

Public Animo in the 2020 Governor Election in the Covid-19 Pandemic Era: Religious and Cultural Approaches

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Abstract: This study aimed to examine how the public's animo in the gubernatorial election during the COVID-19 pandemic through religious and cultural approaches, in which the Central Kalimantan people still respected traditional and religious leaders as role models. This research used descriptive qualitative data collection through interviews with traditional and religious leaders and related documents obtained from election administrators. The findings showed that socialization was a reasonably good tool and strategy carried out by traditional leaders and religious leaders at specific events with a cultural (local tradition, Dayak language) and religious approaches (through speech in churches and other religious places of worship).

Keywords: *Public Animo, governor election, pandemic era, religious and cultural approach.*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana animo publik dalam pemilihan gubernur di masa pandemi COVID-19 melalui pendekatan agama dan budaya, di mana masyarakat Kalimantan Tengah tetap menghormati tokoh adat dan agama sebagai panutan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pengumpulan data kualitatif deskriptif melalui wawancara dengan tokoh adat dan agama serta dokumen terkait yang diperoleh dari penyelenggara pemilu. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa sosialisasi merupakan alat dan strategi yang cukup baik yang dilakukan oleh para tokoh adat dan tokoh agama pada acara-acara tertentu dengan pendekatan budaya (tradisi lokal, bahasa Dayak) dan keagamaan (melalui pidato di gereja dan tempat ibadah keagamaan lainnya).

Kata kunci: *Animo masyarakat, Pemilihan gubernur, Era pandemi, Pendekatan Agama dan Budaya*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian President declared COVID-19 a national disaster (Samudro, Eko G., and M. Adnan Madjid, 2020). This also had an impact on political aspects, such as the postponement of regional head elections in 270 provinces, cities, and districts in Indonesia (Kurnia and Utami 2021), as well as being affected globally in 20 countries (Nurhayati, Titik, and Syah Aji Halal, R, 2020). Central Kalimantan will carry out regional head elections. Of course, it is still considered to be a health protocol. The global election for regional heads in 2020 needs to be considered in the election mechanism and cycle by minimizing the impact of the increasing COVID-19 and considering the potential problems found during the election (Landman & Splendore, 2020).

So far, studies on elections or regional head elections can be seen in several aspects. First, there is political tension (Picherit, 2020). Second, the election should be transparent; both mechanisms and stages should be performed suitably with laws and rules that minimize conflict (Landman & Splendore, 2020). Talking about general election studies, one of which can be seen in the process where several studies talk about democratic competence and democratic values (Müller-Rommel & Geißel, 2020) as well as political participation in this matter (young people) (Valkering, Nemčok, Matu, & Spáč, 2018) who participate in general elections. From several factors related to general elections in several countries, it is also mentioned that ethnic, regional, and religious sentiments are still the main factors for voters in choosing leaders in general elections (Babalola, 2020a). There is a new paradigm in several European countries: the religious dimension becomes the public domain and affects the balance of power and politics (Helander, 2017). In addition to the influence of religion, self-identity or ethnicity is also considered (Colclough, 2000).

Election organizers also have democracy volunteers, with several segments, including youth, categorized as first-time voters. Beginners voters are critical during elections. They do not yet have a decisions on political choices and are easily influenced by other people regarding their political choices. In addition, first-time voters have a high enthusiasm, so they are quickly mobilized (Berenschot, Capri, & Dhian, 2021). As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a space limitation for first-time voters, so the environment becomes the most dominant factor in providing information (Firmansyah, Kariyani, 2021).

It is already known that an election success can be seen when the voter participation turnout increases. The current regional elections have differed since the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. It becomes a big question for everyone, considering that several regulations must be implemented in elections, such as social distancing and physical distancing, and must meet health protocols. Considering that, it is still in the condition of the COVID-19 pandemic era. All processes and stages needed to be considered in detail, starting from the governance rules, election organizers, and candidates must prioritize the determined health protocols (Diastama Anggita, Ramadhan, 2021).

The elections in Indonesia are still being carried out for several reasons. In this case, the KPU is carrying out the work by the mandate of the applicable regulations, then coordinating with the task force for handling COVID-19. There is also the constitutional right to vote and be elected. Finally, the budget is available and managed (Saleh, 2022). It is hoped that after the election ends, there will be new strategic policies such as regulation in the party system, prioritizing minority rights, economy, and federalism (Kar et al., 2020).

