



The Political Role of the Survey Agency in Indonesia Democracy

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ABSTRACT

This article has main discussion points on issues related to how political survey institutions should operate to support democracy in Indonesia. The study in this article aims to map the ideal operational pattern of political survey institutions to support democracy in Indonesia. This article collects various literature sources to conclude these problems using the literature study method. This article has found various ethical violations in political surveys that have been carried out for some time. The problem relates to the unholy alliance with political consultants, contemporary business models, manipulation and misleading survey results, and survey method techniques. This article recommends that political pollsters prioritize integrity, transparency, and accountability over profit. It will undoubtedly be positively correlated with developing democracy in Indonesia.

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INTRODUCTION

After the New Order, Indonesia's political system underwent many changes. Amid the Old Order, the political system implemented – although using the term democracy – turned out to be predominantly authoritarian (Sihidi et al., 2020; Rakhmani, 2014; Susanto, 2019). Since Soekarno implemented the Decree of 5 July 1959, which contained the dissolution of the Constituent Body; the return of the 1945 Constitution and the invalidity of the 1950 Provisional Constitution; and the formation of the Temporary People's Consultative Assembly (MPRS) and Temporary Supreme Advisory Council (DPAS), the Indonesian political system changed from Liberal Democracy to Guided Democracy, which in practice contradicted the values of Liberal Democracy and placed Soekarno at the top of power (Choi, 2007)

Alfian described the political conditions during the Guided Democracy period. For several years leading up to the September 30 th Movement by Indonesian Communist

Party (*G30S/PKI*), the political arena was controlled by Sukarno, the Indonesian National Army (TNI), and the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). The reason is the inability of political parties to stem the conflict between political parties, which eventually leads to political instability. Another reason was that Soekarno wanted to play a more significant and meaningful role in politics (Alfian, 1978, pp. 30–31).

Entering the post-New Order era, Indonesia experienced significant political changes (Hefner, 2018; Mietzner, 2020; Tan, 2018; Robison & Hadiz, 2017). The political atmosphere before and after the 1955 general election was quite democratic. Political parties have re-emerged after more than 40 years of political isolation. The practice of democracy experienced a giant leap, not only at the central level but also at the local level, which was marked by direct elections. Many parties have resulted in open competition (Menchik, 2019). This competition encourages the emergence of strategic approaches, so constituents take sides or choose them. This phenomenon enables the growth of survey institutions that offer various programs, including political marketing and surveys, which are expected to exchange ideas and ideologies (Bratton et al., 2016; Dvir-Gvirsman et al., 2016; Fossati et al., 2022; Meserve et al., 2018). An institutional survey is an institution that measures public opinion and perception, one of which is related to political life, such as elections (Dvir-Gvirsman et al., 2016; Lasala-Blanco et al., 2017; Lutz et al., 2018; Nielson, 2017).

In Saeful Mujani's view, the presence of survey institutions in a democratic political system is not a coincidental relationship but a relationship that reflects the nature of democracy and public opinion polls themselves, which is impossible in an authoritarian or totalitarian government. In severe and totalitarian political systems, public involvement in public policy-making is always neglected. People are forced to remain silent and are not comfortable expressing their opinions. Politically, its existence means nothing in the eyes of authoritarian or totalitarian rulers (Mujani, 2004). In a democracy, the regime feels the need to know what the preferences of the citizens are. Without knowing it well, it is undoubtedly difficult for governments to respond appropriately to their preferences and how the mechanism of government-people relations can work as expected by democracy (Dahl, 1992, p. 27).

Based on the above framework, this research has two primary questions. First, how is the performance of survey institutions in Indonesia? Second, what should survey institutions' political roles supporting democratization in Indonesia?

In Indonesia, many researchers have conducted studies on survey institutions' existence. Fitrië (2015) saw that the publication of the results of the quick count survey institutions that were not credible succeeded in creating confusion in the eyes of the public and could be criminalized. Sudarningsih (2017) sees that transparency is the key to public trust in the survey results of survey institutions. Hamiruddin (2016) considers survey institutions' role as political consultants for candidates. Surokim & Ariyani (2020) see that universities can be an alternative to survey organizers that are more trustworthy because they are more independent, autonomous, and not partisan, and the results can be more accountable. Hulwani & Setiono (2019) saw that survey institutions could help increase public participation in the 2017 Jakarta Province election.

