

Voting Behavior of Batam Students in the Legislative Elections

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the voting behavior of Batam Students in the legislative elections based on voting behavior models and types. The study used qualitative research with a focus group discussion technique. The result showed that students at University are few interested in political practices and issues. The voting behavior of students is categorized as rational, critical, traditional, and pragmatism. The study found that students voted the candidate who gave them money without considering the track record, achievement, and background of the candidate

Keywords: Voting Behavior, Legislative Election, Batam, Candidate

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the general election is to uphold the principles of a democratic state namely popular sovereignty. People's involvement in a democratic country is necessary to maintain the stability of the general election (Pito, Efriza, and Fasyah 2019). In a democratic country, the decreasing level of people's participation in every election is a serious problem for the consolidation of democracy and its future. Since the end of the authoritarian system, Indonesia has amended its constitution on democratic based principles. It successfully conducted the first open general election in 2004 which people knew whom they vote for without any pressure. This study focuses on the analysis of the voting behavior of students at the university in the legislative election.

Batam is a city in Indonesia that is so plural in terms of ethnicity, religion, race, and groups. Being a pluralistic community and an industrial hub of Indonesia dominated by the productive age generation is pushing scholars to analyze the voting behaviors of this productive age generation in legislative elections using voting behavior approaches.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Voting Behavior

Voting behavior in elections is a form of political behavior. Samuel P Huntington (1990:16) argues that voting behavior and political participation are two things that cannot be separated. Political participation can take many forms. One form of political participation is activities of election such as votes, donations, seeking support for a candidate, and every activity aimed to influence the result of elections. According to Mahendra (2005:75), voting behavior is an act of someone voting for a candidate, political party, and certain public issues. On the other hand, Ramlan Surbakti (Efriza 2012:480) argues voting behavior is Individual voting activity that is highly related to the decision-making to vote or not to vote in the election. According to Ramlan Surbakti (2010:46) voting behavior includes approaches namely:

1. Sociological Approach

This theory of voting behavior focuses on the individual and the social structure surrounding the individual. Thus, it places votes in the social context and then studies the effects of variables such as social class, religion, nationalism,

language, and rural-urban divisions (Scott & Marshall, 2009; Hutchings & Jefferson, 2018; Antwi, 2018). According to this theory, individuals learn their partisan predilections corresponding to the political orientations of the group to which they belong. (Aiba, 2003). This approach basically explains that social characteristics and social groupings have

a significant influence in determining behavior choice. Therefore, understanding social grouping such as one's membership in a religious organization, professional organization, and informal groups such as family, friends, and other small groups is vital to understand political behavior as these groups have a major role in shaping a person's perception and attitude to make a choice in the election.

2. Psychological approach

The psychosocial model focuses on political factors as determinants of voting behavior (Antunes, 2010) as it links voting decisions to the psychological predispositions of voters like their party identifications and attitudes towards the candidates (Scott & Marshall, 2009). The model identifies six psychological factors that may influence voters' decision-making process. These factors are (I) Party identification, (II)

Concerns with issues, (III) Personal attachment to candidates, (IV) Conformity to the group standards, (V) a sense of efficacy, and (VI) a sense of civic obligation to vote. Of these six factors, party identification, candidate orientation, and issue orientation are the most important ones (Aiba, 2003). Party identification means the psychological attachment of a person to a specific political party. Issue orientation means a voter's attitude toward issues highlighted during an election campaign while candidate orientation means voters' attitudes toward the personal qualities and performance of a particular candidate (Akhter & Sheikh, 2014).

The central theme of this model is partisanship or party identification. According to this model, partisanship is a durable association with a political party that does not necessarily mean formal registration as its member or constantly voting for it (Antunes, 2010). It argues that partisanship is the outcome of the pre-adult socialization of individuals under the influence of their parents. The scholars proposing this model argued that individuals develop partisanship under the parental influence just like their acquisition of religious beliefs. For substantiating this claim, they claimed

that the survey data showed that an overwhelming majority of their respondents were likely to identify themselves with parties with which their parents identified themselves (Hutchings & Jefferson, 2018).

3. Rational Approach

The third and last model of voting behaviour is the Rational-Choice Model which tries to explain individuals' voting behaviour in economic terms (Antunes, 2010). This model claims that individuals' voting behaviour is an outcome of cost-benefit analysis. The voters, it argues, before casting votes, critically evaluate issues highlighted and policies supported by various political parties and candidates (Scott & Marshall, 2009).

The most influential introducers of Rational Choice Theory in electoral studies were economists Anthony Downs, Duncan Black, and Kenneth Arrow. Anthony Downs' seminal book (*An Economic Theory of Democracy*) is considered the foundational work for engaging the Rational Choice Model for the study of voting behavior. In this book, Downs argues that voters would assess candidates and their electoral platforms and would vote for the party based on promises it made to deliver (Stegmaier,

Lewis-Beck & Park, 2017). Proponents of this model argue that voters adjust their affiliation with political parties during every election while keeping in view economic conditions and political parties' approach to them (Antunes, 2010). It further claims that voters cast votes for parties and candidates whose policy positions are closest to them (voters). Thus, voters keep in mind their interests while deciding to vote for a party or candidate and these interests may be personal or related to family, class, or group (Dowding, 2018).

