



The Role of the North Sumatra Provincial Bawaslu in the 2019 Election: Performance Analysis and Design of an Adaptive Supervision Model

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of the North Sumatra Provincial Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) in implementing the 2019 Election and formulate a more effective and contextual supervision model. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation from informants such as Bawaslu and KPU commissioners, academics, party administrators, and the public. The results of the study show that the role of Bawaslu has not been optimal due to various obstacles, including limited human resources, weak coordination between institutions, and a recruitment process that is not transparent and full of political interests. Election supervision tends to be administrative and formal, with no strict law enforcement measures. For this reason, the researcher offers a supervision model that integrates the role indicators, according to Biddle and Thomas, with the three types of Donnelly supervision and adds two important indicators: the quality and quantity of human resources. This model is expected to strengthen the professionalism and effectiveness of Bawaslu's supervision in overseeing democratic, honest, fair, and integrity elections and increase public trust in the region's election process.

Keywords: Bawaslu's Role; Election; Surveillance Model.

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INTRODUCTION

The implementation of good governance in a democratic country cannot be separated from the principle that power comes from the people and is carried out to meet the interests and welfare of the people. Elections are the primary means of implementing democracy, where the people are given space to participate directly in determining the direction of the country's leadership (Syafriadi & Santri, 2023; Tambun et al., 2024). However, in practice, democracy does not necessarily run ideally. Various problems remain, such as low public political education, weak protection of freedom of opinion, and unprofessionalism of election-organizing institutions. These things often lead to unfair and non-transparent elections (Delmana et al., 2019; Putra, 2018).

After the reform, Indonesia entered a new era of democracy, which was marked by holding direct elections. Direct elections are expected to solve the problem of representation and legitimacy of power and are a significant marker of democratic consolidation. However, electoral democracy is also inseparable from threats. In many cases, the elected elite seeks to maintain power by systematically strengthening its power structure, even creating political successors who remain in control (Damanik et al., 2010; Fitriani, 2021; Madani, 2023). Therefore, a strong and independent oversight mechanism is needed to ensure the integrity of the electoral process and prevent the occurrence of pseudo-democracy.

Linz and Stepan (1996) propose that a consolidated democracy requires five main conditions: a strong civil society, an autonomous political society, law enforcement, a functional bureaucracy, and an institutionalized economic system. In this context, elections are included in the realm of political society, which has an important function in strengthening the structure of democracy. Political

institutions risk being unaccountable without adequate oversight of elections and losing public trust.

Indonesia's experience in holding democratic elections began at the end of the New Order (Hidayat, 2023; Meima, 2015). The Law on Political Parties and Elections passed in 1999, paved the way for holding free elections. The 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019 elections became essential milestones in the democratization process in Indonesia. However, according to Samuel P. Huntington's view (1991), elections as an instrument of democracy will only be meaningful if they are carried out freely, honestly, and competitively, accompanied by freedom of opinion and guarantees of civil rights protection.

Through Article 22E of the 1945 Constitution, the Indonesian Constitution affirms that elections are held by independent and independent institutions (Ansari, 2020; Mutawalli, 2024). In this case, the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) has a vital supervisory role in ensuring that the election runs according to direct, public, free, confidential, honest, and fair (LUBER and JURDIL). Bawaslu is not only a complement to the General Election Commission (KPU) but an independent institution that functions to supervise all stages of the election. The Constitutional Court Decision Number 11/PUU-VIII/2010 became a strong legal foundation that affirmed the position of Bawaslu as an institution on par with the KPU (Suci et al., 2021; Sulastri et al., 2023).

The duties and authorities of Bawaslu are regulated in detail in Law Number 7 of 2017. Bawaslu is responsible for supervising the election stages, preventing and cracking down on violations, and supervising the neutrality of the state apparatus. In its implementation, Bawaslu is also authorized to receive and follow up on reports of violations, resolve disputes in the election process, and take over the duties of the regional Bawaslu under

certain conditions. Therefore, the existence of Bawaslu is crucial in maintaining the integrity of elections.