Irfan (2017) noticed that the Celebes Research Center survey institute played a strategic role in South Sulawesi, especially in Makassar, helping elites to map out public

issues in South Sulawesi. At the same time, it helps to formulate policies and research as references in making important bureaucratic decisions based on facts and accurate data. Finally, [Iswanto \(2017\)](#), by taking a study in the 2017 Pringsewu Regency Elections, concluded that there is no relationship between the publications of survey institutions on voter behavior. This study fills the void of previous research that has never detailed the problems experienced by survey institutions and the role of survey institutions in the development of electoral democracy in Indonesia.

METHOD

This article uses a literature study as a data collection technique. The data obtained were accessed through books, articles in scientific journals, official documents, and internet sources related to the political role of survey institutions in supporting democracy. Data were collected from national and international journals that were considered relevant to the theme of this paper to help the authors explain the issues being discussed. The data analysis technique used in this article is the descriptive-qualitative analysis technique. The data that we found through various sources were used to describe a phenomenon through interpretation based on the themes discussed in this article.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Development of Survey Institutes in Indonesia

One of the political phenomena that emerged after the New Order was the emergence of political survey institutions accompanied by by-products in the form of quick counts since the 2004 General Election and Presidential Election. At that time, the number of survey institutions in Indonesia was only a dozen. As a new phenomenon, many parties do not understand survey institutions, including those related to the role of survey institutions in elections and democratic development ([Mujani & Lidle, 2010](#)).

In a democracy, the presence of survey institutions is a necessity. In the United States (US), the study of public opinion has developed since the 1950s. This study was used to determine the attitudes and political preferences of the community. In the 1970s, this method grew in popularity and underwent a significant leap. This study is used to determine the effect of public policy on public opinion or vice versa. In the US, for example, there are very well-known agencies such as the Gallup Poll, Harris Poll, Roper, Crosley Poll, Pew Research Center, and Rasmussen.

Initially, large companies used survey institutions to obtain data on market opportunities and the social context of consumers related to the company's products. It is beneficial for companies to create products easily absorbed by the market and consumers. From here, survey institutions slowly penetrated the social and political world. The existence of survey institutions from the beginning has a place in the democratic system. The supremacy of popular sovereignty demands the management of the state by listening to the general will, or Rousseau calls it the general will, which in its development is often equated with public opinion.

Regarding the existence of survey institutions in Indonesia, there is not much data that can be traced. Even so, there were at least three waves. First is the centralization wave, where almost all survey activities are managed and under the control of the

government. This phase occurred during the New Order era. The initial initiators of this type of survey were the Djakarta Press and Public Opinion Institute and the Ministry of Information, born in October 1968. One of their contributions to the general election can be traced to the publication of survey results related to the 1971 general election. At that time, the survey results showed that Functional Groups Party (Golkar) was predicted to win 37.7% of the public election votes. A very repressive regime controlled the survey results, one of the victims was PT Survey Business Research Indonesia (Suburi), which did not last long.

The second is the initial consolidation wave. It started in 1999, which gave room for the expression of democracy to various political forces. Several institutions have started to exist, including the Institute for Economic and Social Research, Education and Information (LP3ES) and the International Foundation for Elections Systems (IFES), as well as survey activities conducted by campuses and the mass media. In this phase, although survey activities are starting to get busy, they are not yet integrated with the professional specifications of the survey agency (McRae & Robet, 2020). And third, survey commodification wave. This phase is marked by a close relationship between survey institutions and the mass media. In 2004, the survey was more advanced in methodology, including pre-election and election surveys, such as exit polls and quick counts. At that time, there were at least seven survey institutions, namely IFES, LP3ES, International Republican Institute, Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI), Sugeng Sarjadi Syndicated (SSS), Danareksa Research Institute, and Democratic Party—Struggle (PDIP) Balitbang.

