



## Accessibility and Participation: South Sumatra KPU Efforts to Present Disability-Friendly Elections in the city of Palembang in 2024

Peni Masito<sup>1\*</sup>, Dwiki Adi Putra<sup>2</sup>, Amaliatulwalidain<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Government Science, Indo Global Mandiri University

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the strategy of the South Sumatra Provincial KPU in increasing the participation of voters with disabilities in the 2024 Presidential election in Palembang City, as well as the obstacles and factors that affect the effectiveness of the strategy. The research method used is a descriptive qualitative approach, by collecting data through observation, interviews, and documentation at the South Sumatra Provincial KPU office, as well as the chairman of KPPS, and the Disability Group. Data analysis is carried out through data collection, data reduction, data presentation as well as verification and affirmation of thematic conclusions based on Strategy Theory (Mulgan, 2009:19) and Political Participation Theory (Budiardjo, 2019), to identify the KPU strategy as well as the obstacles and factors that affect the effectiveness of the strategy. The results of the research revealed that the South Sumatra Provincial KPU implemented various strategies to increase the participation of voters with disabilities in the 2024 Presidential Election. The strategy includes direct socialization to communities and social institutions, the use of social media and tools such as braille, and training for KPPS to be able to provide inclusive services. The KPU also involves people with disabilities in election simulations and public service advertisements to increase their political awareness. Facilities at the polling station are prepared to be disability-friendly, such as special lanes, wheelchairs, and pick-up services. Cooperation with social institutions and communities with disabilities also strengthens the dissemination of information. Despite obstacles such as limitations of disability-friendly information media and psychological barriers, this strategy is considered effective in increasing the confidence and political participation of people with disabilities. This effort reflects the commitment of the South Sumatra KPU in realizing inclusive, fair, and equal elections for all. Based on the results of the research, the South Sumatra Provincial KPU's strategy in increasing the participation of voters with disabilities in the 2024 Presidential Election in Palembang City shows a positive commitment, but still faces obstacles. The goal of political inclusion has been well directed, but the provision of facilities and information still does not fully support the needs of people with disabilities, especially for sensory and intellectual disabilities. Socialization is not yet fully accessible, and the involvement of people with disabilities in decision-making is still limited. The participation rate is still mostly passive due to lack of information, physical barriers, and psychological and social factors. To realize inclusive elections, the KPU's strategy needs to be strengthened through increased accessibility, involvement of the disability community, and more disability-friendly communication methods.

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#### *\*Corresponding Author:*

Peni Masito

Government Science, Indo Global Mandiri University

\*Email: [fenimsyto@gmail.com](mailto:fenimsyto@gmail.com)

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## INTRODUCTION

General Elections (Elections) have always been the main indicator of the existence of democracy in a country, one of the essential characteristics of a democratic system of government is the holding of periodic and competitive general elections. General elections are a proven method to carry out a peaceful change of power in a democratic system of government. It allows the people to actively participate in the political decision-making process, as well as provides opportunities for the people to express their voices by electing representatives who will manage the government. Based on Article 448 paragraph (1) of Law Number 7 of 2017 as amended by Perpu Number 1 of 2022, it clearly mandates the implementation of elections in Indonesia based on the principles of Luber (Monday et al., n.d.).

This provision is a direct implementation of the principle of people's sovereignty as stated in the 1945 Constitution, and is a tangible manifestation of efforts to realize a clean and authoritative government. Based on its scope, elections in Indonesia can be categorized into two main types, namely the National General Election (Election) and the Regional Head Election (Pilkada) which is regional. Regional Head Election is a type of election that is specifically held to determine regional leaders, such as governors, mayors, and regents. This process is carried out by the people directly. The purpose of the Regional Elections is to ensure that the elected regional heads reflect the will and needs of the local community

Elections provide an opportunity for people to elect their leaders, which are governed by various laws that recognize the rights of voters. Political power cannot be obtained by force, but through effectiveness achieved by winning the most votes in transparent and fair elections (Ningsih & Yandra, 2024). Although elections are a crucial form of political participation, there are still obstacles faced by some individuals, including people with disabilities. Disability refers to individuals who fall into the category of physically disabled, mentally disabled, or a combination of both.

