

## The Performance of Election Organizers in the Implementation of the 2020 Regional Elections During The COVID-19 Pandemic

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Received: June 8, 2021; Revised: October 26, 2021 Accepted: November 10, 2021

**Abstract:** *This study explains the performance of election organizers in implementing the 2020 regional election during the COVID-19 pandemic. This type of research is descriptive qualitative. This study's data comes from important scientific journal papers and reliable Indonesian mainstream media news sources like tempo.com, kompas.com, lokadata.id, Republika.co.id, tribunnews.com, and CNN Indonesia. The study's findings suggest that election organizers have no plans to postpone the simultaneous regional head elections scheduled for December 9, 2020, for the simple reason of ensuring the people's constitutional right to be elected and vote. It is impossible to predict when the COVID-19 pandemic will stop. The government does not want task executors to lead the areas. During the simultaneous regional elections on December 9, 2020, misinformation and coordination errors occurred between the government and the Election Supervisory Body, and the task force for the acceleration of handling COVID-19.*

**Keywords:** *performance; election organizer; regional head election; COVID-19 Pandemic.*

### Introduction

The regional election is a democratic party made up of Indonesians who live in a particular area which directly elect the Governor and Deputy Governor, Regent and Deputy Regent, and Mayor and Deputy mayor. In the 2020 regional election, elections were held in 270 provinces, regencies, and cities across Indonesia (Aida, 2020). However, the COVID-19 pandemic that hit Indonesia made the holding of the 2020 simultaneous elections different. The

COVID-19 Pandemic has been declared a national catastrophe by the Indonesian government. As a result, on September 23, 2020, there will be simultaneous regional head elections, which will not be held.

Several themes emerge from research on regional head elections in several nations. The Liberal Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) won a landslide victory in South Korea's 2018 provincial election, while the Conservative Liberty Party of Korea (LPK) suffered a crushing defeat. The Liberal Democratic Party of

Korea's victory can be attributed to the impeachment of the previous President, Park Geun-Hye, and the current Liberal Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) president, Moon Jae-In. Despite the extraordinary victory of the Liberal Democratic Party of Korea (DPK), the Conservative Liberty Party of Korea (LPK) managed to retain some of its electoral strongholds (Jung & Kang, 2020). Mayoral elections in Russia are held by elected mayors who are supported by powerful political machines. The findings also demonstrate how subnational elections can help maintain authoritarianism by assuring elite allegiance and putting the resources of powerful elites to work for the regime (Shubenkova & Garifullina, 2016). According to studies of Catalans, Independence became a crucial predictor of vote choice for those who participated in the 2015 regional election. Despite this, the polls did not deteriorate into a pure independence referendum, as voters also used their voice to hold the provincial government accountable for its previous performance (Lluis Orriols, 2016).

Then, several literature reviews were mapped by research worldwide that discussed the holding of general elections during the COVID-19 pandemic. The many risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic on the conduct of genuine and transparent elections worldwide. The variety and number of elections, the dimensions of the electoral cycle that can be disrupted, and the need for solutions all raise important questions about the future of democracy (Johnson, Pollock, & Rauhaus, 2020). The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the 2020 US presidential election. COVID-19 cases negatively affected Trump's vote

share. The estimated effect appears most vital in urban counties, in states without stay-at-home orders, in swing states, and in states that Trump won in 2016 (Baccini, Brodeur, & Weymouth, 2021). The extent to which the Coronavirus pandemic influenced Malawi's 2020 elections. Those fears about the virus and its economic impact did influence trust and confidence in the government to handle Covid but had little to no effect on either abstention or vote choice (Dulani et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has gendered implications for women's time and resources. The COVID-19 pandemic may impact women's electoral participation, support, and viability in meaningful ways. The main obstacle to women's representation is not personal political ambition or efforts but women's perceptions of their access to support for their candidacies. Obstacles to women's electoral viability may also be particularly consequential at a time of rapid change when election dates and procedures are being amended because of health concerns (Gatto & Thome, 2020). The effect of the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) on polling place consolidation and voting behavior. That polling place consolidation, even accompanied by widespread absentee voting in the face of an emergency, may result in disenfranchisement, particularly among Black voters (Morris & Miller, 2021).