However, in implementing the 2019 election in North Sumatra Province, various dynamics and problems indicated that the role of Bawaslu had not been running optimally (Hasibuan et al., 2018; Thariq & Priadi, 2019). The earliest problems arose at the stage of updating voter data. The Voter Data Information System (Sidalih) has experienced many technical obstacles, such as system errors, network problems, and low operator capacity. In addition, coordination between Bawaslu, KPU, Disdukcapil, and other institutions has not been established effectively, resulting in inaccurate voter data.

Another problem arises regarding low public participation, especially regarding awareness of the importance of voting rights. The limited number of supervisory human resources at the village and sub-district levels, as well as geographical conditions that are difficult to reach in several areas, are also challenges in implementing supervisory tasks. The high index of election vulnerability in North Sumatra, especially in the subdimension of voting rights, shows that the problem of voter data is a serious challenge that must be overcome immediately.

In addition, Bawaslu's access to the candidacy information system (SILON) is limited at the candidacy stage. Bawaslu only has access to nomination documents, not candidate requirements documents, making it difficult to verify and validate the process. Similarly, various forms of violations were found at the campaign stage, such as money politics, using state facilities, off-schedule campaigns, and spreading the SARA issue. Unfortunately, the supervision of campaign props and campaign fund reports is still not running optimally.

In terms of logistics and vote recapitulation, the North Sumatra Bawaslu faces various challenges, ranging from

untimely logistics distribution to the implementation of re-voting (PSU) that is not in accordance with recommendations. Vote inflation in several regions and differences in data on voting rights users cause uncertainty and public doubt about the election results.

All of these problems show that the election supervision system still needs to be strengthened in terms of regulations, mechanisms, human resources, and coordination between institutions. Strengthening Bawaslu's role must be carried out comprehensively by emphasizing institutional capacity building, modernizing information technology-based supervision systems, and involving civil society in monitoring.

Several previous studies have discussed the role of Bawaslu in implementing elections with diverse focuses. Dissertation Ahab (2022) highlights the weaknesses of Bawaslu in realizing honest and fair elections due to limited authority and low supervisory capacity in the field. Aaron (2016) also emphasizes the need to strengthen Bawaslu's authority, especially in resolving election disputes, even though the primary focus is the Constitutional Court. Meanwhile, Bring It (2014) highlights the role of the KPU and the implementation of regional elections in the growth of democracy, not specifically on Bawaslu. However, most of the research is still limited to normative or legal approaches and has not specifically discussed the role of Bawaslu at the provincial level with specific social and geographical contexts. Therefore, this research offers a new contribution by focusing on the role of the North Sumatra Provincial Bawaslu in supervising all stages of the 2019 election and formulating a more effective and contextual supervision model on regional needs.

This study aims to analyze the role of supervision of the North Sumatra Provincial Bawaslu in implementing the

2019 elections and formulate a more effective and adaptive supervision model as a recommendation for improvement so that the Bawaslu institution can carry out its functions optimally in realizing democratic and integrity elections in the future.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study type to analyze the role of the General Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) of North Sumatra Province in implementing the 2019 Elections. Qualitative research was chosen because it could describe the phenomenon in depth and contextually, especially related to election supervision practices. Case studies are the primary strategy focusing on research on activities, events, and processes in real life in the North Sumatra Provincial Bawaslu. Data was collected through field observations, in-depth interviews, and inductively analyzed documentation to find the patterns and meanings of each finding that were relevant to the research objectives.

The research informants were selected by purposive and snowball sampling, including 17 people from backgrounds such as Bawaslu and KPU commissioners, political party administrators, academics, security forces, and the voting community. The primary data collection techniques are in-depth interviews and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted both directly (face-to-face) and indirectly, with open-ended questions to explore informants' experience, perception, and evaluation of the implementation of election supervision. Secondary data is obtained through literature studies that support conceptual analysis, including regulations, official reports, scientific articles, and other relevant written sources.