To date, at least 33 survey institutions are registered as members of the Indonesian Public Opinion Research Association (AROPI), and 21 are registered as members of the Indonesian Public Opinion Survey Association (PERSEPI), which carries out political assistance and public opinion activities. Survey. The number of survey institutions is inseparable from the membership of AROPI and PERSEPI. There are many more survey institutions, both national and local. (Abdi et al., 2014). In the 2019 Election, the General Commission Election (KPU) passed 40 survey institutions allowed to conduct quick counts in the 2019 Election (Kumparan, 2019).

The phenomenon of quick count survey institutes in the 2004 General Election opened the eyes of survey institutions which quite enlivened and added weight to democracy in Indonesia. However, like the booming press in the Reformation era, survey institutions' emergence is similar. There will be natural selection, and only competent, and integrity surveyors will survive. In the 2004 presidential election, LP3ES appeared, which released the quick count results that the SBY-JK pair won 33.2% and Mega-Hasyim 26.0%. KPU results (26 July 2004) showed that the Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono-Jusuf Kalla (SBY-JK) pair was 33.6% and Megawati-Hasyim Muzadi 26.6%. Seeing the quick count result is not too bad to be used as a reference and control over the KPU's count, which is prone to manipulation.

Since then, another survey agency was born that used the 2009 general election as a test of courage to conduct a quick count. At that time, the KPU stated that based on the 2.5% Parliamentary Threshold (PT), nine political parties had the right to sit in the DPR. Not much different; most survey institutions released quick count results that matched the KPU's absolute count. The same thing happened in the 2009 presidential election; comparing the KPU's manual calculation is not much different from the quick

count of survey institutions. The KPU released the manual count results, where Megawati-Prabowo won 26.79%, SBY-Boediono 60.8%, and JK-Wiranto 12.41%.

In practice, public skepticism arises over the ethical values of survey institutions that tend to bind themselves to political parties or candidates with interest in election contestation. For this reason, there needs to be a publication standard for presenting research results, as is done in countries with more established democracies. In the US, for example, there are writing standards recommended by the National Council on Public Polls (NCPP) and the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) minimum standards. In Indonesia, it is necessary to establish a solid and credible professional association of survey institutions, which can bind all survey institutions. Currently, in Indonesia, there are PERSEPI and AROPI.

The Reality of Survey Institutes in Indonesia

This survey institution is expected to help democratize Indonesia; maintain the neutrality of political candidates or contestants; carry out cooperation that contributes positively to the common interest, and based on the correct methodology. However, in reality, political work carried out by survey institutions is often based on orders and favors specific candidates. The order of the survey and the results of the survey lack attention to the use of correct methodologies. Also, not transparent in conveying survey results. The presence of survey institutions to support the creation of democratic and accountable politics has not materialized. The company of survey institutions has not been able to support the development of democracy.

Unholy Alliance with Political Consultants

In the reform era, political consultants thrived with the presence of political consultants, and sometimes conflicts of interest occurred, where survey institutions also became political consultants. This phenomenon has penetrated the country since the 2004 presidential election was held directly. Since 2005 when the subnational executive elections (Pilkada) began, the “industry” of successful teams and survey institutions has grown (Robet, 2019).

Political consultants must be professional and take responsibility for their surveys to inform the survey’s sponsor. In the US, one of the codes of conduct agreed through AAPOR requires agencies conducting public opinion research to name sponsors. Professional political consultants can deliver their clients achieve political goals in an innovative, dignified, and efficient manner. Prioritizing the maintenance of the survey agency's professionalism, integrity, independence, and competence are necessary. Therefore, separating the work of pollsters from political consultants is a must. However, since there are the relationship between pollsters and political consultants continues.

In a democracy, surveys are used to find out public opinion. Political scientists have developed various techniques. The study of public opinion in the United States has increased since the 1950s, especially in people’s political attitudes and preferences. In the 1970s, this method became increasingly popular to find out how public policy affects public opinion or how public opinion affects public policy.

Contemporary Business Models, Manipulation and Misleading Survey Results

The current reality is that survey agencies operate similarly to “business agencies,” as the dominant discourse is limited to profit-and-loss issues. The survey

agency will only work if there are clients who ask, and what the survey agency has in mind is only the profit that can be obtained from the survey it does (Robet, 2019). Just to note, for a one-time election survey in Java, the tariff ranges from Rp 125 million to 200 million. For outside Java, of course, it's different. Hajj rates range from IDR 1.5 billion to 6 billion, depending on conditions, geographic location, and desired survey model (Lewis, 2020). According to the parties involved in the survey institutions, they can get enormous profits for one survey. Making a survey agency a business institution is undoubtedly a mistake and collides with the spirit of democracy. The background of the establishment of the survey institute is to provide political education through objective research. When the facts are the other way around, it's disappointing.

