

Political Participation of Indonesian Migrant Worker in Malaysia: Political Education's Perspective in General Election of 2009 and 2014

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Keywords: Political Participation, Indonesian Migrant Workers, Political Education, Election

Abstract: This article discusses the weakness of political participation of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia. The increasing number of political participation in the election 2014 compared to 2009 is just because of the figure factor. The implementation of political participation requires a proper political education for the migrant workers. This research uses the qualitative and in-depth interview as the method of data collection. It applies participation theory, state theory, protection theory, also the concept of political education. The researcher finds that Indonesia's government does not socialize the political education as an essential alternative to increase political participation of Indonesian migrant workers in the election. The government also manages the status document of Indonesian migrant worker in Malaysia, tries to repair the system and referendum mechanism by coming directly to society. The immigrant workers and election organizers need political education in order to make a better election process.

1 INTRODUCTION

The election is the symbol of democracy in a country; it proves that there is a process of democratization which involves the society in one nation. It is also the medium of the elites to reach specific power in the government. So the political participation in the election is essential and needed to vote who is going to be the representative in the government. Thus, all element of citizens including migrant workers in the overseas need to participate in every election that the country holds.

The placement of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia had been the second highest position after Saudi Arabia since 2012. Malaysia becomes one of the most favorite destinations for the workers because of the geographical factor and the same language. The data about the placement of Indonesian migrant workers to Malaysia that taken from BNP2TKI (National Body of Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers), mention that Malaysia has a highest position compare to Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, Hongkong, Singapore in 2016 from the placement of Indonesian migrant workers. Malaysia (87.616 migrant workers), Taiwan (77.087 migrant workers), Saudi Arabia (13.535 migrant workers), Hongkong

(14.434 migrant workers), and Singapore (17.700 migrant workers).

Mostly Indonesian migrant workers that sent to several destination country is women and only had junior high school and elementary school as their education level with their working destination as wokers in informal sector. By lowest education level, they do not have many choices to work in, except informal sector. Half of them choose to work in the wood industry as farming workers.

With the lacking of educational experience, migrant workers are facing difficulty to compete in the formal sector. The level of education influences one's quality. It also impacts migrant workers ability to understand the rights, rules, and obligation they supposed to do. Many of them get through violence in their workplace for their lacking in understanding their rights and regulations of working. The worse part was they when they got the lousy treatment; most of them do not know to whom they need to report the incident. Educational background also impacts their political awareness including to participate in the general election of 2009 and 2014.

The researcher conducted by NGO on the protection of Indonesian migrant workers stated that the election of 2009 was not running well. The

majority of Indonesian migrant workers including those who work in Malaysia, could not vote and use their rights in the election. Migrant Care found that in the election, 1.850 voters came to the voting place and 45.000 who voted by post. In total, 46.850 voters attended the election, but 831.750 final voters listed in the data. It indicates that not all immigrant workers whose their names registered in final voters list participated in the election.

The number of participant in the election of 2014 increased with 8.968 voters voted in the legislative election. The observation of Migrant Care on the election in 2009 was less than 20% of Indonesian immigrant workers used their political rights, and only 5% of workers could use their right (CARE, 2014). Although there was a distinction on the number of the election in 2009 and 2014, the problem still occurred in the election. One of the issues happened is in the final voter's list, voters who voted from abroad by total 2.010.280 with 873 voting places spread out in several in Indonesian representative offices. Based on that number, Migrant Care predicted that there were still 4.5 million Indonesian workers who did not register their names to be voters. Hundreds of thousand voters in final voters list also had invalid data, including the double name in the voting places. The number of migrant workers political participation in the election of 2014 went up. However, there is a question arising that whether the increase of the number due to the double name that occurred in the field.

Regarding the rules, there is any statement from UU Pemilu No.08/2012 which stated the situation of the voters who work or live abroad. The other problem that appeared was the mechanism of voting which caused by the working hours of the immigrant, the working place, and minimum supervision of the voting process that used some methods in conduction the voting such as Dropbox and sending the ballot paper by post.

Two questions stated in this paper. **First**, how is the political participation of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia in the election of 2014 compared to 2009? **Second**, how is the effort of government in term of increasing the political participation of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia?

