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2024 Election Organizers Recruitment Reform: Challenges and Solutions Towards More Transparent and Accountable Elections

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Abstract

This study evaluates the recruitment scheduling of election organizers in Indonesia, particularly in the context of the 2024 General Elections. It highlights the challenge posed by the short interval, often around two years, between recruitment and the conduct of elections, especially at the Provincial and Regency/City levels. To address this, the study recommends extending the tenure of organizers whose terms end in 2023 and 2024 until the election stages are completed and accelerating the recruitment for those whose terms end during the election process. It also emphasizes the importance of the selection team's composition, advocating for neutrality and the involvement of the Election Organizer Ethics Council (DKPP) and the Regional Examination Team (TPD) to ensure high-integrity candidates. These measures aim to enhance the recruitment quality and ensure the efficient execution of elections, thereby strengthening Indonesia's electoral system.

Keywords

recruitment reform; 2024 general elections, bawaslu, kpu

Introduction

In the context of a democratic country, direct general elections (Pemilu) are considered the most legitimate and recognized method of power transition. This is because general elections are seen as a practical manifestation of the people's sovereignty, where they exercise their voting rights to determine the future of the nation (NCSL, 2021; Qodir, 2014). The success of the elections heavily relies on the crucial role of election organizers. In Indonesia, the election organizers include the General Election Commission (KPU), the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu), and the Election Organizer Ethics Council (DKPP), responsible for regulating ethics in election administration (Ilman Hakim & L. Iztighfari, 2021; Irawan, 2022; Rohendi & Muzzamil, 2021).

According to Ramlan and Kris, election organizers are independent institutions supported by strong and clear constitutional legitimacy. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) identifies three types of election organizers based on their formation: 1) Independent, where the organizing body is independent and separate from the executive branch; 2) Governmental, where the executive branch, through a ministry or local government, organizes the elections; 3) Mixed, involving independent supervisory bodies from the executive branch that oversee the government's executing bodies. Hartlyn from IDEA mentions that independent and professional organizing bodies have a greater chance of success in conducting elections. Indonesian election organizers are independent, in accordance with Article 22E paragraph 5 of the 1945 Constitution, which states that elections are organized by an

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independent election commission (Akbar, Taufik, Irawan, & Sudiar, 2021; Husin et al., 2021; Muhlis, 2021).

The importance of the election organizing body in the democratic process in Indonesia is reflected in the amendments to the 1945 Constitution, where one of the amended articles relates to election organizers. This differs from the elections in the Old Order and New Order eras, where the government managed the elections. Post-amendment, the elections are run by a special institution that is independent and autonomous, aiming to improve the previous election system. The emergence of these autonomous and independent bodies also led to the establishment of other election institutions like Bawaslu and DKPP, although not explicitly regulated in the 1945 Constitution (Asshiddiqie, 2016).

Election organizers play a crucial role in the success of political contests in Indonesia. The law demands that they operate with integrity and independence, considering the significance of elections in democracy. The selection process involving recruitment, screening, election, and appointment of members is a procedure that must be conducted. The Law No. 17 of 2017 on General Elections regulates the process of appointing or recruiting election organizers from the central level to the Regency/City level. The process of appointing election organizers at all levels begins with the formation of a selection committee responsible for carrying out the selection from administrative to candidate appointment before the fit and proper test. The central level selection committee is formed at the latest six months before the membership term ends, while at the provincial and regency/city levels, it is established at the latest five months prior (Sintani, Tuanaya, & Wance, 2020; Taufik, 2020).

The simultaneous elections to be held on February 14, 2024, demand the readiness of the election organizers since July 2022, about 20 months before voting. The preparation for the simultaneous regional head elections (Pilkada), to be held on November 27, 2024, as per Law Number 10 of 2016, has started since December 2023. The term of office of election organizers at the regency/city and provincial levels will mostly end in 2023, which means the process of filling KPU and Bawaslu commissioners has already begun during the simultaneous regional elections stage. There are challenges in managing the schedule between the 2024 General Elections and Regional Elections.

The 2024 elections will include legislative elections, presidential elections, and regional head elections, which will run in a marathon. Organizers must map potential challenges, including the pressure of stages between the General Elections and Regional Elections. It is essential to evaluate the recruitment schedule of election organizers and the timing of the elections themselves, considering the complexity of elections in Indonesia and the lengthy recruitment process. This study applies the policy evaluation theory of William N. Dunn, viewing policy evaluation as an essential stage in the public policy process. Additionally, the political recruitment theory by Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell, which distinguishes between open and closed recruitment, is also used as a theoretical basis.

This study builds on previous research to develop an analysis of the election organizer recruitment process in Indonesia. Previous research generally focuses on issues related to the recruitment process of election organizers in various regions, including analysis of specific work units involved in election administration. As part of this study's references, one is the research conducted by Sayed Fahrul. In his research, Sayed describes the dynamics that occur in the recruitment process of election organizers in Aceh, identifying problems from the formation of the selection team to the appointment of selected candidates.

