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The Role of the General Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) in Handling Vote Shifts in the 2024 General Election

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Abstract: The title of the article is The Role of the General Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) in Handling Vote Shifts in the 2024 General Election. This article aims to examine the handling of vote shift in the 2024 General Elections in West Likupang District, North Minahasa Regency by the General Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) of North Minahasa Regency. The method used in this study is a qualitative method. Data were obtained through interviews and document analysis in order to trace the supervisory, prevention, and enforcement functions by the Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency. The results of the study indicate that the handling of vote shift cases in the 2024 General Elections in West Likupang District by the Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency was carried out through clarification, investigation, and coordination internally and across institutions implemented through three institutional pillars. The regulatory pillar is reflected in the implementation of rules and mechanisms for taking action against violations, the normative pillar is seen in the institution's commitment to maintaining the values of honesty and professionalism of election supervisors, and the cognitive-cultural pillar is reflected in Bawaslu's efforts to build public awareness and participation in participatory supervision. The final result was a recommendation from the Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency regarding improvements to the vote count results and the enforcement of ethical sanctions against the election organizers involved

Keywords: Election Supervisory Body; Institutions; Election Violations; Vote Shift

INTRODUCTION

General elections (Pemilu) are a fundamental instrument in the modern democratic system that provides a space for the people to exercise their sovereignty directly, publicly, freely, secretly, honestly, and fairly (Surbakti, 2010; Budiardjo, 2008; Patricia & Yapin, 2019). Elections are not only a political mechanism for electing leaders and representatives but also

serve as a primary indicator of the quality of a country's democracy. A healthy democracy is characterized by the implementation of competitive, participatory, and integrity-based elections. Elections are important because they can accommodate all public aspirations through the political articulation function of political parties (Hertika et al., 2019). Therefore, monitoring the election process is a crucial element in maintaining legitimacy and public trust in its results.

The General Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) of the Republic of Indonesia plays a crucial role in overseeing the implementation of elections, functioning independently and free from any related parties (Badan Pengawas Pemilihan Umum Republik Indonesia, 2011). Bawaslu is the first point of contact for handling election violations, which are then forwarded to other authorized institutions (Ibrahim et al., 2021).

Handling election violations involves several parties. Bawaslu as an independent institution is responsible for monitoring and following up on these violations, including conducting investigations and examinations and providing recommendations to the General Elections Commission (KPU) of the Republic of Indonesia and other institutions. The Indonesian National Police (Polri) plays a role in following up on election violations that are criminal in nature, conducting investigations, and providing recommendations to the Attorney General's Office of the Republic of Indonesia for prosecution. Meanwhile, the Election Organizer Honorary Council (DKPP) of the Republic of Indonesia has an important role in handling violations of the code of ethics committed by election organizers (Abiyasa, 2019).

One of the election violations discussed in this study is vote-rigging. This case not only threatens public confidence in the election results but also violates the principles of democracy and justice that underpin election administration (Bayu, 2017). Within the context of oversight, the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) plays a crucial role in preventing and addressing various forms of violations, including vote-rigging. Therefore, Bawaslu's oversight is essential in the implementation of elections.

In the 2024 General Election in North Minahasa Regency, specifically in West Likupang District, there was a shift in vote acquisition, namely an attempt to manipulate data by certain parties to benefit certain candidates. This case began with the transfer of votes held by several political parties to one of the legislative candidates from the Partai Bulan Bintang (PBB) at 26 Polling Stations (TPS) (Bawaslu Kabupaten Minahasa Utara, 2024). Following the discovery of this election violation, the Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency immediately conducted clarification and coordinated with the Election Supervisory Committee (Panwaslu) of West Likupang District and the Election Law Enforcement and Supervision Task Force Center (Gakkumdu).

Bawaslu has a legal mandate to follow up on these reports by conducting clarifications, conducting tiered investigations, and issuing recommendations to relevant parties. This action aligns with the mechanisms stipulated in Election Supervisory Agency Regulation No. 7 of 2018 concerning the Handling of Findings and Reports of Election Violations.

Regarding election violations, several studies have focused on the role of the Bawaslu in overseeing the implementation and resolution of election violations in Indonesia. Daeli et al. (2021), for example, examined the role of Bawaslu in resolving disputes during the 2019 Legislative Elections in Medan City. Hertika et al. (2019) examined the role and constraints faced by the Bawaslu of Ponorogo Regency in overseeing the 2019 Elections. Meanwhile, Hermana & Jaya (2021) examined Bawaslu's effectiveness in handling violations and the sanctions imposed by Bawaslu in resolving violations that occurred during the 2019 Elections in Bengkulu Province. While this study examines Bawaslu's handling of election violations, its focus is on the case of vote shifting in the 2024 General Election that occurred in West Likupang District, North Minahasa Regency. This study is important because the phenomenon

of vote shifting is not only an administrative error but also reflects institutional challenges in maintaining public trust in the democratic process.

