

Citizen Participation in the Democratic Process in West Papua (The Study on the Waisai Community of Raja Ampat Regency) *by Mardan Umar*

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

**Citizen Participation in the Democratic Process in West Papua
(The Study on the Waisai Community of Raja Ampat Regency)**Julien Biringan^{1,a}, Mardan Umar^{2,b}¹ Pancasila dan Civics Education Departement, Faculty of Social Sciences, Manado State University² Pancasila dan Civics Education Departement, Faculty of Social Sciences, Manado State Universitye-mail: ^a julienbiringan@unima.ac.id; ^b mardanumar@unima.ac.id;^cCorresponding Author

Mardan Umar {085256031165}

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how citizen participation in the democratic process in West Papua Province, especially the Waisai community in Raja Ampat Regency. This research is a qualitative descriptive study using observations and interviews as data collection techniques. The results of the study indicated that the level of citizen participation was highly dependent on the process of political education provided. The role of electoral institutions was still not optimal in providing political understanding to the public. Citizen participation in democratic processes such as legislative and regional head elections was still not optimal. Thus, citizen understanding of the democratic process needs to be improved to reach awareness in building democratic values in West Papua Province.

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Introduction

Democracy has empowered the Papuans (Viartasiwi, 2018:141). This statement brings a positive narrative that democracy has a positive impact on the people of Papua. In an era of democratic transition, the people of Indonesia are facing various uproars, as a result of the democratic process. The legislative elections, regional head elections, and presidential elections still leave many important notes in Indonesia's political system. A similar condition occurs in West Papua Province, where many negative indications in the implementation of the general elections in Raja Ampat (Sindonews.com).

Wampler as cited by Li (2015:100), citizen participation is important to both the citizens and the government. The process of democracy requires the role and participation of the citizens, as Kirakosyan (2019: 230) argues that democratization is not only a top-down process, the successful transition depends on the domestic elites, the values, and principles adhered to the citizens. It indicates that democracy cannot be secluded from the values and principles embraced by the community. In the local context, several things, such as geographical location, community conditions, customs, culture, and economic conditions, need to be considered.

The existence of community participation has an impact on decision making or government policy. Mandell (2007) stated that community participation in government can benefit the government. The government encourages

collaborative as a way to ensure that the performance runs well as expected by the community.

The government feels that the public is involved in overseeing the government process. Hong (2015) and Abels (2007) stated that citizen participation eliminates the probability of political leaders making the wrong decisions for the community because community participation is very supportive of improving the quality of democracy.

The election is believed to be a democratic process, in which it is carried out in the context of the process of changing the political elites. In a five-year cycle, the people's representatives' election is carried out as a manifestation of the democratic process. Political parties have a central role in this process, which is by offering candidates for political office. Then, this role makes the parties as the primary vehicles of pursuing the office. Husin (2005:2) states that democracy as a government, in which all people are entitled to govern and to be governed. It means that all citizens have the right to participate in this process, both as voters and as candidates to be elected. It is relevant in Indonesia as a democratic country, where the state system constitutes the sovereignty lies in the hands of the people, the supreme authority is in the joint-decisions of the people, the people in power, the people's government, and the people power. Hence the characteristics of a democratic country are the citizen participation in political decision making; Freedom or independence and protection of human dignity; Representative system; Government based on the rule of law; A system that guarantees government by the people;

and general education and political education (Suprpto, 2001: 23).

Democracy is the central issue in politics. The right development of democracy can be an indicator of the country developing in a better direction, but it does not mean that it has no impact on the people. The people encounter many circumstances as a result of democracy in Indonesia. Social sentiments, ethnic tendencies, and religious issues are new phenomena in Indonesia's political system. Indeed, these phenomena represent the diversity of people of Indonesia in terms of ethnicity, race, and religion. Husin (2005:2) states that among the characteristics of the elements of democracy, the legitimacy of government, based on the claim that it represents the wishes of the people, as well as the settlement that organizes the bargaining to gain legitimacy, is carried out through competitive elections.

Whatever the impact of the democratic process, it must lead to the benefit, peace, and welfare of the people. Budiarmo, as quoted by Kusmanto (2014: 81), formulated several democratic values, namely: 1). Resolving the disputes peacefully and institutionally; 2). Ensuring peaceful change in a changing society; 3). Holding regular changes in leadership; 4). Limiting the use of violence to a minimum; 5). Recognizing and assuming that the existence of diversity is natural; 6). Securing justice, and; 7). Lastly, implementing democratic values held by state institutions.