Data is analyzed qualitatively through condensation, presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification. Data validity

checks are carried out through source triangulation, member checking, and repeated observation. Researchers also apply internal and external validity through bias clarification, peer-review engagement, and detailed method reporting. Data processing is carried out by classifying primary and secondary data and then interpreting them according to a conceptual framework that measures aspects of the role, supervision, and institutional dynamics of Bawaslu. The entire research process was carried out at the North Sumatra Provincial Bawaslu Office, with an implementation schedule arranged in stages from proposal guidance to the final revision of the dissertation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the Role of Supervision of the North Sumatra Provincial Bawaslu in the Implementation of the 2019 Elections

General elections are a pillar of democracy that guarantees the fundamental rights of citizens. However, not all elections are democratic, as their success is determined by how free, honest, and fair the process is. In this case, the role of Bawaslu is essential to maintain the integrity of the election. The 2019 election brought together two presidential candidates from 2014 and created political tensions in the regions, including North Sumatra. Public polarization, doubts about neutrality, and geographical challenges add to the complexity of the North Sumatra Provincial Bawaslu supervisory task.

In the 2019 election, the North Sumatra Bawaslu supervised all stages until the vote results were determined. The Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin pair won 52%, while PDIP excelled in the legislative elections as the main supporting party. The political dominance of the incumbent is seen at various levels. In this context, the role of Bawaslu is to supervise the technical aspects of the election and ensure the continuation of a process by the principles

of directness, publicity, freedom, confidentiality, honesty, and fairness. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate the performance of the North Sumatra Bawaslu to formulate a more effective supervision model in the future.

1. Commitment to Optimize the Role of Bawaslu

The commitment to optimize the role of Bawaslu in carrying out the 2019 election supervision function in North Sumatra Province is an important highlight in this study. From the perspective of political parties, Bawaslu is seen as an institution with a substantial responsibility to oversee the integrity of the election implementation. One of the party figures, namely the Secretary of the DPD of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle for North Sumatra, explained that philosophically, Bawaslu was formed to ensure that all stages of the election, from the beginning to the end, are under strict and responsible supervision. Elections with integrity are considered an essential foundation for building public trust, which also directly affects the active participation of the community in the democratic process.

From the internal side of the supervisory institution itself, one of the commissioners of the North Sumatra Provincial Bawaslu revealed that his institution always makes maximum efforts in carrying out the direction of the Bawaslu of the Republic of Indonesia, with a commitment to carry out the supervisory function as optimally as possible. This commitment is realized through comprehensive and continuous supervision work during the election stage. This strengthens the view that Bawaslu not only has a formal existence as an institution but also becomes the real hope of the community to oversee free, fair, and honest elections in North Sumatra Province.

However, different views have also emerged from other political parties. The Head of the North Sumatra Golkar Party

DPD Election Winning Agency assessed that although institutionally, the role of Bawaslu is essential and has a strong legal basis, implementing supervision in the field is still not considered optimal. He emphasized that there needs to be a strengthening of the capacity and independence of Bawaslu so that this institution can carry out its duties and functions to the maximum, especially in ensuring that the election process runs fairly and with integrity. This statement indicates that the public's expectations for Bawaslu have not been fully fulfilled because there are still gaps in the implementation of supervision at the operational level.

2. Bawaslu Regulation on General Elections

Regulations are needed as a reference in carrying out their primary duties and functions so that they do not make mistakes. During the election stage, regulations must answer the needs of the series of facts that occur to help organizers carry out their roles optimally.

