

Factors Causing Conflict in Village Head Election (Pilkades) in Luwu District, South Sulawesi Province Year 2019

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Abstract:- Unrepresented voter rights in the Village Head Election in South Sulawesi, including in Luwu Regency, has led to social conflicts in the community. Thus, this research aims to examine and identify the factors causing conflict in the Pilkades in Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi during 2019. This research was conducted with a qualitative approach in Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi, in four conflicting villages during the 2019 Pilkades: Mappetajang, Belopa, Cimpu, and Uroso village. The study results show that the factors causing conflict include differences in choices, conflict of interest between groups, dissemination of false information (hoax) as part of a black campaign, poor administration and socialization, fanatic partiality and mass mobilization. Reconciliation is needed through conflict management by mapping the roles of actors, structures (implementers of *Pilkades*), and other social groups that contribute to local democracy (*Pilkades*). Information media, both offline and online, can be used to socialize the rules and tools of the village head election to prevent information polarization and reduce potential conflicts. A strict monitoring system is required through the active participation of village head election officials, state apparatus, religious and community leaders, and independent monitoring groups to oversee village elections. The post-conflict resolution involving all stakeholders through legal processes and mediation is needed to evaluate the sustainability of local democracy and increase the political education capacity of communities.

Keywords: Conflict, Village Head Election, Kabupaten Luwu, Sulawesi Selatan.

1. Introduction

In the post-reform period, the Village Government mechanism became part of the Government of Indonesia. Before the enactment of Law No. 6 of 2014, which regulates how village government mechanisms become part of the Indonesian Government, Law No. 72 of 2005 concerning Villages constructed the village as a traditional medium. Village heads election is inseparable from the dynamics of political competition, as a study by ((Teguh Setyabudi et al., 2020) on the dynamics of village head elections concludes that *Pilkades* is not only about power struggles or how campaign strategies are structured to gain support from the community, more than that, the *Pilkades* involves prestige, pride, and dignity so that the process often provokes community conflict.

Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages explains that the village, as part of the local government is authorized to regulate and manage government affairs and the interests of the local community based on community initiatives, origin rights, and/or traditional rights that are recognized and respected in the Indonesian government system. Government is inseparable from the problems in regulating citizens' lives, especially those related to village head election that causes conflict. Article 31 paragraph (1) states that the Village Head Election is carried out simultaneously in all districts/cities; and paragraph (2) that the Regency/Municipal Government determines the policy of implementing the Village Head Election simultaneously, as referred to in paragraph (1) with Regency/City regional regulations. Article 34 explains that the Village Head Election is direct, general, free, confidential, honest, and fair. The election of the Village Head is carried out through the stages of registration, voting, and determination of results.

The election of the Village Head is a representation of democracy from the people, for the people and by the people, as (Silaban et al., 2013) states that democracy is "Government of the people, by the people, for the people. (Istania, 2009) adds that local democracy is achieved when it fulfils several aspects; (1) participation from the community; (2) accountable and transparent resource management by the community; and (3) responsively useful for the benefit of the community. These three aspects are intended to build local citizenship through a local democratic process that brings decentralization. One form of local democracy is the Village Head Election.

Based on information obtained from the community and media, both printed and online, several village head elections in Luwu Regency were tinged with tensions between communities, leading to conflicts. Some factors causing this include money politics with a vote price range of IDR 1.000.000 per voter, as happened in Belopa Village, Belopa District and in Mapetajang Village, North Bastem District (makassar.sindonews.com, 20 September 2019). In addition, the public said that money politics practice was performed openly by some candidates, which impacted community protests that led to conflicts (Rabbani, 2013). The hegemony of the community towards community leaders is still powerful. Community leaders have different strategies for directing voters to vote for their chosen candidate. The practice of money politics and threats are used frequently so that differences in the votes of village heads lead to quite tight competition (Romlah, 2017).

The next contributing factor is the lack of socialization from the organizing committee. This factor has caused some candidates not to be accommodated in the village head election contestation, thus triggering community protests that lead to conflict. Upheavals and inequalities have occurred in every Village Head Election event. Based on the study, abstention in village head elections is one of the causes of poor socialization of village head candidates (Muhammad Elwan, 2019) and (Thomas, 2007). Based on the above explanation, we would like to examine and find the factors causing the Pilkades conflict in Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi in 2019.