This paper uses a qualitative approach for the data that sourced from face to face interview with the interviewee and also analyzing toward written data of supervising report of the general election in Malaysia 2009 and 2014. Primer data obtained by interview to Anis Hidayah as Director of Migrant CARE and Siti Badriyah as supervisor of the 2014 election in

Malaysia, and one of an activist who focuses on the political right of migrant workers.

2 METHODOLOGY

The study of this research is by using several methods:

2.1 Research Approach

This approach of this is qualitative analysis. This approach aims to get the whole picture and in-depth research. The purpose of this research is to answer more than "what," but also "why" and "how." Qualitative research is based on the subjective result, interpretative and contextual data, whereas this method tries to control and do not use those elements (Aurbach & Silverstain, 2003).

2.2 Research Type

The type of this research is descriptive analysis, and it describes why the increasing number of political participation between two elections. Also, it aims to find the solution to the rights of Indonesian migrant workers.

2.3 Collecting Data Method

In this qualitative research, there are things done:

- a. Observation: the researcher records the detail because of the possibilities of asking significant things. The researcher takes notes and records it for the documentation (Verba, Nie, Norman, & Jae-On, 1978). This research dedicated to analyst, study and collect the data that relate to the democratization of political right, political participation of Indonesia migrant workers in the election.
- b. Interview: the researcher interviewed NGO's that took part in the protection of Indonesian migrant workers, such as Migrant CARE. The interview was done to the Director of Migrant CARE, Anis Hidayah and Siti Badriyah as the Head of Section.
- c. Collecting Data: By searching literature, books, journal, internet and other sources that relate to the research.

3 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND STATE CONCEPT

Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie, Jae-On Kim on their book titled *Participation and Political Equality* mention that democracy has developed in two things. First, by expanding the number of political rights and second, number of people that have rights. A citizen comes to use their political right, whereas that right needed political influence: the right to vote, right to work for political party or organization, to work in government, also the freedom of speech. However, political right represented a chance that came to people. A citizen can choose or not choose (Verba, Nie, Norman, & Jae-On, 1978). The relation between participation, stratification of socio economic, and the equality that analyzed in the book of Sydney Verba, used the relatives data from developed society or less developed.

Participation differs in two types of society. In developing society, a problem happens about mobilization. In the developed nation, the problem is more focusing on justice. In the developing country, the problem of participation involves society mobilization and social participation. The changes in social structure increase the number of literate and educated people. Those changes served a motivation and source for political development on individual part. They became aware on political world, learning the norms of political society and expanding the cognitive ability that need for political activity. (Verba, Nie, Norman, & Jae-On, 1978)

Meredith Rolfe in his book, *Voter Turnout: A Social Theory of Political Participation* stated that voters compare to people who do not vote, can be seen from the political interest. An active participant cares to the political outcome, prefer to participate compared to the inactive participant or independent who are careless to the result. If so, why some people decided to vote and some not? Rolfe seeing this thing from the social perspective on voters, came from the conditional choice approach. The political participation theory that seeing from social perspective, placed that voter not only in social context, but also assumed logic that less familiar on decisions. The theory of social participation do not talk on individual motif and the existing reason, but can serve good explanation on the variation empirical documentation in voter context. For the example, in the network structure and social location of citizens in the demographic context (Meredith Rolfe, 2012).

Max Weber stated the understanding of the state as the human community that succeeds in claiming a monopoly on the legitimate use of physics power in

the definitive territory (Weber, 1946). In this context, the state is the only institution that has a right to use violence instrument to rules its territory and members. In detail, in his other writing, Weber explained the identity of primer formal modern state; has a law description and the administration that bend to the changes toward legislation, being the reference of the activity of administrative staff, also regulated by legislation (Weber, 1947).

According to the literacy process, Bleich said that the process is reliable if we see it as the thing that can change people lives (Gale, 1994). Political literacy is not only the political knowledge but also the way that make citizen to be active and pushes them to participate formally or voluntarily in the politics. Bernard Crick in the *Essays on Citizenship* stated that political literacy is 'a compound of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be developed together, each one conditioning the other two' (Gale, 1994). The basic of political literacy then a practical understanding on concepts, that pictured from the daily of life and languages.