Regulations are interpreted as general norms and technical work tools that must be available and understood by all election organizers, both the KPU and Bawaslu. The Chairman of the North Sumatra Provincial Bawaslu for the 2018-2023 period emphasized the importance of technical regulations, explaining that technical rules must be prepared and socialized at least three months before the stage begins so that there are no misinterpretations in their implementation. In addition, a supervision syllabus is needed so that the roles of each organizer do not overlap.

However, in practice, implementing norms in the field faces several obstacles, especially in sub-district and village-level supervision. A member of the Medan City Bawaslu explained that delays in the recruitment process and restrictions on the number of supervisors in the field caused a supervisory vacuum at essential stages such as updating voter data and the campaign period. This condition has

implications for the low intensity of supervision and opens up opportunities for violations in these crucial stages. The limited number of supervisors and late assignments are significant obstacles in ensuring that all stages of the election are timely.

From the perspective of the community, this condition is felt real. Several residents revealed that the presence of Bawaslu was not seen significantly during the implementation of the 2019 election in North Sumatra. The community considers that supervision in the field is weak; even in some areas, there are no supervisors. This is a loophole for potential fraud, especially amid fierce competition between legislative candidates. In addition, supervisors at the polling station level who are recruited ahead of the vote are often not equipped with a sufficient understanding of their duties and responsibilities. A former TPS supervisor admitted that he only carried out his duties formally because he did not have adequate debriefing. These findings illustrate that the weak implementation of technical norms and regulations in the recruitment process and the debriefing of supervisors directly impact the low effectiveness of election supervision.

3. Bawaslu's Behavior in the General Election

The Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) 's role in implementing the 2019 Election in North Sumatra Province is not running optimally. In terms of the implementation of supervision, observers said that although Bawaslu has a mandate to supervise every stage of the election, from updating voter data to recapitulation of votes, its presence in the field is not significantly felt. Some parties consider that Bawaslu is only present in formalities to fulfill the administrative aspect but does not have the courage and capacity to execute supervision thoroughly. This practice is exacerbated by the perception

that the role of Bawaslu is more passive and only produces recommendations without being accompanied by concrete actions.

The absence at the village and sub-district levels also strengthens the view that Bawaslu has not functioned optimally. Some polling station supervisors admitted they were not given enough debriefing, so they only performed their duties as supervisors in a mere formality. In addition, there is tension between Bawaslu and the General Election Commission (KPU), where the KPU is considered not to have fully recognized the position of Bawaslu as an equal institution. This is reflected in the obstacles to accessing voter data and the limitations of Bawaslu in following up on candidacy because they are not given full access to the candidacy information system. This institutional rivalry creates a coordination gap that impacts the effectiveness of supervision.

Furthermore, institutions that should be trusted can carry out their functions correctly, but the opposite is obtained. Bawaslu, on many occasions, seems to only carry out the function of "fake controlling" or pseudo-supervision. They are present in official forums, follow every stage, and are involved in various administrative documentation. However, their existence is more of a fulfillment of the formal requirements of democracy than a substantive exercise of supervision. It is as if our democracy only needs to be "seen" being monitored without really being critically monitored. If supervision is carried out to abort obligations or comply with protocols, democracy loses its life. It became a procedural stage that lost substance.

Strengthening Bawaslu's institution and authority is necessary. Recommended products must have stronger legal coercion, or at least they cannot be rejected without transparent and accountable evidence. Otherwise, Bawaslu will continue to be an invisible supervisor whose role is invisible,

and our democracy will continue to be in danger of legalized manipulation.

4. The Dynamics of the General Election

Dynamics and rivalries between organizers occur due to institutional egos in showing their existence. This dynamic should not happen because both the Bawaslu and KPU institutions are a unit that cannot stand alone because both are part of the organizers. The most obvious example is access to strategic data, such as voter data, due to synchronization between the KPU and the Ministry of Home Affairs (form A1-KWK). This data is the primary basis for the implementation of matching and research (coklit) by the ranks of the KPU at the lower level. Bawaslu, as the stage supervisor, is not given adequate access to this data, so the supervision process is not optimal and tends to be formal. When supervisors do not have the same information, transparency becomes an illusion.