2. Research Methodology

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach in Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi, in four villages that experienced conflict during the 2019 *Pilkades*: Mappetajang, Belopa, Cimpu, and Uraso. The unit of analysis in this study is the actors involved in the village head election conflict, i.e. the Head of Community and Village Empowerment Agency, Luwu Regency; Head of Regional People's Representative (DPRD) of Luwu Regency; Head of *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS) Luwu Regency; Community Leaders of Uroso Village; Community Leader of Belopa Village; Community Leader of Mappetajang Village; Community Leader of North Bastem; Member of the Regional People's Representative Council of the *Partai Amanat Nasional*; Community Leaders of Mappetajang Village; Cimpu Village Youth Leaders; Head of Uroso Village; and secretary of Belopa Village. The research instrument was in-depth interviews with triangulated data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

3. Result And Discussion

Differences of opinion between individuals and groups of each candidate's supporters lead to open manifestations of conflict, intimidation and physical violence. Frontal conflict manifestations after village elections are familiar to villagers considering the numerous elements of political interest. Conflicts between groups of citizens often occur after village head elections, considering that elections are held directly, and constituents have candidates they want to win in order to realize their interests.

Factors causing vertical and horizontal conflicts after the *Pilkades* are:

a. Indiscretion in responding to different choice

The *Pilkades* conflict in Luwu Regency began with an election process characterized by differences in choice and support among voters. The difference caused conflict between the two parties until the village election campaign season started in Luwu Regency. At the time of the campaign, each faction was on guard every night, even suspecting each other between supporters. This condition tenses the village atmosphere. The confrontation eventually occurs after open conflict, where conflicted individuals are gathered to discuss their differences. Confrontation allows different parties to openly discuss their feelings towards each other (Warioba, 2008).

These differences in choice include differences in attitudes and preference. Every human being has the instinct to show different tendencies and preference towards candidates with congruent visions and thoughts. Differences in attitudes and preference are common and sometimes cause social conflict since not everyone shares the same vision. Candidates can build a good first impression with their potential constituents because of the similarity of characteristics (Suwarso, 2016).

The dynamics that occur in society need to be addressed wisely. The potential for conflict due to choices difference occurs relatively often in the community. For example, one community group tries to retain an incumbent candidate to perpetuate his term of office. In contrast, some other community groups aim to bring in other candidates who bring new ideas to change and develop the local potential of the village. The following is the opinion of the Chairperson of the Luwu Regency DPRD regarding the triggers of conflict due to difference in choice:

“One of the causes of the *Pilkades* conflict is the difference in choices among supporters. In addition, it was also triggered by political gambling involving unscrupulous win/lose actors in the *Pilkades*. They are trying to get the candidate to win the battle by betting money. External provocations from residents who once lived there and have changed their domicile in other villages or districts cannot be avoided. The provocation act includes attacking the winning party with money politic issues. This conflict happened in several villages in Luwu Regency.”

The same opinion was also conveyed by community leaders in Bastem District as follows:

“Differences in choice are also a factor driving conflicts. However, if society is mature in responding to differences, the conflict will not arise. All these conflicts occur because of the different interests of each candidate and their supporters”.

According to the Belopa Village Community Leader, the difference in choice is part of democracy that must be addressed maturely:

“Differences in choice are part of democracy. Differences in choice occur because of differences in goals between the two parties. It can also occur between individuals in two villages, triggering conflicts between community groups. Therefore, differences in choices must be addressed maturely, with high-minded and being a statesman”.

The life of the villagers is tinged by the awareness of the shared conditions with people in certain communities. Solidarity gets stronger when external pressure or interference exist. Interference from outside has the same impetus: a sense of solidarity to defend or fight for the group in achieving specific goals, for example, winning the candidate nominated by each group. This condition became unstable due to political conflicts ranging from general elections, local elections to village elections. As stated by the Youth Leader of the Bastem District of Luwu Regency that:

“Implementing local democracy, including the *Pilkades*, has resulted in conflicts in the village due to differences in political choices. Initially, the community united and had a sense of kinship. However, the implementation of democracy triggers conflict in the community. This all happened as an effort to mature the community in the implementation of a healthy and quality democracy.”

b. Conflict of interest between community group

Another factor that triggers the conflict in *Pilkades* is the conflict of interest between community groups. This conflict is caused by differences in the goals and vision of each group involving many people simultaneously. Each community group considers its candidate the most suitable to lead the village. On the other hand, the opposing group also thinks so and does not accept their candidate's loss. This situation was supported by the member of the Luwu Regency DPRD regarding the triggers of conflict due to differences in community or pragmatic interests:

“Factors causing the *Pilkades* conflict are differences in interests among the community. This interest is due to the goals achieved when winning the *Pilkades*. One of the goals of interest is gambling with fantastic profits”.