There is some knowledge that ideally owned by someone, and that thing politically made society literate; (1) basic information about some issues; who hold the power, where money coming from, how the institution walk, (2) how to actively involved used the knowledge and understanding the nature of issue, (3) how to predict the most effective way on the solving issues, (4) how to recognize how good the policy objectivity that has been reached and the settled existing issues, (5) how to understand the other vision and their justification for their action (Gale, 1994).

4 THE ENHANCEMENT POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN THE ELECTION

The political enhancement participation of migrant workers regarding immigrant workers political rights is part of the implementation of functional democracy. Several things become the drive of the political enhancement participation in the election of 2014;

4.1 The Improvement of Indonesia's Election System Abroad

Indonesian election system abroad, especially in Malaysia, has several types: First, Dropbox, this system is to put the ballot box in the center of the

voting places. Voters can use it anytime to put the ballot paper that has been elected by the voters. This drop box usually located in the factory or farms, and will be collected in a few days ahead. The weakness of this system is it can be manipulated by the successful team of candidates, because of the collection days and the ballot paper that being put by migrant workers into the box.

The second system is by using early voting. This system means doing the early election. It is useful because not all Indonesian migrant workers who work in the formal or informal sector can vote on the same day with the election in Indonesia. As the example, on 2014 legislative's election abroad, it is done in 8 days started from March, 30th until April, 6th 2014. Meanwhile, the presidential election started from July, 4th-6th 2014. That schedule means to facilitate voters who have work to do. On July, 9th 2014 is on the weekend, and the authorities abroad are impossible to ask permission to allow Indonesian who worked to vote on July, 9th (Tribun, 2014).

The third system is a system that also implemented in Indonesia's election event, came into the existing polling station. On the 2014 election, all Indonesian migrant workers were given time within three days to come directly to the polling station. Nonetheless, several problems also occurred during the election, for example, the distance from their houses to the polling station. By the result, the employer did not support the workers to vote and did not permit his/her worker. On the contrary, there was also employers who accompanied the workers to the embassy of Indonesia, to vote and support the workers to give his/her political right.

According to the interview with one of the migrant workers activist, Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia also allowed voting, instead of his/her passport being taken by the employer and so on, as long as he/she has an identity card (Badriyah). The three systems that had been used this time stay implemented along two periods of the election, on 2009 and 2014. Then, there is no special system, but in 2014 much more fixed systems and the more supervising system being implemented. This thing influences the political participation of Indonesian migrant workers.

The improvement of political participation from Indonesian migrant worker in Malaysia also written by Migrant CARE, that in the data they had, on 2009 election, there was 324.686 (22%) for the number of legislative election and 326.182 in the presidential election. Also, in 2014 there was 464.458 (22.19%) for the number of legislative election and 674.997 number of the presidential election (Tribun, 2014).

4.2 Intensifying Socialization from Government toward Indonesian Migrant Worker in Malaysia and the Coordination of Election's Institution Abroad

In a democracy context, political socialization is a critical component to build a good quality of election. The improvement of political participation on the election of 2014 can be called as the result of intensified socialization and coordination among general commission election (KPU), ministry of foreign affairs, the committee of election abroad (PPLN), embassy of the Republic of Indonesia (KBRI), Indonesian consulate general (KJRI) also the existing volunteer. Nonetheless, the coordination among those institutions is still needed to be improved, especially in facing the voters in Malaysia.

Election Supervisory Agency translated the participation of society by doing Gerakan Sejuta Relawan Pengawas Pemilu (GSRPP). This movement aims to recruit the society who wishes to involve in supervising, but they did not join in the organization of elections supervision. Basic philosophy from the society involvement directly in the election supervising is 'each citizen can contribute to make sure that his/her vote has a meaning for the existence life of nation and state'. The pre-condition that build are; doing voting education, socialization toward public that represented by society organization, youth organization, humanity organization, regional organization, professional organization, universities and schools (bawaslu,2014).

