



Digital Democracy: Exploring the Potential and Challenges of SIPOL in the 2024 Indonesian Election

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Article Info

Article history:

Received 5 March 2024

Received in revised form 24

March 2024

Accepted 3 April 2024

Keywords:

SIPOL

KPU

Democracy

2024 Election

Digital Transformation

Abstract

This research discusses the use of the SIPOL application as a form of digital transformation carried out by the KPU in the registration process as a candidate for the 2024 Election. The use of SIPOL for preparation for the 2024 Election is the second year it has been used. Previously, SIPOL was also used in 2017 to prepare for the 2019 Election. As a result, this research found that the use of SIPOL for the 2024 Election was better than the use of SIPOL for the 2019 Election. It was also found that the use of SIPOL aims to increase public participation in the 2024 elections. Additionally, SIPOL contributes to transparent and accountable elections. However, in its implementation, researchers found that the use of SIPOL still encountered many problems, for example the recording of a person's Population Identification Number (NIK) by a political party to be registered as a party member. Furthermore, some political parties still faced challenges in accessing SIPOL. SIPOL is also considered to be unable to help the public monitor political parties in fulfilling the requirements regulated by law. This research aims to explain the application of SIPOL in the registration stages of candidate participants in the 2024 election and to identify opportunities and challenges associated with using the SIPOL application. This research uses a qualitative descriptive analysis method. Data collection was carried out through the interview method accompanied by literature analysis and reporting in online media.

Introduction

This research aims to assess the readiness of the Political Party Information System (Sistem Informasi Partai Politik/SIPOL) application, managed by Indonesian General Election Commission or Komisi Pemilihan Umum Republik Indonesia (KPU RI), to facilitate the transition to a digital-based electoral system. The use of information technology is considered a necessity in the current digital era.

The rapid growth of information technology in Indonesia over the last two decades, marked by the emergence of the internet, has led to various. As time went by, the emergence of the internet played a role in the democratic process in Indonesia which slowly began to be digital-based. Digital democracy is then defined as the use of information communication technology and computer-mediated communication in all types of media such as the internet, interactive broadcasting and digital telephones with the aim of increasing political democracy or citizen participation in democratic communication (van Dijk & Hacker, 2000).

According to Mahpudin, digital technology contributes to the efficiency of general elections. The use of technology in general elections also makes it easier for election management institutions (Mahpudin, 2019). However, the credibility of election results from the use of technology is often doubted (Russell and Zamfr, 2018). This is because the use of technology cannot be separated from weaknesses in terms of system security. The existence of system

weaknesses, especially those related to voters' personal data, often gives rise to distrust among voters.

Catt et al. (2014) classify the main types of election technology. The first is the voter registration system, namely election technology used to check voter data, detect multiple voters, manage voter identity documents, target voter information, plan election logistics, and produce voter lists according to demographic information. Second, voter identification system, this type of technology is used to check the eligibility of each voter at the polling station by comparing the voter information database. Third, party and candidate registration system, the technology used to register prospective candidates or political parties is related to the appropriate requirements, data and format for designing ballot papers.

Then fourthly, observer registration and accreditation systems, are used to observe the accreditation process for national and international researchers by identifying documents. Fifth, districting and boundary delimitation systems, using geographic information systems to determine boundaries related to the size and area of districts. Sixth, electronic voting and vote-counting systems, are used at the voting and vote counting stages. Seventh, results tabulation and transmission systems, used for vote recapitulation, eighth, results publishing systems, this technology is used to visualize election results in various formats. Ninth, voter information systems, are used for information systems for voters related to elections. Tenth, e-learning systems, are used to develop the professionalism of election management staff.

KPU completed the stages of the registration process for political parties (political parties) as candidates for the 2024 General Election in 2022. As in the 2019 General Election, the process of registering candidates for the 2024 General Election this time again uses the Political Party Information System (SIPOL) application. Quoted from KPU's Regulation (PKPU) Number 4 of 2022 concerning Registration, Verification and Determination of Political Parties Contending in General Elections for Members of the People's Representative Council (DPR) and Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), SIPOL is an information system and technology used to facilitate the administration of registration, verification, and the determination of political parties participating in the election for DPR and DPRD members as well as continuous updating of data on Political Parties participating in the Election at the KPU, Provincial KPU, Regency/City KPU and Election participant levels.

The process for registering political parties as candidates for the 2024 General Election via the SIPOL application began on August 1 2022 and ended on August 14 2022. As a result, 40 political parties have registered as candidates to participate in the election. Of the 40 political parties, as many as 24 political parties had complete registration documents. The KPU has also completed the political party administration verification process which ended on September 14 2022. During the administrative verification stage, the KPU approved 18 political parties. Furthermore, the KPU will carry out factual verification of 9 non-parliamentary political parties from 15 October to 4 November 2022. However, the use of SIPOL as a registration for political parties participating in the 2024 Election was completed on 14 August 2022.