Citizen Participation

Participation needs involvement, which is followed by the awareness and responsibility towards the community group in achieving a common goal (Sastropetro, 2000: 12) so that participation makes a citizen has an attachment to the group. Also, citizen participation means involvement in decision making, which will affect the future of their lives (Subakti, 1999: 140). Thus citizen participation is highly significant to determine the progress and development of their lives.

Arnstein, as quoted by Wicaksono (2013: 27), divided citizen participation into the eight levels, namely citizen control, delegated power, partnership, placation, consultation, informing, therapy, and manipulation. Meanwhile, according to Kanji and Greenwood (Chamber, 2005: 105), there are five levels of citizen participation, such as Collective Action, Co-learning, cooperation, consultation, and compliance. Both models of participation levels can be specified as follows:

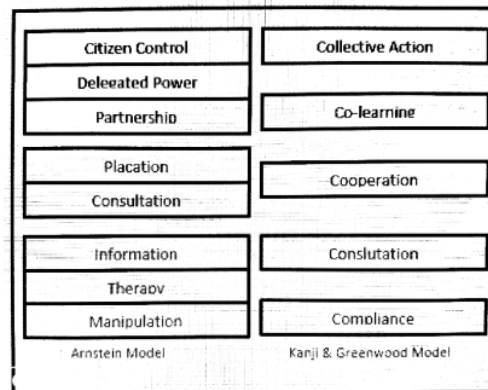


Figure 1. The level of Citizen Participation

The citizens must be involved in the decision-making process related to their lives as individuals and as members of the community. Regarding the democratic process, the citizens are expected to participate in politics, because in a democratic country, citizens and government are inseparable elements.

Arnstein argued that citizen participation is classified as non-participation at the lowest level, including manipulation, therapy, and delivery of information to the citizens. Then, the level of acceptance, including consultation and placation, and the highest level is the power of citizens in the participation, which includes partnership, delegated power, and citizen control, while Kanji and Greenwood provided the lowest level in terms of compliance, then consultation, cooperation, co-learning, and the highest level is collective action. Both concepts have similarities in determining the level of citizen participation.

Regarding political participation, Herbert (in Budiarmo, 1998:2), defines the concept of political participation as voluntary activities of citizens to participate in the election of rulers directly or indirectly, in the process of public policymaking. This participation can be carried out individually or collectively, organized and spontaneously, continuously or sporadically, peacefully or violently, legally or illegally, and effectively or ineffectively.

However, according to Michels (2011: 275), the contribution of participation in a democracy is diverse, depending on the type of innovation, for example, deliberation is better in having discussion and exchange of arguments while in decision making, it is necessary to involve many people through voting.

As quoted from UNDP, Haris (2007) states that every citizen has the right and obligation to make decisions in the process of state, government, and society. Such participation can be carried out directly or through intermediary institutions, such as the DPRD (local people's representative council), NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), and so on. The participation can be in the form of ideas, funds, energy, and other useful manners.

Citizen participation is not only at the implementation stage, but as a whole, starting from the policy formulation, implementation, evaluation, and utilization of the results.

Currently, Indonesian democracy is developing in a positive direction. However, the democratic situation gave rise to negative attitudes in politics. According to Iskandar (2002: 86) this was marked by the emergence of a "negative public mood" caused by the community's assessment of political conflicts both internally and externally in a wider political scope in Indonesian democracy. The phenomenon of citizen participation becomes an inseparable part of the western region to the eastern region of Indonesia. The Waisai, one of the districts in Raja Ampat Regency, West Papua Province, also shows a similar phenomenon. The citizen began to participate in the democratic process, but to what extent their participation, is needed to be further revealed. It is the purpose of this study, which is to find out and analyze the citizen participation in Waisai, Raja Ampat Regency, West Papua Province, in the democratic process in this region.

