Participation of Special Needs Communities in the 2019 Legislative Elections in Medan City

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Received: 30 September 2023; Reviewed: 01 October 2023; Accepted: 09 October 2023

Abstract

This article explores the participation of individuals with special needs/disabilities in the 2019 legislative elections in Medan City. Despite numerous regulations governing the rights and participation of disabled voters in elections, their political rights, particularly the right to vote, are often overlooked in practice. This is evident in their low participation rates in elections, especially in Medan City. The research aims to assess the level of participation and political behavior of disabled individuals in elections and evaluate the efforts of the Medan City Election Commission (KPU) in enhancing their participation. The research method employed is qualitative descriptive, using interviews and in-depth analysis as data collection techniques. The findings indicate inaccurate data regarding disabled individuals in Medan City and low participation rates due to the lack of professionalism among polling station officers in data collection and services. This study recommends recruiting polling station officers based on qualifications and relevant experience to provide maximum and professional services in their duties. The data updating process should also be improved through collaboration between election organizers, the Department of Social Affairs, and the Department of Population and Civil Registration to collect data on disabled individuals in Medan City more effectively. Furthermore, election organizers should engage in outreach efforts.

Keywords: Political Participation; Disabled Individuals; 2019 Legislative Elections


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INTRODUCTION

Elections in democratic countries, including Indonesia, are a democratic process that grants full sovereignty to the people through elections based on constitutional principles. This principle includes the right of all citizens to participate in state decision-making, which reflects democracy (Almond, Gabriel A., Verba, 1984). Political changes from the New Order to the reform era had a positive impact on people’s political rights. The New Order era did not allow free participation in the election of representatives in the legislative body or presidential elections. Currently, people enjoy the freedom to choose leaders who are considered capable of representing them. This also applies to people with disabilities or people with disabilities, who have impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. Disability is a problem in a person’s bodily function or body structure, activity limitations are individual difficulties in carrying out tasks, and participation restrictions are obstacles experienced by individuals in participating in social life (Mercer & Hallahan, 2002; Reynhout & Carter, 2006). Thus, disability is a complex phenomenon influenced by the interaction between individual characteristics and the social environment.

Persons with disabilities are individuals who experience physical, intellectual, mental, or sensory limitations either due to genetic factors or due to accidents. These limitations persist over a long period and make it difficult for them to participate fully and effectively in interactions with others, based on the principle of equal rights. Unfortunately, people with disabilities are often considered unproductive by society, and their rights are often ignored, so their existence is sometimes ignored (Santoso & Apsari, 2017; Widinarsih, 2019).

Democratic principles, which involve human rights, form the basis of a democratic political system. These principles guide a country or government in building a democratic political system and are the key to measuring its success. Without democratic principles, political direction becomes unclear, and the concept of government loses rationality. Therefore, it is important to involve people, including people with disabilities, directly in the democratic process (Marzuki, 2014).

Democracy is a system of government in which the people have an important voice through general elections. Democracy and politics are always related because to have a democratic government, people need to actively participate in politics. Participation is when a person or group of people take part in a larger activity, and this is only meaningful if they feel responsible for their actions in that activity (Kusmanto, 2014; Suharyanto, 2014).

Political participation refers to various activities in the political system, including voters voting in general elections. (Budiardjo, 1981) explains that political participation is when someone is actively involved in political life, such as directly electing a leader or influencing government policy. In Indonesia, elections are used as a way to realize democracy, where citizens elect legislative and executive members, including the President or regional heads, to create a representative government in a diverse society.

Initially, the rights and opportunities for people with disabilities were guaranteed in Article 5 paragraph 1 of Law No. 4 of 1997 concerning Persons with Disabilities. Aspects of their lives and livelihoods including religion, health, education, social, employment, economics, public services, law, culture, politics, defense and security, sports, recreation, and information are regulated in this article. Through this law, their political rights, such as participating in elections, are facilitated, and they can exercise their voting rights.

It should be remembered that the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD 1945) guarantees everyone’s right to recognition, guarantees, protection, and fair legal certainty, as well as equal treatment before the law. According to Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities (UU 8/2016), persons with disabilities are individuals who have long-term physical, intellectual, mental, or sensory limitations, so they face obstacles and difficulties in participating fully as citizens. Others are based on the principle of equal rights.

