

Local Democracy and Community Participation: The Role of Information and Communication Technology

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Local Democracy and Community Participation: The Role of Information and Communication Technology

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in increasing community participation in local democracy. The research method used is a qualitative method with a literature study approach by collecting data from various sources related to the implementation of ICT in community participation in local democracy. The results of the analysis show that ICT has an important role in increasing community participation in local democracy. ICT enables community participation in various activities such as elections, participation in discussion forums, and access to public information. ICT also makes it easy for the government to convey public information and receive input from the public. However, the challenges in implementing ICT to increase community participation in local democracy also need attention. These challenges include people's access to technology which is still limited and the lack of participation from certain community groups such as the elderly, the elderly, and the disabled. This study recommends the importance of developing ICT infrastructure and training for the community regarding the use of ICT in participation in local democracy. In addition, there needs to be a special effort to involve community groups that are less involved in local democratic participation in the use of ICT.

Keywords: *Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Community Participation, Local Democracy.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Democracy is a political system based on the active participation of the people in the decision-making process. In a democracy, people have the right to elect their leaders and provide input on public policies taken by the government. Community participation in local democracy is very important because it is a form of community participation in making decisions related to their interests (Prasojo, 2004).

Democracy does not just mean elections. It contains important elements such as meaningful dialogue, debate and discussion, the goal of which is to find solutions to all problems that arise in society. Negotiations or deliberations are also not just hearing and accommodating residents' complaints. Democracy based on deliberation definitely involves giving and receiving dialogue between interest groups in society

about the most important decisions and actions they face and share together (Suyatno, 2016).

Local democracy is democracy that occurs at a lower level of the government hierarchy of a country. Meanwhile, the study of Bureaucracy and Democracy is primarily aimed at streamlining the goals of democratic government in fulfilling promises to constituents. One of them is through the emphasis on the performance of the bureaucracy. The public is directed to be closer to the "real work" of the government, unlike the current conditions which are like "alienated" from the implementation of government behavior (Romli, 2018).

The significance of democracy at the local level is increasingly visible when many decisions are specific to only one area. These specific decisions require approval from the public, both when they are made and when they are implemented. For example, in Indonesia, the implementation of the School Operational Assistance (BOS) policy is held by the City/Regency Education Office, not the central government. Without effective and efficient participation from citizens, it is impossible for these good policies to be implemented. The nature of democracy at the local level is not as 'abstract' as democracy at the state level (Usman, 2011).

Community involvement involves community involvement in the process of recognizing issues and potentials in the community, making decisions about alternative solutions to problems, and community involvement in the process of evaluating changes that occur. Community participation can provide opportunities for the community to have a more active role in building and developing their territory. In addition, community participation can also increase openness and transparency in decision making and program or policy implementation (Laily & Imro'atin, 2015).

Community participation does have an important role in the democratic process. In community participation, the community has an active role in conveying their aspirations and needs, as well as participating in decision making and evaluating implemented programs or policies. Through community participation, it is hoped that the resulting policies or programs can be more in line with the needs and aspirations of the community, and can be well received by the community (Kusmanto, 2014).

In Indonesia, community participation in local democracy is still very low. One of the factors influencing community participation in local democracy is access to information. Insufficient and untimely information can hinder community participation in decision-making processes. However, with advances in information and communication technology, access to public information can be more easily accessed by the public (Lubis, 2009).

The advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) in recent years has been accelerating at an ever-increasing rate, and it has had an impact on many facets of people's life, including the extent to which they participate in political processes. Participation from the general populace is essential within a democratic framework because the populace plays an active part in defining the policies that are implemented by the government. More community involvement in

democratic processes at the local level is possible with the help of information and communication technology (Sutrisno & Akbar, 2018). For instance, the government can utilize social media to disseminate information to the public and request feedback from individuals in the populace. The general public is also able to utilize information and communication technology in order to keep an eye on and critique the performance of the government.

However, the use of information and communication technology in increasing community participation in local democracy cannot be used as a guarantee that community participation will increase significantly. This is caused by various factors such as a lack of public understanding of technology, limited access to technology, and public trust in the political system (Arafah & Winarso, 2020).