Method

The type of this research is descriptive research and was analyzed using qualitative methods. The research location was in Waisai, Raja Ampat Regency, West Papua Province. Primary data was collected by conducting observations, documentary data, and interviews with some information sources in the Waisai community. In this study, the community category was divided into those who had a role as election supervisors and community leaders. The context of this study was an analysis of the citizen participation of Waisai's regional head election process, and the documentary analysis of the 2019 general election in Waisai, Raja Ampat Regency. It was used content analysis with data obtained from observation, interviews, and documentation. Conclusions were drawn based on data processed using the interactive model data analysis of Milles and Huberman (Sugiyono, 2006).

Results and Discussion

Geographical Conditions of Waisai, Raja Ampat.

Waisai lies on Waigeo Island, a group of Raja Ampat Islands. Waisai District is one of the districts in the Raja Ampat Regency of West Papua Province. Raja Ampat Regency was declared new regency based on Law No. 26 of 2002 concerning the Establishment of Sarmi Regency, Kerom Regency, South Sorong Regency, and Raja Ampat Regency, on 3 May 2002. Raja Ampat Regency is the result of the division of the Sorong Regency and is one of the 14 new regencies in the Land of Papua. Today, Raja Ampat Regency is part of West Papua Province, which consists of 4 large islands, namely Waigeo Island, Batanta, Salawati and Misool, and 1,847 small islands (figure 2). The central administration is in Waisai, South Waigeo District, which is about 36 miles from Sorong City. The administration of this regency was only effectively run on May 9, 2003.



Figure 2. Raja Ampat Regency Map

Community Participation

In 2014, citizen participation by exercising their rights to vote in the general election was very high. From a total of 38,185 voters, there were 30,605 people voted or about 80% (bps.go.id), whereas, in 2019, the number of citizens who participated in the 2019 elections reached 88% (Suara.com). This data shows an increase in citizen participation in the election. Thus it can be said that after the regional head election of the Raja Ampat regency in Waisai Urban-Village, apparently, there were conflicts in several areas, which resulted in the low participation of citizens in village development.

This study found numerous facts and data in Waisai Urban-Village, Waisai District, Raja Ampat Regency, where citizen participation was proved by several concrete actions as forms of their participation in community activities, particularly in the implementation of Regional head election. The Waisai Community has the willingness to participate in some activities programmed by the government, but the services of the Regional head election supervisory board was not performed optimally, which discouraged them from participating. Moreover, the indigenous people who lived in Waisai Urban-Village considered that their rights were unfulfilled, which make them not fully participate.

The Waisai community participation was not realized due to the performance of the Election Supervisory Board/Panwaslu, which was not optimal either. The process of administration itself was problematic, such as voters who have died were added in the permanent voter list/DPT, while there were still voters who were not added to the voter data. The reports on this matter from community were not responded well, which caused the public disappointment on this board.

Besides, the process of democracy, including the election process was not yet fully understood by the public. Some of the causing factors were socialization activities, which were unsuccessful in providing understanding to the

community, and a low understanding level of the community.

The socialization factor in the process of general election was very important in providing an understanding of the Waisai people. The socialization and supervision process was carried out to the lower-level committees, but there was an inhibiting factor found, including the geographical location of the Raja Ampat islands, which were mainly crossed by sea, and the weather used to be unfriendly, resulted in transportation slowly reach the locations, while community education level factors were indeed still low, as shown by the Central Statistics Agency data of the percentage of the population based on the level of education. It showed that the majority of people who no longer attended the school was 65.99%, while the remaining 17% were elementary school education, 5.06% was in junior high school, 5.98% was senior high school, and 5.96% never attended school (BPS data of 2018, source from bps.go.id).

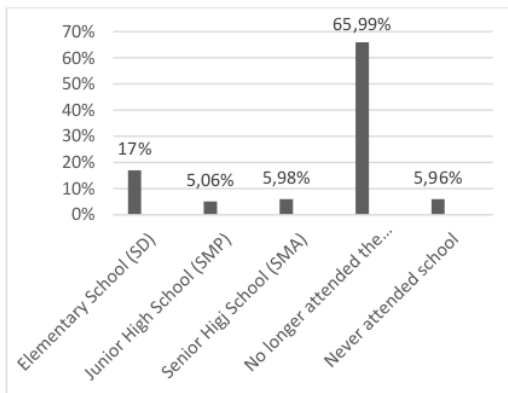


Figure 2. Community Education Level in Waisai

Therefore, it is required the role of the government by providing a democratic education in the community. Mollet (2011: 232), on his research in Papua, concluded that local government strategies failed to provide relevant development programs to local communities, which resulted in increased poverty, inadequate educational system development, and deteriorating health conditions of the population. Thus citizen participation is highly important to be discussed as a part of Papua development.