There are survey institutions whose survey results have a high level of accuracy, but there are also those whose predictions are far from reality. There are entirely objective survey institutions, but there are also survey institutions whose objectivity is doubtful. Different survey results tend to cause public confusion. At this point, the survey agency is indifferent to political education and democracy for the people. The motive for just looking for profit is certainly not educational.

The lack of transparency in delivering survey results is another survey reality. Financially, surveys are certainly an expensive activity, so survey agencies can't do it alone. The survey agency will survey if there is an order from the party or candidate. These order surveys are not always "intrusive" if the process is according to the usual indicators in the survey and is reported as is. However, surveys are often conducted using a bespoke methodology, and the published results are also in that order.

According to Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) researcher Siti Zuhro, whether the survey is conducted at the behest of particular parties or institutions doesn't matter. Still, the sponsor of funds must be announced to the public. It is much better and justifiable. Or the order survey does not have to be reported to the public but is limited to the party or institution concerned (Liston P. Siregar, 2018).

Surveys also help create media mapping. Although it is relatively expensive financially, it is affordable. Candidates who conduct surveys are like soldiers who will attack the enemy by first sending reconnaissance troops, so the attack is believed to be more targeted than not starting with reconnaissance. Likewise, candidates who want to conduct a survey first are believed to be more targeted than candidates who do not complete a survey. With surveys, candidates know their level of popularity and electability, as well as the public's desire for candidates and input regarding alternative candidate policies.

Although there are many benefits, after 2005, not many parties are willing to conduct periodic surveys (McRae & Robet, 2020). A good relationship between the survey agency and the political party or candidate will actually benefit the political party or candidate itself. Through surveys, political parties will quickly determine which candidate should be promoted in the regional head election. Political parties and candidates will also have their jobs reduced and become financially cheap. As is often the case in several regional elections, we can imagine where candidates from internal parties compete without elegant political rules. Surveys can be an option to determine which candidates will be championed by the party. Surveys can also reduce the potential for conflict between candidates within the party.

It also reduces the patron-client model so those who feel aggrieved can file a lawsuit. Thus, the presence of survey institutions will have a positive value in reducing internal conflicts. Surveys can also be used as a means of public control. Therefore, survey institutions must appear honest; there should be no lies in the results. In this context, many survey institutions still appear dishonest in their survey results. For example, several institutions that conducted surveys before the 2014 presidential election did not have the “courage” to publish because the survey results did not favor the “candidates”: Jokowi-Jusuf Kalla and, on the contrary, favored his rival, Prabowo-Hatta’s partner (Bachelard, 2014).

Why do pollsters “hide” their survey results? Michael Bachelard cites several sources, citing that pollsters may have a foothold in Jokowi’s camp because of financial problems or relatedness of similar views. Several survey institutions are also proven to have missed survey results related to the vote acquisition of political parties in the 2014 general election. Previously, several survey institutions favored certain political parties as winners or were at the top. Still, it was proven that the quick count results of several credible survey institutions turned out to be very different (Aco, 2014).

With these facts, it is not surprising that in recent years there have been frequent objections from the public against the survey results. In the 2019 presidential election, for example, the Coalition of Anti-Corruption and Hoax Community Activists (KAMAKH) reported six survey agencies to the Criminal Investigation Department for alleged criminal acts of public fraud and violations of Article 22 of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law. The six survey institutions in question are CSIS, Poltracking, SMRC, Charta Politica, Indobarometer, and Perludem, which display the quick count results of the 2019 Presidential Election. These six survey institutions are reported because their immediate count results tend to win the Jokowi-Maruf pair (Majni, 2019).