The implementation of the election involves various stages and challenges, where one of the main challenges is to increase voter participation. The success of an election is not only determined by the open and fair implementation, but also greatly influenced by the level of political awareness of the community (Diazaki & Mubarak, 2024). In general, political participation refers to the involvement of individuals and groups in political activities, including the election of the head of government of a country as well as the impact on government decisions, either directly or indirectly (Adriani & Maulia, 2024). Efforts to fulfill the rights of persons with disabilities are a form of application of the principle of state credibility in providing the rights of citizens fairly regardless of identity, including in the fulfillment of political rights accommodated by the state through general elections (Tri Agustina Wardani, 2019). One of the factors causing this is the lack of awareness and understanding of the importance of elections and its impact on their lives as citizens. To face these challenges, continuous efforts are needed in providing effective political education and socialization about elections.

Obstacles in election socialization refer to obstacles or obstacles that can hinder or make it difficult to disseminate information about elections to the public. In the digital era, it allows for more intense dialogue between candidates and voters. Through various interactive features provided by digital platforms, political campaigns can be carried out in a more personalized and responsive manner to voters' aspirations (Majid, 2023). The development of digital technology in political campaigns presents new challenges for the General Election Commission (KPU). As an independent institution responsible for the implementation of General Elections as stipulated in Law Number 7 of 2017, which regulates the implementation of elections including the duties and authorities of the KPU. The KPU structure includes the central, provincial, and city/district KPU (Kurniawan et al., 2023).

Lack of voter participation can cause the resulting public policies to be not in line with the wishes and needs of the community. If the golput is higher among the younger generation, this can reduce their interest in participating in politics and elections in the future. Golput is a phenomenon that can have a significant impact on the democratic process. Therefore, it is crucial for the government and related agencies to conduct socialization and education about the importance of participation in elections in order to increase voter involvement in the upcoming elections. The General Election Commission (KPU) needs to implement an efficient strategy. To achieve an organization's vision, mission, and goals, careful strategic planning is essential, but the execution of the strategy is also crucial. Political education at the secondary and tertiary education levels is a very important aspect, considering that the millennial generation needs to actively participate in using their voting rights in the 2024 election (Sugara et al., 2024).

The South Sumatra Provincial KPU plays an important role in encouraging increased voter participation for the upcoming elections. The province has an area of 91,592.43 km<sup>2</sup> and is estimated to have a population of around 8,973,168 people by mid-2024, with 17 districts/cities. Ogan Komering Ilir Regency is the largest, with an area of 18,539.04 km<sup>2</sup>. Thus, the South Sumatra Provincial Election Commission has a great responsibility to hold democratic elections, including socializing to voters in all 17 districts/cities. The KPU has designed various strategies to increase voter participation ahead of the 2024 General Election. To improve the participation and quality of voter education in South Sumatra Province, the KPU has prepared an

activity plan that refers to the scope of regulation of KPU Regulation Number 9 of 2022 covering all aspects of citizen participation in the General Election, starting from the socialization stage, voter education, to the implementation of voting. This regulation provides a strong legal basis for the implementation of quality elections.

Regarding the South Sumatra Provincial KPU, in its efforts to increase voter participation in the 2024 elections, it has implemented various strategic initiatives designed to reach out to various levels of society and encourage active participation in the democratic process. The 2024 election is a bright moment for the Indonesian nation, where it is hoped that the community can actively participate in determining the direction of national development and leadership. However, a number of challenges such as lack of understanding of the electoral process, dissatisfaction with candidates, and political apathy contribute to the low voter participation rate. Therefore, to ensure that the democratic process takes place in a participatory manner, election socialization by the KPU must be able to accommodate the information needs and understanding of all levels of society. This study will analyze the extent of the strategy implemented by the South Sumatra Provincial KPU in increasing the participation of voters with disabilities in the 2024 presidential election.

The General Election Commission (KPU) has formulated various strategies to increase voter participation, which include efforts to increase the quantity and quality of political education for the public. With this approach, the KPU aims to reach all levels of society, including people with disabilities and vulnerable groups, so that they understand their rights as voters. Referring to the previous election, data on the number of users with disabilities in 17 districts/cities was 13,961 voters.

