

**Madurese Non Voters:**  
**A Study of Cross Cultural Communication**  
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The number of non-voters in Madura is still high. The regencies in Madura have the highest rates in East Java in terms of their participation in using voting rights. The participation rates of the four regencies are as follows: Sampang 65,231 votes (13.91%), Bangkalan 62,502 votes (13.56%), Sumenep 55,854 votes (8.05%), and Pamekasan 35,352 votes (7.88%). At present the government still uses the same strategy model for all public, which is contradictory to the fact that different public have different demographic, social, economic, and cultural characteristics. The high rate of *absentia* voters is caused by the cooccurrence of voting day with tobacco planting season which Madurese prioritize as an economic opportunity.

Various socialization efforts have been done such as campaigns about the implementation of national election. Other activities done to increase people's participation include holding seminars and election dialogues, advertising on television, radio, and mass media as well as spreading posters and election procedures in strategic places. However, these efforts have not been able to decrease the high number of non-voters. This paper aims to study the non-voting phenomenon in Madura from the cross cultural communication viewpoint.

Cross cultural communication is a field in Communication Studies which focuses on the comparison patterns of interindividual communication among communication participants with different cultural backgrounds. Originally, cross-cultural studies derives from social and cultural anthropology whose study is in the form of depth description, that is, an in-depth description about communication behaviors based on certain culture.

Madurese people are known to have a unique, stereotypical, and stigmatic culture. The use of the term *unique* refers to the definition that Madurese ethnic entity has cultural specificity which is different from the ethnography of other ethnic communities. This cultural specificity is obvious among others in their obedience and acceptance hierarchically to the four figures in their social and religious life. The figures are *Buppa'* (father), *Babbu* (mother), *Guru* (teacher), and *Rato* (government). To these four principal figures does Madurese people's hierarchical obedience appear in their social and cultural life (Wiyata, 2003: 1).

Keywords : *madurese non voters, cross cultural communication*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Non-voters are the result of past historical politic experiences in Indonesia, which makes people avoid political matter. Over and over again people become ignorant and indifferent. Those attitudes stick to the surface, due to the dissatisfaction of people with the nation situation which is even more uncomfortable and unfavorable. It is unquestionable that in the 2004

elections, non-voters appeared embellishing democracy party, just like mushrooms in the rainy season. These groups thrive well without having to be raised by the temp of official position. It happens because of the past treatment and the condition of the nation that do not want to learn from the history.

Non-voters occur as a form of resistance, or because of technical human error resulting from unknowing experience in voting. Sometimes they know how to vote, but their hearts do not find the right party to be chosen. Thus, being non-voter does not mean that the citizens are not good, not responsible, or lack of nationalism spirit quality. However, being non-voters not only for political reasons but also as a form of fundamental issues caused by various technical problems, including distrust of democracy.

Much socialization has been done by the government, including through election campaigns. Various activities were also done to promote public participation, such as holding seminars, election dialogues, public service advertisements on television, radio and mass media, and distributing posters about election procedures at many strategic places. From a legal law perspective, the government also established the Election Law which contains not only the election rules and the election processes which are done, but it also contains the laws controlling various actions that will be imposed for a variety crimes during election process. However, the socialization has not been effective yet. It can be seen from the number of non-voters from the 1955 election until 2004, the number gets higher and higher.

#### **Non-voters in the General Election in Indonesia**

Elections	Registered	Votes	Absent	Number of AV	(%) Increasing percentage
1955	43.104.464	37,785,299	5,319,165	12:34	
1971	58.556.776	54,669,509	3,889,267	6.67	(-) 5.67
1977	69.871.092	63,998,344	5,872,748	8.40	(+) 1.73
1982	82.134.195	75,126,306	7,007,889	9.61	(+) 1.21
1987	93.737.633	85,869,816	7,867,817	8.39	(-) 0.22
1992	107.565.697	97,789,534	9,776,163	9.05	(+) 0.26
1997	124.740.987	112,991,150	11,749,837	10.07	(+) 1.02
1999	117.815.053	105,786,661	12,028,392	10.4	(+) 0, 34
2004	148.000.369	113,462,414	34,537,955	23.34	(+) 13.30

Source: Valina Singka Subekti, *Fenomena Golput dari Tahun ke Tahun* in DIALOG Kebijakan Publik journal, 4th edition, December/II/2008.