This study complements the shortcomings of several existing studies on public interest in the governor election, which took place on September 9th 2020, was predicted not to entirely run optimally (Kennedy, Richard, and Bonaventura Pradana Suhendarto, 2020), considering the problems are so complex, including updating regulations and several additional policies/regulations related to Covid-19 pandemic era and several rules that must be applied, especially in health aspects, such as the availability of hand sanitizers, masks, disinfectants, keeping a safe distance both in the form of crowds and physically touch.

The holding of the general elections was not optimally participated in by all members of society. This can be seen in elderly voters who are worried they will be vulnerable to Covid-19 exposure. This needs to be thoroughly identified regarding how the government's readiness, to carry out the gubernatorial election runs well as expected. The implementation of the general election is not only from the organizers but also the role of various domains, such as the influence of religious leaders and customary/cultural leaders. This needs to be studied, and how the community's participation in the gubernatorial election was seen through a religious and cultural approach during the pandemic several years ago needs to be re-examined.

Religious and cultural approach

The religious and cultural approach is vital, as seen from various aspects. For example, in education, it is necessary to incorporate religious and cultural values, especially the local culture of Central Kalimantan, namely Huma Betang (Raihani, 2014). When religious and cultural motives intersect with strategic matters, a spiritual and artistic approach is very strategic (Babalola, 2020b). The role of religion as a counterweight in the political arena, where there are politicians with various strategies to achieve their respective goals. It is necessary to have a role of religion as a counterweight in applying policies (Helander, 2017). Identity politics at the time of regional elections became common since family/kinship, ethnicity, and religion were used to gain sympathy from people (Colclough, 2000) Dhani, 2019).

A digital religion approach can also be carried out in the COVID-19 pandemic era, It integrates a spatial material approach to studying digital religion and can add information from public space. This digital religion describes the process of religious mediation between online and offline environments by considering materiality and space (Evolvi, 2022). Many people use digital space in the current era, so there is a need for cultural revitalization in the surrounding environment. People have strong beliefs and preserve customs and culture in their daily lives amid the social and political changes brought about by the modernization process (Ku, Wang, & Choi, 2022). The existence of dialogue between young people and cultural figures in a traditional event with a discussion can be one of the steps for cultural preservation (Jun & Li, 2022).

Public Animo

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and people participating in politics how that the consumption of political information and detected participation remains irrelevant. In addition, the public's interest in general elections depends on the consumption of political information received (local or national news, online or offline). This time, the pandemic seems to have slightly affected the relationship between the consumption of political information and the selection of participants (Neihouser, Sandri, Von Nostitz, & Haute, 2022). To attract the public to the election, other than through online media, it can be done using the suggested method by the KPU.

Conventional campaign methods have an excellent opportunity to increase the spread of COVID-19. Other methods that can be used are limited indoor meetings attended by a maximum of 20 people one meter apart, online meetings, or dialogues. In addition, it is hoped that the distribution of general materials will not cause crowds (Bahriyah and Afif, 2021). Of course, it is crucial to ensure that people are not infected with the COVID-19 virus and add positive cases of COVID-19. Each electoral district may have different precautions depending on cultural awareness and local people (Kim, Ahn, Atkinson, & Kahlor, 2020).

Governor election in the pandemic era

The governor election continues to be held during the massive Covid-19 pandemic. Of course, the government can apply new and locally relevant strategic management prevention to overcome this growing disaster (Kassa & Grace, 2020). Efforts were made for the Governor's election at the time of Covid-19 so that it could run smoothly. There was supervision of health protocols, upholding integrity in organizing the election. Both

participants and executors also committed to the importance of people's discipline (Ristryawati, 2020).

Political factors sometimes do not correlate with pandemic wave policies. The existence of political conflicts during elections during the pandemic in 2020 can create divisions amidst the epidemic that is still spreading. Seeing the lockdown system implemented in European countries coincides with political contestation, and it can be concluded that the pandemic is not one of the reasons for the failure to harmonize systematic politics, political institutions, and political culture, which regularly shape policy decisions (Plümper & Neumayer, 2022). One of the general elections held in the Czech Republic showed that voting did not affect the increase in COVID-19 cases. This can be a reference in general elections, which still carry out elections with a lower population than in other democratic countries, so that it is a democratic country with many citizens who do other alternatives, namely voting through postal and online methods. Election delays caused by COVID-19 can disrupt the electoral accountability of previously elected politicians (Palguta, Levínský, & Škoda, 2021).