Based on the findings of various prior studies that looked into the election of regional chiefs both overseas. His research focuses on the implementation results, both for candidates for election participants and for voters' backgrounds in making decisions and the system for

holding regional head elections. As a result, the peculiarity of this study is that it focuses on election organizers' performance in conducting regional head elections during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The problem is the research suggest that the 2020 simultaneous regional head elections have urgency to be held. Because if it is not implemented, positions and officials will be temporarily appointed in 270 regions. This makes policy decisions challenging in the future. The implementing officials of the Regional Heads will not be able to make strategic policy decisions. However, in the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia, academics, national figures, election observers, and community organizations urge that local elections be postponed. The holding of the regional head election is expected to give rise to a new COVID-19 distribution cluster. The 2020 regional election risks attracting crowds, which could violate health protocols and trigger the spread of COVID-19 in new groups (Rahayu, 2020). Therefore, the performance of election organizers is in the spotlight. Because on the one hand, the local elections must be carried out smoothly, on the other hand, the implementation will lead to a new cluster of COVID-19.

Based on the explanation of previous research, the novelty in this research is to focus on the performance of election organizers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, This study explains the performance of election organizers in implementing the 2020 regional head election during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Methods**

This study uses a qualitative approach using descriptive analysis techniques. Qualitative research is a sort of study that yields results that are impossible to acquire (get) using statistical procedures or other quantification (measuring) techniques (Rahmat, 2019). This research uses a case study approach. Creswell in (Sugiyono, 2014) suggesting that a case study is a type of approach that aims to understand and understand an event or problem by collecting various kinds of relevant information, which is then processed and analyzed to obtain solutions or answers to events that occur. The case study of this research is the general election commission in the context of performance in the 2020 simultaneous regional head elections during the COVID-19 pandemic. The source of data in this research comes from a literature study. Library research is a data collection technique by reviewing books, literature, notes, and various reports related to the problem (Sari, 2020).

This study was acquired from reputable Indonesian mainstream media news sources such as tempo.com, kompas.com, lokadata.id, Republika.co.id, tribunnews.com, and CNN Indonesia, as well as relevant scientific journal articles. The information gathered applies to numerous facts about delaying the simultaneous regional head election on September 23, 2020, and various details about the desire to postpone the simultaneous regional head election on December 9, 2020. The holding of the simultaneous regional head election on December 9, 2020. The time of data collection is in the year 2020. Because in

that year, the election organizers began to work to hold simultaneous regional head elections during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Result and Discussion**

Performance indicators will be calculated and measured and used to assess or see the level of performance, both in the planning, implementation and after activities are completed. Performance indicators are used to ensure that the organization/work unit's account shows an increase in capability to achieve the goals and objectives that have been set. In general, performance indicators can clarify what, how much, and when activities are carried out—creating a consensus built by various related parties to avoid misinterpretation during the implementation of policies/programs/activities and assess their performance. They are making the basis for measuring, analyzing, and evaluating the organization/work unit (Sedarmayanti, 2010).

Because this study wants to explain the performance of the general election commission, which has to work with various problems such as the pressure to cancel the election and the threat of a new cluster of COVID-19, so this study uses the theory of performance assessment from T.R Mitchell which has several indicators, namely quality of work and promptness, initiative, capability and communication. Using the theory in this research, the available indicators can accommodate in-depth explanations and analyses related to the research topic. Quality of Work, namely the quality produced, is related to whether or not the work results have been achieved. Promptness is related to

completing work with the planned target and the efficient use of time. The initiative, which is a form of decision-making that employees own in completing work. Capability is employees' ability, namely skills, mental attitudes, and physical elements possessed by employees in completing their work. The fluency of interacting vertically and horizontally in an organization is defined as communication (Ulul Amri Tahir, Hasanuddin Mustari, 2019).