Using this background as a foundation, this study aims to examine and evaluate the recruitment process of election organizers, focusing on the aspect of recruitment timing and election timing. The primary research question is how the recruitment process of Election Organizers for the 2024 General Elections is viewed from the perspective of recruitment timing and the scheduling of the 2024 General Elections.

Methods

This study recommends the use of a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. The descriptive approach is chosen for its ability to detail issues in the recruitment of election organizers and present solutions to these problems. Data collection is conducted through literature study, involving the search and analysis of various data sources including articles, document archives, literature, and previous research relevant to the research topic.

In this study, data is gathered from various literary sources such as books, scientific journals, previous research, media news, as well as court decisions like the DKPP Rulings, and related regulations. Data validation is carried out using triangulation techniques, which involve comparing data with information from 'significant others' or other reliable sources. The main focus in data checking is on themes identified from the results of the literature study. Theories applied in this research include William Dunn's policy evaluation theory and the political recruitment theory developed by Gabriel Almond and Powell. This approach assists in analyzing and understanding the dynamics and challenges in the recruitment process of election organizers.

Result and Discussion

Election Organizers Recruitment Process

The recruitment process of election organizers is a crucial stage that involves selecting candidates for specific positions. The primary focus of this process is on candidate selection, often sparking debates and discussions. According to the classification by Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell on political recruitment patterns, there are two types of recruitment: open recruitment and closed recruitment. Open recruitment emphasizes transparency in procedures and criteria, allowing the selection process to be publicly known. This method is considered highly competitive, offering the public an opportunity to evaluate and choose their political elite. Nazaruddin Syamsudin adds that open recruitment also provides equal opportunities for all citizens to participate in a fair selection process, with objectively and rationally set conditions. On the other hand, closed political recruitment is more exclusive, with undisclosed processes and criteria, and tends to limit the general public's opportunities to know and assess the capabilities of the political elite.

A critical element in the conduct of free and fair elections is the presence of competent, independent, and integrous election organizers. In accordance with Article 22E of the 1945 Constitution, elections must be organized by a national, permanent, and independent general election commission. Therefore, the recruitment process of election organizers is very important and becomes a primary indicator of success in election management.

Recruitment of KPU and Bawaslu

Law No. 17 of 2017 on General Elections regulates the appointment or recruitment of election organizers. Article 22 of the law stipulates that the recruitment process of the General Election Commission (KPU) members begins with the formation of a selection team by the president, consisting of a maximum of 11 people, ensuring at least 30% are women. The task of the selection team is to assist the president in determining KPU member candidates to be proposed to the People's Representative Council (DPR). The composition of the selection team must include three government representatives, four academics, and four community members.

The formation of this selection team must be done at the latest six months before the end of the KPU membership term. During this period, the selection team carries out its duties through a series of activities to select KPU member candidates, including registration, administrative selection, written tests, psychological tests, health tests, and interviews about election administration. Afterward, the selection team determines 14 KPU member candidates in a plenary meeting to be presented to the president. All these stages must be conducted objectively, and each step is reported to the DPR.

After the president proposes 14 KPU member candidates to the DPR, the DPR selects seven as elected KPU members through a fit and proper test. The DPR then submits the names of the elected to the president for ratification no later than five working days after the names are received. The president then ratifies the elected KPU members through a Presidential Decree.

The same process applies to the election of the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu) members. The selection team determines 10 Bawaslu member candidates for the DPR to choose from, who then appoint five as elected Bawaslu members. This process is also implemented at the Provincial and Regency/City levels, with decisions made by the respective KPU or Bawaslu. The number of KPU members at the central, provincial, and regency/city levels is determined based on criteria such as population size, area size, and

the number of administrative regions. The composition of KPU membership at each level also considers a minimum of 30% female representation.

Ad Hoc Election Organizers Recruitment

The Ad Hoc bodies for election organization play a pivotal, temporary role in the administration of elections. According to the General Election Commission (KPU) Regulation No. 3 of 2022 regarding the stages and schedule of the 2024 General Elections, the Ad Hoc Election bodies stemming from KPU include entities such as the Overseas Election Committee, District Election Committee (PPK), Voting Committee (PPS), and the Voting Organizers Group (KPPS). Meanwhile, the Ad Hoc bodies from Bawaslu consist of the District Election Supervisory Committee and the Voting Place Supervisory Committee (TPS).

Despite their limited operational timeframe, the role of Ad Hoc bodies in elections is vital and potentially sensitive to fraud. This significance arises from their central role in ensuring the success of the elections, especially due to their direct interaction with election participants. Therefore, it is crucial for KPU and Bawaslu to prioritize an effective and transparent recruitment process for the Ad Hoc Election Organizers, to minimize potential fraud and enhance the integrity of the elections.