In the existing coordination, KPU asked to PPLN to input Indonesian citizen in the list of voters if they do not have any document, but PPLN sure that she/he is an Indonesian citizen. Meanwhile, from the ministry of foreign affairs, they asked KBRI and KJRI in Malaysia to give support and facilities toward PPLN regarding the effectiveness of general election. In the election of 2014, KBRI in Malaysia reported that 1.055.510 persons entered to the provisional voter list (DPS), it adding from the data of potential society of voter's election (Data Penduduk Potensial Pemilih Pemilu/DP4), about 997.467 persons. KBRI reported that they had done political socialization toward voters in Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur and around it, about 53 times (KPU, 2013).

Political socialization that done by KPU was done by several ways, such as: short message service for the voters list, sending letter to the Indonesian citizen address, to the university, and the company that Indonesian workers worked in it. In this effort, there

was an improvement in the verification of voter's list. The supervision toward PPLN done in 15 spots abroad and produced three agendas, inauguration and consolidation of PPLN, updating voters data and also socialization agenda. (kpu, 2018).

The agenda of socialization which was done by the committee of election abroad (PPLN) on 2014, also contributed to the number of political participation of Indonesian migrant worker. This socialization conducted by several Indonesian consulate generals (KJRI) in Malaysia. The example of the socialization efforts are; first, PPLN as the local committee that shaped and located by central KPU in Penang for the region of northwest Malaysia. Second, PPLN Penang will shape local committee for the voters that will move and spread in a strategic spot of Indonesian people, either in academic, industry and household spot. Indonesian workers asked to come to the KJRI/KBRI to show their passport or identity card. Third, PPLN Penang also formed the election's committee that spread in two different places, for the election process that held in KJRI's office and Wisma Indonesia Penang. Fourth, for the voters abroad will vote legislative member of Indonesian parliament in Dapil Jakarta II that consist on Central Jakarta, South Jakarta and Abroad as ruled in article 22 verse 1 UU No.8/2012 about Legislative Election. This thing also that socialized toward voters abroad (kompasiana, 2014). The agenda of socialization marked to increased the understanding, knowledge and participation of Indonesia citizen, either working or studying in Malaysia.

4.3 The Contestant's Popularity in the Election of 2014

One of the factors of the enhancement of political participation of Indonesian migrant workers in the election of 2014 compared to 2009, is because of the figure/contestant that being the president's candidate. Even 2014 legislative election has higher number compared to 2009, but presidential election of 2014 way higher compared to the number of the legislative election on 2014. Migrant CARE as the institution that participates in supervising Indonesia's election in Malaysia notices that besides the repairing system, the increasing number of political participation exists in the presidential election, compared to the legislative election. It was because of the desire of migrant workers that wished for changes. At last, the increasing number is seen by Migrant CARE in term because of the figure of Joko Widodo, that believed can present the changes. There is no other reason, except the figure of Joko Widodo in seeing the

increasing number of political participation of migrant workers in the election of 2014 (Hidayah). Early election system definitely help in the effort of increasing political participation. But, the figure cannot erased as the reason beyond the existing of the increasing political participation.

On 2014 presidential election, around 6.5 million Indonesian migrant workers stated their support to the couple of president and vice president's candidate of Joko Widodo and Jusuf Kalla. The support's declaration done by the representative of migrant workers in Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, and Kuwait. That thing also related to the experience of Jusuf Kalla that contribute to the bleaching of Indonesian migrant worker from Malaysia and initiate the education for them while he had been coordinating minister for the people welfare (Menko Kesra). It was the reason why Indonesian migrant worker supports Joko Widodo-Jusuf Kalla.

The expectations of Indonesian migrant workers who chose Joko Widodo seemed to succeed. According to the data of Migrant CARE, half of Joko Widodo's government, there was an improvement of the protection of Indonesian migrant worker. At least there was a sign from the legalization of the law 2017 about "Protection of Indonesian Migrant Worker." Despite that, Migrant CARE also saw that there was a fatal thing, such as permanent moratorium to the several middle east countries (KPU, 2013). Jokowi's popularity in the eyes of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia in the election o 2014 also caused by his down earth's profile. Jokowi that came from the village, made Indonesian migrant workers feel a new hope when Jokowi and Kalla became the leader. Of course, they support proved in current government under Jokowi's leadership.

