



## **WHY VOTERS DO NOT VOTE? A CASE STUDY OF THE ELECTION OF BATAM IN 2015**

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In Indonesia, direct local elections took place in 2015 and left some areas with very low political participation. One of them was Batam in which the voter turnout was only 50 percent. This paper analyzes the determinant factors in the lack of voters' political participation. This study uses qualitative data (phenomenology paradigm) with a descriptive analytics method. The results illustrate the factors driving the low voter participation rate were not only caused by factors related to voter capacity such as ideology, idealism, and political education, but also by the other factors related to conditions at the time of voting, such as the poor weather, the celebration of worship, holidays, layoffs, security factors, money politics and the weariness of the voters as there were many elections in that year. Furthermore, the organizational capacity associated with administrative error (misadministration) resulted in voters failing to exercise their political rights. Batam has high heterogeneity and mobility levels that have an impact on the obstruction of the political education process and voter registration requires special handling such as reducing the length of holiday based on local policies and building up the polling place into workplace. In addition, it is necessary to change the pattern of security approaches and the elite's point of view on money politics and the need to improve the speed of voter registration capacity due to the changing of population data. Lastly, the role of community leaders in educating and encouraging their community to participate in election needs to be examined.

**Keywords:** Election, Political disorientation, Voter participation.

### **Introduction**

It is in the interest of the elected governments and the community to have the legitimacy of a high participation rate. Political participation by the electorate is crucial to successful elections both nationally and locally. Every individual is responsible for the future of his government. In a global context, the right to vote is part of the effort to realize human rights. In the context of groups, political participation determines the fate of a group represented and championed by representatives represented on a regular basis. The elected government will respond to the demands of society that have been represented through an election mechanism on a scheduled basis. The elected government will be obliged to defend the sovereignty of the state with all the consequences which are previously promised as the policy line in the electoral mechanism.

In Indonesia, the direct local elections have been held since 2005. Ten years later was introduced the first simultaneously direct local election in 264 regions. These mechanisms are new experiences in the practice of democracy in Indonesia. One of the effects of the election is to stimulate public maturity to participate consciously to vote in the form of active political participation. The greater the votes acquired,

the greater the legitimacy of each candidate gained. A high level of participation and legitimacy is a very useful capital for the elected candidate in carrying out his duties and functions as regional head. Moreover, political participation can be an indicator for the creation of government stability, as well as the effectiveness of governance at the grass roots level.

The national average of political participation in general election according to The General Elections Commission (KPU) was 64,23%. This figure was lower than the average benchmark set by the KPU at 75.5% (KPU, 2015). Therefore, there was a gap of 11.27% in political participation in all election events. Even though the political participation rate was above 50%, the tendency of decreasing political participation in some areas is interesting to observe. The following table shows the lowest number of political participation in nine regions:

**Tabel 1.** Areas with Political Participation Levels

No.	Kabupaten/Kota (Regency/City)	Percentage
1.	Kota Batam	50
2.	Kabupaten Serang	51
3.	Kabupaten Waringin Timur	52
4.	Kabupaten Jember	52
5.	Kabupaten Tuban	52
6.	Kabupaten Karimun	54
7.	Kabupaten Padang Pariaman	55
8.	Kabupaten Agam	55
9.	Kabupaten Asahan	55