Therefore, it is necessary to pay special attention to people with special needs/disabilities so that they can live their lives and participate in general elections properly. Article 13 in Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities regulates
the political rights of people with special needs/persons with disabilities, including a. The right to vote and be elected to public office. b. The right to convey political aspirations in writing or orally. c. The right to vote for political parties or individuals who participate in general elections. d. The right to form, and become a member, or administrator of a community organization or political party. e. The right to form and join organizations of Persons with Disabilities and represent them at local, national, and international levels. f. The right to actively participate in the general election system at all stages and parts of its implementation. g. The right to access facilities and infrastructure in general elections, elections for governors, regents/mayors, and elections for village heads or similar positions. h. The right to obtain political education.

The government and the General Election Commission (KPU) have demonstrated their commitment to fulfilling the political rights of people with disabilities in elections. This can be seen through the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the KPU and the General Election Center for Access for Persons with Disabilities (PPUA PENCA) on March 11, 2013. In this memorandum of understanding, the KPU as the election organizer promised to carry out all stages of the election by paying attention to accessibility, especially for people with disabilities (Martini & Yulyana, 2018).

The General Election Commission (KPU) has shown its seriousness in ensuring the rights and participation of persons with disabilities in general elections. Concrete steps that the KPU has taken include involving people with disabilities in formulating regulations for the 2014 general election. This aims to identify and meet their needs. Since the 2015 regional elections, the KPU has also recorded data on various voters with disabilities with special columns and information, such as physical disabilities, visual disabilities, hearing/speech disabilities, mental disabilities, and other disabilities. This allows people with disabilities to have equal opportunities in elections, both at national and regional levels.

Even though there are many regulations to ensure the fulfillment of the rights and participation of voters with disabilities, in reality, many of their political rights, especially the right to vote, are still neglected. This is reflected in the low level of participation in general elections in several regions of Indonesia, including the city of Medan. This situation indicates that inclusive elections have not been fully realized in several regions, including Medan City. Apart from that, the lack of accurate data on the number of people with disabilities in Indonesia is also a problem that needs to be addressed (Martini & Yulyana, 2018).

Persons with disabilities have the same rights to participate in general elections, including the right to run for president or legislative members. However, in reality, the implementation of elections in Indonesia does not fully reflect the principle of equal rights between citizens, so the participation of people with disabilities is still low. For example, the 2019 Simultaneous Election faced problems, especially in Medan City, related to the low political participation of people with disabilities.

The involvement of people with disabilities becomes a problem when they do not generally get the facilities they need when voting at polling places, especially in Medan City. The General Election Commission (KPU) is also considered to have not sufficiently supported their needs. Apart from that, political parties, which are supposed to provide political education to the public, are unable to function optimally.

Many people in Indonesia believe that the lack of political party presence during general elections is not only due to laziness but also due to the lack of appeal that political parties have on society. They do not have sufficient control over welfare benefits for the people (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019). Political parties have an important role in dealing with collective action and social choice problems in legislative politics. They serve as a heuristic tool and voters often choose based on the political program offered by the party. Therefore, political parties must be active in accommodating the aspirations of the community, including voters with disabilities, so that they are more active in the general election process.

Data on the recapitulation of the final voter list (DPT) for people with special needs/disabilities approved by the Medan City KPU for the 2019 Simultaneous Elections in Medan City are as follows: Medan Amplas: 46, Medan Area: 68, West Medan: 4. Medan Baru:
In the 2019 Simultaneous Elections, the number of disabled voters at the national level increased significantly, reaching 556,754 voters, compared to 375,195 in the 2014 Elections. This reflects the increased serious attention of election organizers to the voting rights of citizens with disabilities. This issue attracted public attention because there were pre-election discussions which discussed the issue of mental retardation and its relevance in the election. This research focuses on Political Behavior and Participation, by observing various facts and events and their comparison from one election to another in Indonesia.