Therefore, research on the role of information and communication technology in increasing community participation in local democracy is very important to do. By knowing the role of ICT in community participation in local democracy, it is hoped that solutions can be found to increase community participation in local democracy. In addition, this research can also provide useful information for the government in developing strategies to increase people's participation in local democracy.

The purpose of this research is to find out how far the use of ICT can increase people's participation in local democracy, as well as to find out the factors that influence the use of ICT in political participation. This research also aims to provide input for the government and society in utilizing ICT to increase community participation in local democracy.

This research is expected to provide benefits to the community, government, and also other researchers in understanding the role of ICT in increasing community participation in local democracy. In addition, this research is expected to contribute to the development of government science, especially in the field of community participation in local democracy and the use of ICT.

B. METHODS

This article employs a qualitative technique, which, according to Denzim & Lincoln (Moleong, 2010), is research that use a natural background in order to explain the occurrence of phenomena and is conducted by combining several existing methods. The qualitative research approach was chosen because it focuses a greater emphasis on data depth and explanation, utilizing interview and documentation techniques for data collecting. Data sources include primary data collected through interviews and secondary data in the form of research-related books and documents. Specifically, this research uses qualitative methods with descriptive research strategies. Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault (2016) provide reasons why researchers use descriptive methods. *First*, descriptive is communicated through data and theoretical is communicated through concepts illustrated by data. *Second*, that the descriptive data obtained is more detailed and in-depth, the data depicts realistically the actual events and cannot be described numerically.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Local Democracy

We live in a democracy. This is a phrase that people often say. It seems that the principles of democracy have been widely accepted and become the basis for the model of government in the world. Democracy has become a fundamental benchmark for political legitimacy in today's era. Law-making and law enforcement will be right, if it is done democratically. Many countries have now become democracies, even though the historical facts of their political institutions show vulnerability to undemocratic factors (Arsa, 2014).

An important description of democracy is also found in Aristotle's *Politics* written between 335 and 323 BC. In this work, Aristotle stated that the basic principle of a democratic constitution is freedom. Every democracy has a goal of freedom. To command and then to be governed in turn, is one of the elements of freedom. The democratic idea of justice is in reality a numerical equation and not an equality based on merit.

The essence of democracy as it is understood is contained in the meaning of government of the people, government by the people and government for the people. The essence of the meaning contained in the government of the people is to point out that in a democratic country, the legitimacy/legitimacy of who can be revealed from government by people, namely that in administering government the process is supervised by the people, while for government for people, it contains meaning that in administering a government by the government it must be carried out for the greatest possible benefit of the people (Simanjuntak, 2015).

More advanced developments occurred at the regional level. One of the dynamics of political life in the regions is marked by the equal position between the executive and the legislature in the regional political arena. Problems between the executive and legislature at the local level that seem to be experiencing fluctuations have recently become an interesting phenomenon to observe. The format of the conflict in the regions in a number of ways is proof that there are not only institutional elements but also intrigues that are more personal in nature that arise in local political conflicts. Apart from all that, the concept of democracy that occurs in Indonesia can run is something that is very meaningful because of the characteristics that have become the identity of the nation so far. Cultural values that are able to explore the diversity of nations and homelands, the concept of democracy is called Local Democracy, so that with this emerging phenomenon, local democracy is considered important and needed to be born for each region.

Democratization at the local level can be seen in several ways. First, the essence of democracy is political participation. Determination of political officials is part of political participation. The election of political officials directly is more democratic than through a representative mechanism. In that context, the direct election of regional heads will in turn improve the quality of representation because the community determines its own leaders. Direct community involvement in the regional head election process will in turn strengthen the legitimacy of regional heads.

Second, direct regional elections allow the people in the regions to determine which candidate for their leader is deemed capable of resolving their regional problems. The people will choose their own governor, mayor, or regent. Selection will prove whether the candidate for regional head is truly populist or not. Third, with direct elections, the people are directly involved in choosing their leaders. This direct involvement of the people in turn increases democratization at the local level, where the people really have sovereignty, in other words there are no distortions in the implementation of people's sovereignty (Haboddin, 2016).