Districts in Madura Island have the highest record and high in East Java for the percentage of voters who do not use their voting rights, those are Sampang District 65,231 votes (13.91%), Bangkalan 62,502 votes (13.56%), Sumenep 55,854 votes (8,05%), and Pamekasan 35,352 votes (7.88%).

The high *absentee voters* are caused by some matters, as follows the Election Day is coincided with tobacco planting season, and so, economic opportunity was more prioritized. On the other hand it is also due to new growing awareness that voting is an individual right, so other parties cannot impose their will or force people to vote. Besides, the increasing number of AV is also caused by voters who do not want to come to the election place due to the lack of socialization and limited information. This is aggravated by the low educational level of the Madurese.

Based on those backgrounds above, this paper tries to examine further about the phenomenon of non-voters in Madura from the perspective of cross-cultural communication.

### **RESEARCH PROBLEM:**

How is Madura non voter's character is viewed from cross cultural communication?

### **DISCUSSION**

Based on research conducted in Sampang (Suryandari, 2011) people choice to be non-voters was born as a form of resistance, or because of technical human error resulting from unknowing experience in voting. Sometimes they know how to vote, but their hearts do not find the right party to be chosen. Thus, being non-voter does not mean that the citizens are not good, not responsible, or lack of nationalism spirit quality. However, being non-voters is not only for political reasons but also as a form of fundamental issues caused by various technical problems, including distrust of democracy.

Much socialization has been done by the government, including through election campaigns. Various activities were also done to promote public participation, such as holding

seminars, election dialogues, public service advertisements on television, radio and mass media, and distributing posters about election procedures at many strategic places. However, it does not decrease the numbers of non-voters. From the communication study point of view, especially cross-cultural communication, it is interesting to be examined deeply.

### **Cross-Cultural Communication**

At first time, cross-cultural studies came from the perspective of socio-cultural anthropology with *depth description* characteristics, which is the deep description of communication attitude based on particular culture. Thus, at first, cross-cultural communication was defined as the process of communication learning between individuals or groups of tribes and races of different nations. The reason is different countries always have different cultures. In contrast, cross-cultural communication is interpersonal communication that is done by persons in a same nation.

Cross-cultural communication is an area of communication studies emphasizing more on comparative communication patterns among participants from different cultural background. At first, cross-cultural studies came from the perspective of social and cultural anthropology so the studies are more *depth description* that is the description of a communication behavior based on certain cultures.

### **The Definition of Cross-cultural Communication**

There are several definitions of cross-cultural communication, as follows:

1. The term cross-cultural communication is often used to refer to the meaning of intercultural communication, without being restricted by geographic context, race and ethnicity. Therefore, cross-cultural communication is defined as the comparative analysis that gives priority to cultural activities relativity. Cross-cultural communication is generally more focused on the relations between nations without having to establish a new culture, as happened in Intercultural Communication (Purwasito, 2003)
2. According Fiber Luce (1991) Cross-cultural study nature is a comparative study that aims to compare:
  - (1) Specific cultural variables,

- (2) The consequences or results of the cultural impact, of two or more cultural contexts. Hopefully with this study, everyone will understand their culture and admit that there is a dominant culture issue of others in the intercultural relationships. This means that intercultural communication can be done if we know our culture and the cultures of others.
3. Cross-cultural communication is the communication process to compare two or more cultures through a cross-cultural survey.
  4. Cross-cultural communication, according to Williams (1966) in Samovar and Porter (1976) turns around the comparison of the intercultural communication behavior by showing similarities and differences:
    - (1) The perception of the experience, the role of social and physical environments,
    - (2) Cognition consists of specific elements of culture, the language and ways of thinking
    - (3) Socialization and
    - (4) Such personality cultural types that affect ethos, the typology of character or national character.