In this context, researchers want to investigate the political behavior of residents with disabilities/special needs in the 2019 legislative elections in Medan City. This research also aims to understand the factors that encourage or hinder their participation in the legislative elections, as well as how election organizers meet their needs. The author's initial assumption is that increasing the number of people with special needs on the Permanent Voter List (DPT) will not necessarily have a positive impact on their participation level, due to social stigma and a lack of adequate election accommodation.

This research aims to understand the voting behavior of people with special needs/disabilities, the factors that cause their low level of participation in the election process, and evaluate the strategies that have been implemented by the General Election Commission to increase participation and provide political education to people with special needs/people with disabilities in the 2019 Legislative Candidate Election in Medan City.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses qualitative research methods because it allows researchers to conduct interviews and analyze phenomena in depth by involving informants who play an important role in the implementation of the 2019 Legislative Election. Qualitative research focuses on humans as research objects and can provide relatively certain information.

This research also chooses a qualitative approach because it can provide complete and relevant data that can answer research problems. The results of data from interviews and comparisons with previous studies regarding the participation of people with special needs/disabilities in Medan City were used to optimize the completion of the thesis optimally and accurately.

In this research, the informants who are the main data sources are sources selected using the purposive sampling method (Sugiyono, 2019). Resource persons are individuals who are considered to have sufficient knowledge and experience in the issues studied, especially regarding the participation of people with special needs/disabilities in the 2019 Legislative Election in Medan City.

The main informants in this research consisted of participants with disabilities and their family members. This research will involve social interaction with key informants, which includes an understanding of their daily lives, the obstacles they experience, as well as their participation in activities in their environment and the general election process at polling stations (TPS).

In this research, there are several types of informants used to collect data. Key informants are individuals who have important knowledge and information related to this research (Sugiyono, 2019). Key informants in this research include the Chair of the Medan City General Election Commission, Mr. Agussyah Damanik, as well as the Chair of the North Sumatra Pertuni Disability Community (Chair of the Blind Association), Mr. Syaiful, and his staff. They provided in-depth insight regarding the participation of people with special needs/disabilities in the 2019 Legislative Election in Medan City.

Apart from key informants, additional informants were also involved in this research. Additional informants are individuals who were involved in the nomination process in 2019 were elected as DPRD members, and have experience in accommodating the aspirations
of people with special needs/disabilities. Additional informants in this research include Mr. Edward Hutabarat (Member of the Medan City DPRD from the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle / PDIP Fraction 2019-2024) and Mr. Rudiawan Sitorus, S. Fil. I, MA (Member of the Medan City DPRD from the Prosperous Justice Party / PKS Fraction 2019-2024).

This research uses two data collection techniques, namely primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with key informants and additional informants. Apart from that, observations and photo and video documentation were also carried out to collect data relevant to this research (Sugiyono, 2019).

In this research, data collection techniques were carried out through face-to-face interviews with the main informant, key informants, and additional informants. Interviews were conducted intensively using recording equipment and writing instruments to obtain complete and in-depth data from each informant. Interviews are focused on specific questions to ensure the data obtained is relevant, accurate, and can be processed.

Structured interviews were used in this research with a list of questions that had been prepared beforehand. This approach allows for the collection of data that is easily quantified, categorized, and classified. Predetermined informants are asked various questions that are appropriate to the problem being studied (Sugiyono, 2019).

Observation is also a technique used to observe the daily lives of people with disabilities and their socio-economic conditions. Observations were also made on the accessibility of facilities and infrastructure to support disability needs in various locations, including in their homes, the surrounding environment, and when they cast their voting rights.

Using a combination of interview and observation techniques, this research aims to obtain clear and in-depth data regarding the participation of people with special needs/disabilities in the 2019 Legislative Election in Medan City.

In this research, researchers used several data collection techniques, namely: Interview: Researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with main informants, key informants, and additional informants. Observations: Observations also include accessibility of facilities and infrastructure to support disability needs in various locations. Documentation: This document is used as secondary data to support research. Literature Study: This helps the researcher in clarifying and strengthening the discussion of the problem. Document Review: Researchers conducted a review of documents related to legislation, research results, news, journals, and other documents related to disability political participation.