Source: JPPR/KPU, 2015

The low political participation in the Batam area did not stand on its own. A number of important factors were influential that contributed to a drastic decline. Apart from the problems posed by a number of candidates who lost in the 2015 election, there were at least some important issues that were likely to create implications for reducing political participation in some areas such as Batam. According to Fachrudin (2015), there were a number of factors: *First*, the regulation of Local Election as stipulated in Law No. 8 of 2015 on the Amendment of Law No. 1 of 2015 does not provide sufficient space and time for each candidate in running a campaign individually. Instead, the campaign was strictly regulated by the regional election officials in their respective regions. As result, the voters were not familiar with the candidates because of the limited information about them. They, in turn, became less attractive to the voters. *Second*, internal political party conflict was one of the factors that made the public less interested in giving a firm choice to the proposed pairs of candidates.<sup>1</sup> *Third*, the pairs proposed may not have marketable value at the grass root level even if the couple had advantages and disadvantages in certain contexts. *Fourth*, the possibility of widespread disorientation of voter idealism caused by the trend of decreasing public confidence in the mechanism of democracy with the central question, whether such simultaneous election events can bring significant change or just a procedural change of the election mechanism. *Fifth*, the possibility of factors of condition that contributed to the decrease of political participation of the voters: lack of time, voters who were in transit, illness, double data, human error, invalid votes, loss of voting rights and tendency to prioritize personal activities rather than to attend the polling place. Some of these factors were less significant enough due to the day being set as a national holiday so that voter would have more time to vote. *Sixth*, the possibility of national issues or scandals also distracted the focus of voters, especially the more educated urban community. These cases degraded

<sup>1</sup> See the case of PPP Party and Golkar Party which until now has created a dualism of leadership at the central level to the regions.

the confidence in democratic symbols so that voters were unfocused or likely to lose confidence in government, including in the Batam election.

To examine the phenomenon of a low voter participation rate, this research was conducted in Batam as one of the regions with the lowest participation rate by looking at the driving factors of disorientation of political participation in Batam election, 2015. In addition, the role of Election Commission, Political Parties, Candidate Pairs, Local Government, Community Organizations and Educational Institutions in encouraging the increase of political participation of the voters in Batam is also important to scrutinize in order to evaluate the efforts which have been done.

## Literature Review

The definition of government by the people as the essence of democracy means that democracy requires the participation of all the people. Any book discussing political participation is essentially inseparable from the framework of the discussion of democracy. In democracy, political participation is defined as the activities of citizens (not politicians or civil servants) who aim to influence political decision-making (Huntington & Nelson, 1990). In addition, the nature of political participation is voluntary, not mobilized by the state or the ruling party (Huntington & Nelson, 1990).

A quite similar definition of political participation is delivered by Silvia Bolgherini. According her, political participation is “...a series of activities related to political life, aimed at influencing public decisions in a more or less direct way—legal, conventional, pacific, or contentious (Bolgherini, Participation, 2010).” Furthermore, Samuel P. Huntington and Joan Nelson, in their classical study of political participation; *No Easy Choice: Political Participation in Developing Countries* also classified mobilized participation as a part of study of political participation (Huntington & Nelson, 1990). They consider that enforcing people to participate in politics as an acceptable action; the point is, either voluntary or coerced, citizens still participate in politics.

Huntington and Nelson divide the forms of political participation into: election activity, lobby, organizational activity, contacting, and action of violence (Huntington & Nelson, 1990). The five forms of political participation by Huntington and Nelson have been a classic form in the study of political participation. However, they do not distinguish whether individual or group action in any form of legal or illegal political participation. Therefore, bribery, threats, extortion, and the like in every form of political participation are included in this study. The classification of Huntington and Nelson’s political participation forms is not yet complete because they have not included the other forms of political participation such as political discussion, political enjoyment, or otherwise on an individual subjective scale. For example, Magstadt adds the forms of political participation may include: public opinion, polling, elections; and direct democracy (Magstadt, 2012).

In voter behavior study, there are two main concepts: voting behavior and non-voting behavior. King and Matland (2003) define two main theoretical approaches in explaining non-voting behavior: emphasizing the social characteristics and psychology of the electorate and the institutional characteristics of the electoral system; and emphasizing voter expectations about the advantages and disadvantages of their decision to attend or not to vote. In Indonesia, the non-voters movement (or known as *Golput*) first appeared before the first election of the New Order era in 1971. The proponents, among others, are Arief Budiman, Julius Usman and Imam Malujo Sumali. This movement is based on the view that democracy is not upheld, tending to be trampled on (Putra, 2003). *Golput* according to Arif Budiman, is not an organization without a board but only a solidarity meeting (Putra, 2003). In addition, Arbi Sanit said that *Golput* is a political protest movement based on all the problems of nationality, the target of protest from the movement of *Golput* is the holding of elections. Regarding this movement, Abdurrahman Wahid once said “if no one can believe, then why we should go to the polling places? We would be disappointed (Wahid & Halim, 2009).”