The analysis of cross-cultural (often called as comparative analysis) is the most common method used to compare and test for the differences between cultures (Alo Liliweri, 2005). This method is crucial to distinguish the universal aspects of human culture and social organization of some social groups or individuals from certain community.

## **Discussion**

### **The Characteristics of Non-voters:**

In the Journal of *Dialog Kebijakan Publik*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, December 2008, it is stated that the composition of Indonesian population is pyramidal. This shows a symptom that younger age group population is more than the older age groups or children. In the context of elections, young people (15-45 years old) became the target of potential vote in the election. The composition is potential to be absentee voters group.

According to the *Lingkaran Survei Indonesia* September 5, 2007 edition, in theory, there are two theoretical explanations about why someone does not vote in the election. The first explanation comes from theories about voter behavior. This explanation focuses on the individual. The size of the voting turnout is tracked from the causes of individual voters.

In the monthly study of LSI September 2007 edition, it was said that there are three major theories that explain why someone does not choose, observed from the voters sides. First, sociological theory, someone who does not participate in the election described as a result of certain sociological backgrounds, such as religion, education, occupation, race and so on. Occupations factor also could affect the decision of joining election or not. In a case in Sampang, from all those reason, education and occupation are factors that appeared as results of interview.

Second, psychological theory, the decision of someone to vote or not is determined by the proximity to the party or candidate of the election. The closer a person with a particular party or candidate, the more likely a person participates in the election. From the result of Sampang's non-voters interview, it is known that most voters are less familiar with the candidates.

Third, the theory of political economy, this theory states that the decision to vote or not is based on rational considerations, such as distrust that the election could bring a better change. Or distrust of the problem would be solved if the newly leader will be elected, and so on. The voters who do not believe the elections will create a better condition, tend not to choose. This factor also occurs to non-voters in Sampang who argue that the election did not change things to be better.

Still according to the *Lingkar Survei Indonesia (2007)* in addition to the theories that focus on the individual voter, voting turnout phenomenon can also be explained by the theory of the structure. Here the size of the turnout of voters does not explained from the voter side, but from a structure or system of a country. There are at least three common descriptors that are used by observers or experts. First is the system of voters' registration. To choose, generally voters must be registered as a voter first. Easy registration of voters can affect a person's interest to be involved in the selection. In contrast, a complex and rough system of registration can reduce the interest of people in elections. In the case of non-voters in Sampang, they are not interested in finding information about their names that are not listed as voters

Second is the party system and elections system of a country. Numerous studies show two-party system relatively could reduce voter numbers. Motivation of voters for voting may decrease when they do not like the party or the candidate. Conversely, country that adopts a multi-party system could relatively attract higher voter participation. This is because voters have a lot of options and alternatives (Russell J. Dalton and Martin P. Wattenberg, 1993). Based on

this theory, some non-voters in Sampang just feel "confused in choosing" because of too many political parties participated in the election.

Third is the nature of the election that is whether the election is a right or obligation to citizens. There is a state which adopts that the general election is a right for citizens, so people can vote and may not vote. There is no penalty for citizens who did not vote. Indonesia is a country which does not give penalty for citizens who do not participate in the election, for voting is a right, not an obligation. Since there is no penalty for those who do not vote, so this is one of several factors in the appearance of non-voters in Sampang, Madura.

### **The Reason of Being Non-Voters**

In the first year of study, the team asked the respondents, what is the reason they do not come to the polling station (TPS) whereas their name were registered as voters in the voters list (DPT). There are a number of reasons which were mentioned by the respondents. From all those reasons, we can divide the reasons of not voting for election (abstentions) in three major categories. First are the administrative reasons. Voters do not vote because they are crashed with the administrative procedures, such as they do not know whether their names registered in the electoral roll or not, or they have not received a voter card or invitation cards. Research found that there are some respondents who did not vote because they do not have voter card. It shows the unpreparedness of the administrative system in voter registration. Someone did not get a voter card whereas his name had entered in the voters list (DPT).