Indonesia has a policy different from that of European countries in overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic. During the massive Covid-19 pandemic, the existence of elections can undoubtedly raise questions among the public. General election contestation during a pandemic gave rise to perceptions of a power struggle between the economic and systemic political programmatic crises. The selection of governors during a pandemic certainly has different aspects from previous elections. Provisions regarding regional head election regulations, election supervision in regions during the COVID-19 pandemic, codes of ethics, and using the election monitoring system (SIWASLU) must be clearly understood by supervisory officers (Muharram 2021). During the election process, a system design can be implemented to measure election waiting time, voter residence time, queue length at polling locations, time spent voting in the voting booth, and the number of voters in the voting booth. This is done to keep the election atmosphere conducive and ensure there are no crowds when the election occurs (Schmidt & Albert, 2022).

2. METHOD

The qualitative method was used to carry out this investigation. Creswell (2012) asserts that the qualitative technique can be used to investigate and comprehend the significance that certain people or groups assign to social human problems. A strategy used in qualitative research is to look at things in their natural settings. It aims to pinpoint the causes and explanations rather than just summarizing the research technique and overall conclusions. To make meaning of unstructured data, this research depends on people's behaviors, attitudes, value systems, concerns, objectives, goals, culture, and way of life. The research process entails developing study questions and methods, gathering data from participants in their environment, inductively analyzing the data, building from specifics to general themes, and interpreting the significance of the findings. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative approaches are divided into five types: phenomenological research, grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and narrative research. This study applied descriptive analysis research.

The objects of this study were religious leaders and humanists, mediated by representatives of democracy volunteers in the religious segment as partners of the KPU (general election commission), both in cities/districts in Central Kalimantan province. Qualitative descriptive research to see or conduct dialogue directly with a team of democracy volunteers in the religious segment or several interfaith communities to determine how the arguments and attitudes towards the socialization activities are carried out and participating in the democratic parties. This research was conducted with several

data sources, namely several members of the democracy volunteer team in the religious segment who are in the city area and several districts as representatives of democracy volunteers.

As for the religious volunteers, there are five people consisting of several religious people from Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, and Hindu Kaharingan; as supporting data, it is also necessary to have four informants from election organizers (KPU). In addition to several informants from democracy volunteers in the religious segment, several interfaith religious leaders and society leaders with congregations/adherents in their area participated in socializing the 2020 governor election in Central Kalimantan province. Several techniques were needed to collect data in the field. First, conducting interviews was the main thing in the process of extracting data in the field because the investigation wanted to see how the responses or arguments from democracy volunteers in the religious segment carry out Governor Election socialization to interfaith communities through the interfaith leaders or traditional leaders in the local society. Second, by observing field data.

The observation was essential in observing, feeling, and acting or responding well from the democracy volunteer team in the religious segment, the interfaith people as voters, and interfaith leaders as socialization agents with charisma for their adherents. Third, documentation needed to be used as essential material to directly see the data in the form of documents and photos of the activities of interfaith leaders in socializing the procedures and processes in the election of governors.

This research also obtained document data from district/city and provincial KPUs to look at the data on public participation in the 2020 governor election. The thematic analysis (Heriyanto, 2018) has several steps for the data analysis. The first is to understand open access from journals, articles, online news, e-books, or the like related to regional head election themes and others. Then, an institutional repository will be created to select the results of writings from several universities related to the theme. The third step is publication and dissemination, where this study attempts to publish the results of writing to several scientific activities such as online/offline seminars and lectures with students. The last is information retrieval, which is the final step in researching, finding, and evaluating open-access sources related to regional head elections and others. The data processing process carried out can be seen in Figure 1, which shows the steps taken.

