

## Election Smart House Service as a Voter Education Center for Students in Dumai City

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**Abstract.** Election Smart House (ESH) is an election organizer innovation designed to improve pre-voter political literacy among students. However, the operation and management of the ESH as a community voter education center is not operating well at present. As a voter education center, ESH provides various attractive services, facilities, and programs. The research design employed a qualitative descriptive method. The researcher intended to describe in-depth and thoroughly the ESH service as a voter education center in Dumai City that strives to promote students' political literacy. Observation, interviews, and documentation were employed in the data collection process. The research informants included Dumai City Election Commission commissioners, Dumai City election smart house (ESH) managers, and Dumai City high school civic education teachers. The study results indicate that ESH services consist of (1) the publication of ESH activities in the mass media and (2) an invitation from the General Election Commission of the City of Dumai for the public, community, or school to visit ESH. ESH can serve as a forum where the election community can discuss elections and democracy. Voter education for students through ESH is a strategic step in educating students about election and democratic materials since ESH offers students materials and additional services that attract visitors.

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**Keywords:** Election Smart House; Voter Education; Political Literacy; Students

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### INTRODUCTION

The election smart house, abbreviated as ESH, is a voter education strategy launched in 2016 by the General Election Commission of the Republic of Indonesia. ESH is a General Election Commission innovation that provides the general population with continuing political and voter education. ESH is operationalized following General Election Commission Circular Letter No. 220/KPU/2016 regarding facilitators of voter education and General Election Commission Circular Letter No. 339/KPU/VI/2016 regarding control of the ESH formation program.

Voter education is a planned educational effort for the target group of voters and pre-voters on electoral and democratic matters, intending to enhance the target group's knowledge and encourage political participation through voting in elections. Additionally, voter education is conducted so that the target group may monitor the election process and be critical of the government management of elected leaders (Hariyanti, 2015). ESH is an intriguing sort of strategy for studying elections for several reasons. ESH is a novel approach to studying elections since it utilizes a unique room equipped with multiple tools/media, such as an audio-visual room with

a television, a simulation room with voting equipment in the polling booth, and a discussion room. Second, ESH is a form of continuous voter education because it is not solely designed to prepare citizens for upcoming elections. ESH differs from other voter education programs designed by the Indonesian General Election Commission, including the democracy volunteer program (Hariyanti & Hambali, 2021). ESH is intended to provide the electoral information needs of voters and the general public, including electoral history, election stages, and simulations of election implementation (Manik, Husni Kamil, Sigit Pamungkas, 2015).

The Election Smart House (ESH) is a national strategic project that is ongoing to educate the public about elections and democracy; its dissemination of electoral information has a positive effect on increasing public participation (Milan Alfianni Zega, Indra Muda, Beby Masitho, 2018; Rafni & Suryanef, 2019; Telaumbanua et al., 2021; Tiowinanda & nora eka putro, 2019).

The Election Smart House (ESH) has always served as a community voter education center, as seen by its services. However, ESH's services and operations as a voter education center have not been optimal up to this point. This article would focus on student voter education services and activities in the Election Smart House of the Dumai City Election Commission. This research differs

from previous studies in that it focuses on ESH services. This service relates to the facilities and management of ESH as a community voter education center.

Students are prepared to become intelligent, rational, and responsible first-time voters through the Election Smart House (ESH). It will be fascinating if the program targets and focuses on pre-voters. Multiple research results indicate that students are frequent visitors to ESH, frequently accompanied by Civics teachers. Included in the pre-voter segment are students. Pre-voter groups are high school-aged citizens; therefore schools indirectly play a significant role in educating students about the fundamental values of elections and democracy (Hariyanti & Sari, 2021).