Fatah classifies four groups of *Golput*. *Firstly*, technical *Golput*. They are those who are unable to attend the polls because of certain technical causes (such as family death, oversleeping, etc.), or those

who make errors so that their votes are declared invalid. *Secondly*, political-technical Golput such as those who are not registered as voters by their mistakes or others (statistical agencies, election organizers). *Thirdly*, political Golput, i.e. those who feel that there are no competent candidates on the available list or do not believe that the local election will bring change and improvement. *Fourthly*, ideological Golput, those who do not believe in the mechanism of democracy (liberal) and do not want to be involved in either for reasons of religious fundamentalism or other ideological-political reasons (Isnaini, 2016). Meanwhile, Ali (1999) divides two groups of Golput. *Firstly*, the layman Golput group; those who do not exercise their right to vote not for political reasons, but for economic reasons and business. *Secondly*, the selected Golput, those who are not willing to exercise their voting right in the elections for political reasons. For example, they are not satisfied with the quality of existing political parties, because they want another political organization that does not exist now, or because they want elections on the basis of the district system and various other reasons. Their political analytical ability is much higher than that of the layman.

Generally, the problems that encourage the increased numbers of golput can be divided into problems of ideology, idealism, political education, misadministration as well as local factors and conditions.

## **Methodology**

This research uses qualitative research approach (phenomenology paradigm) with the analytic descriptive method. This milestone is laid by Max Weber who emphasizes the method of *verstehen* (appreciation, interpretive understanding) in an effort to understand human behaviors (Sanapia, 1990). This research seeks to provide an explanation of the low level of political participation of the voters and its problems. Descriptive research as this study aims to describe precisely the things that trigger low levels of voters' participation as well as certain circumstances and symptoms. The symptoms and facts that exist related to the political participation of the voters during the election are studied in depth.

## **Results of Research and Analysis**

### **Problems of Political Participation in 2015 in Batam**

Batam is one of the islands in Riau Islands Province with a land area which is almost equal to its neighbor, Singapore. The population density has multiplied 158 times in 40 years since it was developed by the Batam Authority Agency in 1970, and as a result its land area is filled with residential buildings. Batam has a population of 1,164,352 people in 2015 and is now a center of growth and economic development in the Riau Islands region. The era of President Soeharto and his advisor, Habibie, developed Batam in order to profit from its association with its immediate neighbor, Singapore. The indications can be seen from the high mobility of the population in the surrounding areas of Batam. In the north, it borders directly with Singapore and Singapore Straits, and can be reached by sea in 40-50 minutes. The high mobility also has an impact on the demographic aspect in which the majority of the population of Batam have come from outside the region to work as laborers. The people of Batam are mainly identified as a modernist urban society; however, in some outer islands they are still living in poverty (Nasution, 2017)

Based on the research results, there are 5 factors that contribute to the low rate of voters' political participation in Local Election in Batam 2015, namely problems of Ideology, Idealism, Political Education, Misadministration, and Situational Factors.

### ***Problem of Ideology***

Voters choose candidates who represent their values or beliefs. In different regions with different societal conditions, ideology is a factor in choosing the candidates or parties with different levels of influence. However, in the 2015 Batam election contest, ideological consideration was not the dominant factor in determining voter choice because there was no significant ideological differences between the pairs of candidates. Political parties in the nomination process of the local election were more active as political machines and as ‘a boat’ for candidates. In general, the power of capital and networks owned by the candidates played a role in this situation. The weak ideological difference was also inseparable from transactional politics. This was expressed by the Head of Government Affairs of Batam who stated that money politics was still common in Batam elections (Panjaitan, 2017).