Second are the technical reasons. Based on the results of interview, information obtained shows that a person decides to be non-voters because they do not have a time to vote for several reasons, such as the need to work on the day of the election, they might be out of town on the day of the election, or they were lazy to go to the polling stations (TPS). Voters have known that their name had registered as voters, but they are reluctant to come to the polling stations (TPS) and so on.

Third are the political reasons. From the interview obtained information about the voters who decided not to use his right because consciously they decided not to vote. In their point of view, the national general election (PEMILU) or regional election (PEMILUKADA) are useless, they will not bring change, or there is not candidate preferred, no candidate known and so on. In this case, someone decides not to choose as a form of protest or dissatisfaction to the

implementation of the national elections / local elections or candidates forward in national general elections or regional election.

### **Non-voters in Madura: Cross-Cultural Communication Studies**

According to Abdul Wahab (2009), the reason people do not vote in Sampang's Regional Head and Vice Head election is basically a form of saturation upon the promises of legislative candidates in the 2004 election, incompatibility between the society and the candidate of head region, the widespread of money politics, some of them were sick, working in the election day, or they had not gotten election invitation.

According to the results of research about non-voters in Madura, the characteristics of non-voters in this region are interesting to be examined further from the cross-cultural communication point of view. Out of many definitions of cross-cultural communication, cross-cultural communication that will be used to explain the phenomenon of non-voters in Madura is the definition according to Williams (1966). Cross-cultural communication by Williams (1966) in Samovar and Porter (1976) is around the comparison of the intercultural communication behavior among cultures by showing similarities and differences:

- (1) The perception of the experience, the role of social and physical environments,
- (2) Cognition consists of specific elements of culture, the language and ways of thinking
- (3) Socialization and
- (4) Such personality cultural types that affect ethos, the typology of character or national character.

From the first aspect, the behaviors of non-voters in Madura are happened because they have a perception of experience, the role of environment, and physical social support. Non-voters in Madura have perceptions based on their past experiences that national general election or regional election are identical with money, they will receive money or certain rewards from particular candidates or party. The role of environment cannot be ignored in this case. Surrounding environment makes them apathetic non-voters who stay in this position because abstentions are considered as common phenomenon happened between them.

The cognition aspect was also influenced in the facts about the non-voters in Madura. The majority of non-voters in Madura have less understanding about the urgency of general election, as they have the past experiences that do not fit with their knowledge about the election



acquired from competent parties. This relates to the third aspect, that is socialization. Socialization from the committee of the general election are more on the technical material, such as to vote by checking of the ticking or punching, the valid and invalid, election time and so on. It is not on the substance of the importance of the election in having the nation and state.

The last aspect is the kind of such personality cultural types that affect ethos, the typology of character or national character, the typology of character or national character. Non-voters in Madura are people with specific character of Madura culture, with their obedience to the four major figures in their lives. That cultural specificity appears in their obedience, submission, and surrenders hierarchically to the four major figures in their life, especially in religious practice. The fourth figure is Buppa, 'Babbu, Teacher, and Rato (father, mother, teacher, and leader of the government). To those main figures, the form of hierarchical obedience of Madurese is shown in their social and cultural life (Wiyata, 2003: 1).

## **CONCLUSION**

Non-voters phenomenon is one form of societies' distrust expressions to the political system in a country, whether due to political reasons, or technical reasons. The political reasons of non-voters in a region have different characters. Character of non-voters in Madura can be seen from the study of cross-cultural communication by paying attention to the four aspects, as follows: (1) the perception of the experience, the role of social and physical environments, (2) cognition consists of specific elements of culture, the language and ways of thinking (3) socialization and (4) such personality cultural types that affect ethos, the typology of character or national character.

In an effort to prevent the increasing numbers of non-voters in the national general elections and the regional election in Madura, several things can be done, including selecting appropriate strategy in doing socialization of the election, both in substance and technical matters, done by the authorities.

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**Jurnal :**

*Dialog Kebijakan Publik* journal, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, December 2008

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