The data analysis techniques used include data reduction, namely summarizing, selecting the main things, focusing on the important things, and looking for themes and data patterns (Miles et al., 2014). Data obtained from the field is recorded carefully and in detail and then presented in a research report.

In the process of presenting data, researchers aim to provide a clear picture of the participation of Communities with Special Needs in the 2019 Legislative Election in Medan City. Data obtained from interviews with informants will be presented in a way that facilitates understanding of various aspects of the research.

The process of concluding is carried out continuously throughout the research process. Researchers conduct data analysis to look for patterns, themes, relationships, hypotheses, and other important elements that emerge from observations and interviews. The conclusions drawn will reflect the results of research based on field findings regarding the political participation of people with disabilities in the 2019 Legislative Election in Medan City.

This conclusion includes factors that hinder the political participation of persons with disabilities in these elections. This conclusion will provide answers to the problems raised in the research and will be a summary of the findings that have been found.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Voter Behavior of People with Special Needs/Disabilities in the 2019 Legislative Election in Medan City

Persons with Disabilities are individuals who experience long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory limitations, and who face obstacles in participating fully in social life and their environment. These obstacles can
Disability problems involve the complexity of interactions between individual limitations and the obstacles that exist in their environment. These can be physical obstacles or rooted in unsupportive attitudes and programs. Therefore, disability must be understood as the result of the interaction between individuals with functional limitations and the environments that influence their participation (Johnstone et al., 2022).

People with disabilities in Indonesia face many challenges, including economic, social, educational, health, employment, social acceptance, and social protection problems. They often face poverty and hardship because of their limitations. Even though there are many regulations governing the rights and participation of voters with disabilities in elections in Indonesia, in reality, there are still many political rights, especially the right to vote, that have not been fully fulfilled. One example can be seen in Medan City, where the participation of people with disabilities in elections is still low.

In 2019, the Medan City Social Service tried to pay attention to people with special needs/disabled people by providing 41 wheelchair units according to the needs and classification of disabilities in the Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS). However, in its implementation, only 38 people took the wheelchair, and 3 other people died according to data provided by the Medan City Social Service to researchers. Even though this step is positive, this figure is still far from the actual number of people with disabilities in Medan City, considering the diversity of their categories and needs as well as obstacles in the imperfect data collection process.

Data obtained from the Medan City Social Service regarding the number of people with special needs/disabilities in 2019 is as follows: Physically disabled: 173; Down Syndrome: 29; Low Vision: 19; Doubles: 77; Doubles Multi: 77; Autism: 6; Blind: 145; Deaf: 46; Mentally Impaired: 26; Speech Impaired: 62; Mental (Mental Disorders): 76, and the total number is: 736.

It should be noted that this data is different from the data obtained by researchers from the Medan City General Election Commission (KPU). This data discrepancy shows the lack of synergy between the Social Service and the Medan City KPU in collecting accurate data on people with disabilities.

Apart from that, the Social Service also assists people with disabilities who are registered in the Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS), including the provision of wheelchairs, as previously explained.

From the data obtained, it can be seen that the number of aid recipients based on the Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS) for people with disabilities conducted by the Medan City Social Service is still far from meeting their needs. Of the total 736 people with disabilities recorded, only around 160 adults and 37 children received assistance. This figure has not even reached 50% of the total recorded population of people with disabilities.

The development of disabled voter participation, which is still low, is very dependent on the government’s realization of accommodating their needs. One important aspect is the accessibility of polling stations (TPS), which is often inadequate for people with disabilities. Even though people with disabilities have a high awareness of participating in elections, the treatment and facilities they need have not been fully met by election organizers.

The behavior of disabled voters tends to be influenced by a psychological approach, where factors such as interest in political candidates or parties, orientation towards the problems faced, personal experience, and environmental political orientation are determining factors. Apart from that, the evaluation of candidates is also influenced by their history and achievements.

In this context, election organizers and candidate pairs need to approach voters with disabilities emotionally and psychologically, and provide adequate accessibility, so that they can participate in the election more actively.

The results of an interview with Mr. Edward Hutabarat, elected Legislative Member in the Medan City DPRD from the PDI-Perjuangan Fraction, revealed that people with special needs or people with disabilities have a high level of awareness of political developments and have quite high sensitivity to political issues. They can also be easily touched...
if the aspirations and problems they face are raised and fought for.