In 2015, after being a President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo also agreed with Malaysia according to the protection of Indonesian migrant workers. He stated that he will send Indonesian migrant workers formally from Indonesia to Malaysia, and will ask for the undocumented migrant workers to come home and fulfil their document for the sake of their safety.

4.4 Political Education as the Effort of the Improvement of Political Participation

Participating politically undoubtedly will influence the life of Indonesian migrant workers in five years ahead or the years after. In term of political participation of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia, several obstacles happened;

1. The weakness of policy toward Indonesia's election abroad.
2. Minimum political literacy for Indonesian migrant workers since departure.
3. The coordination among the promoter institution abroad.
4. The policy of Malaysia's government that not coordinative and supportive toward the Indonesian migrant worker.

One of the things that are the attention of the government in operating the enhancement of political participation is strengthening the political education for Indonesian migrant worker. The minimum number of participants is because not all Indonesian migrant workers realize that participating politically in the election, can influence the policy of their protection abroad.

Good political participation needs political literacy. Literacy is as written by Richard Ohmann in *The Politics of Letters* "literacy is a social group activity, and important picture in social organization." (Gale, 1994) Bernard Crick in the *Essays on Citizenship* stated that political literacy is "a compound of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, to be developed together, each one conditioning the other two." (Crick, 2000) Political literacy is not only a political knowledge but also the way to make citizen been effective in public life, also push them to participate actively either formally or voluntary.

According to the political literacy, several steps should be owned by Indonesian migrant worker in order to have a good political education; **First**: necessary information about several issues that they have to have comprehensive information about the importance of their participation in Indonesia's election abroad. **Second**, they have to have political socialization, relate to how they can be a good voter. Using their political right and vote correctly. Being understand that participate in the election is part of their political right. **Third**, how to predict the most effective way on the solving issues. There are many obstacles they (migrant worker) face. In this point, they need to get the political education to be aware and can contact the embassy to use their political right to vote in the election. **Forth**, how can knowing how good the objectivity of policy and the apparent issues. Indonesian migrant worker needs to understand the item of the policy of protection toward Indonesian migrant worker 2017, including the verse about political right. **Fifth**, the migrant worker needs to get the explanation that there are must be a different perspective from people, different support, even involved as a successful team. Moreover, that thing is

no matter as long as they in line with democratic value. Indonesian migrant worker can see and understand that participating in the election is a compulsion.

It is important for Indonesian government to always push Malaysian government to come and contribute in the effort of the Indonesian migrant worker's protection. This thing because of neighbour stated, the existing of Indonesian migrant workers also contribute in the Malaysia's development to become one of the advanced state in Asia. In the term of doing political education to increase the number of political participation, there are obstacles; First: internal obstacle. One of the existing obstacles, is the weakness of policy for the election agenda abroad. According to the supervision and report from Migrant CARE, 2009 election is the worse election in Indonesia. This evaluation also stated by Constitutional Court (MK) while giving the decision of election report's controversy (Hidayah, 2015). Law of No.10/2008 about Election of DPR, DPD and DPRD definitely being the base of law for Indonesia's election.

Many problems occur in the election of Indonesia. Started from the actor, the policy making process until the policy implementation. All those element being determination in the succeed of the election. There are several articles in the law of 2008 that accommodated practical mechanism of the existing election. Several problems occur, need to be the serious attention for the revision in the future. In the law of No.10/2008 there are several articles that show the event's clause; the article of 41-46 about the clause of voter's registration, article of 157-171 about the vote levies and article of 172-182 about the vote calculation.

However, the law above that ruled the election did not pay attention to the important of political education, socialization information, or the clearness of information on the election. The quality of election's policy that has not mention the articles specifically, and protection policy that did not mention the point of Indonesian worker's votes as the political right, showed the weakness of election policy. The quality of policy has an impact to the quantity and quality of political participation of Indonesian migrant workers that participated in the election of 2009 and 2014.