The premise of this model is that if the functioning of the market can be explained with rational choice assumptions, then they can also be applied to the explanation of the political system. The theory establishes an analogy, between consumers and voters on the one hand, on the other hand, between enterprises and political parties. It argues that just like enterprises that want to maximize profits and consumers who desire to maximize their utility, political parties struggle to maximize electoral gains and voters seek to maximize their votes' utility (Antunes, 2010).

METHOD

The research used qualitative methods to gather information from the object. Qualitative research is used to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by the object of research by way of description in the form of words in a special context naturally (Lexy Moleong 2007:6). In the process of collecting data, this research uses a methodology that includes:

1. Focus Group Discussion

A focus group discussion involves gathering people from similar backgrounds or experiences together to discuss a specific topic. interest. It is a form of qualitative research where questions are. asked about their perceptions attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or ideas.

2. Literature study or Documentary study

Literature studies or documentary studies are carried out by reading reference or reference books, legislation, documents of government, and other materials related to the problem research so that what will be collected is secondary data in this research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The result shows that the students are not interested in politics,

and few of them understand why they must vote for the legislative. Despite being less interested in politics, they used their right to vote in the general election and local elections. The result shows that being less interested in politics does not mean that they do not have a preference in voting for the candidate in the legislative election. They have their own criteria which give an insight into the development of strategies to attract young voters in every election.

Based on the analysis of the result of focus group discussions using three voting behavior approaches, the students have a specific and interesting reason for voting for a candidate in legislative elections.

1. Sociological Approach

The family factor has influential on the decision-making of participant voting for a candidate in the legislative elections. Their parents the member of professional organizations or community organizations that support a candidate running for a member of the legislative. Their parents provoked their children to vote for the candidate that they support, and normally children follow what their parents do. Moreover, these students are normally beginner voters who are less

interested in politics and do not initiatively find out the reason they vote and trace the track record of the candidate to get information and description of the candidate. The results also found that friendship is one of the influential factors in the student making the decision of voting for a candidate. The story that they listen from their friends could be the references for them when voting for the candidate in the legislative elections.

2. Psychological approach

The result shows that some students have preferences for voting for a candidate based on his or her appearance, lifestyle, and the way candidates communicate with the public. These voters are more interested in the personality of the candidate rather than other issues. The result also found that there are students who vote in the legislative election as the civic obligation to vote in the election.

3. Rational Approach

The result shows that the student who made the decision to vote for the candidate based on programs, economic issues, and public issues are those who follow frequently the political party and the candidate on social media. They tend

to be rational in making decisions, they do not easily make decisions if they do not see the candidate programs, ideology, and issues that they deliver for problem-solving of their interest or society. They also are groups of voters who can easily move their preferences if the candidate does not represent their interest expectations.

In the context of voting behavior types, results show that participants are dominated by rational and traditional voters, and only a small number belong to critical voters. Based on the result of a focus group discussion conducted with 50 students from a different university in Batam, it is found that they belong to the rational and critical voter.

1. The Rational Voter

As a student at University and employees, they vote for a candidate who has done concrete actions to society's problems such as the worker's minimum wage, the availability of jobs, educational issues, and transportation. They focus on the work and problem-solving that the candidate delivers and undertakes in accordance with their interests. These voters do not look at ideology as a major voter in making decisions on voting for a candidate.

2. Traditional Voter

Based on the experience of a participant in voting legislative election, they vote for the candidate due to family factors influence particularly their parents. Besides, family factors, friendship is the most important of a student making decisions because of the story they listen from their friends related to the candidate. In addition, the factor of money is also the factor that students make the decision to vote for the candidate, they can get money from their parents and invite them to vote for the candidate. This always happens in every legislative election and students categorized themselves as pragmatism. They do not care about the ideology, religion, ethnicity, family, or any issue that the candidate delivers but they will vote if the candidate gave money to them.

3. Critical Voter

A small number of participants belong to the critical voter. Not like most of the participant who belongs to rational, these critical voters prefer the combination of political party ideology and the programs that candidates offer to society. This group of voters tends to send their critics to the policy or candidate's actions through social media

if they think the policy or action does not represent their interests. For these participants, the factor of religion, ethnicity, and organization do not influence their decision but the ideology the candidate belong to is more important for the voters.

CONCLUSION

The group of the young voter is essential in the legislative elections in Batam, as the number of productive generations is reaching 70% of the population. It is important to understand the voting behavior of this group if the candidate wants to win the election. In the heterogeny community, the young voter who is students, as well as employee, have their personal interest dan character while voting for the candidate. The results have shown that for beginners who are less interested in politics, family and friends are the influential factors in their decision-making. But those, who are rational voters, prefer ideology, track record, personality, and programs that candidates will concretize if they are elected.

However, the result found the pragmatism group which ignores all issues such as religion, ethnicity, economy, family, friendship,

organization, or community if they received money from the candidate. They will vote for the candidate who pays them regardless of their ideology and political party. The number of these student are small but also influential to the quality of democracy.

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