The results of these interviews show that although people with special needs/disabled people have high awareness and want to actively participate in elections, they often face obstacles in getting facilities and treatment that suit their needs. Therefore, there is a need to re-evaluate the realization of meeting their needs, especially regarding accessibility which must be adequate and by their needs.

People with special needs/disabilities value their right to participate in the election process as a form of exercising their voting rights. In the context of political behavior theory, people with disabilities can be approached emotionally and not always oriented toward money politics. What is more important is understanding their needs and aspirations and committing to fighting for them. This is by the psychological approach to voter decision-making (Surbakti et al., 2008).

People with disabilities also have effective reasoning abilities in political behavior. Factors such as cognition (understanding), affection (emotion), and conation (will) play an important role in shaping a person’s political attitudes and behavior. The social and political environment also influences the formation of a person’s political attitudes and behavior through the process of socialization and experience (Kimberlin, 2009).

Persons with disabilities have a high awareness of the importance of their political participation and their rights in elections. However, they are also more motivated to participate actively if there are legislative candidates and election organizers who pay special attention to them. Support and attention from parties involved in the political process can help mobilize people with disabilities and encourage them to participate more actively in elections.

**Factors Causing Low Levels of Participation for Disabled Voters**

Elections are the right of every citizen, including people with disabilities, and must comply with basic principles such as Direct, Public, Free, and Secret (LUBER). The amended 1945 Constitution clearly emphasizes the rights of persons with disabilities to receive equal treatment and protection from discrimination. However, in practice, there are still several obstacles that prevent people with disabilities from fulfilling their political rights.

One of the main obstacles is a lack of understanding from election organizers, such as members of the KPPS (Voting Organizing Group). Insufficient understanding of the policies and actions required to facilitate persons with disabilities can result in violations of their rights.

There needs to be more intensive education and training efforts for election organizers and related stakeholders so that they understand the needs and rights of people with disabilities. Apart from that, it is necessary to improve physical and information accessibility facilities at polling places (TPS) so that people with disabilities can participate independently and confidentially in elections.

Addressing this problem requires cooperation between the government, election organizers, NGOs, and the general public to ensure that the political rights of people with disabilities are fully respected and fulfilled. This will ensure that elections are truly inclusive and representative of all levels of society, including people with disabilities.

Efforts to increase the fulfillment of the political rights of persons with disabilities are a very important step in creating an inclusive society. Several obstacles, such as the lack of data collection regarding the identity of people with disabilities, have hampered their participation in elections. The economic, social, educational, health, employment, community acceptance, and social protection problems faced by people with disabilities show that improvements are still needed in the implementation of disability-related programs and regulations in Indonesia.

The concept of accessibility outlined by LB Wirawan, which includes convenience, usability, safety, and independence, is an important foundation in ensuring that people with disabilities can participate independently in all aspects of life. The KPU has created various disability-friendly facilities at polling places (TPS), such as special tables, special voting place boards, as well as entrance and exit door designs that allow smooth movement. Assistive tools such as braille templates are also provided for people with visual disabilities.

While these efforts are important, additional steps need to be taken to ensure that
people with disabilities can actually utilize these facilities and participate well in elections. This includes more intensive education and training for election administrators, stakeholders, and the general public, as well as steps to improve data collection and understanding of the needs of people with disabilities.

With these steps, it is hoped that people with disabilities can take a more active role in the electoral process and that their political rights will be respected and fully implemented by the basic principles of elections.

The reality that occurs in the field often does not match the expectations and policies that have been made. One example is the problem of accessibility of polling places (TPS) for people with disabilities in previous elections. Many TPS officers have not yet realized that TPS is truly accessible for people with disabilities. This shows the need for better training and outreach to TPS officers regarding the importance of ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities.

Another problem faced by people with disabilities is related to the use of assistive devices. Even though assistive devices should be able to help them, there are still cases where people with disabilities do not know how to use their assistive devices or cannot use these assistive devices due to economic limitations. Therefore, the government’s role in budgeting for assistive devices for people with disabilities is very important. Apart from that, education and training regarding the use of assistive devices are also needed so that people with disabilities can make good use of them.