The community engagement for the development seems quite good, although there were still community members who preferred to fulfill the economic needs of the family as their priority. Some of them preferred to work. They went to the farming land or sea rather than to attend a Waisai community meeting. As Kusmanto (2014: 89) states that the efforts need to be made to enhance the role and quality of democracy, and the manifestation of democracy is not sufficiently measured by formal-symbolic conventional patterns, but it must also concretely lead to socio-economic-political welfare of the community.

Following this perspective, Kirakosyan (2019) asserts that the success of the democratic process is determined by many aspects. The democratization is not simply a top-down process, and although the international efforts, particularly from the perspective of peace, stability, and institutional design, are decisive, the success of transition depends equally on domestic elites, and the values and principles the society adheres to.

Based on the data and facts as mentioned above, the low citizen participation in Waisai urban-village development was caused by people who felt disappointed or dissatisfied with the performance services provided by the Regional head election supervisory committee. It is clear here that the performance of this election supervisory committee can have an impact on the community of Waisai Urban-Village in Waisai District to participate in the implementation of village development. This is in accordance with the statement of Handitya (2018: 631) about the emergence of apathy in politics because people consider many weaknesses in government performance.

Although the election has completed, yet it still has an impact on the changes in attitudes and behavior of the community members, manifested in their mindset and behavioral patterns.

Referring to the Community Participation Model proposed by Arnstein, Waisai's participation in democratic life in his region can be categorized at a low level because the maximum is only reached the stage of information delivery. On the other hand the government is trying to get the community to consult (middle level participation) and become partners in democracy and decision making (top level participation), but this has not been done optimally due to several factors, including the level of community understanding and the level of education that has not been evenly distributed. Whereas in the Greenwood community participation model, the Waisai community is at the level of compliance, which is obedient to the government's recommendation to exercise democratic rights in the political process.

Furthermore, reviewing the dynamics of the Regional head election process in Raja Ampat Regency in 2015, there were many mutual incomprehensible acts between the Panwaslu and the Community, in which although the counseling and socialization program from authorized party through the delivery of information and simulation to the community, due to the low level of understanding, the people of Waisai still did not understand the detailed procedure.

In connection with this case, the Panwaslu, which was independent in carrying out its tasks as the driving force of the election, particularly in the Waisai urban-village of Raja Ampat Regency, was out of control. Based on these phenomena, this study showed that *Panwaslu's* performance was not optimal, which caused the dissatisfaction from the community. In fulfilling their tasks, the supervisors did not understand that the success or failure of the implementation of the election and the supervision in each regency or city, were closely related

to their performances as the electoral agency, and on how significant the participation of all parties concerned. In this case, some of the inhibiting factors in carrying out their supervisory tasks, including human resources, ineffective and inefficient of time management in planning and socialization activities by considering that Raja Ampat Regency has so many islands that are difficult and takes time to reach them.

In addition to the above phenomenon, the results of the study also showed that the Panwaslu of Waisai urban-village did not recognized its central tasks and functions, whereas, in such conditions, the election supervisory agency has a strategic position. The members of the agency believed that they solely have worked, so the matter of performance results was later considered. This institution must be treated as a responsible agency for all processes and results of the election so that the function of supervision would ultimately run effectively and efficiently.

Conclusion

In this section, we want to emphasize that community participation is very important in the development of democracy in a country. Besides that, community participation plays a role in improving the quality of government performance and decision making for citizens.

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that citizen participation in Papua, especially in Waisai of Raja Ampat Regency, is still classified as low-level participation. Referring to Arnstein's concept, the level of citizen participation can be classified in the level of manipulation and informing, while based on Kevin and Greenwood's theory, citizen participation is at the level of compliance and consultation.

In some circumstances, the Waisai people still have the willingness to participate in democracy. However, it needs to be supported by socialization from the government and electoral agencies. Also, providing understanding and democracy education is very important in increasing the participation of the people of Papua.

As a recommendation, to increase community participation in democracy, the government is not enough just to conduct socialization and invitations so that people take part in the political and democratic process, but must prepare all aspects that can support such participation can be implemented, such as fixing public education, providing scholarships, training, and pay attention to infrastructure development.

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