At the most fundamental level of the electoral institutional structure are the voting locations. To manage processes at this level, the Voting Organizers Group (KPPS) is established. The primary task of KPPS, formed by the Voting Committee (PPS) under the authority of the district/city KPU, is to carry out voting and vote counting at the polling stations. The recruitment process for these Ad Hoc election organizers has begun since 2022. For the District Election Supervisory Committee (Panwascam), the recruitment process was conducted simultaneously in September 2022. Meanwhile, for the District Election Committee (PPK), the recruitment process took place in November 2022, indicating concrete steps taken to prepare an efficient and reliable election organizing structure.

Election Organizers Recruitment Challenges

In Indonesia, election organizers are selected through a process regulated by laws and regulations, as stipulated in Law No. 17 of 2017 on General Elections. This recruitment process is conducted through various mechanisms and coordinated by specially appointed committees. Despite its repeated implementation, there are still significant issues to address, particularly concerning the recruitment timing being close to the actual conduct of the elections.

According to Law No. 17 of 2017, the formation of a selection team for the recruitment of election organizers (KPU and Bawaslu) must be completed 6 months before the end of their term. At the Provincial and Regency/City levels, this process is carried out about 1 month after the formation of the KPU and Bawaslu selection teams, or approximately 5 months before the end of their term. This means that the election stages generally begin at the latest 20 months or 1 year and 8 months before Election Day. This creates a relatively short timeframe of about 2 years between the recruitment process and the actual election, which is more critical at the Provincial and Regency/City levels due to non-simultaneous recruitment across all areas.

For example, on May 24, 2018, KPU inaugurated 86 provincial KPU members from 16 provinces in Indonesia for the 2018-2023 period. The appointment of KPU members in 18 other provinces was conducted in 2019 for the 2019-2024 term. This phased inauguration was due to the law stipulating that the tenure of KPU conducting local head elections is extended until the election is completed.

Article 167 paragraph (4) of Law No. 17 of 2017 explains that the election stages are quite extensive, including planning programs and budgets, updating voter data, registering and verifying election participants, determining election participants, nominating, campaigning, and finally determining the election results.

From the data of the Hearing (RDP) between KPU and the DPR RI, it is noted that the term of most Provincial and Regency/City KPU members ends during the stages of the 2024 Simultaneous General Elections and Regional Elections. There are a total of 24 Provincial KPU Work Units (Satker) and 317 Regency/City KPU Satker whose terms end in 2023. Meanwhile, the terms of 9 Provincial KPU Satker and 196 Regency/City KPU Satker, and 1 Provincial KPU Satker will end in 2024 and 2025. In addition, 1,914

members of Bawaslu from 514 Regency/City Bawaslu will end their term in August 2023, and 188 Provincial Bawaslu members will end in March, July, and September 2023. This data shows that most election organizers at the Provincial and Regency/City levels will end their term during the critical period of the 2024 Simultaneous General Elections and Regional Elections.

Conducting recruitment of election organizers during the ongoing election stages presents various challenges in their administration. For instance, in 2023, there are 24 Provincial KPU Satker and 317 Regency/City KPU Satker whose terms end. Conducting recruitment during this crucial period can disrupt the credibility and professionalism of the election organizers. Additionally, there are several important impacts to consider if recruitment is conducted during the election stages.

First, if the recruitment process occurs concurrently with the election stages, the focus of the current election organizers, who plan to re-register through the new recruitment, will be divided. They must carry out their current responsibilities while also participating in the new recruitment process and stages. This can affect their work performance and impact the quality of election execution.

Second, KPU and Bawaslu RI will face additional burdens with recruitment at the Provincial and Regency/City levels ending in the midst of ongoing election stages. In 2023, the election stages are extremely busy with various dynamics to be faced. Crucial stages include registration, verification, candidate determination, and preparation for campaigning. Recruitment amidst these stages will add to the workload of KPU and Bawaslu RI.

Third, if recruitment is conducted during the election stages, KPU and Bawaslu RI need to provide task orientation for the new election organizers. This will add to the tasks they already face in preparing the election stages. Additionally, recruitment during election stages can potentially lead to administrative errors and work negligence, especially if the new election organizers are new to election administration.