In reality, institutional egos often overwhelm the relationship between these two institutions. The KPU and Bawaslu usually follow their respective regulations, KPU Regulations (PKPU) and Bawaslu Regulations (Perbawaslu), which are not always harmonious. Not infrequently, the rules of the two collide, creating chaos in the field. Ideally, when there is a potential conflict or difference in interpretation between regulations, the House of Representatives, as the lawmaker, should be present as a mediator and a director. However, in many cases, the House of Representatives does not perform this function to the maximum. As a result, the KPU continues to move forward with its logic, and Bawaslu is forced to take its path.

This condition gives birth to an overlap of authority and a crisis of legal certainty in the implementation of the election. On the one hand, Bawaslu issued a recommendation based on Perbawaslu; on the other hand, the KPU rejected it on the pretext that it was not by PKPU. Unfortunately, this conflict is not resolved

structurally; instead, it becomes a tug-of-war for interests, ultimately harming the public as the voting owner.

5. Evaluation of the Role of Bawaslu

The assessment of the role of the North Sumatra Provincial General Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) in the 2019 Election can be seen from the positive and negative impressions that arise based on public expectations. This assessment reflects the public and stakeholders' perception of the extent to which Bawaslu carries out its roles and functions effectively. One of the positive assessments was conveyed by the technical organizers, who assessed that the existence of Bawaslu was needed to supervise the running of each stage of the election, especially in updating voter data. Without this supervision, it is feared that there will be negligence or shortcomings in the implementation of the stages by the organizers. However, in practice, good coordination is needed between Bawaslu and the General Election Commission (KPU), so the employment relationship has no hierarchical impression. Harmonization of the implementation of the functions of each institution can be achieved through a uniform understanding of technical instructions and their implementation so that collaboration between organizing institutions can be more effective and contribute to the quality of democratic elections.

On the other hand, a critical assessment shows internal challenges in the Bawaslu institution, especially related to the human resource aspect. Some parties consider that supervision in the field is not optimal due to the limited number of supervisory personnel. These limitations are considered disproportionate to the area and socio-political complexity in North Sumatra Province, so strengthening institutional capacity is very urgent. The problem does not only stop at the numbers but also the quality and integrity of the personnel recruited. In this case, there are

concerns that the Bawaslu recruitment process is often colored by particular political interests, especially when there is support or recommendations from large organizations for commissioner candidates. This has the potential to undermine the independence of institutions and disrupt the objectivity of oversight that should be free from intervention.

The recruitment process for Bawaslu commissioners needs to be reformulated to be more transparent and competency-based, especially for candidates with a legal background and a strong understanding of election regulations. Closed and unprofessional recruitment is considered to hinder the effectiveness of supervision. This was emphasized by the former Bawaslu commissioner, who assessed the need for improvements, including improving the integrity of the selection team. The lack of civil society involvement and public accountability has also weakened the image of Bawaslu. As a result, many of the recommendations issued have no force or legitimacy. This condition is an essential basis for a comprehensive correction to strengthen the role of Bawaslu in maintaining a fair democracy and integrity.

Model of the Role of Bawaslu in General Elections in North Sumatra Province

To strengthen the role of the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) to be more optimal in carrying out its functions and responsibilities, the researcher designed a supervision model based on empirical findings on the implementation of the 2019 election in North Sumatra Province. This model is structured as a conceptual framework that describes supervisory institutions' structure and working mechanism and provides a reference for developing a more effective and professional supervisory system. According to the Great Dictionary of the

Indonesian Language, a model is interpreted as an example, reference, or pattern of something that will be realized. In this context, the model developed aims to be an operational basis and reflect on the lack of Bawaslu supervision in the past.