Pre-voters are groups that have not yet met the requirements to become voters but will do so within the next five years as they will be included in the beginner voter groups.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative design with a descriptive method because it comprehensively describes the voter education activities and services for students at the Election Smart House (ESH) of the Dumai City General Election Commission. The research was conducted at the city of Dumai's general election commission. Several factors led to the selection of Dumai City as the research site. First, the ESH of the General

Election Commission of the Republic of Indonesia for the City of Dumai was selected as a pilot project for the General Election Commission of the Republic of Indonesia in 2017. Second, the 2018 Riau Governor Election in the City of Dumai saw a high abstention percentage of 46%. Dumai City ranks sixth-lowest in voter political participation in the 2019 Provincial Regional People's Legislative Council Elections.

Commissioners of the socialization and voter education division, election smart house (ESH) managers, and several high school civic education teachers in Dumai city served as informants for this study. Meanwhile, research informants were determined using non-probability sampling techniques, particularly purposive sampling. Data were gathered through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis consists of data reduction, data presentation, conclusion, and verification. At the same time, the technique for assessing the validity of the data included source triangulation.

## DISCUSSION

Election Smart House (ESH) is a voter education concept implemented by utilizing space from a building or customized building for all community education project activities. There are at least audio-visual rooms, exhibition rooms, simulation rooms, and discussion rooms in ESH. The four spatial functions are not required but can be

condensed into one if each region's carrying capacity and infrastructure availability are considered (Manik, Husni Kamil, Sigit Pamungkas, 2015). Observations of the Dumai City General Election Commission ESH revealed that the ESH was not constructed in a room partitioned for the four functions of the room because of the limited available space in the Dumai City General Election Commission in building the ESH.



Figure 1. The Election Smart House (ESH) of Dumai City

However, in the Smart Election House, the four types of rooms with different functions are combined into a single room (ESH). When entering the ESH room, the ESH manager will direct visitors to the materials displayed on the walls, after which they will be asked to watch election-related shows/ documentaries/ films on a television mounted in the room's corner. After that, visitors will be invited to take part in a voting simulation in the ESH room's corner. In this area, replica ballot boxes, ballot papers, and a tool for piercing ballot papers at the polling booths have been provided, along with the ink. Finally, visitors will be invited to discuss previously viewed and observed electoral and democratic materials. The discussion continued to take

place in the same area, where the ESH manager had provided quite a few plastic chairs and tables.

In the Election Smart House (ESH), electoral and democracy materials must be provided as voter education materials, which can be implemented as mock-ups or dioramas, information wall panels (manual or digital), booklets, leaflets, flyers, and films. Materials provided in the ESH cover a variety of topics, including (a) election history; (b) the significance of elections and democracy; (c) the electoral system; (d) election stages; (e) election participants (legislative and presidential elections); (f) the selection process; (g) profiles of election organizers; and (h) an election knowledge test (Harahap & Thamrin, 2022; Manik, Husni Kamil, sigit pamungkas, 2015; Qurotul Fitriani, 2018). The same things are also available at the ESH room of the General Election Commission of Dumai City. In addition to election materials put on the room's walls, there is a small library in one of the room's corners. Local elections in the city of Dumai, including elections for the mayor and deputy mayor, the Regional People's Legislative Assembly for the province of Riau, and the Regional People's Representative Council for the city of Dumai, were discussed in addition to national elections. In addition, it contains information about political parties and electoral districts in Dumai City. Due to limited space, however, these resources have not been organized

aesthetically and in a row, and some have not been updated. Similar issues are demonstrated by Suryanef's findings that, on average, there are weaknesses in the management of ESH (Suryanef, 2019).

As for the activities and services of the Election Smart House (ESH) of the General Election Commission for the City of Dumai, field interviews and documentation indicate that just two services, namely publication of activities and public invitations, are carried out at ESH.

