who meet specific requirements (Harrison, 2023). Per Article 19, paragraphs 1 and 2, Indonesian nationals who are 17 years old or older, including those who are or have been married, are eligible to vote on election day. However, despite rising youth voter engagement in previous elections, several factors continue to impact their participation. One significant issue is a lack of understanding about the importance of suffrage and how political

matters affect daily life. Limited political education, both in schools and the wider society, hinders the motivation of new voters to participate actively in the democratic process. Furthermore, feelings of political apathy or skepticism—stemming from the belief that their vote has little impact or a lack of knowledge about candidates and policies—also contribute to low turnout among first-time voters (Maber, 2016).

In the context of Indonesian voters abroad, these challenges are compounded by additional barriers such as limited access to reliable information, geographical isolation from the political environment at home, and a lack of structured political education. This is particularly true for specific target groups such as migrant workers, students, and other expatriate Indonesians. Migrant workers, who often face difficult working conditions, may lack the time and resources to engage in the political process, while students may find themselves disconnected from the national discourse due to their focus on academic life abroad. Moreover, both groups may encounter difficulties in accessing accurate and timely information about electoral procedures, candidates, and issues. Consequently, these voters may be less likely to participate in elections or may cast their vote without a full understanding of the policies and candidates at stake.

Therefore, efforts to enhance political literacy among these groups must prioritize formal education and community activities that raise awareness about the influence of voters in shaping governance. Technology and social media also play a vital role in engaging and connecting with first-time voters abroad. Digital platforms can be used to disseminate accurate information, provide political education, and facilitate open discussions on critical issues. Utilizing these tools can encourage greater political participation among younger voters, who are often more familiar with online media. Successful collaboration between government bodies, educational institutions, community organizations, and the media is essential to adequately prepare and support these first-time voters. To ensure the 2024 Indonesian elections reflect active and democratic participation from all segments of society—particularly the influential youth demographic abroad—it is crucial to raise awareness, provide inclusive education, and create a conducive political environment (Pons and Liegey, 2019).

METHODS

The method in this program aims to improve political engagement among Indonesian expatriates in Spain, especially first-time voters. The training, held at the Indonesian Embassy in Madrid, was designed to be interactive with presentations, group dis-

cussions, case studies, and election simulations. The participants were selected based on their political knowledge, education, and specific needs. The training covered basic information about the Indonesian political system, voter rights, and the election process. Hands-on activities like public speaking and decision-making exercises helped participants feel more confident about voting. To measure the impact of the program, questionnaires were given before and after the training to assess changes in knowledge and attitudes. Observations and in-depth interviews were also conducted to gather more insights. Election simulations were used to give participants a real-life experience of voting. Monitoring and evaluation were ongoing, with follow-up surveys conducted months after the training to see how participants applied their knowledge. The data collected was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the overall success of the program and suggest improvements for future sessions. By combining training, simulations, and continuous evaluation, the program was designed to achieve lasting improvements in political engagement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General elections are one of the main pillars of the democratic system in various countries around the world. First-time voters, who are a relatively new group to the political process, have an important role in ensuring the survival and success of democracy (Dandoy and Kernalegenn, 2021). Especially in the context of the upcoming general elections in Indonesia in 2024, first-time voters are the focus of efforts to strengthen the country's democratic foundations. However, attention to first-time voters is not only limited to domestic areas but also extends its scope to first-time voters abroad, including in cities such as Madrid and other cities in Spain, where there are significant Indonesian citizens (Sloam, 2014).

Context of the 2024 General Election in Indonesia

One of the most significant events that took place in the political life of a nation was the administration of general elections. A similar sentiment could be said for Indonesia, a nation that honors cultural plurality, ethnic variety, and religious diversity for its citizens. Indonesia, with a population of over 270 million people spread out over more than 17,000 islands, has been on a long and eventful road ever since it gained its independence in 1945 (Lewis, 2017).

The elections that took place in Indonesia in 2024 held significant importance in the

annals of the democratic history of this nation. Since the beginning of the reformation period in 1998, Indonesia has gone through a few different political phases that were fraught with tension. It was widely acknowledged that the general election served as a significant symbol for the maturation of democracy in Indonesia and for determining the future course of political affairs (Erlina et al., 2024).

The democratic nation of Indonesia had made the holding of general elections one of the primary means by which it determined the course of policy and the individuals who would hold positions of authority. One way in which this was represented in the political process was that it required active engagement from all sectors of society, including first-time voters, who were the next generation of the nation's successors (Galuh Larasati et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, despite the significance of this election, Indonesia was confronted with a few obstacles that needed to be conquered. Ensuring that the process of holding general elections was carried out with a high degree of integrity and openness was one of the most significant concerns at the time. This entailed diligently monitoring each step of the process, from voter registration to the counting of votes, in order to prevent fraudulent acts that might erode public faith in democratic institutions (Sutrisno et al., 2018).