If you refer to the information data from the discussion, many findings result in the role of Bawaslu not being optimal. The fact obtained is that the role of the provincial Bawaslu in implementing the 2019 General Election in North Sumatra Province has not been optimal due to various factors. A few other things;

a) Commitment to Optimize the Role of Bawaslu

The non-realization of the commitment to optimize the role of the North Sumatra Provincial Bawaslu because the supervisory function that was not visible in the General Election took place illustrates that the supervisory work carried out in the field by the Bawaslu agency has not been optimal in carrying out its role.

b) Bawaslu Regulation on General Elections

The role of Bawaslu in supervision is not carried out optimally due to regulations that limit the time of supervisors at the polling station level and the lack of supervisors at the sub-district and village levels. Thus, the stages of the election are not optimally supervised.

c) Bawaslu's Behavior in the General Election

The non-optimal form of Bawaslu behavior is marked by Bawaslu's low performance in overcoming fraud in the 2019 election in North Sumatra Province and its lack of firm action against the fraud findings in the election.

d) The Dynamics of the General Election

There is a difference in understanding the role of each of the two organizers. Differences in understanding can be detrimental to voters and election participants, especially for Bawaslu

Agencies. The supervision carried out became a paradox, and finally, the role of Bawaslu became less optimal. Both Bawaslu and the KPU always have their own arguments for understanding and regulations.

e) Evaluation of the Role of Bawaslu

The role of Bawaslu is not optimally related to the competence and independence of Bawaslu commissioners. The recruitment system is the basis for forming institutional independence. However, the problem with Bawaslu recruitment is that it is very close to interests so that it can sacrifice the integrity of the organizers.

By looking at the factors that make the role of the Bawaslu Institution not optimal above, the researcher will make an effective model to be used as a recommendation for improvement in realizing the supervision system implemented by the Bawaslu Institution in the implementation of General Elections in North Sumatra Province with the naming of the "provincial Bawaslu role model" With the discovery of the role model of the provincial Bawaslu, the researcher believes that the role of Bawaslu during the implementation of the upcoming elections can carry out its functions optimally and answer the basic needs of the Bawaslu institution to realize elections with integrity.

The importance of quality and quantity indicators based on the facts that occur; quality concerns the standard of knowledge or understanding possessed by members or commissioners in the Bawaslu institution. These qualities are not necessarily carried out instantly with education, training, or technical guidance but start from the initial selection (recruitment). Likewise, in other institutions, if members do not have quality in a particular institution, the role carried out will not be optimal or professional.

Meanwhile, quantity explains the number of members and commissioners in Bawaslu because the broader the scope of

work, the more human resources are needed based on the workload size to achieve the maximum target—for example, supervisors at the village and village levels. So, quantity is one of the indicators found by researchers based on the facts regarding the role of the provincial Bawaslu institution in implementing the General Election in North Sumatra Province in 2019.

CONCLUSION

The role of Bawaslu in implementing the General Election in North Sumatra Province in 2019 refers to data and information from ongoing research that has found many findings that result in the role of the Bawaslu Institution not being optimal. Various obstacles were found, ranging from limited human resources in quantity and quality, weak coordination between election organizers, to lack of access to strategic data such as candidacy information systems and voter data. In addition, the problem of recruiting commissioners and supervisors at the lower level, which is full of interests, also affects the independence and professionalism of the institution. This situation impacts the weak presence of surveillance in the field, the low effectiveness of election law enforcement, and the decline in public trust in election integrity.

In response to these conditions, this study offers a model of the role of the provincial Bawaslu based on the correlation of factors that resulted in the role of Bawaslu in the 2019 election is not optimal by designing a more comprehensive and contextual surveillance system. This model not only explains empirical phenomena but also serves as a prediction and simulation tool for designing surveillance policies that are more adaptive, professional, and responsive to local challenges. With the implementation of this model, it is hoped that the North Sumatra Provincial Bawaslu

will be able to strengthen its role in overseeing honest, fair, and integrity elections as the primary foundation of democracy.

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