Local democracy attempts to introduce the qualities of each region, which will eventually coalesce into a national unity. Local democracy has become a geopolitical arena for regional elites who aspire to be the future leaders of their home country. To become local leaders who are generally recognized by the populace, political decisions must be made after weighing all discourses, attentively examining indications, and utilizing intelligence. A concrete space that represents the as-yet-unrealized attitude of local leaders and the community's lofty aspirations (Usman, 2011).

Many elements usually referred to as the preconditions of local democracy can impact the improvement of local democracy's quality. 1) quality DPRD, 2) a competitive, selective, and accountable DPRD recruiting system, 3) functioning parties, 4) critical and rational voters, 5) freedom and consistency of the press, 6) strong and consistent NGOs, and 7) civil society empowerment are prerequisites for democracy. Not seeking a local leader based on wealth, government position, fame, proximity to power, family, or coworkers (Romadlon, 2016).

2. Society participation

Community participation is one of the important indicators or characteristics of the existence of a democratic government system. Community participation here/is not only seen as limited involvement of the community in general elections, but also in various other political activities that have implications for the interests of the people. Community participation is an important thing that must be done in a country that adheres to democracy. According to Walge, democracy will only have meaning when the community or citizens as the main stakeholders are always involved in the process of making all kinds of public policies produced by the government. Therefore, public participation in the public policy-making process is the only way to convince the public that public policy-making is carried out democratically (Zakiyah, 2018).

The first advantage in public participation is an increase in the quality of public policies produced by the government. Improving the quality of policies will in turn be very beneficial for the people who are the targets of these policies. Second, According to Smith and Ingram, in addition to bringing benefits to the community, community participation in the policy-making process will also help the government. Thus, according to them, an increase in institutional capacity will improve public support for the government, for instance through voting in general elections, if the public perceives the government as an institution capable of reflecting society's interests (Smith & Ingram, 2022).

In accordance with what Smith and Ingram have stated, some political scientists assert that public participation in the decision-making process will have positive outcomes, such as enhancing the legitimacy of decisions by increasing the competence of decision-makers through the development of quality policy-making. - decisions made by community involvement can promote public responsibility in the decision-making process and contribute to a positive image of a democratic society (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000). More important than that, V. Denhardt and B. Denhardt stated that through broad community participation in the policy-making process, citizens can help increase guarantees or certainty that the voices and interests of individuals and groups in society are heard and then the government responded fairly.

Factors Influencing Community Participation. Certainly, influenced by several factors, according to Pangestus there are several factors that affect community participation, namely:

- a. Internal factors include individual characteristics that can influence the individual to participate in an activity. Individual characteristics include age, education level, total family burden, total income, and even group experience.
- b. External factors, including the relationship that exists between the project manager with the aim of being voluntarily involved in a project, if the response from the manager is positive and benefits them. In addition, if it is supported by positive or appropriate activity management services needed by the target or the community, then the target will not hesitate to participate in the program.

Apart from that, the inhibiting factors for community participation according to Waston in Soetomo (2003) said that there are several obstacles (obstacles) that can hinder the occurrence of a change, including obstacles originating from individual personalities, one of which is the dependence of the community on the government in implementing development activities, which is an obstacle in realizing active community participation or involvement, because of this sense of dependence the community does not have the initiative to carry out development or their own initiatives.

Wilcox (1994) distinguishes the level of community participation into five types, namely (1) providing information (2) consulting, (3) joint decision-making, (4) carrying out joint actions, and (5) supporting activities that arise on the initiative of the community.²⁴ According to Wilcox, at which level community participation will be carried out very much depends on what interests are to be achieved. In order to adopt strategic policies that will affect the livelihood of many people, of course the community must be fully involved. Meanwhile, in making decisions that are more technical in nature, it may be sufficient to provide information to the public .

Community participation is a form of citizen involvement in various aspects of social, political, economic and cultural life in an area or community. Community participation includes various forms such as participation in general elections, discussion forums, decision making, and implementation of activities related to regional or community development and planning. Community participation is very

important in the context of regional or community development, because through participation, the community can play an active role in determining the desired direction of development. Community participation also allows the government or related institutions to obtain the necessary input and feedback in designing programs and policies that suit the needs of the community.

