Simultaneous Politicization of Identities to Increase Candidates' Electability: A Case Study of the 2020 Regional Head Election of East Sumba Regency

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KEYWORDS

Abstract

Identity politicization became popular in areas of Indonesia after the 1998 reform. Political candidates use this practice to increase electability and acquire power in electoral political contestation. This condition also occurred at the 2020 Regional Head Election (Pilkada) in the East Sumba Regency. The study aims to investigate identity politicization in various forms and its impact on the 2020 Pilkada in the East Sumba Regency. This research used a qualitative method with a case study approach. The findings indicate politicized identities during the Pilkada, including candidates' religious and ethnic identities, areas of origin, social stratification, and government bureaucracy. An interesting finding in this study is the politicization of the various identities existing in society and was carried out simultaneously to gain voter support to increase the candidates' electability. The academic contribution of this research is to exploit the full potential of identity simultaneously, including kabihu identity, to respond to the candidates' practical political interests to gain power despite the impact on segregation and polarization in society and diluting Sumba cultural values. Furthermore, this study advises the government on how to improve the quality of future Pilkada.

Introduction

The post-authoritarian New Order since 1998, which promotes democratic principles, has reformed the government system by introducing regional autonomy. After the lengthy and authoritarian New Order regime ended in May 1998, Indonesia underwent a democratization process (Van Klinken, 2007).

At its most fundamental and primordial, the guiding principle of democracy is "every individual has the right to vote," which grants states, communities, and territories the ability to determine their own destinies. This process entails modifying established power structures' capacity for negotiation, preservation, and prospective advancement (Thombs, 2019). (See also: (Graham & Svolik, 2020) (Løland, 2021) (Masabo, 2023)
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(Acemoglu et al., 2019; Can & Korkmaz, 2019; Heldeweg & Saintier, 2020; Ignazi, 2020; Løland, 2021; Maerz et al., 2020; Mietzner, 2020; Pap, 2023; Pesch et al., 2019; Pierskalla et al., 2021; Sauermann et al., 2020; Toepfer et al., 2020; Ufen, 2020) However, Mietzner also examines the proliferation of authoritarian ideologies in Indonesia, wherein executive bodies, opposition factions, and elite groups take individual initiatives that contradict liberal principles. This fact has led to a substantial deterioration in the quality of state democracy, as evidenced by electoral splintering, identity politics, and executive illiberalism (Mietzner, 2020).

The delegation of regional autonomy authority from the central government has enabled local governments to oversee and regulate (Amin et al., 2019; Wijoyo, 2015). Local governments may organize electoral democracy to exercise regional autonomy, such as the direct election of the regency chief (Hidayat, 2021). The achievement of electoral democracy's objectives is contingent on the execution of effective, efficient, and highly integrated general elections (James et al., 2019).

Since 2005, the government of East Sumba Regency has been given the authority to elect its district head directly. The 2021-2024 Pilkada for the East Sumba Regency was administered on December 9, 2020 (Indonesia, 2004, 2016). Nevertheless, the existing body of research concerning the phenomenon of identity politicization in the context of political contestation for the election of the district head—including prior eras—remains extremely scarce. Research on the politicization of diverse societal identities has been conspicuously absent from the East Sumba district from the direct election of the regency chief in 2005-2010 until the most recent period of 2020-2024.

Research on the identity forms involved during the 2020 electoral political contest in the East Sumba Regency for the election of the district chief remains extremely limited. Candidates exploited every available opportunity to pursue their own interests, including the politicization of societal identities. Kabihu identities (clan), religions, ethnicity, candidates' region of origin, social stratification, government bureaucracy, and other political identities were all potential identities that could politicized to increase candidates' electability. (Boyer et al., 2022) reveal the influence of cultural identity on election policies and outcomes when voters exhibit "behavioral" characteristics. Voters evaluate political and economic events through the lens of their partisan identification. They tend to bestow disproportionate praise or inadequate retribution upon candidates who share their cultural identity (Boyer et al., 2022). This study analyzes potential identities during the 2020 political contestation in the East Sumba Regency.