In the context of the 2019 General Elections, there were cases where election organizers had to be dismissed by DKPP due to violations of the code of ethics, as happened in KPU Kota Palembang. This case illustrates the impact of recruiting election organizers during the election stages. Considering the impacts and consequences of conducting recruitment of election organizers concurrently with the election stages, it is crucial to evaluate this recruitment policy to ensure the successful conduct of the 2024 General Elections and simultaneous Regional Elections. The following are recruitment recommendations for Election Organizers for the 2024 General Elections:

Election Organizers Recruitment Recommendations for the 2024 General Elections

Adjustment of Election Organizers' Term Schedule

1. **Adjustment of Term:** For Election Organizers whose term ends in the midst of the General Elections and Regional Elections stages, their term should be extended until the completion of these stages. This will avoid administrative disruptions that may occur due to transition amidst crucial stages.
2. **Simultaneous Recruitment Post-Elections:** After the completion of the General Elections and Regional Elections, recruitment of election organizers in all Work Units (Satker) should be conducted simultaneously. This approach ensures uniformity and efficiency in the recruitment process and minimizes disruptions during the ongoing election stages.

Optimization of Election Organizers Recruitment Process

1. **Accelerating Recruitment Process:** For Election Organizers whose term ends in the midst of the General Elections and Regional Elections stages, the recruitment process should be accelerated, considering efficiency and effectiveness aspects, so as not to disrupt the progress of the election stages.
2. **Prioritizing Experienced Organizers:** In the accelerated recruitment process, prioritize candidates who have experience to ensure a smooth transition and maintain the quality of election execution.

Performance Assessment of Organizers: Additionally, there should be a performance evaluation system for the current election organizers to determine if they are suitable for an extended term or prioritized in the accelerated recruitment.

1. Training and Orientation: To ensure that new election organizers, especially those who are 'newcomers', can quickly adapt, there should be a comprehensive training and orientation program before and after recruitment.
2. Supervision and Accountability: Enhance supervision and accountability during the recruitment process, involving various stakeholders, including civil society, to ensure transparency and integrity of the process.

Based on the previous discussion, this study proposes two strategic recommendations for the recruitment pattern of election organizers in the context of the 2024 General Elections. The first recommendation is to extend the term of election organizers whose term ends in 2023 and 2024 until the completion of the election stages. This approach aims to ensure that election organizers can fully focus on executing the complex and busy election stages. With the simultaneous conduct of the General Elections and Regional Elections in 2024, election organizers are faced with the task of managing two major events with different regulations, namely the General Elections and Regional Elections. Facing this challenge, especially if the selected election organizers are newcomers to election administration, will add to the complexity of management. Therefore, recruiting new election organizers should ideally be conducted after the completion of all General Elections stages, simultaneously in each Work Unit. This approach will have a positive impact on subsequent election administrations, providing sufficient time for new election organizers to prepare until the next election stages are completed.

The second recommendation is to accelerate the recruitment process of election organizers. This is relevant for organizers whose term ends in the midst of the General Elections and Regional Elections stages, to ensure that the accelerated recruitment process does not disrupt the smooth conduct of the election stages and provides adequate transition time for the new organizers. In this recommendation, it is also suggested to give affirmation to previously experienced organizers, while still considering their public record and track record, including DKPP rulings as one of the references.

Beyond these two recommendations, improvements to the recruitment mechanism for election organizers also need to consider the composition of the selection team. The composition of election organizers must not only meet the requirements in terms of educational background and experience in election administration but also ensure the neutrality of the selection team. Another important aspect is the involvement of the Election Organizer Ethics Council (DKPP) and the Regional Examination Team (TPD) in the recruitment process. This step is taken to ensure the selection of candidates with integrity and the ability to perform tasks effectively and efficiently in a dynamic and challenging election environment.

Conclusion

This study highlights the need to evaluate the scheduling of election organizers' recruitment in Indonesia in relation to the timing of the elections themselves. This evaluation is necessary due to the relatively close timeframe between the recruitment of election organizers and the conduct of the elections, often around just two years, especially at the Provincial and Regency/City levels where recruitment is not carried out simultaneously across all areas. This close scheduling approach can pose significant challenges, particularly in maintaining the consistency and effectiveness of the complex electoral system.

To address this issue, the study proposes two recruitment strategies for election organizers in the context of the 2024 General Elections. The first recommendation is to extend the term of election organizers whose term ends in 2023 and 2024 until the completion of the election stages. The purpose of this recommendation is to enable election organizers to focus on managing the increasingly complex and busy election stages, particularly considering the simultaneous General Elections and Regional Elections to be held in 2024. The second recommendation is to accelerate the recruitment process for election organizers, especially for those whose term ends in the middle of the election and Regional Election stages. This measure is taken to ensure that the election stages are not disrupted and to provide adequate transition time for new election organizers to prepare for the election stages.

In addition to these two recommendations, this study also emphasizes the importance of considering the composition of the election organizers' selection team. This composition must not only meet the requirements of educational background and experience in election administration but also ensure the neutrality of the selection team. Another important aspect to consider is the involvement of the Election Organizer Ethics Council (DKPP) and the Regional Examination Team (TPD) in the recruitment process to ensure the selection and production of candidates with high integrity. This approach is expected to enhance the quality of recruitment for election organizers and ensure the effective and efficient conduct of the elections.

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