DAFTAR PEMILIH DAN PENGUNTAH DAIRY PILIH		Jumlah Pemilih		Jumlah Penguntah	
No	Uraian	Jumlah Pemilih	Jumlah Penguntah	Jumlah Pemilih	Jumlah Penguntah
1	Jumlah Pemilih dan Penguntah Daiky Pilih	13.961	13.961	13.961	13.961
2	Jumlah Pemilih dan Penguntah Daiky Pilih (Pilih)	13.961	13.961	13.961	13.961
3	Jumlah Pemilih dan Penguntah Daiky Pilih (Penguntah)	13.961	13.961	13.961	13.961
4	Jumlah Pemilih dan Penguntah Daiky Pilih (Pilih dan Penguntah)	13.961	13.961	13.961	13.961

Figure 1. Number of Voter Participation of Persons with Disabilities  
Source : PPID KPU South Sumatra Province

Table 1. Number of Voter Participation of Persons with Disabilities

Join all voters with disabilities who exercise their right to vote	Male - Male	Woman	Sum
	5.389	7.607	12.996

Source : Processed By The Author, 2024

It is hoped that through this research, an effective solution can be found for the South Sumatra Provincial KPU in increasing the participation of voters with disabilities. It is hoped that the results of this research can provide useful recommendations for the KPU and other stakeholders in creating more inclusive and democratic elections so that the implementation of democracy in Indonesia can take place better.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach, by collecting data through observation, interviews, and documentation. The main objective of this research is to explore the meaning and deep understanding of certain social phenomena. Researchers used a variety of triangulation methods to collect rich and complex data, which was then inductively analyzed (Scott, 2020)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the discussion of the research that the author has conducted regarding the strategy of the South Sumatra Provincial KPU in increasing the participation of voters with disabilities in the 2024 presidential election in Palembang City, related to what strategies are implemented by the South Sumatra Provincial KPU in increasing the participation of voters with disabilities ahead of the 2024 presidential election, and what obstacles are faced by the South Sumatra Provincial KPU in implementing the strategy of increasing participation voters with disabilities. It can be concluded that in an effort to increase the political participation of persons with disabilities, the analysis of the General Election Commission (KPU) strategy based on the theory of Geoff Mulgan (2009) shows several important findings.

**Objective:** The South Sumatra Provincial Election Commission has a mission to ensure the involvement of all citizens, including persons with disabilities, in elections. This mission has shown positive developments, with efforts to reach out to groups with disabilities in the election process.

**Ability:** The ability of the KPU is still limited in providing adequate facilities and services for voters with disabilities. The KPU has difficulties in providing disability-friendly information. Facilities and infrastructure such as physical access, assistive devices, or supporting technology are not optimally available.

**Environment:** The KPU began to pay attention to changes in social and health conditions that affect the participation of people with disabilities. The challenges faced include: Lack of physical accessibility to polling stations (TPS), low public understanding of the political rights of people with disabilities, health conditions that limit the mobility of voters with disabilities, the KPU has not been fully able to provide tools or facilities that suit the needs of voters with disabilities.

**Briefing:** The KPU has begun to convey information and directions to voters with disabilities through various media. However, the information is not yet friendly to all types of disabilities. People with sensory disabilities (deaf and blind) and intellectual disabilities still have difficulty accessing information because: Lack of use of sign language, No simple text or voice guide available, No communication tailored to their specific needs.

**Action:** The KPU has taken a number of actions to help voters with disabilities. For example: providing braille templates and involving volunteers at polling stations. However, this action has not been maximized because: Tools are still limited, the involvement of people with disabilities in the election policy design process is still minimal, their aspirations and needs have not been fully heard or realized. And Learning: The KPU has begun to evaluate the implementation of the previous elections. The goal is to improve the implementation of the next election to be more inclusive. However, the results of the evaluation have not had a major impact or resulted in significant changes to the disability-friendly system.