Not only technical problems but also the problem of social stigma that still exists related to people with disabilities. Some of them feel embarrassed or insecure about using their assistive devices, or that their assistive devices may be damaged. This indicates that apart from the physical aspects, there needs to be special attention to the social and psychological aspects of people with disabilities.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Law No. 19 of 2011 is a legal umbrella that should ensure the rights of people with disabilities in Indonesia. However, its implementation is still not optimal. Disabled people should not only be seen as a group that needs to be protected, but also as parties who have the right to participate fully in society. This requires a paradigm shift and a more inclusive approach to ensure that people with disabilities can achieve their basic rights, including adequate accessibility and mobility.

Participation of people with special needs or people with disabilities in general elections often does not receive equal treatment with the general public due to several factors. One of the main factors is the lack of facilities provided by election organizers, especially at polling places (TPS). TPS officers often do not provide services according to their duties, so people with disabilities have difficulty participating independently.

Another factor that influences the low participation of people with disabilities is the lack of understanding and professionalism of the election organizing committee at the TPS. Even though there have been changes to regulations and the existence of TPS access for people with disabilities, this cannot run optimally if the committee does not implement the regulations well and does not fulfill the needs and rights of people with disabilities according to the type of disability they have.

However, it is important to remember that people with disabilities have a high level of awareness to carry out their responsibilities as good citizens in elections. If facilities and services that suit their needs can be provided properly by election organizers, their participation potential can increase. Therefore, there is a need to improve the implementation of elections that are more inclusive and pay attention to the needs of various people with disabilities to ensure their political rights are properly fulfilled.

According to researchers, it is not only the organizers/committees who are experiencing problems in the field but the data collection process must also be improved so that the data obtained is better than before considering the fairly low participation of people with disabilities. The following is the recapitulation data on the votes cast by people with disabilities in 2019 in Medan City:

Data on the recapitulation of the final voter list (DPT) for people with special needs/disabilities approved by the Medan City KPU for the 2019 Simultaneous Elections in Medan City are as follows: Medan Amblas: 46, Medan Area: 68, West Medan: 4, Medan Baru: 16, Medan Belawan: 20, Medan Deli: 18, Medan Denai: 10, Medan Helvetia: 132, Medan Johor: 1294
The participation of people with special needs or people with disabilities in Medan City is at a very low level, not even reaching 50% of the total number of voters in each sub-district that has been recorded by the Medan City KPU. Some sub-districts, such as Medan Helvetia and Medan Johor, have a significant number of people with disabilities, but their participation is very minimal. For example, Medan Johor, which has a large population of people with disabilities, only involved 6 people in the election process.

The researcher's analysis shows that this low participation is caused by a lack of attention and clear data collection by election organizers and the Social Service in Medan City. Differences in data between the Social Service and the General Election Commission (KPU) indicate a lack of synergy between these two institutions in collecting data and paying special attention to people with disabilities in Medan City.

Apart from that, the professionalism of Polling Place (TPS) officers is also a problem, and this needs to be a concern for election organizers in the upcoming election. Evaluation of the role of polling station officers and increasing cooperation between various parties related to persons with disabilities can help increase their participation in the general election process in the future.

**Medan City KPU Strategy in Increasing Participation of Disabled Voters**

During the 2019 Legislative Election in Medan City, the Medan City General Election Commission (KPU) has made various efforts to increase the level of voter participation, especially among voters with disabilities. One of the strategies implemented is through intensifying socialization activities by involving democracy volunteers who have been recruited and involved by the Medan City KPU. This effort aims to provide a better understanding of the importance of participation in general elections to all citizens, including people with disabilities.

The 2019 election was an important moment in Indonesia's democratic system, where legislative general elections were held simultaneously to elect members of the DPR, Provincial DPRD, District/City DPRD, DPD, as well as the President and Vice President. This step was taken as part of efforts to minimize state costs, reduce high-cost political practices, and prevent money politics, abuse of power, and bureaucratic politicization. This simultaneous election is regulated based on Constitutional Court Decision Number 14/PUU-11/2013.