According to Meredith Rolfe, voter compare to non voter, could be seen from the political interest. Strong partisan, care to the outcome of election, prefer to choose compare to weak partisan and careless on the existing result. The voters more having an education and skill that needed to register

and understand how they can reach the polling station and get the ballot paper, compare to who do not vote. In the end, citizen prefer to vote or not, if they family, friend or roommate also vote (Rolfe, 2012).

Beside the understanding and information about how the working atmosphere of Indonesian migrant workers, they also have to be introduced by the policy that relate to the protection policy of Indonesian migrant workers in the existing destination country. And how is the right that have to be owned related to the political right. How they have to be good Indonesian citizen by giving their political right while the election happens. In the effort of increasing the political participation of Indonesian migrant workers, Migrant CARE as the NGO that pay attention to the protection of Indonesian migrant workers, made a module of political education for Indonesian migrant workers in 2014. That module teach to Indonesian migrant workers about the understanding of politics, then explained in that module that politics is so close with our lives. As each individual wants a better life for him/her, so he/she struggle to get that, and he/she made a political process in that struggling.

The election intend to votes the people's representative (senator). So that, Indonesian migrant workers have to vote the right person that can speak up about the needs of Indonesian migrant workers. Election is important for Indonesian migrant workers for the several reasons:

- a. Relate to the policy (Indonesian migrant worker's participation will give an impact to the policy.)
- b. Election is the moment to change the fate toward the policy that supported the Indonesian migrant workers.
- c. As the media of aspiration distribution of needs of Indonesian migrant workers.
- d. To participate and specify the leader that considered support the need of migrant workers.
- e. Being part of the people that struggling for their right that still abandoned.
- f. Using the basic right that ruled in the constitution (participated politically).
- g. As the political participation for Indonesian migrant workers.
- h. Participated in being responsible as the Indonesian citizen.
- i. Indonesian migrant workers can involved directly in politics, and can giving their rights (migrantcare.net, 2017).

Also, there are several obstacles from abroad. Political participation is not only addressed to

Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia, but also the administrator institution abroad. In the law of 2008, articles 41 and 42, Indonesia's representative has a clear mandate to provide the potential data of voters abroad. Those mandate mean the guarantee for each Indonesian citizen abroad to vote. In the law of No.22/2007 about the election administrator, there are PPLN (committee of the election abroad) and KPPSLN (the administrator club of vote levies abroad) that made by KPU for election abroad. Each club has their own task. PPLN and KPPSLN also KBRI/KJRI and supervisor committee abroad (Panwaslu LN) did coordination to held the event of election abroad. In that context, all elements that involved in, has to have the good political education.

The coordination among KPPSLN, PPLN, Panwaslu LN, KBRI/KJRI being difficult. According to the interview with Siti Badriyah, at that time KBRI showed their siding toward one of the president candidate. Several staff also seemed siding toward one of president candidate, and many Indonesian migrant workers at that time felt disappointed because had enthusiastic to vote. Polling station around that being the committee initiative, only came to several places that being the source of voting for one of the candidates. The committee that came from KBRI have to be selected, do not making side to one of candidates (Badriyah, 2017).

In the election, proved that there are voting right universally. This voting right is one of the fundamental precondition for the state that adopted modern constitutional democracy. Dieter Nohlen stated that "The right to vote, along with the freedom of expression, assembly, association, and press, is one of the fundamental requirements of modern constitutional democracy" (Lipset, 1995). If so, the effort to make sure that each Indonesian citizen has a voting right and can choose, is the format of accommodating toward universal voting right, either that citizen is in his/her country or in another country.

5 CONCLUSION

The political enhancement of participation of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia on 2014 election compared to 2009, did not correlate directly toward the better mechanism of the election. That enhancement is more about the raising of the new figure, that can be considered, and expected could accommodate the interest of migrant workers in term of the policy. The appearing of Joko Widodo as one of the contestants are expected to give migrant workers motivation to participate actively in the

election of 2014. In the end, the number of participants increased significantly, and migrant workers start becoming an active voter and participant.

The government socialized the political education as an essential way to improve the political participation of Indonesian migrant worker in Malaysia in the election. The government also went through several ways to improve the number of political participation; (1) Documents status arrangement of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia, (2) Fixing the system and mechanism of voting by picking up the ball out and several other practical ways.

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