The results of the interview with the Belopa Village Secretary also stated that:

“Conflict of interest in this case is between the incumbent and the village head who ran for office and was won by the incumbent who had previously been the village head. This causes polarized supporters and has an impact on *Pilkades* disputes due to immaturity in practicing democracy.”

This pragmatic attitude is embedded in public awareness at the individual, elite, and mass levels. As a result, organizing village head elections leads to material compensation transactions. This practice becomes even more explicit during an election, as observed from buying and selling votes, including during the *Pilkades*. The implementation of democracy is a minimum benchmark to measure how far democracy can be implemented in villages in Luwu Regency. Political domination should be purified into efforts to create a power of authority from the village level. Building political awareness since the beginning of the election is a momentum to build networks and structural relations at the village government level. The election is the space for local political actors to play their role in maintaining their networks in the villages. Cause-and-effect relationships relate to politics, particularly power and competition for limited resources (Goodhand, 1999). As the Belopa Village community leader said that:

“Politics in the village should only be distorted into a struggle for material power because it will only reproduce a series of problems that form a vicious circle. This is where the importance of rational choices is raised, which means that the *Pilkades*, from upstream to downstream, must rely on rational considerations and reject money politics. Rational considerations must be disseminated as widely as possible so that the community chooses a candidate who is competent in developing their village. That is the task of political actors to perform regeneration efforts for community leaders to become the future village leaders”.

The policy of simultaneous village head elections should make the community to choose quality leaders considerately. However, what has happened has put the competing power struggles in a dilemma. The domination of power leads to choosing between obtaining broad relations or strengthening the institutions of productive cooperative networks. Apparently, most interest groups are more obsessed in gaining domination of power than building visionary village government institutions.

c. Dissemination of false information (hoax)

Misunderstanding is one of the things that contradict social conditions and cause miscommunication between groups/individuals, which in turn impacts the spread of false information that drives conflict. One of the causes of this condition is poor communication skills. Therefore, good communication in terms of giving and receiving information is needed. In this digital era, the reality of geography and social structures with internet access can gain equal access to the democratic process for all fields and all communities (Aziz & Hasna, 2020).

Some information received by one person can be twisted if the purpose of the information is different from the one sent by another person. This misunderstanding often starts from insignificant things, such as daily life, to the local political elite's issues that affect people's lives. Misunderstanding in the *Pilkades* led to a prolonged conflict from prior to the election until post-election. This misunderstanding is related to the spread of false information (hoaxes), including the issue of money politics by a candidate, inflating votes, the issue of a candidate's bad behavior, and other news that has not been proven true. The spread of hoaxes increases and becomes "poison" for democracy itself. Therefore, limiting hoaxes or specifically blocking social media that spread misleading information should be done to "cure" and save the democracy that is "sickened" by the hoax virus in the current digital era that uses mass media as a political tool (Pramono & Changming, 2019). The results of the interview with the Belopa Village Secretary stated that:

“Miscommunication between village head candidates and supporters and a lack of socialization resulted in misunderstandings. This problem led to the election of village heads going badly”.

As stated by the Youth Leader of Bastem District, Luwu Regency that:

“Conflicts are no longer new issues, but they still occur due to immaturity behavior and miscommunication in responding to the village head election contestation (*Pilkades*). For example, the DPT is the reason for the conflict, even though it has been determined in the process, plenary meeting, etc. In the *Pilkades* election, there should be no one else in the head-to-head contest, the open conflict room when one of the candidates loses”.

As the Head of Mappetajang Village said:

“Minor problems whose truth is not yet obvious can lead to disunion between each support group to the point of hating and even insulting each other. All *Pilkades* conflicts arise because each party wants to take advantage of positions to control the government following their respective interests”.

This statement also supported by an interview with youth leaders of Luwu Regency who stated that:

“There are several reasons why conflicts between groups after the election of village heads often lead to disputes. This is because each group prioritizes its ego, and both do not want to lose. Certain groups do not want to acknowledge and admit others' wins when they lose. Things like this can cause conflict in the community due to social jealousy that arises from disappointment due to failure in the village head election.”.