Through this article, researchers want to find out about the use of the SIPOL application during the 2024 Election participant registration stage. Researchers will also find out what evaluations have been carried out regarding the use of SIPOL in the 2019 Election. Apart from that, researchers also want to see the use of SIPOL as an effort to digitally transform elections in Indonesia to play a role in democracy in Indonesia. Researchers also want to find out what are the challenges in implementing SIPOL in the 2024 elections. And what are the opportunities for implementing SIPOL for democratic life in the current digital era.

Methods

This research adopts a qualitative approach. Data collection techniques involve triangulation, a combination of observation, interviews, and documentation. The goal of qualitative research is to understand meaning, comprehend uniqueness, construct phenomena, and formulate hypotheses (Sugiyono, 2022).

On a similar note, Creswell (2009) defines qualitative research as a means of exploring and understanding the meaning of individual and group behavior while describing social or humanitarian problems. Research data comes from interview scripts and literature review. The research aims to determine the extent to which digital transformation can play a role in democratic life. Additionally, the study aims to identify the challenges and opportunities for implementing SIPOL in the 2024 election stages. The hope is that this research can serve as evaluation material for future election implementations.

The data sources for this research include interviews with KPU's Commissioner, Idham Holik on September 7, 2022. Additionally, the researcher conducted interviews with Executive Director of Perkumpulan untuk Pemilu dan Demokrasi (Perludem), Khoirunnisa Nur Agustyati on September 7, 2022, and the Daily Coordinator of Konstitusi dan Demokrasi (KoDe) Inisiatif, Ihsan Maulana on 14 September 2022, representing Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with an interest in these issues.

This research involved analyzing reports in the media along with unstructured interviews. The interview guide used is only an outline of the problems to be addressed. In unstructured interviews, the researcher does not know exactly what data will be obtained, so the emphasis is on listening to what the respondent shares.

Results and Discussion

SIPOL as an Effort to Utilize Technology in Organizing Elections

The development of the internet has implications for digital transformation in various fields, including electoral matters. Digital transformation as defined by Westerman et al. (2014), is the organizational shift toward a more effective and efficient digital business model. The SIPOL application is a manifestation of the use of technology in organizing elections in Indonesia.

One of the efforts made to improve the quality of democracy is to apply the concept of cyberdemocracy. Cyberdemocracy is a concept that sees the internet as a technology that has transformative social influence and expands democratic participation (Hague & Loader, 1999). This theory aligns with the explanation provided by KPU's Commissioner Idham Holik during his interview with researchers on September 7 2022. Holik said that the Indonesian KPU is committed to improving the quality of computing technology in the applications used to organize the 2024 election stages. Holik also believes that the use of computing technology or internet technology in organizing the stages will increase public participation. Holik said that the KPU was committed to realizing participatory elections. Therefore, the implementation of registration verification and determination of political parties through SIPOL is in the framework of realizing this commitment.

The KPU launched the SIPOL application on June 24 2022. The KPU also socialized the SIPOL function to legal entity political parties at the Ministry of Law and Human Rights (Kemenkumham) on June 16 2022. The advantages of involving SIPOL for the KPU intend to carry request to the ideological group organization framework and the execution of SIPOL will cause this enlistment and check stage to be more straightforward and responsible (Pratiwi, et al, 2023). Holik mentioned that the preparations for using SIPOL technology this time were

much better compared to the 2019 election stages. Previously, access to SIPOL was only opened two weeks before political party registration. Currently, starting from mid-June 2022, approximately five weeks before the registration begins, the KPU has been inviting political parties to upload their data into the SIPOL application. During the execution of SIPOL for the 2019 political race, various gatherings conceded that they encountered hardships in utilizing SIPOL. Aside from that, the ineptness of ideological groups in contributing information is likewise an issue. In its criticism, Bawaslu even stated that the KPU should not impose a SIPOL requirement on registration (Dhani, 2018).

Holik explained that the legal umbrella for implementing SIPOL is contained in Article 141 of KPU Regulation (PKPU) Number 4 of 2020. The implementation of SIPOL applications is not a new development. Holik revealed that the application was used in December 2017 during the registration of political parties for the 2019 elections.

Executive Director, Khoirunnisa Nur Agustyati, in an online interview with researchers, said there was a difference in the trend of political party registration for the 2024 election compared to the 2019 election. Previously, many political parties registered at the end of the registration period. In contrast, during the 2024 election stage in 2022, numerous political parties are registering early.

According to Khoirunnisa, this happened because the KPU used SIPOL as a registration procedure. Access to SIPOL has also been opened before the registration of political parties begins, so that political parties can input data from the start.