**Publication Activity.** Print and electronic media, social media, and outdoor media can disseminate the Election Smart House (ESH). Publication of activities at the Dumai City General Election Commission ESH is featured in various online media in Dumai and on the website of the Dumai City General Election Commission. According to the documents retrieved, activities such as the 2017 launch of the ESH General Election Commission for the City of Dumai and the visit of Erna Dumai Vocational High School students to ESH have been published. In addition, the publication of the activities of the Dumai General Election Commission includes election socialization to the public and schools regarding the election of the mayor and deputy mayor of Dumai. However, between 2019 and the time of the interview, there were no additional visits to ESH. Apart from being caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, it is difficult to reach the Dumai City General

Election Commission office because it is located very distantly from the city center and has no access to public transportation. In addition, ESH services are not optimal due to the fact that the ESH room is attached to the staff room in a building that is not quite spacious.

Public invitation implies that the General Election Commission can invite various elements of society, including educational institutions, communities, and organizations representing the population's segments. Based on the results of interviews with the manager of the Dumai City General Election Commission Election Smart House, there was just one public invitation, notably Erna Dumai Vocational High School students' visit to ESH. There are two objectives of public invitation. First, to provide first-time voters (high school students/equivalent) with information and knowledge regarding elections, democracy, and voting. Second, to encourage first-time voters (high school students/equivalent) to use their right as citizens to vote in general elections.

According to interviews with the Dumai City General Election Commission (ESH) Smart House manager, no school visits to the ESH socialization activities were conducted by the Dumai City General Election Commission to a number of schools during the Covid-19 pandemic from 2020 until the present. It is because school activities are carried out at home or online, hence

eliminating school-based activities. In addition, the General Election Commission's location, which is fairly distant from Dumai City's schools, is one of the reasons for the infrequent visits to ESH. The General Election Commission for the City of Dumai recently relocated to a new building in 2020 from the old city center. According to the ESH manager, there were still quite a few visits to ESH while it was in the old office, in contrast to the current situation at the new office. The new Dumai City Election Commission office is located in a special office area in a newly constructed area by the Dumai City government, making it difficult to access. One of the objectives is the distribution of development in sparsely populated areas. In addition, it is known that the General Election Commission for Dumai City has not partnered with schools or Pancasila and Civics Education teachers who teach electoral and democracy-related material in schools.

Pancasila and Civics Education can be used to introduce electoral concepts to students in schools. Civics education equips students with the knowledge and understanding necessary to become informed citizens aware of their rights and obligations. Through Civics Education, students can be taught at a young age how to use their right to vote responsibly and be responsible citizens. Eleventh-grade Civics Education curriculum for senior high schools and equivalents include lessons on elections and democracy. This material

discusses the legal basis for holding elections, the meaning of elections, the electoral system, election participants, and the connection between elections and democracy. Therefore, civics education plays a significant role in enhancing the knowledge and understanding of students, especially for those who have met the requirements to exercise their right to vote responsibly and rationally. Teachers of civics have a crucial role in enhancing students' understanding of basic democratic and electoral values.

Civics Education teachers are united by the Pancasila and Civics Education Subject Teacher Association (MGMP PKn). The organization is formed at the Junior High School/Madrasah Tsanawiyah and Senior High School/ Vocational High School/ Madrasah Aliyah levels of each Regency/ City as a forum for communication and the exchange of knowledge among colleagues. The organization can facilitate teachers' collaboration with other parties in developing and enhancing Civics Education materials. This collaboration is undertaken since distributing general election materials is vital to Civics Education. As stipulated in article 16 paragraph (3) of PKPU No.8 of 2017 concerning Socialization, Voter Education, and Community Participation in the Election of Governors and deputy governors, regents and deputy regents, and mayors and deputy mayors, the General Election Commission can cooperate with educational institutions in

implementing voter education. Moreover, schools can collaborate with the Regency/City General Election Commission to utilize ESH.

According to research by Deni Ardiyansyah (2019) at the General Election Commission for the City of Bandar Lampung, good communication between the school and the management of the Election Smart House (ESH) would facilitate school visits to the ESH. In addition, it is the responsibility of school teachers to organize visits to ESH so that students can gain knowledge about elections and democracy.