### **Quality of Work and Promptness**

Law 32 of 2004 on Regional Government-mandated regional head elections for the first time in 2005. Previously, under Law Number 22, Regional Government, issued in 1999, the provincial head was elected by the Regional People's Representative Assembly (Respationo, 2013). Article 18 (4) of the 1945 Constitution establishes the legal framework for organizing regional head elections. "Governors, Regents, and Mayors, respectively heads of Provincial, Regency, and City Government are democratically elected," according to the Constitution of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. The paradigm of organizing regional head elections is accepted in this text, either directly or indirectly, and considers the two systems equivalent under Pancasila's fourth principle (Widodo, 2015).

The performance was carried out separately at the start of the implementation of direct regional head elections in Indonesia, based on the completion of the regional head office in a given area. Then, as time went on, regional head elections were held concurrently

with elections in other regions. The critical reasons for this are the administration's fiscal efficiency and the stability of regional politics. Elections of regional heads held simultaneously can save money and keep the community from becoming bored with a never-ending political agenda (Kristiyanto, 2017). The first wave of regional head elections took place in December 2015, covering the 2015 term and the first semester of 2016. The second wave will occur in February 2017, during the second semester of 2016 and the first semester of 2017. The third wave will occur in June 2018 for the current fiscal year's conclusion, and the fourth wave will occur in September 2020 for the current fiscal year's end. In 2027, simultaneous regional head elections will be held across the country (Nazriyah, 2015).

Several Indonesian provinces, regencies, and cities will have regional head elections in 2020. The General Election Commission (KPU) published a strategy for the stages leading up to the Regional Head Election 2020 a year before the election, in 2019. In nine provinces, governor elections will be held. In addition, 224 districts will hold district head elections, and 37 cities in 32 regions will have mayoral elections (Bunga, 2019).

However, regional head elections were halted due to COVID-19, which hit Indonesia in early March 2020. The timing for holding regional head elections has changed as a result of COVID-19. The Indonesian government, The House of Representatives, the General Election Commission, and the General Election Commission have all decided to hold regional head elections in 2020. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, simultaneous

voting will occur on December 9, 2020, rather than September 23, 2020, as planned. President Joko Widodo signed Government Regulation No. 2 of 2020. Governing Governors, Regents, and Mayors will be elected instead of Law No. 2 of 2020. According to a government decree, the 2020 simultaneous regional elections have been postponed until December 9, 2020, rather than the law approved on May 4, 2020. Instead of Law No. 2 of 2020, If riots, security disturbances, natural disasters, non-natural disasters, or other disturbances occur in the part of the electoral area or the entire electoral area, and part of the election stages are unable to be implemented, the election stages are carried out after the General Election Commission Decree stipulates postponement. The regulation further states that if a non-natural calamity prevents the simultaneous vote from taking place, the vote will be postponed and rescheduled as soon as the emergency is over (Fra, 2020). As a result, if COVID-19 in Indonesia is not completed by 2020, the regional head elections may be postponed and rescheduled.

The General Election Commission also released a decision letter postponing the regional head elections in 2020 after the President approved a Government Regulation rather than a Law. On March 21, 2020, KPU Chairman Arief Budiman signed letter number 179 / PL.02Kpt / 01 / KPU / 111 / 2020, which contained this decision. Following the creation of Covid-19, which the Indonesian government had declared a national tragedy, this decision was made. At least four stages of regional head elections have been postponed, according to the General Election

Commission (KPU) order document. First, the voting committee's inauguration and working term (PPS). Second, individual regional head candidates' support criteria must be verified. The third stage is establishing voter data update officers, then updating and preparing voter lists (Farisa, 2020).

When the General Election Commission (KPU) postpones the regional head elections stage, there will probably be modifications in other areas impacted by the postponement, such as campaigning, voting, and counting (Rajab, 2020). The administration, the General Election Commission, and the People's Representative Council have agreed to postpone regional head elections until December 9, 2020, based on the government, the General Election Commission, and the People's

Representative Council's agreement. The primary problem is Covid-19, which has hit Indonesia, causing halted voting for regional head elections.