During the elections, the role of democracy volunteers and outreach efforts by the Medan City KPU were important factors in increasing voter participation, including people with disabilities, so that the democratic process could run better.

The General Election Commission (KPU) is responsible for the smooth running of elections, including increasing voter participation, including people with disabilities, in elections. In the 2019 elections, people with disabilities were also included, considering that their physical or mental condition does not eliminate their political rights. The Constitutional Court decided that people with mental and memory disorders should still be recorded in the Permanent Voter List.

The Medan City KPU makes people with disabilities a top priority and tries to increase their participation. They carry out data collection and provide access to voting stations (TPS) for people with disabilities to make it easier for them to choose candidates. The Medan City KPU also advocates for the interests of the general public, including people with disabilities, in the general election process.

Since the first election in Indonesia in 1955, the country has strived to provide elections of quality and integrity. Principles such as honesty, confidentiality, calmness, and directness have been guaranteed normatively. This shows the state's commitment to facilitating the people as the highest holders of sovereignty in exercising their political rights in a conducive atmosphere.

The Indonesian General Election Commission (KPU) has a hierarchical structure in carrying out its duties. Decisions and responsibilities are regulated in stages from the election management work unit level to the national level. This hierarchical model was
chosen to strengthen the independence of election organizers and enable national election planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. This change in institutional structure is by Law Number 22 of 2007 concerning Election Organizers, which was later changed to Law Number 15 of 2011. Recruitment of KPU members has also undergone fundamental changes, with KPU members currently coming from professional and non-partisan circles, different from the previous period which involved elements of political parties and government.

In the 2019 election, the KPU made various breakthroughs to ensure elections of quality and integrity. This breakthrough involves three main aspects, namely organizing access to public information, guaranteeing the constitutional rights of citizens, and maintaining the authenticity of the people’s voice. The KPU applies the principle of openness at every stage of the election and uses information systems as a tool to increase accuracy, speed, and transparency in managing the election stages and for publication to the public.

The General Election Commission (KPU) strengthens the guarantee of citizens' constitutional rights in holding elections by making improvements in the governance of voter data. This improvement involves regulatory and technical aspects. By regulation, the KPU allows Indonesian citizens who meet the requirements to vote but are not registered on the Permanent Voter List (DPT) to still exercise their right to vote. They can be registered in the Special Voter List (DPK) and the Additional Special Voter List (DPKTb). The KPU also uses an information system called Sidalih to manage voter data, including updating and maintaining data as well as disseminating and publishing data.

The KPU also maintains the authenticity of the people’s vote by allowing the public to access documents on vote counting results at polling stations (TPS) and recapitulation at various levels. These documents can be read and downloaded by the public who needs them. The KPU provides the C1 scan application and DA1, DB1, and DC1 Excel form applications to support transparency in reporting vote counting results at the sub-district, district/city, and provincial levels.

The Medan City General Election Commission (KPU) routinely carries out data collection and evaluation in every general election to increase community political participation, especially among people with disabilities. The Medan City KPU has also followed regulations regarding people with disabilities to ensure their rights in elections are fulfilled.

Mr. Edi Suhartono, as Commissioner of the Medan City KPU, Community Participation Division (Parmas), has coordinated with Pertuni North Sumatra and carried out political outreach activities in Pertuni to explore the aspirations and needs of people with disabilities in the elections. This shows the Medan City KPU's commitment to ensuring that people with disabilities can participate in the general election process.

The Medan City General Election Commission (KPU) has made maximum efforts to increase the political participation of the community, including people with disabilities, regardless of their condition or background. They continue to make changes and innovations to ensure increased political participation, although there are still several obstacles that must be evaluated for future improvements.

Chairman of the DPD Association for the Blind of Indonesia (PERTUNI) North Sumatra, Mr. Syaiful Bakti Daulay, and Secretary of the DPD Pertuni North Sumatra, Mr. Mardisan Tanjung, also feel that there have been significant changes in meeting the needs and rights of people with disabilities, even though they are not yet perfect. This reflects the commitment of the Government and KPU to directly involve people with disabilities in the general election process.