Community participation also plays an important role in creating a better democracy. By being actively involved in the democratic process, society can improve the quality of representation and accountability of leaders and public institutions that are responsible to them. However, community participation also has various challenges and obstacles. Several factors affect community participation including lack of awareness and understanding of the importance of participation, lack of access or adequate facilities, and reluctance of the community to become involved in the participation process for political, economic or social reasons.

c. Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a broad word that encompasses any technical equipment used for information processing and transmission. ICT includes two components: information technology and communication technology. Information technology encompasses the processes, applications, manipulations, and management of information. According to the Oxford dictionary (1995), information technology is the study or use of electronic equipment, particularly computers, to store, analyze, and distribute any type of information, including text, numbers, and images. Information Technology encompasses the production of information sources, maintenance of information channels, selection and transmission of information, receiving information selectively, storing and retrieving information, and employing information, according to Indrajit (2000). Everything associated with the use of tools to process and send data from one device to another is considered communication technology. Information technology consists of hardware, software, procedures, and systems that facilitate communication. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) encompasses any activities involving the processing, management, delivery, or transfer of information between facilities/media. According to UNESCO, ICTs are the different technological instruments and resources utilized for transmitting, storing, creating, sharing, and exchanging information. According to Bambang Warsita (2011), information technology is the infrastructure and systems (hardware, software, and useware) for acquiring, transmitting, processing, interpreting, storing, and utilizing data in a meaningful manner. Information technology and communication technology can be categorized separately as information technology and communication technology:

- a. Information technology is used to process information. An example of information technology is a computer.
- b. Communication technology is used to move information from source to receiver. Examples of communication technology are telephone and television.

The term "information technology" refers to any and all aspects that are associated with the process of manipulating data and managing information. Everything that pertains to the process of transferring or sending information from the sender to the recipient is included under the umbrella term "communication technology." Information technology and communication technology are inseparable equivalent technologies, which means that the two technologies are very intimately tied to one another. This may be deduced from the concept of information technology and communication technology. The term "information and communication technology" refers to any and all forms of activity that are relevant to the process of processing, managing, and transmitting information from one sender to another.

The phrase "information technology" (IT) first gained widespread use in the latter half of the 1970s. In the past, the term computer technology, electronic data processing, or EDP was used to refer to what is today known as information technology (Electronic Data Processing). In general, Lucas in Kaunang et al (2021) outlines the definition of Information Technology, which is explained as follows: "Information Technology is any form of technology that is applied to process and transmit information in electronic form, examples of Information Technology include micro computers, mainframe computers, barcode readers, software, transaction processing, worksheet software, and communication and network equipment. "

ICT refers to any sort of technology that facilitates the delivery of information and the implementation of unidirectional, bidirectional, or multiple communication channels. Information and Communication Technology, according to a second definition, is the knowledge required to handle information so that it may be searched efficiently and precisely. ICT is a component of an information system in the academic context, which comprises of hardware, software, computer networks, and other ICT-related equipment.

Hence, Information and Communication Technology refers to the processing, modification, management, and transfer of information between mediums. Information and communication technology consists of hardware and software, as well as any activities associated with processing, altering, and transporting information between mediums. In general, ICT or information and communication technology serves three purposes:

- a. Technology functions as a tool. What is meant by technology as a tool is that technology plays a role in exchanging data, information, making graphic data, calculating numbers, designing, etc. Which can be used by all people, especially those of you who are still in school. During this pandemic, we are sure to use the sophistication of existing technology, as a tool for doing tasks and so on.
- b. Technology functions as science. The sophistication of social media or the internet, especially "Google" has become ingrained in the general public. This technology can be used to seek knowledge around the world, ranging from general knowledge, school subjects, *entertainment information*, etc. But with a note of wisdom in using the internet.

- c. Technology as materials and tools for learning (*literacy*). Technology as materials and tools for learning, namely as an example such as distance learning due to the pandemic factor. This study uses cellphones/PCs that are used in their respective homes. With existing technology allows students and teachers to do learning.

d. The role of ICT in increasing Community Participation in Local Democracy

The development of information and communication technology (ICT) has had a significant impact on various aspects of human life, including in the fields of government and politics. In this digital era, ICT can play an important role in increasing people's participation in local democracy. ICT is able to provide benefits in terms of access to information and participation, but also faces challenges in ensuring that its use can increase community participation in an equitable and quality manner.