Survey Method Technique

Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (SMRC) released the results of a controversial survey on 3 February 2012. This survey states that the level of public satisfaction with the government is relatively high (52%). Interestingly, the Democratic Party (PD) electability fell drastically to 8.3% and was in third place. Responding to the paradox of this survey, SMRC called it an anomaly survey. A survey was conducted on December 6-22, 2012, with 1,220 respondents, with an error margin of 3 percent, at a confidence level of 95 percent. Golkar and PDI-P ranked first and second with 21.3% and 18.2% of the votes, respectively. Then Gerindra 7.2%, Indonesia's Nation Awakening Party (PKB) 5.6%, National Democrat (NasDem) 5.2%, United Development Party (PPP) 4.1%, Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) 2.7%, National Mandate Party (PAN) 1.5% and People's Conscience Party (Hanura 1.4%).

Usually, the survey is related to the ruling political party, such as the Democratic Party; the decline in the political party’s vote share is generally parallel to the vote gain or the government’s performance results. Meanwhile, the results of the SMRC survey are indeed extraordinary. On the one hand, the PD’s vote count has decreased; on the other hand, the government’s performance has been entirely satisfactory. As many as 51.6 percent said they were satisfied with the government’s performance, 4.2 percent were very satisfied, 34.8 percent less satisfied, 5.4 percent were unsatisfied, and 4.3 percent did not answer.

The results of the SMRC survey reflect the “questionable” survey because it is considered a “by-order” survey, which is not only in terms of survey implementation but also results. Conducting a national-level survey would cost billions of rupiah, something no survey agency could do on its own. So it is almost certain that the SMRC survey results from a particular client order. The results of the SMRC survey are also extraordinary from the effects of surveys from other survey institutions at almost the same time. The SMRC survey said PD got 8.3% of the vote, while another survey at about the same time put PD in the range of 11-13%.

In addition, another thing that is often questioned is related to survey methods. What is frequently asked is the validity of the survey results because the survey was carried out without including the survey method, especially regarding the sample and survey question instruments that are unknown to the public. Often the sample and question instruments are helpful to the pollster and the candidate or party ordering the survey.

Furthermore, the survey results in the 2018 West Kalimantan gubernatorial election objected to. The protest was carried out by the PDI-P West Kalimantan DPD Cornelis Chairperson. They stated that the results of the West Kalimantan Pilkada survey by LSI Denny JA and Poltracking were forms of academic crime. “In the context of the West Kalimantan gubernatorial election, it is clear that these two survey institutions are political consultants from their opponents, so the measurement of the survey results must be biased towards their interests (Prastiwi, 2018).

In general, the validity of the survey results will be subjective based on the political interests of the viewer. Those who benefit from the survey results will undoubtedly say that the survey results are valid and accurate, whereas those who are disadvantaged will say otherwise. The debate over the survey results will only meet endless arguments because each survey institution has a limit of explanations that the other party cannot penetrate. In other words, they have the right to determine to what extent they want to open their “survey kitchen.” In short, if anyone disagrees with the survey results, they are welcome to conduct a “back survey.”

Third, political surveys often present unhealthy political competition. Political parties or figures then use campaign methods and winning strategies that are not smart and uncivilized. In the end, what happened was money politics that got crazier in every general election and regional head election. Because the political survey is low, money politics is the way to win. Tragically, the survey institute also led the opinion to become the winner.

Whatever it takes to be a winner. Fourth, political surveys have killed one step toward democracy. Because of their growing role, survey institutions are used as political tools to win parties or candidates. Political parties and candidates are reluctant and lazy to work for the people; they prefer to work to get appreciation from survey institutions (Muhammadun, 2013).

The Role of Survey Institutions to Support Democracy

Political surveys help build democracy, of course, independent and dignified surveys, not surveys democracy. An independent and dignified survey will produce results to the community's wishes. All survey institutions must take several steps to

obtain survey results that align with the ideals of democracy. Suppose the survey has been able to put forward ideal democratic values. In that case, the presence of the survey institution will support the realization of democratic life.

Keeping Integrity

The presence of survey institutions is a *das sollen* to participate in guarding a democratic political climate. Therefore, ethically the existence of survey institutions must be able to maintain integrity. Survey institutions must also not be paradoxical and contrary to democratic values. Survey institutions must be able to encourage the growth and development of democratic political life. Democracy talks about politics and power, including elections. Therefore, survey institutions must also understand the political system, the ideology of political parties, the functions of political parties, and voter behavior so that the survey results can provide political lessons to the community.