In addition to that, the election that took place in 2024 is also a significant push to expand political involvement, particularly among people who voted for the first time (Moeller et al., 2014). There is a significant possibility that new voters may become forceful agents of change in society (Emilson et al., 2023).

However, they are also susceptible to a wide range of external stimuli, which have the potential to affect the political choices that they make. As a result, the government and other institutions need to provide first-time voters with sufficient political education to enable them to make informed choices that are based on correct facts.

While the election in 2024 provided Indonesia with a few obstacles, it also presented several opportunities. Increasing the number of women participating in political processes was one such opportunity (Nasiruddin et al., 2023). There was still a large gap between the political engagement of men and women in Indonesia, even though progress had been made in providing women with opportunities to participate in politics. The election that took place in 2024 had the potential to serve as a catalyst for increasing the number of women holding political positions at all levels, from the legislative to the executive (Koc-Michalska et al., 2014).

In addition to that, the election that took place in 2024 was an opportunity to reinforce the values of inclusive democracy and the protection of human rights. By prioritizing democratic principles, Indonesia had the potential to serve as a model for other nations in achieving peace, justice, and prosperity for all its citizens. The trainees had a significant capacity to influence the political direction and policies of their home nation (Inganah et al., 2023).

In the grand scheme of things, the election that took place in Indonesia in 2024 was a significant event in the history of democracy in this nation. The Indonesian government had the potential to establish itself as a mature and responsible democratic nation through the process that was undertaken. For Indonesia to make progress toward a more positive and equitable future for all of its citizens, it was necessary to ensure that the process of holding general elections was carried out with a high degree of integrity and openness while encouraging greater political engagement from all sectors of society (Zorrilla-Velazquez et al., 2021).

The Importance of First-Time Voters Abroad

The importance of new voters in ensuring the continued viability of democracy is not confined to the domestic sphere alone; it also includes new voters in other countries (Regif et al., 2024). The Indonesian diaspora is dispersed over many different regions of the globe, which presents Indonesia with a unique set of issues and possibilities when it comes to assuring the political involvement of its inhabitants living outside of the country. This includes places in Spain, such as Madrid, where there are substantial numbers of Indonesian nationals (Mvukiyehe and Samii, 2017).

They have a significant capacity to influence the political direction and policies of their home nations, which is why it is impossible to overestimate the significance of first-time voters who are located outside of their home countries. Their participation in the political process in Indonesia still has a tremendous influence, even though they are separated from their country by a geographical distance. First-time voters in other countries have the potential to become agents of change in society by casting their ballots for candidates who reflect their beliefs and goals. This possibility is especially relevant in the context of the general election that will take place in Paris in 2024 (Scholte, 2014).

On the other hand, the involvement of first-time voters in foreign countries is also confronted with many obstacles. The lack of access to information that is pertinent to political matters is one of the most significant issues. It is necessary to make further

efforts in order to guarantee that first-time voters in other countries have the same access to information about candidates running in general elections as voters in the United States, as well as knowledge about the political platforms and programs that these candidates advocate for (Fithor and Afrizal, 2022).



Picture 1. The Overseas Election Committee provides training on elections abroad, especially for new voters, and is located at the Indonesian Embassy in Madrid.

In addition to this, first-time voters who are located outside of the country often have challenges while attempting to comprehend the nuances of our domestic political system. It is possible that they do not have an adequate grasp of the political problems that are presently emerging in Indonesia, as well as the political system and governance of the nation in general. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to provide first-time voters in other countries with political education that is both targeted and effective to prepare them to participate in general elections (Junaedi et al., 2023).

Furthermore, new voters residing abroad may struggle to understand the entire general election procedure. Voters must have a thorough understanding of the voting procedures to vote correctly, especially because different election systems in their countries may be challenging for some voters.

Even though they are confronted with a variety of obstacles, it is essential to keep in mind that first-time voters who are located outside of Indonesia have a significant potential to contribute to the growth of Indonesian democracy. Using technology and social media, the government and other connected institutions have the ability to enhance the accessibility of political information to young voters located in other countries, as well as to enable discourse and discussion on subjects that are pertinent to

politics. In addition, collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and local communities may also assist to raise the political knowledge and awareness of first-time voters in other countries. This will allow these individuals to make informed choices based on factual information during general elections (Ruslan et al., 2023).

In the context of the general election in Indonesia in 2024, it is anticipated that the government and relevant institutions will take tangible actions to boost the involvement of first-time voters in the political process of their home countries. This is because the government believes that first-time voters abroad play a significant role, particularly in the context of the general election (Kartika & Syafrudin, 2023). First-time voters who are located outside of Indonesia have the potential to become a vital part of Indonesia's democratic path toward a better and fairer future for all of its inhabitants if this is accomplished via planned and coordinated cooperative efforts (Tarrant et al., 2014).

Challenges and Opportunities

First-time voters abroad, particularly in Spain, are faced with several challenges that could affect their participation in the Indonesian general election. However, despite these challenges, some opportunities can be exploited to increase their involvement in the political processes of their home countries (Fauzan et al., 2024).