According to the village head, the disputes occur repeatedly. The conflict can potentially provoke hostility and destruction if not appropriately managed. Social commitment is caused by problems in economic, political, religious and other aspects. *Pilkades* contestants often carry out allegations of money politics to win the competition dishonestly. Likewise, gamblers' role in distributing money to the public is to choose certain contestants hoping that if the supported candidate wins, they will gain a much bigger profit. This practice risks creating conflict between supporters of the village head candidate because the *Pilkades* are considered unfair. The political debate around land reform and social services provides an opportunity to form new alliances across conflicting identities (Sue, 2001). As the Chairperson of the Luwu Regency DPRD explained:

“Social conflicts related to the *Pilkades* are caused by gambling players who become win-lose (betting) actors in the election. These actors are trying to get their candidates to win the competition. This gambling practice is not only carried out by individuals but also in groups. This practice happened in several villages in Luwu Regency.”.

In addition to economic and political factors, blind fanaticism in supporting certain candidates and the interest in winning one candidate is also the cause of the *Pilkades* conflict. The factor in the conflict between supporters of the village head candidate was the alleged mistake of the village head election committee, which was not transparent in counting the votes to the detriment of one group of village head candidates and their supporters. As explained by members of the DPRD from the PAN faction and a community leader in Cimpu Village,:

“After the vote count for the Village Head Election, the losing party protested to the committee. They do not accept their loss by resorting to violence between groups”.

These conflicts affect all aspects of people's lives which as a whole have an impact on social relations between communities. Even relations between families are affected by this situation, so family values and blood relations fade and are very concerning because of the different aspects of support in the *Pilkades*. This is generally because the Village Head candidates are people who is closely related or even a family.

d. Poor administration and socialization of village election rules

The following explanation is based on a study about the problems in the *Pilkades* in Luwu Regency during 2019. The right of all who vote in the *Pilkades* should be accommodated properly through careful planning. The factors that led to simultaneous village head election conflicts in 2019 were poor administration and socialization. In addition, experts and public relations services are also needed to assist candidates so that they can provide good democratic advice (Dhani et al., 2015). Conflict management is also needed as a step to limit, reduce, and prevent conflict (Miller, 2005).

First, poor administration became a source of problems in the simultaneous village head elections (*Pilkades*). Poor administration in direct *Pilkades* led to a dispute over election results. Several administrative matters, such as population data collection and updating of voter candidate data, can be a solution so that the election process takes place as it should. Based on the information given by the Belopa Village Community Leader:

“The *Pilkades* conflict occurred because of a dispute over the vote count results. That conflicts occurred because of a structured, systematic and massive (TSM) dispute over results and processes. The Constitutional Court

created the norm for the sake of justice, not only from the results but also from the evidence of violations in the results of the vote count C1”.

Second, inadequate socialization during the simultaneous *Pilkades* in 2019 in several villages in Luwu Regency resulted in post-election conflicts. Socialization before the election should be held as the main focus in the success of local democratic activities at the village level. In addition, during the socialization process, it is also necessary to emphasize that the community must be politically critical, and the village head candidate must be able to accept the results of the people's choices. As explained by members of the DPRD from the PAN faction and a community leader in Cimpu Village:

“Another factor that causes conflict is the lack of socialization by the organizing committee. The ballot did not reach the voters until the day of the *Pilkades*”.

The Belopa Village Secretary stated that:

“Poor administration and socialization in the *Pilkades* induce poor democratic process and massive indications of fraud committed by interested parties”.

Thus, the administration must be strengthened, and socialization must be improved so that the *Pilkades* run well and targeted. The direct *Pilkades* allows the people to elect regional heads directly so that they can use their right to vote intelligently with critical-rational considerations based on a vision and excellent work program.

e. Fanatical Partisanship and Mass Mobilization

The partisanship of unscrupulous village officer and members of the BPD is also the cause of social conflicts related to the *Pilkades*. Officials who are supposed to be neutral in the election process have become individuals who openly play fraud in support of the incumbent. Likewise, mass mobilization from outside the village also causes conflict in the community. Interviews with Cimpu village youth leaders stated that:

“There is a strong suspicion that the elected head of Cimpu Village arranged a fake domicile certificate to mobilize voters from other areas who are not residents of Cimpu Village. The advantage for the incumbent is that all the election committees involved are village officers elected in the *Pilkades* of Cimpu Village”.