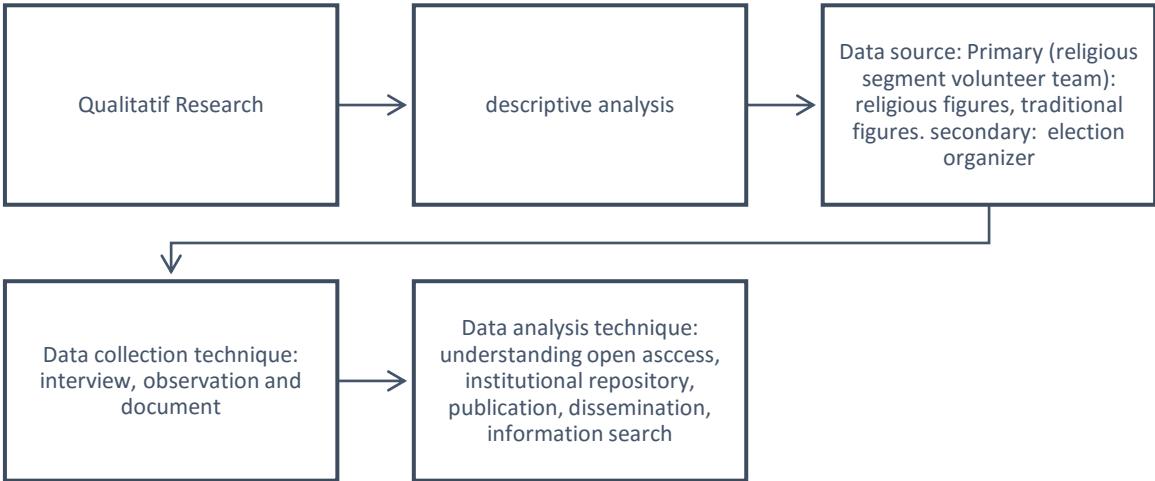


Figure 1 Steps in the field data mining process

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study focuses on the three main research questions.

2.1. *Public Animo in the Governor election in the Covid-19 Pandemic Era Through Socialization in religious approach*

The socialization carried out by democracy volunteers in the religion segment can also be seen in the content of the lectures delivered by various religions, including Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, and Hindu Kaharingan. The next thing was about how to choose a candidate for a leader. It was also no less attractive to talk about maintaining health protocols, considering that the 2020 gubernatorial election is still during the COVID-19 pandemic era. The clergy also reminded them not to commit crimes during the democratic party. Dissent usually happens during elections, but it does not spread hatred, bullying, or insult to one another. The assistance performed by religious leaders resulted from the increasing number of public animo to actively participate in the general election as a stage of the party. This is in accordance with the results of an interview from one of the voters (FL) stating that "with the role of religious leaders to provide motivation for their citizens to participate in voting at a predetermined time (interview, FL, 2020).

The same thing was conveyed by another voter "NH" explaining that the role of religious and customary leaders makes an important contribution in terms of providing the importance of participating in the democratic party, especially the people of Central Kalimantan are very obedient to both religious leaders and their figures (Interview, RS, 2020). The people's involvement in the election was seen from the continuation of the religious content of speech and social-political content, which included religious texts or sources from each religion. The statement is in accordance with the results of interviews with several religious leaders "My, Prd, FM, DD", stating that every delivery of religious messages is always associated with the necessity of participating in one of the government programs such as the simultaneous election of regional heads (Interview, My, Prd, FM, DD, 2020).

2.2. *Cultural Approach as a Form of Successful Society's Involvement*

Public animo in the election for Governor in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic was supported by massive movements carried out by both PPK, PPS and democracy volunteers, which was first proven by a decision letter (SK) from the district/city KPU in Central Kalimantan province by making an effort to share information online and face-to-face with religious leaders, youth, organizations, public figures in society so that they urge, invite and assist all elements of culture (Muntiar, 2021).

It was proven that the role of traditional leaders was proactive by using a cultural approach to determine future leaders (Harmain Harmain, 2021). The cultural approach was carried out strategically as the results of an interview with one of the traditional leaders stated that: "the society members (our people) are very enthusiastic in flocking to the TPS to choose a candidate leader according to their hopes and wishes, this is influenced by exposure or invitation from traditional leaders because they are considered role models (public figures), especially among their citizens (*Uluh Itah*), (Parada, 2021).

2.3. *Public Animo as One of the Strategies to Increase Voter Participation in the Central Kalimantan Governor Election*

Based on data in 2020, it was found that 61.95% of people were involved, where women were 48.65% while men were 51.35% while in 2016, it was around 52.30% (H Harmain, 2021), this data showed that the level the success of public participation in 2020 was better than in 2016. The high level of participation in the gubernatorial election showed that people

followed and understood political issues and wanted to be involved in democratic parties. Of course, this cannot be separated from the KPU's efforts to increase social participation by conducting outreach through direct and indirect media, print and electronic media (Herlinda, 2021).