SIPOL as an Effort to Increase Election Participation

Previously, it was explained that cyber democracy can enhance democratic participation (Hague & Loader, 1999). Etymologically 'participation' is defined as engagement, involvement, contribution, cooperation, and collaboration. The act of participation allows individuals or societies to determine what is good for themselves through democratic mechanisms that are available and agreed upon as a consensus (Wisnaeni & Ratna, 2020). Political participation is further described as the efforts of citizens, both individuals and groups, to influence the formation of public policy in a country. It involves an individual's active action to control a process or system (Wisnaeni & Ratna, 2020).

KPU said the use of SIPOL in the election registration process is considered to have contributed to increasing election participation. Digitalization and the use of internet technology now make it easier for election participants to register. When compared to the election registration process in previous years, the 2024 election registration process is no longer filled with piles of files. Participants also don't need to bother coming directly to the KPU office when registering.

The conveniences offered by SIPOL make it easier for political parties in the administrative verification and factual verification processes. Political parties only need to attach the documents required by the KPU through SIPOL. Documents that do not meet the requirements will be easily detected by SIPOL.

Apart from political parties, SIPOL also makes it easier for the public to monitor the registration process for election candidates. The integration of SIPOL with the <https://infopemilu.kpu.go.id> website provides the public with the opportunity to monitor political party data management to make it more transparent and valid. The public can also provide feedback on the election registration stage process. Especially if it is discovered that their names are registered as members of a particular political party, the public can submit their objections via <https://helpdesk.kpu.go.id/tanggapan>.

For election participants, the role of the platform is to register election participants. KPU step in opening SIPOL early is considered appropriate to open up space for political parties to register as participants in the 2024 Election. The opening of SIPOL was carried out early, even before the registration time began. This step was taken as an effort to increase political participation.

Democratic participation also impacts the quality of leaders produced in elections. Holik explained that SIPOL is an electoral technology representing a national strategic program for organizing elections. He stated that the SIPOL application could strengthen electronic-based public participation (e-participation). Holik also mentioned that efforts to modernize Indonesian democracy through the internet in holding elections are well consolidated among all voters and can enhance the quality of Indonesian democratization. According to him, this is evident from the consolidation level to the level of democratic maturation.

Challenges and Evaluation

In implementing SIPOL, KPU faces several challenges. One such challenge involves cases of profiteering (NIK) by political parties. As reported by Beritasatu, instances of NIK profiteering targeted the Bawaslu Yogyakarta staff. According to KPU Chairman, Hasyim Asy'ari, this profiteering is seen as proof that SIPOL is effective as a detection tool (Beritasatu, 2022). Not only have Bawaslu staff been affected, but journalists have also fallen victim to NIK profiteering by a political party (Tribunews.com, 2022).

In response to these issues, Holik explained that during the political party registration process, the Indonesian KPU only carries out administrative functions. However, concerning this profiteering, the KPU provides a platform for the public to check whether their names are registered as members of a political party or not. The public can verify this information at https://infopemilu.kpu.go.id/Pemilu/Cari_nik.

The KPU encourages the public to submit written reports, attaching clear demographic identity information of the reporter, evidence supporting the report, and a description of the reported problem. This process is regulated by article 140, paragraph 1 of PKPU 4 of 2022. Subsequently, the KPU will verify the written reports with the authorized agency. The results of this clarification can then be used as material for consideration in determining the political parties participating in the election.

Apart from that, equal distribution of the internet network also needs to be a concern for election organizers. This is because not all areas can easily access the internet, so facilities in the form of an internet network need to be provided. Not only that, digital literacy is also considered important to improve so that the use of SIPOL as a platform for election participant registration and verification is much more effective. Another challenge faced by the KPU is how to increase public trust in election organizers. It is known that election organizers are always in the spotlight every time there is an election. Accusations that the KPU is taking sides and not carrying out its duties professionally are often conveyed by parties who do not accept the election results. Therefore, the KPU needs to increase public trust.

In an interview with researchers, Ihsan Maulana, the Daily Coordinator of the KoDe Initiative, conveyed several evaluations regarding the implementation of SIPOL in the 2024 Election. Despite the discovery of profiteering, Maulana appreciated that SIPOL data is open to the public, allowing individuals to check whether their names have been affected. However, Maulana also highlighted issues in the SIPOL system, such as difficulties in entering SIPOL, although he believes the KPU can address these challenges. This is evident from the successful registration of numerous political parties participating in the election.

Nine political parties, including Partai Pelita, Partai Indonesia Bangkit Bersatu, Partai Bhineka Indonesia (PBI), Partai Kedaulatan Rakyat, Partai Pandu Bangsa, Partai Negeri Daulat Indonesia (PANDAI), Partai Masyumi, Partai Kedaulatan, dan Partai Reformasi, filed a lawsuit over alleged administrative violations by the KPU to Bawaslu. Maulana stated that although most parties mentioned SIPOL in their lawsuits, Bawaslu's decision rejected the claims, indicating that the SIPOL application did not experience significant problems.