Indeed, a survey is just a survey. However, it should be realized that surveys are a scientific part of statistical science with a strict methodology. Doubting the survey is the same as rejecting the knowledge that results from research in concluding the truth of something. Survey bodies are also part of the scientific community. Therefore, surveys conducted by survey institutions must be scientifically justified, even legally, and the results must be presented to the public. Suppose the survey results cannot be accounted for and even cause disturbance or harm to some people democratically. In that case, the community needs to be given space to file a lawsuit to allow public control over the survey institution to continue functioning.

If all survey institutions knew their political position, there would be no need to worry about deviations from the democratic spirit that survey institutions would most likely do. There is no need to suspect certain survey institutions as partisans or supporters of certain political parties or candidates. Even if political parties have their survey institutions, it doesn't matter. It is because the essence and function of survey institutions are clearly to guard and support democratic political life. The survey agency continues to maintain its integrity and is expected to be of much help with the existence of democratic political life.

Transparency

In our political tradition, opinion polls have not been widely used to assist political elites in formulating policies so that a policy is in line with the interests of the community. People are also not used to using survey results to urge public officials to make policies according to their aspirations. On the other hand, currently, not a few politicians, social scientists, and community groups do not believe in the survey results. This distrust is partly an implication of the survey's tradition, which is not yet strong and often disregards academic norms, but the results are often widely published. There are survey institutions that have implemented standard rules in their surveys. Some survey agencies are correct in methodology and process but lack discipline in writing the results.

For the second category, surveys are usually conducted on only a tiny part of the surveyed population, but the report pretends to cover the people. For example, the survey targets Indonesian voters. Still, the sample is taken from only a few large cities, so residents outside the city and those living in rural areas do not have the opportunity to

be included in the survey. However, his reports often pretend to cover up the population of potential voters in Indonesia.

Included in this category are telephone surveys. Its purpose is to collect voter opinions, but the population is limited to phone owners listed in the phone book. Sampling is done systematically, and the number of samples and the margin of error are reported, but the report's title often ignores the method used. A headline appeared in the newspaper "Voters Will No Longer Vote for the Democratic Party." The voters in question are the owners of telephones registered in the books, not voters in general, whose numbers are tiny compared to the total population of Indonesia. Therefore, selecting these pieces is not sufficient to make a broad conclusion like the title above.

In addition to the aspects of methodology, process, and reporting, it is also essential for survey institutions to openly convey the results of political surveys by mentioning various information that the public needs to know, including the methodology. In the 2014 presidential election, the crowd was given free broadcasts to watch survey institutions' quick count results, which showed different results. It was recorded from 12 survey institutions that eight survey institutions declared the Jokowi-Jusuf Kalla pair victory, and four survey institutions announced the Prabowo-Hatta pair superior. Based on the quick count results, each pair of presidential and vice presidential candidates declared victory on voting day.

A similar case occurred in the 2018 Central Java gubernatorial election. There was an electability gap between survey results and quick counts conducted by survey institutions. From the quick count of survey institutions, after the voting on 27 June 2018, there was only a slight difference of 10 percent (60-40%). It contrasts with the results of a survey conducted by a survey agency before the election, which put the Ganjar-Yasin pair winning more than 60%, compared to challengers Sudirman Said-Ida Fauziah who only got 20%. The results of the survey ahead of the election, according to the LSI SurveyKP, the electability of the Ganjar-Yasin pair was 54.0 percent, while Sudirman Said-Ida Fauziyah was 13.0%. The Kompas Research and Development survey showed the electability of the team before the election of Ganjar-Yasin was 76.6%, while Sudirman-Ida got 15%. (Rossa, 2018). These calculations' results are wrong, where almost all post-election survey institutions recorded quick counts (exit polls) of Ganjar-Yasin 59% and Sudirman-Ida 41%.