**Capability and Communication**

The regional head election stages were postponed from mid-March to June 2020 due to the coronavirus outbreak. On June 15, 2020, the process of regional head elections will be completed. On December 9, regional head elections will take place at the same time. However, many parties have called for the regional head elections to be postponed, citing the ongoing Covid-19 outbreak in Indonesia. Various groups applied pressure, including electoral activists, national politicians, and community organizations, with some of these parties noted in table 1.

**Table 1. Several parties are pushing for the regional elections in 2020 to be postponed at the same time.**

<b>Individual/ institution</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Nahdatul Ulama (NU)	Even though the COVID-19 health protocol is tightly maintained, a regional head election might draw a large audience.
Muhammadiyah	Implementing regional head elections, which might become a COVID-19 transmission cluster, is considerably more vital than public safety.
Association for Elections and Democracy (Perludem)	The decision to postpone regional elections is based on the COVID-19 pandemic's uncontrollable conditions and the growing number of daily Covid-19 positive confirmation cases. Meanwhile, the number of health protocol violations by political actors and the public is also high.
Jusuf Kalla	There is no urgent necessity to organize simultaneous regional elections in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, there is a chance that a new COVID-19 transmission cluster will emerge as a result of simultaneous regional elections.

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Epidemiology Griffith University Dicky Budiman	The 2020 regional head elections could become a ticking time bomb due to numerous health procedure violations during registration and rules that still have gaps in crowd activities.
Epidemiology Universitas Airlangga (Unair) Windhu.	It's not easy to ensure that people who attend regional head elections follow health rules like wearing masks and keeping their distance.

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**Source: processed by the author (2021)**

Table 1 shows which parties are lobbying for the 2020 regional elections to be postponed. Said Aqil Siradj, the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) general chairman, proposed delaying the regional head elections in 2020 due to humanitarian concerns; mental safety cannot be compromised, primarily through political activity. Similarly, Muhammadiyah continued to organize regional head elections in 2020, according to Haedar Nashir, the party's general chairman, who claimed that he accepted the government's decision. It did, however, ask the government to assume responsibility for any COVID-19 transmission concerns that arise as a result of the 2020 regional elections (Saubani, 2020). Jusuf Kalla, the former Vice President of Indonesia and Chairman of the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI), has asked the General Election Commission (KPU) to reconsider holding simultaneous regional head elections in 2020, citing an increase in the number of patients who have tested positive for COVID-19 (Prastiwi, 2020). Fadli, a researcher with the Association for Elections and Democracy (Perludem), also believes that violations of health rules on registration day are the government's responsibility, according to the House of Representatives (DPR) and the General Election Commission (KPU). The 2020

regional elections should be postponed if the three parties cannot execute the COVID-19 treaty (Maharani, 2020).

The assumption that having simultaneous regional head elections in 2020 could lead to crowds violating health standards can be used to infer a variety of reasons why different parties want regional head elections postponed. This could be the start of a new COVID-19 cluster, and the COVID-19 space in Indonesia is currently unregulated, as evidenced by the fact that roughly 1000 individuals are exposed to COVID-19 every day. As a result, many parties urge the government to postpone the December 9, 2020, regional head elections. After all, because the government can do so, it is governed by Law No. 10 of 2016, which regulates regional head elections.

According to the Association for Article 122 of Law 10/2016 on Elections and Democracy (Perludem), subsequent and secondary elections are organized by the district/city or province General Election Commission (KPU). The regional head election may be postponed if governor and deputy governor elections cannot be held in 40 percent of the districts/cities or 50 percent of registered voters cannot exercise their right to vote. Meanwhile, regional elections for regents and deputy regents and mayors and

deputy mayors have been postponed due to the inability to hold elections in 40% of sub-districts or 50% of registered voters. This clause is still in effect in the modifications to the most recent regional head election law, namely Law no. 6 of 2020, addressing government regulations' stipulation rather than Law No. 2 of 2020. Because it was postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the legislation modification is the foundation for arranging subsequent simultaneous regional head elections (Rahayu, 2020). The shelving of regional head elections is planned to allow regional chiefs to focus on developing measures for dealing with COVID-19. It is critical to postpone the polling timetable to ensure the safety of organizers, citizens, candidates, and political certainty (Fernandes, 2020).