Furthermore, the absence of significant differences (in ideology) raised perceptions for the voters that whoever was elected would not be much different in their ideology from each other except depending on the competence of the candidates. The weakness of regeneration in political parties and the blurring of ideological boundaries that distinguished the party as the bearers motivated voters to see the candidate figure as the most realistic determinant. According to the elected Mayor of Batam, in the 2015 election, the candidate pairs were all out to campaign their programs (Rudi, 2017). The two candidates who fought in the 2015 Election had a different leadership style. It was reinforced by the opinion of the Head of Sub-district of Sagulung that although the two mayors have the same background and were active in religious organizations, their figures were quite different. For example, the first candidate of Ria Septarika was considered more religious. Perceptions by voters that Ria Septarika strictly maintained religious ethics such as limiting himself when shaking hands with the opposite sex. The second candidate was perceived as more moderate so that for non-Muslim groups and most *abangan*<sup>2</sup> Muslims were considered more likely to be supported (Khadafi, 2017).

### ***Problem of Idealism***

In the midst of the ideological crisis of the political parties, the voters considered the candidates programs as the main attraction. Batam is strongly supported by industry and services which means there is a large number of factory workers. National Work Force Survey (Sakernas) 2015 in *Batam In Figures 2015* shows 63 percent of the workforce in the Riau Islands were in Batam. The remaining were scattered in other districts/cities with a percentage of no more than 10 percent (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2016). The high percentage of Batam’s workforce in the Riau Islands Province correlated with its sensitivity to employment-related issues, especially in the areas of industry and services that made up the majority of Batam’s population.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the government’s failure to stimulate economic growth created a direct sentiment for workers who, in fact, work seasonally in Batam. The sluggishness of the economy had resulted in the disappointment of citizens not only against the central government, but also the municipality as the closest and the most responsible entity.

Laborers/factory workers in Batam are mostly concentrated in areas close to the city. On the other hand, in the islands far from the city center (hinterlands), most of the people are indigenous and work as fishermen or farmers. In the hinterland, the voter participation voter is higher than in the mainland. The three villages with the highest voter participation in Batam are areas far from Batam center, and two of them (Bulang and Galang) are in the hinterland.

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<sup>2</sup> Muslims who practice a much more syncretic version of Islam than the more orthodox santri.

<sup>3</sup> Disnaker Batam: In 2015, 7,000 were unemployed, 54 Companies were closed. (Pos Metro, 2016)

**Table 2.** Comparison of Three *Kelurahan* (Village) with Highest Participation of Voters and Three *Kelurahan* with Lowest Voter Participation

<b>Three <i>Kelurahan</i> (Village) with Highest Participation of Voters</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Name of <i>Kelurahan</i></b>	<b>The level of Participation (%)</b>
1.	Karas (Sub-district of Galang)	82,00
2.	Subang Mas (Sub-district of Subang Mas)	79,18
3.	Pantai Gelam (Sub-district of Bulang)	78,36
<b>Three <i>Kelurahan</i> with Lowest Voter Participation</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Name of <i>Kelurahan</i></b>	<b>The level of Participation (%)</b>
1.	Kampung Pelita (Sub-district of Lubuk Baja)	26,16
2.	Lubuk Baja Kota (Sub-district of Lubuk Baja)	43,81
3.	Sukajadi (Sub-district of Batam Kota)	31,69

Source: *Data and Infographic Book of Mayor Election of Batam 2015, KPU Batam*

The low rate of voter participation in urban areas compared to the hinterland was due to several factors: *First*, the urban societies (mostly migrants) there is a low interest in political issues because their arrival was based solely on economic reasons. This was different from the Malay community which are the indigenous people of Batam where most of them inhabit the hinterland; they obviously have an emotional attachment to Batam. *Second*, the hinterland communities were easier to mobilize because of their strong social bonds rather than the people living in urban Batam who tended to be more rational, bound by the work system, and have no historical relationship except as temporary migrants.