The result of the political contestation in the governorship election in Central Kalimantan in 2020 was won by the governor candidate paired with serial number two (2), obtaining 51.60% of the votes, and the Governor and deputy governor candidate pairs number one (1) with 48, 40% votes. The results showed that the use of socialization from a religious and cultural perspective can convey information and easily understood by public to participate politically in elections. The success of this election was seen from the large number of people involved because political information influenced people's interest in participating in democratic parties (Neihouser et al., 2022).

People Animo through a Religious approach

The widespread fake news during the COVID-19 pandemic increased, coupled with the existence of political democratic parties. Of course, choosing the information circulating in the media is tricky. False news targeted people with low education, young men and women, so in political contestation, socialization was needed not only from electronic media (Balakrishnan, Ng, Soo, Han, & Lee, 2022). Related to this, to reduce misinformation, one way that can be done to disseminate information to the public is socialization from the religious segment. In Indonesia, religion and politics are still difficult to separate. Religion is used as a political lens to determine their choice and govern candidates. Religion is used as an issue in the democratic public sphere to gain votes for voters. The sense of brotherhood among Muslims or Ukhuwah Islamiyah is the next part, which shows the relationship between religion and politics in Indonesia (Manese & Nurhamidin, 2021).

During the pandemic, people's anxiety can be overcome through enlightenment from religious leaders or society leaders through online and offline media (Siuda-Ambroziak & Bahia, 2020). So, in socializing with this religious approach, it is easier to convey information that is supported by the support of religious leaders. People with religious beliefs have a strong sense of brotherhood towards others, so it is not uncommon for people to choose a candidate for a leader from their religious background. During the governor election during the COVID-19 pandemic, to attract people to vote without experiencing excessive worries, it is necessary to socialize with a religious approach that is easy to understand. One of the general elections held in Brazil during the election for the mayor of Rio de Janeiro used a Christian religious approach. The religious approach is the most demanded in Brazilian politics. Popular rules are like "brothers choose brothers," which means the discipline of supporting representatives and allies in election campaigns (Chilanga, Dzimbiri, Mwanjawala, Keller, & Mbeya, 2022).

The use of religion in a political approach certainly has its pros and cons. There are moral reasons why religion is used as one of the bases for communicating information to certain religious groups. The religion can be an approach that can be taken amidst people's fears and concerns regarding the pandemic (Coetsee, 2022). It turns out that the pandemic has made people more concerned and obedient to follow government regulations. With the relevant government policy to prioritize health protocols, voters can still exercise their voting rights (Perdana, 2021). The pros and cons of the religious approach during political contestation are inseparable from the image of religion itself in the eyes of the wider society. One of the approaches in the Islamic religion itself highlights two different trends in the Muslim approach: exclusivity and inclusivity. Both of these trends have focused on outward obedience (exclusive) and prioritizing good morals (inclusivism) (Shah, 2022).

A Cultural Approach as One of the Forms of Success in the Governor election during the Covid-19 pandemic Era.

In addition, with a cultural approach, the delivery is not in a formal language, and there are no restrictions on movement, so messages from election information can be conveyed (Morgan, 2022). Socialization through the media could not raise public awareness of the importance of using their right to vote during elections. Therefore, using culture as a communication medium for discussions during the gubernatorial election can help the public understand each pair of prospective leaders and determine which votes apply health protocols during a pandemic (Habibi, 2020). Socialization using a cultural approach can also be one of the identities of a region or country.

This approach can bring out the specificity of politics. The amount of socialization with online media allows for the combination of political values from other regions. The existence of a cultural approach to society makes it easier for prospective leaders to explain based on local cultural values (Lu & Yan, 2022). In addition, culture regulates political spirit, political values, political thoughts, certain periods, specific social communities, and the arrangement and operation of public power to help people understand politics (Yuan, 2022). One of them, in the gubernatorial election in Central Kalimantan, the Dayak people strongly believe in culture and adhere to the "*Huma Betang*" philosophy, making it a reference or order in people's daily lives (Apandie & Ar, 2019). The "*Huma Betang*" philosophy indicates that there is acceptance of the local community to the immigrant community while always maintaining local rules and norms (Pelu & Tarantang, 2018). When they are part of them, it is often called "*Uluh Itah*", then the attitude of tolerance, respect for differences and cooperation becomes the main capital in community life.