Despite intense pressure from many parties to postpone regional head elections, the administration has not changed its mind. On December 9, 2020, the government continued to hold regional head elections at the same time. President Joko Widodo's coordinating minister for politics, law, and human rights, Mahfud MD, explained why the 2020 regional head election was postponed. First, ensure that the people's constitutional rights to be elected and voted following the law and numerous statutory requirements are protected. Second, COVID-19 pandemics cannot yet be known when it will end; therefore, if the regional head election is postponed until the Pandemic is over, it will create uncertainty. Third, the President does not want the regional election organizers to be led by the task force because they cannot take strategic policies. Fourth, the previous regional

head elections have been postponed from September 23 to December 9. As a result, rather than delaying the widespread spread of COVID-19, what needs to be done now is to anticipate it (Ismail, 2020).

The policy taken by the government not to postpone the holding of regional head elections simultaneously in 2020 is of public concern. Another perspective of the government's reasons for not delaying regional head elections is related to political investors who have spent their capital for regional head candidates and even political parties. The goal is that if the candidate for the regional head is elected as a regional head, his business interests or other things can run smoothly, both from licensing administration or playing large projects in the region. Practices like this encourage elected regional heads to stumble over corruption cases. The Corruption Eradication Commission processes many instances of regional leaders. If the provincial head election is postponed, it will interfere with the interests of the group. Because he is suspected of having committed corruption in several modes, ranging from sin in discussing the regional revenue and expenditure budget, project funding, licensing to buying and selling of positions. The Corruption Eradication Commission alleged that some of the proceeds from corruption were used to finance the regional head election campaign they were participating in. When referring to the President's regulation, the provincial head election will be postponed if COVID-19 is still not over (Rusdi, 2018).



## **Initiative**

The Indonesian government, House of Representatives of Indonesia Republic, and election organizer agreed that the 2020 regional head election simultaneously would be held on December 9, 2020. This decision occurred in a working meeting of Commission II house of representative of Indonesia republic with the Minister of Home Affairs, General Election Supervisory Agency, General Election Commission, and Election Organization Ethics Council(Alfian, 2020). The Head of the Information Center (Kapuspen), who is also the acting Director-General of Politics and Public Administration of the Ministry of Home Affairs (Kemendagri) Bahtiar, said the simultaneous elections on December 9, 2020, ran smoothly and safely from COVID-19(Kominfo, 2020). The Head of the Information Center (Kapuspen), the acting Director-General of Politics and Public Administration of the Ministry of Home Affairs (Kemendagri) Bahtiar, said the simultaneous elections on December 9, 2020, ran smoothly safely from COVID-19.

Health protocol in effect on voting day December 9, 2020. According to General Election Commission Chairman Arief Budiman, the first division of voter arrival time is based on the number of permanent voters list in a polling station, and the arrival schedule is divided into five groups. The first group at 07.00-08.00 in the morning, the second group at 08.00-09.00 in the morning, and so on until the last one at 12.00 to 13.00 noon. Second, medical equipment such as hand washing and soap, hand sanitizer, plastic gloves for voters, masks. Face shield, trash can, temperature measuring device, medical gloves for Voting Organizing Group (KPPS)

officers. Disinfecting voting place locations, Hazmat clothes or Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), ink drops, and a particular room for voters with a body temperature of 37.3 degrees Celsius(Rizal, 2020). After holding simultaneous regional head elections on December 9, 2020, the government, through Mahfud MD, the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs, asserted that the simultaneous regional elections in 2020 did not result in the formation of a new COVID-19 cluster(Puspita, 2020). The Minister of Home Affairs, Tito Karnavian, also stated that public compliance with implementing health protocols during the 2020 regional head election was relatively high. Adherence to health protocols during the voting process ranged from 89 percent to 96 percent in some areas(Mashabi, 2020).