In a similar vein, an area that has yet to be extensively investigated is the influence of identity politicization practices on the cultural values of Sumba culture, social order, and government bureaucracy. Hence, this study is critical in filling in the gaps due to identity politics.

At present, there is no discernible resolution to prevent the practices of identity politicization from manifesting itself in political contestation within the East Sumba Regency. Consequently, it is necessary to advocate and educate all citizens, notably the elected, regarding how they can recognize and carry out their political rights and responsibilities as law-abiding citizens.

Studies on the manifestations of identity politicization are critical during the East Sumba Regency's 2020 Pilkada. Discussing identity or identity politics is unavoidable.
Charles Taylor, as cited by Fukuyama, posits that identities are "a strong moral idea" that has reached us. This concept transcends cultural boundaries due to its foundation in thymos, a universal property of human psychology. This ethical principle teaches that we all possess an often-overlooked, genuine inner essence, and it exposes the possibility that the external perspective of society may be erroneous and impede progress. This understanding underscores the inherent human desire for acknowledgment and provides the mechanism to articulate the emotions of disappointment that ensue in the absence of such recognition (Fukuyama, 2018).

Regarding membership in various social organizations and positions, Kuhn argues in his writings that individuals possess multiple identities as opposed to a single one. Interaction, complementarity, or reinforcement among these identities is possible. Collective identity, on the other hand, pertains to "social identities that arise from distinctions among sizable groups and possess substantial potential, including those manufactured by variables such as ethnicity, gender, social standing, or age" (Kuhn, 2019).

Identity politics pertains to political strategies that concurrently or simultaneously emphasize group identities yet may function as a pretext for engaging in political behavior. Furthermore, this political notion of identity permits an appreciation of identity as a juncture where heterogeneous identities can converge into a unified whole because of the shared identity that unites them (Brunila & Rossi, 2018). (See also: (Brunila & Rossi, 2018; Chhachhi, 2019; Drozdewski & Matusz, 2021; Ilmonen, 2019; Kabir, 2020; Kaufman, 2019; Knowles et al., 2022; Moran, 2020; Papanek, 2019; Payne & Journell, 2019; Vaara et al., 2021; Ware, 2020; West & Iyengar, 2022; Wijesinghe, 2022; Yuval-Davis, 2019).

Engaging in the politicization of identities to secure more votes for candidates running for district chief can result in societal division and fragmentation. Hence, it is critical that the public receive political education immediately so that they are aware of their political rights and responsibilities. Political education will arguably encourage greater levels of political engagement by providing understanding and knowledge of political processes and how individuals can actively participate. Furthermore, political education contributes to the formation of a robust democracy by cultivating informed and proactive individuals capable of making informed political choices grounded in reality rather than being swayed by propaganda or misinformation. Similarly, individuals can better understand proper authority conduct and preventative measures against authority abuse. Individuals can foster their social responsibility and contribute to formulating more equitable and effective policies through political education. Progress has been made in the ideological and political education sectors during the current era of Internet multimedia technology development. Enhancements have been implemented to the learning environment for students, approaches to ideological and political education have been broadened, and the education system as a whole has been optimized (Yu, 2021; Zhao & Zhang, 2021).