Challenge:

1. **Limited Access to Information:** One of the main challenges faced by first-time voters abroad is limited access to relevant political information. They may not have the same access as domestic voters to information about candidates running in general elections, as well as about the political platforms and programs they promote.
2. **Lack of Understanding of Domestic Politics:** New voters abroad may not have sufficient understanding of political issues currently developing in Indonesia. They may also be unfamiliar with the country's political system and governance in general, which may hinder their participation in the political process.
3. **Difficulty Understanding the General Election Process:** The different electoral systems of the countries where they live can be confusing for some first-time voters abroad. They may need a deeper understanding of the procedures that must be followed to vote effectively.

Opportunity:

1. **Technology and social media:** Advances in information technology and social me-

dia open new opportunities to increase the access of young voters abroad to political information. The government and related institutions can utilize these platforms to provide accurate and relevant information about Indonesia's political process, as well as to facilitate dialogue and discussion on important political issues.

2. **Inter-institutional Cooperation:** Collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and local communities can help increase the political understanding and awareness of first-time voters abroad. Through targeted and coordinated political education programs, first-time voters can be given a deeper understanding of the Indonesian political system and the importance of participation in the political process.
3. **Active Participation in Communities:** Indonesian communities abroad can be an important forum for increasing the political participation of novice voters. Through discussions, meetings, and other activities, first-time voters can support and motivate each other to get involved in the Indonesian political process.



Picture 2. With training participants and outreach to new voters ahead of the 2024 elections in Madrid

By paying attention to the challenges and opportunities faced, the Indonesian government, the Indonesian Embassy in Spain, and the Indonesian community abroad can work together to create a supportive environment for first-time voters to participate in the 2024 general elections. Through directed and coordinated joint efforts, first-time voters can become an integral part of Indonesia's political process and contribute to strengthening the country's democracy (Amrizal et al., 2018).

Strategies to Increase Participation

Increasing first-time voter participation abroad, especially in cities such as Madrid, Spain, requires a planned and coordinated strategy (Böcü and Baser, 2024). The following are several strategies that can be implemented to increase their involvement in the Indonesian political process:

1. **Targeted Political Education:** It is important to provide targeted political education to first-time voters abroad. This can be done through seminars, workshops, or online courses that discuss Indonesian political issues, the political system, and the general election process. The Indonesian Embassy in Spain can collaborate with educational institutions and local communities to organize these activities.
2. **Use of Technology and Social Media:** Information technology and social media can be effective tools for increasing first-time voters' access to political information. The Indonesian Embassy in Spain can use digital platforms to disseminate information about candidates, political programs, and general election procedures to Indonesian communities abroad.
3. **Organizing Discussions and Meetings:** Holding regular discussions and meetings on relevant political issues can increase awareness and engagement of first-time voters abroad. The Indonesian Embassy in Spain can facilitate these meetings and invite political figures and academics to speak on certain topics.
4. **Voter Education Campaign:** Through a planned voter education campaign, the Indonesian Embassy in Spain can provide information to first-time voters about the importance of their voting rights, voter registration procedures, and how to vote effectively. This campaign can be carried out through social media, pamphlets, and community events.
5. **Collaboration with Local Communities:** The Indonesian Embassy in Spain can collaborate with local communities, community organizations, and educational institutions to increase the political participation of first-time voters abroad. This can be done through collaborative programs, such as joint political education workshops or social campaigns about the importance of political participation.
6. **Use of Online Resources:** Creating online resources, such as voter guides and video tutorials about the election process, can help first-time voters understand election procedures better. The Indonesian Embassy in Spain can provide these resources in multiple languages to meet the diverse needs of first-time voters.



Picture 3. Providing materials and insights is one of the strategies to increase Political Participation in the Democratic Party at El Retiro Park, Madrid

By implementing these strategies in an integrated and sustainable manner, it is hoped that the participation of first-time voters abroad, especially in Spain, can increase in the 2024 general elections. This will strengthen Indonesian democracy by ensuring that the votes of all citizens, regardless of gender and where they live, are heard and counted in the country's political process (Boulianne, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The involvement of individuals who are eligible to vote for the first time in other countries, such as Spain, has had a substantial influence on the consolidation of democracy in Indonesia. Although these voters face obstacles like restricted access to information and a lack of understanding of domestic politics, there are also significant opportunities to boost their engagement. This can be achieved through targeted political education, the use of technology and social media, and collaboration with local communities. Furthermore, community service programs can play a pivotal role in enhancing voter participation by offering grassroots-level education on voting procedures, political literacy, and the significance of democratic participation. By involving local volunteers and professionals, these programs can effectively bridge knowledge gaps and empower voters to make informed decisions. By addressing these challenges and opportunities, it is expected that first-time voters abroad will become more involved in the 2024 general elections, contributing to Indonesia's political process and strengthening its democracy.

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