Another factor that influenced the voter participation rate was the existence of money politics. According to one academic from the Riau Islands University, voters did not consider their regional future for the next five years. Instead, they chose those candidates who were solely capable of delivering large amounts of aid during campaigns or direct financial assistance to community organizations such as tribal, religious, youth and etc. (Husein, 2017). According to the Chairman of General Elections Supervisory Committee (Panwaslu) of Batam, money politics was an effective way to influence voters in Batam. He found that the previous legislative election was stained by money politics but effectively increased voter participation (Prabu, 2017). He considered that, at that time, voter turnout was good enough (62.92%) (Batam Ekbiz, 2014). He observed that because of a lack money politics in the 2015 local election voters became less interested in voting (Prabu, 2017). Thus, money politics was considered as one of the important variables in increasing voter participation.

### ***Problem of Political Education***

The education level of people in Batam is low. Only half of Batam residents graduated from senior high school, while diploma and bachelor/postgraduate made up 4 and 6 percent respectively. Thirty one percent graduated from elementary school and junior high school (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2016).<sup>4</sup> This situation was reflected in the fact that voters was also uninformed.

The lack of interest in the election correlated with a lack of knowledge of both the candidates and their political agendas. According to the Head of Sagulung sub-district whose working area was dominated by people working in the industrial sector, the voters' lack of familiarity with the candidates was due to the hectic work system which did not allow them to access information. In addition, the economic crisis which affected most of the voters resulted in them being less interested in elections. Most

<sup>4</sup> Percentage of Population with age 15+

of them were migrants from various regions in Indonesia and were driven solely by the economic appeal of work, and they intend to leave Batam when their work contract ends (Khadafi, 2017).

High population mobility flows were one of the obstacles in providing political education to them because the process of political education takes time, while the stay of many workers was only temporarily until the contract ran out. Voters with low political education are unable to make choices based on rational considerations. In Batam, industrial workers often asked government officials about which candidates were eligible to be elected (Khadafi, 2017). This is certainly a dilemma for the civil servants because they must be neutral. Such short dialectics illustrates how some industrial families in Batam did not have a good knowledge of the profile of the candidates.

### ***Misadministration***

The problem of misadministration is a common problem in cities with high levels of complexity and population mobility. Most of these people were contract workers and only work for a contracted period. Workers who come from outside of Batam can be residents of Batam and then leave it after they have completed his contract work. Problems arose when residents who have left Batam were still registered as residents of Batam. According to one KPU Commissioner and Secretary, industry recruited workers for only six months to one year on average (Setiawan & Herlambang, 2017). The problem arose when their personal data was registered in Final Voters List (DPT) several months before the election and, when voting occurred, they had left Batam as their contract expired. The number of workers who failed to vote because of this problem reached 1,000 people in the 2015 election (Prabu, 2017).

In addition, the problem was accentuated by the insufficient human data collection personnel. According to the Chairman of Panwaslu of Batam, the human resources problem in the Batam election needed to receive a serious attention. The main obstacle lay in the weak population administration. It was proof from the number of voters who had been registered by the Voter Enrollment Committee (Pantarlih) but were not listed on the permanent voters' list. The application of Electronic ID card (KTP-el) by the central government also imposed constraints on the Election. His agency found that around 45,000 voters were dropped from the list because they did not have Electronic ID cards (Prabu, 2017).

One of the causes of the misadministration was the limited budget allocated to voters' data collection. In the opinion of one of the members of KPU Commissioner of Batam, the salary of officers who came door-to-door was still minimal when compared with their workload. In the 2015 election, the honorarium of the officials was only 250 thousand rupiahs (25 dollars) to record about 500 voters. The job cannot be completed in just one day because it needs to be double checked. The amount of money was not enough. The officers also used their private vehicles to collect data and travel between Batam Center and Lengkonng. Thus, data collection is an Indonesian problems, and there was no exception in the election in Batam (Siregar, 2017).