Ultimately, through these efforts, the Medan City KPU and the government as a whole are moving towards fulfilling the political rights of people with special needs/disabled people, in line with the provisions regulated in Law No. 8 of 2016 concerning the political rights of people with disabilities.

The Medan City General Election Commission (KPU) has implemented existing regulations to the maximum and evaluated every error that occurred in the general election process. As a result, people with special needs/disabled people felt significant changes at each stage of the general election. It is hoped
that good coordination between election organizers and people with disabilities can bring about better changes in the future so that people with disabilities do not experience discrimination in the implementation of general elections.

The Medan City KPU has complied with the circular instructions from the Central KPU in creating Access Voting Places (TPS) for people with disabilities. They also coordinate with the Disability Community, especially DPD Pertuni (Indonesian Blind Association) North Sumatra, to meet their needs and aspirations. This effort aims to increase the participation of disabled voters in Medan City and make it easier for them to exercise their right to vote.

In the implementation of elections in Indonesia, laws and regulations have been designed to protect the rights of voters with disabilities and ensure the availability of accessible polling stations. The KPU as a technical implementer is determined to guarantee the rights of voters with disabilities by providing facilities and tools that make it easier for them to exercise their right to vote.

A Circular from the Central KPU shows that the KPU has carried out its duties and functions by the Constitution and Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning persons with disabilities, especially Article 13 which protects the political rights of persons with disabilities, including the right to accessibility in holding elections, including the Election of President and Deputy President, Governor/Deputy Governor, Regent and Deputy Regent, Mayor and Deputy Mayor, and Members of the Legislature.

Even though the KPU has made regulations that attempt to facilitate disabled voters, such as policies regarding voting aids (Braille templates) and TPS access, there are still several problems faced by disabled voters in fulfilling their political rights in elections. One of the main problems is the lack of understanding of TPS officers (KPPS), especially regarding policies relating to people with disabilities in elections. KPPS has a very important role in ensuring good accessibility in elections, and for that, they need to understand well how to provide access by the regulations made by the KPU.

In this case, increasing understanding and training for KPPS regarding policies and accessibility for people with disabilities can be an important step to ensure that the political rights of people with disabilities are guaranteed and can be implemented properly in every election.

To increase voter participation, especially voters with disabilities, in the 2019 Legislative Election in Medan City, the Medan City KPU has implemented various strategies, including intensifying outreach activities through democracy volunteers recruited by them. During the holding of elections in Indonesia since 1955, basic principles such as honesty, confidentiality, calm, and directness have been guaranteed normatively. In the 2019 election, the Medan City KPU implemented various breakthroughs to present elections of quality and integrity. This breakthrough includes three main aspects: Organizing access to public information with the principle of openness at every stage of the election; Guarantee the constitutional rights of citizens, including voters with disabilities, with inclusive administration; and Maintaining the authenticity of the people's vote through transparency and public access to election results documents.

The Medan City KPU also utilizes information system applications as a tool to increase accuracy and efficiency in managing the election stages and as a means of publishing information to the public. The Medan City General Election Commission has made maximum efforts to increase the participation of the people of Medan City, including people with special needs or people with disabilities. This effort is in line with Article 13 of Law Number 8 of 2016 which regulates the political rights of people with special needs/persons with disabilities. Although there is still a way to go, there has been progress in fulfilling the rights of persons with disabilities in the electoral process.

CONCLUSION

The research results show that people with special needs or people with disabilities have a high level of awareness about participating in general elections. Even though they faced several obstacles and experiences that did not meet expectations, with the attention and commitment of the election organizers, their participation level increased significantly. In the 2019 Election, there were 556,754 permanent voter lists (DPT) with
disabilities, an increase from only 375,195 DPT in the 2014 Election. The Medan City KPU addressed the problem of political participation of persons with disabilities with steps such as involving them as democracy volunteers, using sign language in information, updating disability voter data, providing election training, and compiling accessible training modules. Initial coordination between election organizers and the disabled community in Medan City was not smooth due to differences in understanding of needs. However, coordination efforts that are more inclusive and based on input from the disabled community, especially through the North Sumatra DPD Pertuni organization, have resulted in improvements in meeting their needs although there is still room for improvement in better election implementation.

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