The effectiveness of Bawaslu in carrying out its role in this study was analyzed using Scott's institutional theory (2013). This theory emphasizes that the success of an institution is supported by three main pillars: regulatory, normative, and cultural cognitive. The regulatory pillar refers to the system of rules and sanctions that govern the institution's behavior; the normative pillar relates to values, ethics, and moral responsibility; and the cultural cognitive pillar describes how society understands and internalizes democratic values. These three pillars provide a conceptual framework for assessing the extent to which Bawaslu is able to carry out its oversight function effectively. This study aims to determine how Bawaslu handled the case of vote shifts in the 2024 General Election that occurred in West Likupang District, North Minahasa Regency, using Scott's institutional approach. This approach will provide an academic contribution regarding whether this vote shift is an institutional problem or merely a technical oversight issue.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive-qualitative approach. The focus of the study is the handling of vote shift cases in the 2024 General Election that occurred in West Likupang District, North Minahasa Regency.

To obtain comprehensive data related to the focus of the study, the author conducted in-depth interviews with a number of intentionally selected informants, including: members of the Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency, the chairman and members of the Panwaslu of West Likupang District, and political party witnesses involved in the vote recapitulation process. Complete data was also obtained through observation and document searches, including the 2024 Election Supervision Report from the Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency, laws and regulations, scientific articles, and media reports relevant to the issue of election supervision and law enforcement.

Data analysis was conducted in three stages (Creswell, 2009): information recording, categorization, and data interpretation. Information recording was conducted to carefully record the results of in-depth interviews with informants, field observations, and documents. Categorization was carried out by sorting data based on issues (the role of Bawaslu in handling vote shifts in the 2024 General Election that occurred in West Likupang District, North Minahasa Regency). Interpretation of the various data obtained was sorted by issue, and using data triangulation methods, in order to draw conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of the North Minahasa Regency Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) in Handling the 2024 Election Vote Shift in West Likupang District

The election supervisory body was originally known as the Panwaslu, which was ad hoc and active only during the general election and regional election periods. Significant changes occurred after the enactment of Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections, which established the Panwaslu of Regency or City as a permanent Bawaslu. This transformation strengthened the legal standing of the supervisory body and expanded Bawaslu's authority to carry out its supervisory function, prevent and prosecute election violations (Ibad et al., 2023).

The Bawaslu plays a strategic role in maintaining the integrity of election results through monitoring, preventing, and prosecuting violations, including cases of vote-rigging. According to Article 93 of Law Number 7 of 2017, Bawaslu has the authority to supervise all stages of the election process and is obligated to ensure that any violations are handled in accordance with applicable legal procedures.

Di Kecamatan Likupang Barat, ditemukan bahwa pada Pemilu 2024 terjadi pergeseran perolehan suara dari beberapa partai politik ke salah satu calon legislatif Partai Bulan Bintang (PBB) di 26 Tempat Pemungutan Suara (TPS). Temuan ini menuntut Bawaslu untuk menjalankan fungsi pengawasan, klarifikasi, dan penegakan hukum sesuai dengan Peraturan Bawaslu Nomor 7 Tahun 2018 tentang Penanganan Temuan dan Laporan Pelanggaran Pemilu.

In West Likupang District, it was discovered that in the 2024 Election, votes shifted from several political parties to one of the PBB legislative candidates at 26 polling stations (TPS). This finding requires the Bawaslu to carry out its oversight, clarification, and law enforcement functions in accordance with Bawaslu Regulation Number 7 of 2018 concerning the Handling of Findings and Reports of Election Violations.

The Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency immediately coordinated with the Panwaslu of West Likupang District and the Gakkumdu Center. An interview with the Head of the Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency Bawaslu revealed that the initial step taken by the Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency was to verify the C-Result and C-Plano documents at the District Election Committee (PPK) level. The results revealed discrepancies between the TPS recapitulation results and those recorded at the PPK. The clarification process involved summoning election officials at the district level and witnesses from relevant political parties. The clarification revealed errors in the recapitulation process due to negligence and alleged ethical violations by the organizers, prompting Bawaslu to recommend improvements to the vote count results and the imposition of ethical sanctions against the organizers involved. Supervisory institutions such as Bawaslu have a legal mandate to follow up on these reports by conducting clarifications, conducting tiered inspections, and recommending improvements or action to relevant parties in accordance with statutory regulations (Manurung & Heliany, 2020).