In the 2019 presidential election, something similar happened. Regarding the campaign, it is not surprising that Prabowo-Sandi's victory is predicted to be above 60 percent. But surprisingly, the results of the quick count and exit pool were released by several survey institutions after the polling stations were closed, which almost entirely won the Jokowi-Makruf Amin pair. The results submitted by nearly all these survey institutions starkly contrast with the Plano C-1 form, widely circulated and uploaded on various social media. Almost all of them state that the Prabowo-Sandi pair's vote acquisition is far ahead Jokowi-Makruf couple.

Why did the 2014 Presidential Election, Central Java Gubernatorial Election, and 2019 Presidential Elections happen? In general, the problem lies in the transparency of survey institutions. Lack of transparency, especially in terms of funding and survey methodology; in this case, one of the survey methods is in the form of a quick count. A quick count is done by examining several samples to conclude the population. By

considering Voting Place (TPS) as a sample unit and using the cluster-random sampling method, we want to know the reflection of the overall vote acquisition.

The three cases of political events above should serve as lessons for survey institutions in conducting surveys. The political research performance of survey institutions should be improved by auditing all funding, methodologies, and results. The government must audit all survey institutions by establishing quality control and quality assurance agency. The survey results may not be announced before being verified and validated by the quality control agency, so there is no confusion and immorality in each survey institution—political events such as presidential and regional head elections ([Exploration, 2019](#)).

The absence of standard operating procedures (SOP) related to sampling and distribution limits could be the cause. The risk is that survey results tend to be subjective. Survey institutions should think that the survey results before the election can be used as a reference for the public in assessing candidates. Democracy education can be started from the results of this survey. There is no such SOP in Indonesia. Survey institutions only work based on research methodologies. Therefore, they can use the survey results as advertisements for candidates who order them.

Meanwhile, the publication of the exit poll results was used to cover up the errors of the previous survey, plus advertisements from the survey agency itself. Even more fatal, the survey results before the election can be a force that leads to an opinion “to force” the public to choose the candidate promoted by the survey agency. It is not allowed to conduct surveys and exit polls by the same institution. In the context of democratic development, it is a crime to enable surveys and exit polls to be completed by the same institution. Survey institutions should be one of society's main pillars of democratic education.

Independence

The survey agency must certify that the publication of its survey is free from political interests. The survey results do not direct the public to specific political interests. They also do not generalize and claim that the study represents the entire community's opinion. Several survey institutions are currently indicated to switch functions from professional institutions to winning institutions that work according to the rhythm and wishes of candidates or political parties who are their clients. In comparison, the aspect of professionalism is ignored. They take on a large enough role to influence voters. They consciously stand on two legs. One of them claims to be a professional institution; on the other hand, its parts and functions are like the wings of a political party.

A political year marked by many political agendas, ranging from regional head elections to presidential elections, opened up new business fields in the form of research and survey services. Many survey agencies use the independent principle only as a display. If it is genuinely independent, the survey agency must dare to state to the public that it is independent and disclose all information related to the source of funds, sponsors, and interests of the survey.

In most countries with democracy history, such as the US and many European countries, the independence of pollsters has become a tradition. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, it is still far from expectations. The main reason is that the existing survey institutions are

not yet independent. Most are still dependent on “political projects.” Not surprisingly, when there was a debate on the Pilkada Bill, which regulates the mechanism for selecting regents/mayors, survey institutions were among the most interested, and almost all rejected the indirect election of regents/mayors. Of course, they had rational reasons for refusing it. However, it is believed that one of the reasons is that if the election is conducted through the DPRD, the “livelihood” of survey institutions will be drastically reduced. This fact further confirms that most survey institutions are currently far from independent. Their lives are still “hanging” on the five-year political celebration.

The Importance of the Code of Ethics, Association, and Accreditation of Survey Institutions

Starting from the slanted issue related to surveys, the discourse on the need for accreditation to avoid using surveys that are manipulative, influencing, and leading public opinion has been circulating since 2009. However, the address has been drowned and the accreditation of the institution. The survey institute was never established. The urgency of the importance of the code of ethics and certification of survey institutions has strengthened again, along with the increasing number of survey institutions and the rise of accusations related to orders from certain parties to survey institutions. These slanted accusations are usually related to funding issues. Therefore, regulations must ensure that survey funding involves public accountants for audits. In addition, the ethics of survey institutions must also be guaranteed so that the morality of survey institutions can be adequately maintained. It must be admitted,

Despite many criticisms of survey institutions, it must be admitted that in the realm of democratic politics, the existence of survey institutions is still significant. Scientifically, this is a learning medium for contestants before competing in the political arena. Surveys can be used to read grassroots political maps and dig up information about political preferences and many other variables, which write down political thinking and “what voters want” (Aminuddin, 2013).