It is common to employ tolerance as a strategy to prevent or alleviate the adverse effects of identity policies, which may result in physical and verbal aggression, social division, and segregation. The function of tolerance in mitigating the adverse consequences of political identity is critical. The resurgence of communication among disparate groups can be facilitated by tolerance, fostering an appreciation for others' experiences. It can stifle the biases and preconceived notions that frequently serve as the bedrock of harmful identity politics. Thus, tolerance can facilitate the resolution of
disputes between diverse groups; in other words, they can develop mutual appreciation and acceptance of one another’s unique qualities. The adverse consequences that facilitate the existence of identity politics can be averted and circumvented under such conditions. Tolerance can contribute to the formation of a more inclusive society in which all members, irrespective of identity, feel valued and accepted. It may assist in alleviating the adverse consequences of identity politics, including but not limited to discrimination. Additionally, the principles of religious tolerance, nondiscrimination, and equality are intertwined with religious liberty. (Arifin et al., 2019). Advocacy for hate speech stands as a highly contentious facet of political tolerance (Armstrong & Wronski, 2019). They observe that the moral principles that underpin hate speech and the stances of existing political parties are two elements that can contribute to a lower tolerance level. They posit that Americans' level of tolerance towards bigoted rhetoric will diminish when it is perceived as contravening specific moral principles, when political parties reject such rhetoric, or when party elites exploit such moral offenses.

This investigation seeks to determine which forms of identity are politicized to increase the electability of East Sumba Regency candidates for the 2020 elections. Furthermore, this study aims to understand the detrimental consequences that the political presence of identities has had on the society of Eastern Sumba, along with endeavors to mitigate them.

Research Methods

This research is qualitative and employs a case study methodology with the research area of the East Sumba district. The target informants comprised a broad spectrum of influential social groups, including public figures, religious figures, youth figures, political parties, organizing institutions (Regional General Elections Commission and General Election Oversight Body), candidates' campaign teams, and relevant bureaucrats. A group of 25 individuals was interviewed as informants. Methods such as documentation studies, non-participation observation, and in-depth interviews were employed to collect the data required for this research (Creswell, 2012).

The data analysis phases of the interpretative model, as outlined by (Miles & Huberman, 1994), encompass the subsequent three stages: firstly, gathering all the essential primary and secondary data; secondly, organizing the data into categories once it has been obtained; and finally, proceeding to the stage of data display.

Results and Discussions

The study yielded two sets of results: Table 1, which presents the outcomes of interviews conducted on identity politicization to enhance candidate electability, and Table 2, which presents the voting results for the 2020 Pilkada in East Sumba Regency.

Table 1: The Category of Politicized Identities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Identity Category</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kabihu (clan)</td>
<td>existed</td>
<td>Traditional visits in all areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tribe</td>
<td>existed</td>
<td>Limited, exploiting ethnic associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>existed</td>
<td>Limited to religious figures and adherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Geographical Area</td>
<td>existed</td>
<td>In all areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bureaucracy</td>
<td>existed</td>
<td>Obscure in bureaucratic assignments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The politicized identities in the 2020 political contestation in the East Sumba Regency (Table 1) encompassed kabihu (clans), tribes, religions, geographical territories, bureaucracy, and social stratification. The practices of politicizing identities were observed among the candidate heads of the district and their campaign teams to secure votes and boost candidates' electability for the district's leadership position. Politicization refers to the mechanism via which a group, institution, or activity acquires political capital to acquire or preserve power (Adediji, 2016).

According to Francis Fukuyama's book titled "Identity: The Demand for Dignity and The Politics of Resentment," the concept of identity posits that thymos, an independent component of the soul, is distinct from the realm of reason. Thymos consistently desires acknowledgment of its inherent worth. Thymos functions as the focal point for emotions such as rage and pride. Currently, thymos has emerged as the central