The various descriptions above demonstrate that the Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency coordinated internally and across institutions in handling the vote shift case in West Likupang District. Internal coordination was carried out with field supervisors, the Panwaslu of District, and cross-institutional coordination with the General Elections Commission (KPU) and law enforcement officials. The implementation of its oversight function will run optimally if the supervisory agency has adequate structural support and human resource capacity. Bawaslu also strives to involve the public in participatory oversight to strengthen transparency and public accountability.

The Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency adheres to the principles of justice, transparency, and legal certainty in its oversight. As a public oversight institution, Bawaslu must maintain public trust through integrity and independence in every decision. Therefore, the Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency's steps in investigating and clarifying reports of vote shifts reflect a strong institutional role in ensuring democracy and protecting the people's voting rights.

Implementation of Supervision, Prevention, and Enforcement Functions

Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections explains that the duties, authorities, and obligations of Bawaslu are to supervise the implementation of elections to ensure that the election process runs smoothly, honestly, and fairly; receive reports of alleged election violations and follow up on these reports to ensure that such violations do not occur again; supervise election campaigns to ensure that they are conducted in a fair manner and do not violate regulations; supervise the use of campaign funds to ensure that they are used transparently and do not violate regulations; supervise the vote counting process to ensure that the process is carried out accurately and transparently; resolve election disputes that arise during the election process; and supervise the implementation of decisions that have been issued by related institutions, such as the KPU (General Election Commission) or the DKPP

(Election Organizer Honorary Council). Bawaslu has a very important role in ensuring that the election process in Indonesia runs smoothly, honestly, and fairly. In fact, according to one respondent that:

“Bawaslu can ensure that the election process runs fairly and transparently, and increase public trust in the election organizing institution.”.

Hasil wawancara dengan sejumlah informan menunjukkan bahwa pelaksanaan fungsi pengawasan oleh Bawaslu Minahasa Utara pada Pemilu 2024 telah dilakukan secara preventif dan partisipatif. Sebelum hari pemungutan suara, Bawaslu melakukan sosialisasi dan supervisi kepada Panwaslu Kecamatan dan Pengawas TPS mengenai tata cara pengawasan dan pelaporan pelanggaran. Namun, pada praktiknya, rendahnya partisipasi masyarakat dalam pelaporan dugaan pelanggaran menjadi salah satu kendala utama. Masyarakat di beberapa desa masih menganggap bahwa pergeseran suara merupakan “hal biasa” dan enggan melapor karena takut berhadapan dengan pihak penyelenggara. Interviews with several informants indicate that the Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency implemented its oversight function in the 2024 Election in a preventative and participatory manner. Prior to election day, Bawaslu conducted outreach and supervision to the Panwaslu and polling station (TPS) supervisors regarding procedures for monitoring and reporting violations. However, in practice, low public participation in reporting alleged violations remains a major obstacle. Residents in several villages still consider vote shifts "normal" and are reluctant to report them for fear of facing repercussions.

Bawaslu has also attempted to maximize the role of the Gakkumdu Center as a coordination forum with the Police and the Prosecutor's Office to investigate alleged criminal election violations. However, several internal informants stated that inter-agency coordination has not been optimal due to differing understandings of the categories of administrative and criminal violations. This finding echoes research by Yuhandra et al. (2023) that found that factors hindering Bawaslu's administrative and criminal violation prevention function include varying interpretations of technical regulations.

The actions of the Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency are a real implementation of the regulative function of Bawaslu, as explained in institutional theory, that the regulative pillar acts as a system of rules and sanctions to regulate institutional behavior and ensure compliance with legal norms.

Normative and Cultural Cognitive Evaluation of Bawaslu's Performance

Based on institutional theory, an institution's effectiveness is measured not only by its compliance with regulations, but also by its ability to build moral values and social legitimacy. In the context of this research, the normative pillar is evident in the professionalism of election supervisors in maintaining the integrity of the oversight process. The Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency consistently emphasizes the ethics and neutrality of election administrators at every stage of the election. This is in accordance with the statement from a Bawaslu of North Minahasa commissioner and member of Gakkumdu, who stated:

“The bottom line lies within us, integrity lies within ourselves, not in others...we comply with all existing procedures and regulations.”.

“...in handling alleged violations, if we are no longer neutral, the output from what we handle will not be in accordance with expectations, so we must be neutral, we must be impartial, whoever there is an alleged violation, be it a friend or anyone else, we will process it according to existing regulations”.