Of course, the trend of using survey institutions, although not a few survey institutions, often interfere with the progress of democratic development because the surveys they conduct tend to ignore survey ethics. It is necessary to regulate the survey institutions to minimize these survey institutions. This regulation is, of course, in the context of democracy, not “regulation” like in the New Order era. There needs to be an institution that regulates survey institutions, including punishing pollsters who play with numbers and survey data and don’t present them correctly.

There are AROPI and PERSEPI, but their existence has not been able to bind all survey institutions. For example, their presence cannot be maximized by taking firm action against survey institutions that release “fake” survey results that are not based on the proper survey process and methodology.

In this context, the existence of binding associations and a code of ethics becomes essential. Surveys are an effective instrument for detecting public opinion and voter behavior in elections. Surveys can help political parties or candidates to measure the amount of public support for themselves and, at the same time, find out people’s expectations of the leader or candidate of the political party they choose. The benefits of surveys are many.

Accountability for Responding to Controversy

Currently, surveys and polls are familiar in Indonesia. Controversy surrounds survey activities such various forms, from the soft in the form of satire to the harsh in the form of accusations that coincide with slander. However, if traced, the various criticisms are not as loud as shouts. Criticisms of surveys can be classified under several themes. Dodi Ambardi shares several pieces of this criticism, ranging from issues of justice and injustice, the effects of releasing a survey, the possibility of a conflict of interest, and the accuracy and wrong predictions of the study (Mujani et al., 2012)

Survey institutions are necessary amid the euphoria of democracy because the presence of survey institutions goes hand in hand with the life of a 'democratic' state. Its company can become a bridge and provide information about public perceptions, expectations, and evaluations of socio-political conditions and developments, even as part of political education. It is by ethics and professionalism as a survey agency. Survey institutions must be on a controlled path so that their presence does not damage the democratic order

CONCLUSION

The existence of a survey agency is essential. The survey institute is expected to help accelerate political democratization in Indonesia. Without a survey agency, democratization can still be realized, but with a survey agency, it is believed that the process will be faster. Of course, the survey institutions in question are institutions whose presence is intended as an effort to advance democracy, not the other way around. Of course, the latter cannot be expected to carry out much political development in a better direction.

From the results of this study, there are difficulties in correctly mapping survey institutions that are considered to be able to help accelerate democratization. Initially, the presence of pollsters in the early 2000s, along with direct presidential elections, which are now often referred to as "mainstream survey bodies," could have been a glimmer of hope that these pollsters would do much to democratize Indonesia, but in recent years. Process, there are doubts about the survey institute.

This doubt arose after seeing the performance of survey institutions which, in several survey results, were considered to have fallen out of academic standards as institutions that are usually in line with democracy. There is a strong impression that some mainstream pollsters have committed some "lies" in their surveys. Some pollsters are considered "having an affair" with specific political parties or candidates. Some survey results also show as "ordered surveys." As a result, the survey results are questionable. It is just a question of doubt about the mainstream pollsters. Then what about survey institutions that fall into the "small-flow" category? The public's skepticism towards the "small stream" pollsters is much greater.

This research contributes to revealing the survey institution's reality, which is unfortunate. These pollsters have failed to "market" their products and themselves as pollsters in line with democracy. Some pollsters have fallen in love with political pragmatism. The survey results show the opposite as an institution whose presence is expected to be large enough to accelerate the democratic climate. Existing survey institutions, both mainstream and "small-stream," should offer political marketing

patterns that can accelerate democratization in Indonesia. As described above, several ways that can promote democratization should be of concern to survey institutions.

This article has not explicitly discussed all of the distortions of survey agencies. Therefore, further studies must look at other aspects, such as how survey institutions manipulate facts for popularity. In other words, survey agencies work to build public opinion, not record public opinion. It is perilous because democracy is carried out manipulatively, following the wishes of the pollsters.

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