Meanwhile, from the perspective of Political Participation of Disabilities according to Theory (Budiardjo, 2019), with Indicators of Active Participation, Passive Participation, and White Groups.

**Active Participation:** Only a small percentage of people with disabilities consistently actively participate in elections, Active engagement is still low due to various information and access barriers.

**Passive Participation:** More dominant among voters with disabilities in South Sumatra, many only participate in elections out of obligation, without understanding their political rights.

**White Group (Golput):** There are still people with disabilities who do not vote because: Lack of confidence, access to polling stations that are difficult to reach, Distrust of the electoral system, Lack of support from the social environment.

Thus, although the South Sumatra Provincial KPU has shown significant efforts in designing a strategy to increase voter participation with disabilities, the strategy still requires strengthening in terms of implementation, involvement of stakeholders with disabilities, and expanding the reach of information and facilities. To realize truly democratic and inclusive elections, the KPU needs to build a strategic system that is not only administrative, but also transformative in empowering and integrating voters with disabilities as an integral part of the democratic process.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the discussion of the research that the author has conducted regarding the strategy of the South Sumatra Provincial KPU in increasing the participation of voters with disabilities in the 2024 presidential election in Palembang City, related to what strategies are implemented by the South Sumatra Provincial KPU in increasing the participation of voters with disabilities ahead of the 2024 presidential election, and what obstacles are faced by the South Sumatra Provincial KPU in implementing the strategy of increasing participation voters with disabilities. It can be concluded that in an effort to increase the political participation of persons with disabilities, the analysis of the General Election Commission (KPU) strategy based on the theory of Geoff Mulgan (2009) shows several important findings.

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## SUGGESTION

Based on the findings and conclusions of the research, there are several suggestions that researchers can give regarding the South Sumatra Provincial KPU Strategy in Increasing the Participation of Voters with Disabilities in the 2024 Presidential Election in Palembang City, so the researcher suggests the following:

The KPU needs to strengthen its internal mission and capabilities by training all election officers on the rights of persons with disabilities. This training should not only be technical, but also touch on the aspects of empathy and social understanding, so that all ranks of the KPU are able to treat people with disabilities well. In addition, the KPU must provide facilities that suit various types of needs, such as providing accompanying officers at polling stations, increasing the use of visual and sound aids, and improving physical accessibility, such as wheelchair lanes.

Adjustments to the electoral environment must be paid more attention, especially anticipating various health conditions of voters with disabilities. The KPU must work with health institutions to ensure that all

election procedures are safe, comfortable, and pay attention to the physical condition of participants. For example, providing a closer polling station or special mobile election service for voters with very limited mobility and Polling Stations (TPS) must be truly disability-friendly with the provision of wheelchair lanes, voter companions, and voice/touch aids for all types of disabilities.

In terms of information delivery and briefing, the KPU must develop various socialization media that are more friendly to people with disabilities. Campaigns and socialization are not enough just to be carried out in ordinary writing. It is necessary to add the use of videos with sign language, simple infographics, audio books about elections, and hotline services for people with disabilities who want to get direct information. In addition, counseling must reach the village or community level, not only in big cities, so that people with disabilities in remote areas also get complete information.

In terms of actions and decision-making processes, the KPU needs to open up a wider space for participation for the community with disabilities in the formulation of election policies. They must be invited to dialogue from the planning stage, so that all decisions taken really consider direct input from those who experience obstacles. The KPU also needs to provide equipment tailored to all types of disabilities at each polling station, such as ballot templates for the blind, larger voting spaces for wheelchair users, and support systems for the deaf and speech-impaired.

In an effort to increase active participation and reduce the number of votes among people with disabilities, the KPU needs to create a sustainable political education program for voters with disabilities. This program can be in the form of voting rights training, political discussions, voting simulations, and motivational seminars. With inclusive political education, people with disabilities will be more confident to participate and no longer just follow the rules without understanding the importance of their vote. It is also important to build supportive communities in various regions, so that people with disabilities feel not alone in exercising their right to vote.

With these more real and targeted steps, it is hoped that in the future elections in Indonesia will not only be fair on paper, but can really be enjoyed fairly by all citizens, including people with disabilities.

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