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Sub District</th>
<th>Candidate Pair</th>
<th>Sehati (%)</th>
<th>Kobul (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Haharu</td>
<td>2,391</td>
<td>67.45</td>
<td>1,154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kahaungu Eti</td>
<td>2,438</td>
<td>49.40</td>
<td>2,497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kambata Mapambuhang</td>
<td>1,555</td>
<td>73.63</td>
<td>557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kambera</td>
<td>13,042</td>
<td>66.41</td>
<td>6,596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kanatang</td>
<td>3,210</td>
<td>55.57</td>
<td>2,567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Karera</td>
<td>2,750</td>
<td>62.51</td>
<td>1,649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Katala Hamulingu</td>
<td>1,188</td>
<td>52.04</td>
<td>1,095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kota Waingapu</td>
<td>11,334</td>
<td>59.77</td>
<td>7,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lewa</td>
<td>4,300</td>
<td>47.66</td>
<td>4,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lewa Tidahu</td>
<td>2,008</td>
<td>51.66</td>
<td>1,879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mahu</td>
<td>1,239</td>
<td>52.08</td>
<td>1,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Matawai La Pawu</td>
<td>2,080</td>
<td>63.88</td>
<td>1,176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Ngadu Ngala</td>
<td>1,519</td>
<td>55.08</td>
<td>1,239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Nggaha Ori Angu</td>
<td>3,625</td>
<td>62.98</td>
<td>2,131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Paberiwai</td>
<td>1,994</td>
<td>66.44</td>
<td>1,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Pahunga Lodu</td>
<td>3,593</td>
<td>44.85</td>
<td>4,419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Pandawai</td>
<td>6,520</td>
<td>64.47</td>
<td>3,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Pinu Pahar</td>
<td>2,494</td>
<td>61.99</td>
<td>1,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Rindi</td>
<td>1,975</td>
<td>33.49</td>
<td>3,922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Tabundung</td>
<td>3,281</td>
<td>61.78</td>
<td>2,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Umalulu</td>
<td>5,725</td>
<td>54.42</td>
<td>4,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Wulla Waijili</td>
<td>1,891</td>
<td>40.64</td>
<td>2,762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>80,152</strong></td>
<td><strong>57.18</strong></td>
<td><strong>60,024</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


DISCUSSIONS
A study investigating identity politicization during the 2020 East Sumba Regency political contestation was conducted in adherence to the contest's predetermined schedule. December 9, 2020, was the "D" day of the vote.

The politicized identities in the 2020 political contestation in the East Sumba Regency (Table 1) encompassed kabihu (clans), tribes, religions, geographical territories, bureaucracy, and social stratification. The practices of politicizing identities were observed among the candidate heads of the district and their campaign teams to secure votes and boost candidates' electability for the district's leadership position. Politicization refers to the mechanism via which a group, institution, or activity acquires political capital to acquire or preserve power (Adediji, 2016).

According to Francis Fukuyama's book titled "Identity: The Demand for Dignity and The Politics of Resentment," the concept of identity posits that thymos, an independent component of the soul, is distinct from the realm of reason. Thymos consistently desires acknowledgment of its inherent worth. Thymos functions as the focal point for emotions such as rage and pride. Currently, thymos has emerged as the central
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theme of identity politics. It is an inherent aspect of human nature that consistently manifests within their deepest selves. Each person has an inherent quality that deserves respect despite the potential for prejudiced evaluation from society due to limited comprehension. In the modern era, the notion of identity has arisen from the integration of thymos, which pertains to contemplating both human beings’ internal and external dimensions. This paradigm shift entails a fundamental conviction that the internal element holds greater significance than the outward appearance. It arose as a reaction to the evolving perspective of humanity and the rapid progress of civilization due to economic and technological advancements (Börzel & Risse, 2020; Boyer et al., 2022; Das, 2020; De Guzman et al., 2021; De Micheli, 2021; Fukuyama, 2018; Hanan, 2020; Kabir, 2020; Karakas & Mitra, 2021; Lacombe et al., 2019; Moghadam, 2019; Noury & Roland, 2020; Sata & Karolewski, 2022; Sychova, 2021). Furthermore, in his book titled "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color," Kimberle Crenshaw highlights the notion of intersessionality. This concept posits that an individual’s lived experience is shaped not solely by a singular facet of identity, such as gender or race, but also by a multitude of intersecting identity dimensions (Crenshaw, 2013).

The phenomenon of identity politics has given rise to societal frictions, leading to the segregation and polarization of individuals, including the bureaucrats residing in the East Sumba district. The politicization of identity encompasses two significant dimensions. The first is characterized by good attributes, such as tolerance and freedom. Conversely, identity politicization manifests negatively, characterized by patterns of intolerance, verbal aggression, and physical violence, which can contribute to ethnic conflicts within society (Heller & Puntscher Riekmann, 1996).