Horizontal conflicts in the community occur because some people feel aggrieved since they do not obtain benefits from the village head's programs and policies. The origins of cultural, economic, and political relations are the struggle for land, social status, and energy resources, which are limited and unequal in society. Unfair social distribution is seen as a form of inequality in society. Injustice provokes certain parties to obtain and increase social resources as much as possible ((Ezirim & Ekenedirichukwu, 2009)

The feud between residents also causes vertical conflicts between the Village Head and his residents. The community protests against policies that are not aligned with the community's aspirations. This vertical conflict leads to violence and political impacts on community groups criticizing the policy. When the problem is personal and becomes a political grudge, it polarises society. Disputes in the election and post-pilkades are highly possible due to differences of opinion among community groups. All village officials should be able to see the conditions in their communities to prevent conflicts in potential sectors, especially in areas where community groups gather. As stated by a member of the Luwu Regency DPRD from the Partai Keadilan Sosial faction that:

“Minor disagreements can lead to conflict between the two groups. Egos built to defend each other's opinions and self-esteem become the root of personal and group disputes that spontaneously awaken their consciousness. Differences like this gradually become conflicts that cause social polarization in society”.

The *Pilkades* conflict in Luwu Regency initiated resistance from the community to obtain justice and legal assurance in the election of village heads. The legal resistance was carried out openly through demonstrations at the Luwu district regent's office, occupying the local village government area, and even physical fights between supporters. Everything was done to break the domination of government power in the *Pilkades* process to obtain voter justice and apparent legal certainty. According to (Belton, 2005), five elements of the law are expected by society: law-abiding government, equality in law, the rule of law, predictable and efficient decisions, and human

rights. Various village head election conflicts simultaneously show the struggle for power areas. This can trigger a power conflict between the government to maintain the area of power at the village government level. As explained by members of the DPRD from the PAN faction and a community leader in Cimpu Village:

“The community's effort to get justice in the Pilkades conflict is to hold a demonstration at the Luwu Regency regent's office, as the Cimpu Village community did. They occupied the area of the local village government, as happened in Uroso Village. Physical clashes also occurred between supporters, as happened in Mappetajang Village”.

This is supported by the statement of the Head of the Luwu Regency DPRD which explains that:

“One of the impacts of the conflict is that a piece of land donated to the public interest, for example, a football field, can be taken back by the family of a losing candidate. This includes the village head's office, which has been sealed, as happened in Uraso Village, North Bastem District, which to this day cannot be used. This caused the elected village head to rebuild the village office not far from the old office. A similar conflict happened in Pantilang Village, where the elected village head could not reside in the village office because it was hindered by the opposing party who lost in the Pilkades. Hence, he arranged the office to his house”.

This condition is very stressful for the social life of the community. A prolonged conflict will happen if the situation is not handled carefully. The solution for this impact is through a power distribution approach by embracing the opposing party to reconcile with the losing party, one of which is by giving a position at the village office following the agreement. In addition, if the conflict persists, political figures recommend continuing through the legal process involving legal institutions. Conflict management interventions also need much emphasis on institutional design and not enough on state legitimacy (Luckham et al., 2001).

4. Conclusion

Factors that cause conflict include indiscretion in responding to different choices, conflict of interest between groups, dissemination of false information (hoax), poor administration and socialization, and partiality and mobilization. Based on the analysis of interview data, these following actions are needed to address those conflicts:

- a. Increase the role of the government and security forces in reducing all causes of conflict as a prevention effort.
- b. A facilitator is needed to encourage reconciliation through conflict management by mapping out the roles of actors, structures (Pilkades officer), and other social groups that contribute to local democracy (Pilkades).
- c. Information media, both offline and online, can be used as a medium for socializing the village head election rules to prevent information polarization and reduce potential conflicts.
- d. A strict monitoring system is required through the active participation of village head election officials, state apparatus, religious and community leaders, and independent monitoring groups to oversee the implementation of village elections.
- e. The practice of money politics as one trigger for fraud and unfairness in the village head election needs to be anticipated by building transparency, public accountability, and political participation. Strict monitoring and the sanctioning system can also be implemented to minimize the potential for fraud that cause political conflict.
- f. Post-conflict resolution is required by involving all stakeholders through legal processes and mediation to evaluate the sustainability of local democracy and increase the political education capacity of rural communities.

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