### ***Problem of Situational Factors***

In addition to the causes already presented of low voter participation, there were also other causes. Based on the interviews, there were some other situational factors. The first one relates to the exhaustion of voters to participate in the election as they had previously participated in the presidential election and legislative elections in the same year. These elections were held sequentially and, according to the Vice Mayor of Batam, exhausted the voters (Amsakar, 2017).

Furthermore, the bad weather conditions were also considered influential. On the election day Batam endured heavy rain. Many voters, as a result, were not present at the polling places. Another situation which was also influential in poor voter turnout was two religious holidays at the time, namely Christmas and *Imlek* (Chinese New Year). Due to the diverse ethnic and religious composition and the majority of residents of Batam were newcomers, they preferred to take advantage of the holiday to return to their respective hometowns or to visit the tourist spots instead of polling places. The large number of residents

who returned home was also associated with massive layoffs affecting the workers. Many of those who did not work decide to go back home while waiting for the opportunity to return to Batam (Khadafi, 2017).

### **The Role of Stakeholders in Promoting the Political Participation of Voters in the 2015 Election in Batam**

#### *KPU (Election Commission) of Batam*

As the leading sector of the election, KPU has a strategic role in determining the quality of an election. In addition to preparing the administrative and logistical needs of the local election, this commission also plays a role in increasing voter participation. One of the most common strategies is through to provide political education to voters or prospective voters. Ideally, the socialization undertaken by the KPU is not only focused on when the election will be held, but also after the election. The socialization conducted in the 2015 election was limited. According to the Chairman of KPU, delivering information to the public conducted by his institution experienced several obstacles. The biggest was insufficient funds which also affected the implementation of education campaign which was considered inadequate. All stages of the process were carried out within a period of only two months. In that time, the number of education campaign was only conducted 45 times in each sub-district in rotation by inviting local community leaders (Setiawan, 2017). In addition, according to the KPU Secretary, the problem was also constrained by the geographical problems as Batam consists of several islands (hinterland) which are quite far from Batam Center. The role of KPU of Batam, especially in the 2015 election, in disseminating information on the election of Batam, was very important. All Disseminating Information Tools (APS) and Campaign Tools (APK) were provided by KPU since all the stuff no longer came from the candidates or political parties.<sup>5</sup> This new regulation aimed to provide an equal opportunity for every candidate to compete regardless of their financial status. The problem was that the KPU had a limited budget to provide adequate APK and APS. According to the KPU chairman, funding problem made the number of education campaigns for the 2015 election was less than the previous election where each candidate was allowed to maximize their campaign to attract voters through their own banners, billboards, and posters. This change had a direct impact on declining voter participation because they thought that the Batam 2015 election was not as attractive as the previous election in which the contestants rigorously provided props to attract the attention of voters (Setiawan, 2017).

#### *Batam Government*

As one of the key stakeholders in the 2015 election, local government tried to foster the implementation of the election through its institutions, from the neighborhoods (RT/RW) as the smallest government units, to the National Unity and Politics Agency (Kesbangpol). Their role was crucial in increasing the political awareness of the voters. The RT/RW level has a social bond that is very strong. Strategically, the institution of RT/RW is a quick and effective way to provide information to the community. This communal institution becomes a strategic medium in disseminating information. The role of the heads of urban villages and sub-districts in mobilizing these RT/RW heads is a prime importance and needs to be better utilized.

The Kesbangpol has a role of cultivating national values to citizens, including encouraging political awareness of voters to choose their future leaders. According to the Deputy Mayor of Batam, Kesbangpol provided ten political education activities in the form of education campaign to beginner voters in schools (Amsakar, 2017). However, compared to the number of senior high schools in Batam in 2015 which consisted of 53 schools excluding schools outside the Batam Education Board, such as religious high school under Batam Religious Board, the number of socializations was still insufficient (Central Bureau

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<sup>5</sup> new regulation through Law No. 8 of 2015 and PKPU No. 7 of 2015

of Statistics, 2016). Kesbangpol was not effective in increasing the political awareness of the community. According to the deputy mayor, the role of Kesbangpol was: “unwilling to live, unwilling to die.” It was different from its predecessor which in the New Order regime was called the Social Politics Board (Sospol). At that time the Sospol had extensive powers and was supported by a large budget. The function of Kesbangpol today is limited to being a political party coordinator for the delivery of funds, or just as a supervisor during executive or legislative elections. The uncondusive socio-political conditions in Batam during the 2015 election indicated that the role of Kesbangpol was insufficient (Amsakar, 2017). The Batam government should maximize the role of Kesbangpol to manage the potential conflict and to mediate the delivery of political education to voters.