The article titled "Authoritarian innovations in Indonesia: electoral narrowing, identity politics, and executive illiberalism" by (Mietzner, 2020) highlights the significance of Indonesian electoral politics. Mietzner observes that in recent years, both authoritarian and democratic governments have employed diverse innovative strategies to enhance or broaden their authority. Particularly in democratic societies, it is frequently challenging to identify these techniques as they are frequently incorporated as a means of safeguarding democracy rather than leading to a decline in the quality of democratization. This article examines the adoption of authoritarian innovation in Indonesia, wherein many influential factions, opposition parties, and the government collaborate to initiate actions that go against liberal ideals. Consequently, this has deteriorated countries’ democratic standards. Examples of techniques inconsistent with liberal ideas include strategies that limit competition in general elections, the utilization of political identity as a means of mobilization, and endeavors to amass and optimize power by the central government. The proliferation of individuals who reject democratic values in Indonesia has distinct traits compared to more prominent instances of escalating illiberalism, wherein the head of government frequently assumes the primary role. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Indonesia is facing challenges due to the presence of remnants of an electoral democracy system, which, despite its shortcomings, continues to exist. This has hindered the efficacy of this authoritarian innovation, allowing Indonesia to avoid descending into complete autocracy or further authoritarian populism.

According to the researchers’ perspective, the phenomenon of identity politicization tends to manifest its detrimental aspects when identity politics is employed or organized for pragmatic objectives, specifically to establish power in the political competition of general elections. It encompasses manifestations of intolerance and verbal aggression and
can even result in societal segregation and division. This perspective aligns with (Weinstock, 2006) assertion that the elites employ identity politicization as an instrumental and opportunistic means to advance their agendas.

Within the context of the 2020 *Pilkada* political contestation in the East Sumba Regency, various societal identities have been concurrently politicized by candidates and their supporters to acquire voters' votes and enhance their electability. The findings indicate that politicized identities encompass various factors, including *kabihu* (clans), religious, ethnic, area of origin, social stratification, and government bureaucracy.

The efforts and processes involved in politicizing these identities can be outlined as follows:

1) *Kabihu* (clan) identity:

   *Kabihu* is a sociocultural organization comprised of community members with a common ancestry and seeks to enhance their familial connection. The exploitation of the local identity of *kabihu* is an inevitable aspect of the 2020 *Pilkada* event in the East Sumba Regency. According to interviews with all sources, the informants explained that candidates and their supporters took advantage of the politicization of *kabihu* to increase voter turnout and enhance the candidates' electability. The candidates and their supporters portrayed the candidates as a representative of their *kabihu* and other *kabihu*, but this is not always the case. The candidates consistently participated and attended the traditional ceremonies orchestrated by the *kabihu*, which served as their representatives. The candidates and their supporters consistently donned traditional attire and adhered to conventional attire. They employed several persuasive strategies to garner support from voters. During every customary ritual in *kabihu*, candidates consistently attended to solicit support from the contemporary *kabihu* community.

2) Religious Identity:

   The phenomenon of religious politicization in the 2020 *Pilkada* was arguably absent. Nevertheless, using religious leaders to influence the congregation or their members was publicly common. To enhance their electability, candidates seek the support of religious leaders and their respective communities, seeking prayer and support while delivering political promises to the congregations. Political gatherings conducted within a congregation or community were typically commemorated by religious authorities, with certain individuals openly advocating for the appointment of particular candidates.