Based on the findings explained above, researchers observe that the digital transformation of the election registration process through the SIPOL application represents a significant step forward in Indonesia's democratic landscape. As technological developments are expected to become more rapid in the near future, election organizing institutions, particularly the KPU, are considered to need swift adaptation to current advancements. Nonetheless, the KPU should not become complacent with the number of positive records achieved. The KPU still has a considerable amount of work to complete to prevent incidents like the data leak leading to the NIK profiteering incident from happening again.

In addition, researchers note that the SIPOL application is a part of efforts to establish transparent and accountable elections. This accountability initiative is believed to require support from various stakeholders, including the Ministry of Communication and Information (Kominfo), the Ministry of Home Affairs (Kemendagri), and related institutions such as the National Cyber and Crypto Agency (BSSN). Kominfo is known to have taken various concrete steps to ensure the success of SIPOL, namely by registering the system owned by SIPOL with the government. The information registration system is regulated in Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Information and Electronic Transactions. Previously, the government could not improve the performance of SIPOL if problems occurred, as happened in 2017 when 10 parties sued the KPU regarding SIPOL. By registering SIPOL with the government, the government has oversight of the information system in Indonesia. Kominfo is also ready to help with security and investigations if problems arise in the future. Similarly, BSSN has collaborated with the KPU to ensure SIPOL security ahead of the 2024 elections. From a technical perspective, firewall security is a concern for the KPU and BSSN, given that SIPOL contains population data.

Furthermore, the issue of data security is considered to be a concern for all parties, not only the KPU and the government but also all components of society. Regarding the NIK profiteering incident during the SIPOL application implementation this year, researchers see the KPU's step in opening up space for the public to make written reports as an effort to foster dialogue between political parties and the people who are victims of profiteering. Despite the inappropriate nature of this profiteering, the openness of data and information provided by SIPOL is seen as a positive aspect in implementing election stages using internet technology.

The openness of SIPOL data is deemed important with the hope that, in the future, the public can monitor the requirements regulated by law (Pratama & Amalia, 2022). Currently, the public faces challenges in monitoring political parties ability to fulfill these requirements, such as the number of management positions and women's representation of 30 percent, or the distribution of memberships at various levels, from provincial to sub-district levels. This serves as a noteworthy consideration for the KPU.

As an open data system, it is crucial for the information mentioned above to be made accessible to the public so that the data contained in SIPOL related to legal requirements can be utilized by the public.

Kominfo said the digitalization of election stages has also been carried out by Baltic countries in Europe such as Estonia. The Minister of Communications and Information at that time,

Johnny G Plate, expressed the need for Indonesia to learn from countries that have implemented election digitalization. Johnny said that, the adoption of digital technology in election activities has the benefit of realizing effectiveness and efficiency in the process of legitimate political contestation in various stages including voter verification, voting, counting votes, and tabulating election results.

Conclusion

The SIPOL application is an initiative by the Indonesian KPU to digitize the execution of the 2024 Election stages. The implementation of the SIPOL application has garnered a positive response from various groups, ranging from political parties to election observers. The majority of them perceive that the execution of the SIPOL application this year surpasses that of the previous year. This favorable response is deemed reasonable considering that the implementation of the SIPOL application in the 2024 election marks the second time such technology has been utilized in an Indonesian election. The initial introduction of SIPOL occurred in 2017 for the registration of parties participating in the 2019 General Election. This indicates improvements made by the KPU in preparing the SIPOL application.

However, the implementation of the SIPOL application has also encountered several challenges. One such challenge is the occurrence of fraud committed by political parties seeking to qualify as election participants. The emergence of news concerning NIK profiteering by political parties highlights that SIPOL is not yet 100 percent flawless. Consequently, addressing this issue becomes a crucial task for the KPU that requires immediate attention.

Collaboration and synergy between the KPU and stakeholders need to be carried out to ensure the election runs smoothly. One of the synergies that has been implemented to oversee the election process in the digital space is by forming a special task force (Satgasus). This collaboration involves a number of stakeholders such as Kominfo, KPU, BSSN, Bawaslu, DKPP, Ministry of Home Affairs, State Intelligence Agency, Ministry of Education and Culture, TNI, Ministry of Religion, and Ministry of PAN-RB. It is hoped that the existence of this Task Force can resolve election issues quickly.

In its implementation, every ministry and agency related to the Task Force has cyber tools and units in its institutions. It is hoped that control on all platforms will be carried out in coordination with each other so that handling is optimal (Aptika, 2022).

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