### *Political parties*

The political education process by political parties had not been effective. They worked only when the election will be held as a “boat provider” for candidates who will take part in elections. The stagnation of the political education process by political parties in Batam not only affected to the voters, the internal political education and political regeneration in the political party itself were often “ad hoc.” A Commissioner of KPU of Batam revealed that most of the candidates promoted by political parties were instant cadres who have financial capital, but little experience in politics (Siregar, 2017). This political anomaly in which a political access was only for a group of people who were considered to have a strong economic capital, without taking into consideration the intellectual quality in building a vision for the society, nation, and state. By this means, the election is a way of legitimating the group of investors to take power.

As the organizer of the election, the Chairman of the KPU of Batam admitted that the political parties only played a procedural role as candidate nominators when the election took place. They had less interest in providing political education to the public. This meant voters did not have emotional ties with the ideology of the political parties (Setiawan, 2017).

### *Candidate Pairs*

The influence of the two pairs of candidates, Rudi-Amsakar and Ria-Sulistiyana on the level of voter participation is relatively equal. Both of the mayor candidates, Muhammad Rudi and Ria Septarika once served as deputy mayors of Batam in different periods. Rudi was the deputy mayor of the incumbent (2010 to 2015) while Ria was the deputy mayor from 2005 to 2010. This allowed voters to compare their performances. In addition, they also have Malay blood, indigenous to Batam, and they are both Muslim, the majority religion.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, in terms of ethnicity, the percentage of the population of Batam was dominated by the immigrants with the largest percentage coming from Java which made up 26.78 percent of population. The indigenous, the Malay tribe, made up 17.61 percent and this was followed by a narrow margin of Batak and Minangkabau tribes (Suryadinata, Arifin, & Anan, 2003).

However, the image of the two candidates was contrasted by their different views on religion. According to the Head of Sagulung sub-district, the election of Rudi-Amsakar had a more moderate religious view and more tolerant toward other religious groups. In addition, voters judged Mr. Ria Septarika as an untrustful leader as he left his position as a member of the Regional Representatives Council (DPD) to become involved in mayoral election of Batam (Khadafi, 2017). The track record of the candidate pairs is one element that determines voter preferences which in turn determines their level of participation. The more attractive and competitive the competition among candidates is, the higher the desire of the people to exercise their right to vote.

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<sup>6</sup> Islam is a majority religion in Batam, which made up 74,25 per cent of population (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2016)

*Universities*

Educational institutions are an important element for the success of local governance. Academics play a role in conducting studies and research on the growing political issues. According to the Deputy Mayor of Batam who also has an academic background, the role of universities in Batam on efforts to increase political education in Batam had not given a direct impact. Their role were limited to public lectures and seminars (Amsakar, 2017). Obviously, the role of universities in improving the political education of the community is expected. However, the role of universities in the advancement of Batam was more focused on the fields of engineering and technology.

*Community organization*

Community organizations are the informal representations that grow in the midst of society. In Batam where the population is very heterogeneous, the role of those organizations is significant. The most prominent organizations in Batam are tribal organizations. There are at least seven big ethnic groups called paguyuban: Malay, Javanese, Batak, Minangkabau, Bugis, Sundanese, and Jambi. Among the paguyubans, there are even groups with smaller scope (sub-ethnics) (Panjaitan, 2017).