3) Ethnic Identity:

   Aside from the Sumba tribe, Sumba island is home to several other tribes, including Sabu, Rote, Flores, Timor, Bima, Lombok, Java, Madura, Batak, Bugis, and other tribes that have a relatively smaller number. In this respect, *paguyuban* is a fusion of various ethnic groupings. In the 2020 *Pilkada* political contestation, the candidates initiated a comprehensive political engagement with the *paguyuban* leaders to acquire electoral votes during the political competition. Following a greeting from prominent *paguyuban* leaders, a scheduled meeting was arranged between the candidates and the entire *paguyuban* members. At that juncture, the candidate conveyed their intentions to engage in the political contestation of *Pilkada* to the entire *paguyuban* members, while simultaneously urging the prayers and backing of the local residents. The candidates concluded their tour by delivering a presentation on their vision and mission. Before the communal dining event, the *paguyuban* extended a cordial salutation as a manifestation of sincere intentions on behalf of the populace to offer
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their support to the candidate inside the squad. *Paguyuban* will exclusively decline visits from other candidates they have decided not to endorse.

4) Candidates' Area of Origin:

Geographical areas can be classified as a form of identity that can be strategically politicized to enhance voter turnout and secure victory for the *Pilkada*. Umbu Lili Pekuwali, a candidate from the eastern region, was campaigned as a representative of the eastern region. It was promised that the eastern region would experience more development if the candidate won the election because the candidate was emotionally connected to the eastern region's people and represented them. The northern territory exhibited a similar pattern. Kris Praing was positioned as the preferred candidate for the northern region due to his strong emotional connection with the people of the region and his representation of their interests. The campaign procedure is tailored to the candidate's region of origin, considering the candidates' district heads and vice-heads of regions for each candidate pair and the territory they represented.

5) Social Stratification Identity

Social stratification refers to the culture-based social stratification observed within Sumba culture concerning cultural strata, education, and ownership of resources, including capital. Various interviews with key informants revealed the existence of the politicization of social stratification, albeit covertly, as it was carried out by candidates in specific institutions. This principle also applied to education and the possession of unpoliticized resources.

6) Government Bureaucracy Identity:

The government bureaucrats possess a distinct set of identities subject to politicization by the government bureaucratic elites to further the political agendas of the candidates they endorse. Within a patron-client transaction (Scott, 1972), the bureaucratic elite utilized the civil state apparatus (ASN) to secure votes and enhance the candidates' electability. Consequently, the bureaucratic elites urged the ASN to return to their villages, enlisting the assistance of their friends, relatives, and families to endorse the candidates preferred by the bureaucratic elite. At ASN's place of origin, they engaged in social events that were directly related to their responsibilities but were also politically involved with the community. The social activity served as an opportunity to enlist and guide the public in selecting the candidates desired by the bureaucratic elite. The phenomenon of identity politicization was observed within bureaucratic systems. Table 1 presents a concise overview of the findings obtained from the investigation.

The practice of identity politicization in a political contestation can have both beneficial and harmful effects on society. The positive aspect symbolizes the manifestation of tolerance and freedom. In contrast, the negative side represents the manifestation of intolerance, encompassing both verbal and physical aggression, which ultimately leads to segregation and social polarization (Heller & Riekmann, 1996). The phenomenon of identity politicization during a *Pilkada* can have many advantageous and detrimental consequences contingent upon the specific circumstances. In the specific setting of the 2020 *Pilkada* in the East Sumba Regency, wherein candidates engaged in a head-to-head competition, the phenomenon of concurrent politicization of individuals and societal identities emerged as a predominantly adverse circumstance.

The 2020 *Pilkada* in the East Sumba Regency has had several adverse consequences. *First*, political polarization has occurred through the societal division into rival and allied factions. This has potentially resulted in heightened social and political
tensions. Second, an excessive emphasis on a specific identity within the realm of politics has resulted in the discrimination and exclusion of various groups, jeopardizing the rights and welfare of minority or underrepresented populations. Third, excessive politicization of identities undermines political stability and engenders ambiguity in governance. It can hinder governments' capacity to develop and execute efficient policies. Fourth, an excessive emphasis on identity in elections, rather than problems and candidates' credentials, diminishes the overall quality of the electoral process and disregards significant matters. Fifth, this study examines the strained correlation between affiliation and bias of cultural values within the populations residing in the East Sumba district.