One of the main benefits of ICT in increasing community participation in local democracy is access to information. In a democracy, information is an important need that must be fulfilled by society. In the context of local democracy, people need to know information about public policies, political decisions, and government programs that affect their daily lives. With ICT, information can be accessed more easily and quickly. Citizens can use social media, government websites, or mobile applications to obtain the information they need, thereby increasing their participation in influencing public policies and political decisions.

Through social media and online platforms, people can interact and share information easily. They can also take advantage of applications and software that enable them to monitor and provide input on local development activities. Digital participation platforms such as online discussion forums, online surveys and social networks also enable citizens to participate in broader and more open decision-making.

Utilization of ICT can also open space for community participation that was previously limited, such as for people who live in remote areas or people who have physical limitations. In the context of local democracy, the use of ICT can also strengthen better governance, increase transparency, and enable wider participation of the public in making decisions that are more inclusive and in favor of the interests of society in general.

However, there are also challenges to be faced in using ICTs to enhance citizen participation in local democracy. One of the main challenges is the digital divide or digital divide. This gap includes factors such as access to technology, technological skills, and the availability of resources to access technology. People who live in remote areas or people with low levels of education may not have the same access as people who live in urban areas or who have higher levels of education. Therefore, ICTs are not always able to reach communities that need more information and participation in local democracy.

The benefits of ICTs in increasing citizen participation in local democracy also depend on the quality of the information provided. Information presented through

ICT must be accurate, objective and transparent. Not all information available on social media or government websites can be considered correct and trustworthy. Therefore, the government needs to ensure that the information provided through ICT is reliable and reflects the actual situation.

ICTs can also raise privacy and security concerns in people's participation in local democracy. The use of ICTs for political participation can open loopholes for misuse of personal data and sensitive information that can harm national security and individual rights. Therefore, there needs to be clear policies and mechanisms for protecting privacy and security in the use of ICT for political participation. The use of ICTs in political participation requires certain skills and knowledge in the use of technology, as well as a sufficient understanding of political issues and governance. Therefore, there is a need for training and education programs that cover aspects of digital and political literacy to increase community participation through ICT.

participation in local democracy through ICT also requires the active involvement of the government and related institutions in developing and facilitating platforms for community participation. The government and related institutions must ensure that the community participation platforms provided are accessible to all groups in society, as well as easy to use and safe. The government must also ensure that public participation through ICT remains open and transparent, and pays attention to various community groups and different opinions.

In overcoming these challenges, synergy and collaboration between the government, non-governmental organizations and the community are needed in encouraging community participation in local democracy through ICT. Utilization of ICT can accelerate and facilitate the process of community participation, provide wider access, improve the quality of participation and transparency, and strengthen government and community accountability. Therefore, the role of ICT in community participation in local democracy is very important and must be continuously developed and improved. In addition, it is also important to note that the use of ICT for political participation cannot be the only solution for increasing people's participation in local democracy. The use of ICT must be balanced with offline participation and collective participation, so that more inclusive community participation can be realized.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the research that has been done, it can be concluded that information and communication technology (ICT) can play a very important role in increasing people's participation in local democracy. In this context, the use of ICT can improve the quality of community participation, accelerate and simplify the participation process, provide wider access, increase transparency, and strengthen government and community accountability. However, there are still some challenges in the use of ICT in community participation in local democracy, such as technological gaps, data security and privacy, and the lack of clear regulations related to the use of ICT.

Therefore, efforts are needed to overcome these challenges so that the use of ICT in community participation can run more effectively and efficiently.

In this case, the role of government and society itself is very important to strengthen the use of ICT in local democratic participation. The government needs to provide adequate access and provide training to improve technological skills among the people. Meanwhile, society must be open to the use of ICT and active in participatory processes to ensure its success. The use of ICTs can be an effective tool to increase people's participation in local democracy, but efforts are needed to overcome the existing challenges. In this context, the role of the government and the community itself is very important to strengthen the use of ICT in community participation, so that it can strengthen local democracy and provide wider benefits for the community.

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