Voter education conducted by election organizers through the Election Smart House (ESH) is a strategic step because: (1) ESH is a national-scale program, so its reach is broad; (2) ESH has a variety of facilities, including audio-visual rooms, exhibition rooms, simulation rooms, and discussion rooms, which allow people to learn about democracy and elections more easily and comfortably; and (3) ESH is managed by the General Election Commission, so it can manage the program related to democracy and elections.

Therefore, the following steps can be implemented to address shortcomings in the Election Smart House (ESH) management related to the services provided. First, the collaboration between the ESH management and the school, particularly the Civics Education teachers organized in the Pancasila and Civics Education Subject Teacher Association (MGMP PKn) (Hariyanti,

Hambali, Ahmad Eddison, 2022). At the very least, this collaboration will make it easier for the General Election Commission to conduct voter education in schools. It allows for creating a joint project to enhance student political literacy, similar to the election class program implemented by the Padang City General Election Commission in 2015. Second, a request to the local government for assistance in managing ESH as a public asset to increase political participation among the population. Through the National Unity and Political Agency (Kesbangpol), as the agency tasked with providing political education to the community, the regional government can empower ESH as a center for community political learning.

Election Smart House (ESH) provides citizens with political education so that they are equipped with the knowledge and information necessary to interact with the government (Iskandar & Marlina, 2019; Rozuli & Haboddin, 2018). As a means of voter education, ESH strives to give pre-voters an understanding of fundamental electoral and democratic values and to present data and information as well as electoral and other democratic knowledge in an engaging manner. The ESH room is equipped with displays of electoral documentation and a simulation room that provides visitors, especially students acting as pre-electors at polling stations, with authentic voting experiences. ESH, as a form of voter education, also contributes to

preserving elections' integrity. It should be recalled that election integrity is a characteristic that every democratic nation must possess. Elections marred by violations and fraud will weaken the elected regime's legitimacy and erode voters' trust in democratic institutions. The process of democratic transition and consolidation is strongly dependent on election quality (Rafni & Suryanef, 2019; Rahmatunnisa, 2017). Elections are the implementation of people's sovereignty, and elections have at least five functions: (1) a means of political legitimacy; (2) a means of circulating political elites; (3) the most realistic means of public political participation in government; (4) community political education facilities; and (5) a means of political punishment for politicians and political parties that betrayed the mandate of the people under the previous regime. The purpose of a general election is to elect representatives of the people.

With voter education, it is intended that first-time voters will be intelligent and reasonable. Criterion-based rational choice theory presupposes that individuals clearly understand what they want as an outcome, how their choices relate to those outcomes and a predetermined set of criteria for measuring different alternatives to ensure that one alternative is selected each time. It implies that individuals are presumed to have the information necessary to make these choices

(Manik & Budhiati, 2015; RR Emilia Yustiningrum, 2015).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the Dumai City Election Smart House (ESH) service has not been effective for the student target group, which is included in the pre-election segment when viewed through the lens of the provided services. Publication activities are still conducted rarely due to the infrequent number of visitors, the poorly functioning ESH program, and the lack of public invitations/visits during the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, the General Election Commission office is far from the city center, and there is no public transportation to get there.

The Election Smart House (ESH) is a strategic step in educating students as pre-voters because: (1) ESH is a national program with a wide reach; (2) ESH has a variety of facilities, including audio-visual rooms, exhibition rooms, simulation rooms, and discussion rooms, which allow people to learn about democracy and elections more easily and comfortably; and (3) ESH is managed by the General Election Commission, which ensures that competent and qualified people manage it.

Therefore, there are several recommendations to overcome weaknesses in management, particularly services at the

Election Smart House (ESH). First, a collaboration between ESH managers and schools, particularly Civics Education teachers, is organized in the Pancasila and Civics Education Subject Teacher Association (MGMP PKn). Moreover, a request to the local government to help manage ESH as a public asset aims to improve ESH services through additional facilities in order to attract more voters. Through the National Unity and Political Agency (Kesbangpol), the agency charged with delivering political education to the community, the regional government can designate ESH as a center for community political education.

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