It is imperative to offer political education to the general populace and all relevant stakeholders to mitigate the prevalence of identity politics, enabling them to comprehend and effectively exercise their political rights and responsibilities during the course of democratic processes. Political education is an endeavor that seeks to provide the general public with knowledge and understanding of the diverse facets of the political system, the fundamental tenets of democracy, the entitlements and responsibilities of individuals as citizens, and the continuous dynamics of the political landscape. Multiple entities have a crucial part in implementing the mission of political education for the public. Efficient political education necessitates cooperation among all factions to impart a fair and unbiased comprehension to society. The primary objective of this effort is to facilitate individuals' active engagement in political processes and empower them to make well-informed and prudent decisions pertaining to general elections and other political matters. The following are the typical parties involved in this process:

Government: The primary responsibility of the government is to ensure the provision of political education to its citizens. Consequently, the government can create political curriculum in educational institutions, provide assistance for political education programs, and carry out information campaigns pertaining to political processes and general elections. Educational Institutions: Educational institutions, such as schools and universities, assume a crucial role in imparting political information to the younger generation. They can effectively structure governance, political institutions, and citizenship lessons. Mass media: Mass media, including newspapers, television, radio, and the Internet, are pivotal in disseminating political information to the general populace. They can deliver impartial reports on many political matters and foster public deliberation. Civil Society Organizations: Non-governmental organizations, such as advocacy groups, NGOs, and other community groups, are often involved in political education. They can organize seminars, workshops, and political education campaigns to enhance citizen understanding. Political Parties: Political parties are crucial in educating voters regarding their policies, candidates, and political matters. Their activities encompass general assemblies, political deliberations, and educational initiatives. Academicians and Researchers: Political scholars and researchers possess the expertise to comprehensively examine political matters and disseminate them via scholarly publications, seminars, and conferences. General Election Commission (KPU): The KPU, the governing body entrusted with overseeing general elections, is assigned to disseminating information about the general election procedure, voting rights, and voter lists to the general populace. Religious and Social Groups: Religious and social groups can contribute to political education by imparting pertinent moral and ethical principles to their members within a
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In a political context, individuals are also responsible for proactively understanding politics and participating in the political process. It encompasses the activities of reading, deliberating, and acquiring information regarding political matters.

Table 2 presents the allocation of votes given to the two candidate pairings across 22 districts. The Sehati candidate pair garnered a total of 80,152 votes, accounting for 57.18% of the legally valid votes. Meanwhile, the Kobul candidate pair obtained a total of 60,024 votes, or 42.82% of the legally valid votes. In the East Sumba district, the Sehati candidate pair emerged as the victor in the 2020 political race.

**Conclusion**

The candidates and their campaign teams have simultaneously employed many identities, including kabihu (clans), tribe, religion, geographical region, bureaucracy, and social stratification, to garner voter support and enhance candidates' electability for the position of district head. The identity politics in the 2020 Pilkada in the East Sumba Regency has led to social segregation and societal polarization. Hence, it is crucial to refrain from politicizing identities in any administration of electoral politics.

Moreover, identity politicization practices ultimately disrupt social cohesion in social interactions. The preservation and safeguarding of cultural values among indigenous civilizations are vital since they serve as the foundational pillars of national authority. The politicization of local cultural identities for the sake of political gain should be avoided.

Political education aims to provide individuals with knowledge and understanding of their political rights and responsibilities as citizens while preventing the politicization of their identities. Likewise, tolerance can have a pivotal impact in mitigating the adverse consequences of identity politics. Tolerance encompasses accepting differences and respecting other groups, hence fostering the development of a more inclusive society.

The research offers a theoretical contribution by identifying identities that can be constructed or politicized simultaneously for electoral politics. Additionally, it offers a practical benefit by anticipating and preventing the exploitation of identities for political objectives. Moreover, it is imperative to uphold an equilibrium between comprehending the advantages associated with identities as an integral component of societal culture and the overarching objective of fostering cohesion, solidarity, and even national cohesion within the region.
References


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