A cultural approach can also be carried out in artistic activities such as festivals, traditional events, or traditional ceremonies (Coetsee, 2022). The indigenous Dayak People have cultural activities such as *Batiwah*, *Memapas Lewu*, which can be used to reach prospective leaders in the 2020 gubernatorial election. At this traditional ceremony, people gather both conventional leaders, the local society, and young people so they have space to discuss and dialogue about elections and invite the wider society to participate in the election of governors (Safira n.d.). Another local wisdom possessed by the Central Kalimantan Dayak People is "*Karungut Sansana Dayak*," which has a role in society, especially in communication that uses symbolic language, which is quite effective.

In this culture, it can convey messages in terms of language that people can understand (Adi Syaputra & Sihombing, 2020). Based on the observations, through traditional ceremonies it is very effective to carry out socialization and direct interaction starting from traditional leaders, community leaders, village elders, government, religious and community. Local language is also one of the right strategies in providing suggestions to the community (Observation, MN, 2020).

Cultures in several countries still have policies for determining the habitual patterns of people's daily lives. One of them is the existence of a pandemic. In several countries, local culture is one of the means that has an essential role in determining the spike in cases of the COVID-19 pandemic in society. The magnitude of the role of cultural figures in influencing local communities can undoubtedly be one of the platforms that can be used to invite people to participate in general elections. In addition, this cultural approach can undoubtedly reduce the occurrence of fake news or information (Curtis et al., 2022). The country's success in handling COVID-19 can increase public trust in the government. Increased public trust in government policies can be one of the assessments of public interest in government politics (Lim & Prakash, 2021).

Based on the results of this analysis, it can be seen that the function of religion in society is very influential; as said by one of the classical sociologists, Durkheim, religion, when viewed in terms of its function, can bridge the tensions that occur in the hope of creating social order (Mahyudi, 2023). In this case, solidarity is the primary goal in the political realm. Of course, religion plays a crucial role (Malešević, 2021).

The approach of religion and culture to create a new culture (Burchardt & Yasemin Ural, 2024) can be seen in the role of religious and cultural leaders in the local community in Central Kalimantan, even though it was colored by the pandemic, hitting globally did not affect the enthusiasm of the community to attend and listen to the socialization given by the leader. This indication can be seen that religious messages and local traditional events have more points, and it can be seen that the voter participation rate increased even during the pandemic, with an average of 61.59% when compared to the voter participation rate in 2016 around 52.30%. Many factors contributed to the campaign's success, including the role of democracy volunteers in the religious segment. In accordance with Berger, one of the socialization agents that can be given to the community is religion, mass media and peers (Johnson, 1986).

The religious and cultural approach plays a very important role in providing assistance to the community, the importance of being an active voter in the 2020 gubernatorial election, even though it is still in a pandemic condition, there is no fear of the community because of the trust and obedience to their leaders, in this case religious leaders and traditional leaders have full authority over the local community. The politicization of culture and economics is a combination that can affect a person's way of thinking, can cause division or unity (Bornschiefer, Häusermann, Zollinger, & Colombo, 2021).

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through a religious approach, one of the factors in the success of the governor election during the pandemic in 2020 is that the people animo of Central Kalimantan can play an active role as voters in the governor election. One of the factors is the existence of socialization and the role of religious leaders, where society highly respects the profession. The Indonesian people's general characteristics are that trust in religious leaders or society leaders is still very strong. Other supporting factors are the contents/religious messages affecting the perspective of the society. The cultural approach also played a part in the success of the 2020 gubernatorial election. Seeing the characteristics of local people, the role of traditional leaders/cultural figures in socializing the governor election is perfect through the local language, traditional ceremonies, and the like. These customary activities can become a forum for discussion and interaction between communities regarding elections. Using a religious and cultural approach is an exceptionally strategic medium for information distribution and inviting people.

Considering the pandemic era, extra preparation is needed from the election organizers. Furthermore, readiness to use media or digital access in the election era requires sufficient attention. Referring to the results of the vote acquisition, the study reveals that there has been an increasing number of voter involvement. This shows that the ongoing pandemic has not hindered the change of regional leaders. The spiritual and cultural approach is a strategic step in introducing potential leaders to society, considering that the Central Kalimantan people still strongly believe in traditional leaders.

The charismatic power of religious leaders and traditional leaders plays a very important role and influence on the mindset and actions of the people in Central Kalimantan, even though the outbreak of the pandemic has occurred in the past few years. The community members are still enthusiastic about participating in religious activities and traditional ceremonies. The pandemic has given birth to an attitude of caring, empathy, sharing, living together, and continuing to follow the health protocols.

Conflict of Interest Statement

There is no conflict of interest.

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