The influence of these community organizations on voter participation cannot be underestimated. The Deputy Mayor of Batam admitted that he made an approach to the Malay paguyuban where the Mayor held the position of chairman of the organization, and he was the secretary. To the Batak community, he also tried to attract sympathy by singing Batak songs when socializing with them. He advertised that he still had Batak blood. Furthermore, he also approached the Minangkabau community. He was close to traders from Minangkabau as he had served as a former Head of Empowering Communities, Markets, Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises Board of Batam (Amsakar, 2017).

The role of religious groups was also very important. According to the deputy mayor, when Rudi served as deputy mayor in the previous period, he was regarded as a moderate religious leader who accommodated minority religious groups. During this period, he provided assistance to religious leaders, such as the teacher of the Qur'an, the imam of the mosque, the pastor, and so on (Amsakar, 2017).

**Conclusion**

The political participation of Batam voters was relatively unsophisticated. The Batam election in 2015 was a poor turnout. The root causes were; the high heterogeneity, and the population mobility. These factors became the main challenges for stakeholders to deliver political education, especially voter education. The young electors and the working-age voters who were the main targets of voter education were not likely to be exposed to voter education such as the work programs of candidates, the importance of the election and its procedure. To build political awareness takes a long time. However, their presence in Batam depended on the length of their working contract which was usually five years. Often they did not participate in elections although they were able to vote as their work contract ended. As workers, they were replaced by new workers who had not been exposed to information related to the election but suddenly recorded to vote.

The low level of voters' political idealism was also evident when the voters voted the candidate pairs based solely on pragmatic aspect such as money politics. In addition, the low voter level of interest in urban areas was triggered by the dissatisfaction of voters due to numerous cases of work relations severance. Apart from the main causes, there were also technical aspects such as the failure to record the accurate final voter list (misadministration). The incompetence of officers and the policy to not accommodate voters who did not have electronic ID card (e-KTP) added to the accumulation of the number of absentees. Moreover, the factors of situation at the time of the election also had an impact on voter political participation, such as hostile weather, voter exhaustion to elections, rising unemployment rates due to work relation severance, schedules of election simultaneously with religious celebrations, the

utilization of voting time as a holiday, and the lack of money politics. The latter became one of the lures for voters at the grassroots level to come to the voting place. Money politics was a pragmatic solution to increase voter participation as it was recognized more effectively in attracting voters to come to polling places.

## Recommendation

As a city with a heterogeneous population, especially in terms of ethnicity, Batam has ethnic groups that are usually incorporated in the *paguyubans*. To target the member of the groups, the local government, the Election Commission, political parties, candidates, and academics all need to embrace the leaders of those organizations in order to be able to disseminate information to members of their community about the importance of being involved. The role of community leaders is very strong, especially in the midst of the declining level of public confidence in the Batam government due to the economy weakening and the rising of unemployment.

Furthermore, the biggest challenge for Batam in any election is the high level of population mobility dominated by industrial workers whose stay is limited by their employment contract. All stakeholders, in addition to conventional political education campaign such as coming to schools or open campaigns, need to understand the trend of social media usage. Through social media, young people can be easily accessed anytime and anywhere as information can be posted on social media 24/7. In addition, the use of social media platforms enables the direct interaction and delivery of responses from the public to create political debates. The Association of Internet Service Providers Indonesia (APJII) released that internet users in Indonesia reached 88 million people until the end of 2014. In the Riau Islands, 800,000 people or nearly half the population has access to the internet (APJII, 2014). The usage of social media will not only reach potential voters, but will also reduce the budget of political education and campaigns.

In order to increase the number of voters, the government needs to reevaluate the national holiday policy. The results show that the policy was ineffective in Batam. Holidays on Election Day tend to be misused by workers to visit tourist attractions. For that reason the holiday policy needs to be sufficiently regulated through local policies of each region. For industrial areas and services such as Batam, it would be better to nullify the holiday policy on Election Day and arrange voting places in the factory areas.

The voter turnout in Batam in the 2015 election was disappointing. The factors were both endemic to elections generally, but also to Batam uniquely given its strategic position. The situation can be restly improved, and it is hoped this research will contribute to a better future.

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