Another thing that was discovered through interviews with several field supervisors was that there were still several supervisors who were not firm in dealing with minor violations because of their personal relationships with the organizers at the village level.

Meanwhile, the cognitive-cultural pillar was evident in the community's level of understanding of the importance of election supervision. Research data indicated that some residents did not fully understand the violation reporting mechanism and the Bawaslu's oversight function. This obstacle was revealed in interviews with several respondents. For example, one voter, WS, stated:

"...I have seen several violations committed by legislative candidates, such as giving money and goods to voters, but because I don't understand the mechanisms and reporting channels, I am reluctant to report them...."

Different information was obtained from a voter with the initials AK, namely:

"...We here do not wish to report various election violations, especially the use of money politics, because for us this is a form of reciprocation from them to us as voters."

The various conditions above are the main causes of the failure of participatory public oversight. Therefore, Bawaslu needs to expand political education and ongoing outreach on election law, especially in rural areas.

Institutional Challenges and Barriers

This study identified a number of institutional obstacles faced by the Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency in handling vote shift cases, including:

1. Limited human resources at the sub-district and village levels, where the ratio of supervisors to polling stations (TPS) is unbalanced.
2. Limited resources, especially for detecting signs of vote shifts.
3. Lack of technical support and operational budget for field investigations.
4. Lack of synchronized coordination between institutions (Bawaslu, KPU, Gakkumdu, and DKPP) in determining follow-up actions for violations.
5. Socio-cultural factors, such as low legal awareness and personal relationships between supervisors and election officials at the local level.

These various obstacles impact the effectiveness of Bawaslu's regulatory, normative, and cognitive cultural pillars. According to the institutional theoretical framework, the weakness of these pillars can undermine institutional legitimacy, making it crucial for Bawaslu to strengthen the internalization of the values of fairness, professionalism, and transparency in all oversight activities. These challenges and obstacles are supported by the statement of an academic observer of election issues:

"..... the law will only be effective if supported by other subsystems: culture, structure, and substance. Indeed, those who become organizers, including the KPPS, PPS (election committees), PPK (election supervisory committees), Panwaslu, Bawaslu, and KPU, have different motives, whether they are truly committed to safeguarding democracy or simply seeking an honorarium. Commitment is required to be an organizer."

Analysis of Institutional Roles

When analyzed through Scott's three institutional pillars, the role of the Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency can be explained as follows. The regulatory pillar, which is an analysis based on the legal framework and regulations governing behavior and actions in

elections, has been quite effective. Indicators that can be used as a reference include the implementation of formal rules, procedures for handling violations, and coordination between the Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency, the Panwaslu, and the Gakkumdu.

The assessment of the normative pillar, which refers to the values, norms, and ethics underlying the Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency behavior in the election, including fairness, integrity, and honesty, is deemed to still require strengthening, particularly in terms of the supervisory institution's professionalism and moral responsibility towards the principles of justice and transparency. Meanwhile, the cognitive-cultural pillar, which refers to public knowledge, perception, and understanding of elections, remains very weak. The indicator used is low public awareness of actively participating in election oversight.

Thus, although Bawaslu has successfully uncovered and followed up on cases of vote shifting, this success has not completely eliminated structural and cultural institutional barriers. Institutional reform and increased human resource capacity are needed to ensure comprehensive and sustainable oversight. This section must address the problems or research hypotheses that have been formulated previously.

CONCLUSION

The handling of the vote shift case in the 2024 Election in West Likupang District by the Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency was carried out through clarification, investigation, and coordination internally (Field Supervisors and District Election Supervisory Committees) and across institutions (political party witnesses, the KPU, the PPK, and law enforcement officers) implemented through three institutional pillars — regulatory, normative, and cognitive-cultural. The regulatory pillar is evident in the implementation of rules and mechanisms for taking action against violations, the normative pillar is seen in the institution's commitment to upholding the values of honesty and professionalism of Election Supervisors, while the cognitive-cultural pillar is reflected in Bawaslu's efforts to build public awareness and participation in participatory supervision in the North Minahasa region. The final result is a recommendation from the Bawaslu of North Minahasa Regency regarding the improvement of vote count results and the enforcement of ethical sanctions against election organizers involved. To strengthen the election monitoring system, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of human resources for supervisors at the sub-district and village levels through training in election law and supervisory ethics, increase synergy between agencies through integrated and digital data-based coordination mechanisms, encourage participatory community monitoring by expanding outreach and involvement of local organizations; and conduct periodic evaluations of the implementation of Bawaslu Regulation No. 7 of 2018 so that the violation handling mechanism is more responsive to the local context.

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