But on the other hand, the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu RI) found thousands of health protocol violations in the 2020 regional elections. One of them was related to discovering Voting Organizing Group (KPPS) officers exposed to Covid-19 at several polling stations (TPS). The Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu RI) noted that 1,454 polling stations did not provide handwashing facilities. Several polling stations have also reportedly not provided unique polling stations for voters with body temperatures above 37 degrees Celsius. The Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu RI) also found another violation of its health protocol: Voting Organizing Group members were still caught on duty at the voting place even though they were known to be positive COVID-19. These violations were reported in 1,172 polling stations in Sulawesi, specifically in

Tomohon, North Sulawesi (Hidayatullah & Pandamsari, 2020). The Banten COVID-19 task force team also said that the 2020 regional head election had become a new cluster of the spread of the coronavirus in three areas, namely South Tangerang City, Serang Regency, and Pandeglang Regency. Regional head election clusters in these three regions did not only arise because of the voting process. Still, they were also influenced by several previous stages, such as the declaration, registration, and campaigning. This is reinforced by the statement of Global Health Security & Pandemic researcher Griffith University Australia, Dicky Budiman, the coronavirus cluster due to the 2020 Regional Election will undoubtedly emerge. Because these activities were carried out when the COVID-19 pandemic was increasingly out of control, with indications that the ratio of favorable cases was still very high, above 10 percent (Firmansyah & Hidayatullah, 2020).

This explanation shows that there has been a lack of information and coordination between the government and election supervisory stakeholders and those responsible for handling COVID-19. This results in differences in data and information obtained from each field. Even though the task force to accelerate the handling of COVID-19 is a party that the government formed to deal with the spread of COVID-19 in provinces, regencies/cities throughout Indonesia. Therefore, the government should coordinate to get data and information from these task forces throughout Indonesia.

## **Conclusion**

The conclusion in this study, due to the COVID-19 pandemic that hit Indonesia, became an obstacle to the performance of election organizers in holding simultaneous regional head elections in 2020. Aspects of quality of work and promptness, The simultaneous regional head elections were postponed from September 23, 2020, to December 9, 2020. The agreement of the government, the General Election Commission (KPU), and the People's Representative Council to postpone regional head elections until December 9, 2020, is based on the government's agreement, the General Election Commission (KPU), and the People's Representative Council (DPR). The root cause is Covid-19, which has struck Indonesia, disrupting voting for regional head elections.

Aspect of capability and communication, The state of the COVID-19 pandemic did not end on December 9, 2020, but the election organizers have not postponed the 2020 regional head elections as before. Although some parties have urged to defer the 2020 regional head elections, the government and election organizers did not delay the 2020 elections to guarantee the people's constitutional right to be elected and vote. The end date of the Covid-19 epidemic is unknown, the government does not want task executors to lead the areas, and regional head elections have been postponed previously. Because Covid-19 has not ended in Indonesia, the 2020 regional head elections can be delayed simultaneously based on Law Number 6 of 2020 about the Stipulation of Government Regulations rather than Law Number 2 of

2020. The aspect of Initiative, During the simultaneous regional head elections on December 9, 2020, there was misinformation and miscoordination between the government and the Election Supervisory Body of the Republic of Indonesia and the task force for the acceleration of handling COVID-19. This resulted in data imbalances related to violations of health protocols on polling day and the emergence of new COVID-19 clusters.

The limitation of this study is that the data sources come only from online media and relevant journals. Therefore, the recommendation for further research is to conduct direct interviews with the election organizer. This is so that the data obtained becomes more complete.

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#### **Acknowledgments**

We thank the government affairs and administration for supporting this research. In particular, thanks to the human resources management course that

encouraged this research.

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