

Covid-19 and Vote Buying in Sumenep Direct Regional Head Elections

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Abstract

The current covid-19 pandemic has killed tens millions of people. One way to avoid covid-19 is to keep a distance from each other. At the same time, Indonesia held direct regional head elections in 270 regions, which required voters to come and gather at the polling station (TPS). This research was conducted to analyze the relationship between covid-19 and vote-buying with voters participation in direct regional head elections in Indonesia, which was held on December 9, 2020. For the research approach, mixed methods both quantitative and qualitative descriptive were used. The quantitative method was carried out by distributing questionnaires directly to 139 polling stations in Sumenep Regency, East Java, during the regional head election. While the qualitative approach is carried out by observing the conditions directly at the polling station (TPS). In addition, in-depth interviews with the election committee and voters were also conducted. The results of the study found that voter participation was very high even though the regional head election was held during the covid-19 pandemic. This increased participation was apparently correlated with the widespread practice of vote-buying carried out by the winning team for the two pairs of regional head candidates.

Key words: Covid-19; vote buying; regional head elections; money politics; voters.

Abstrak

Pandemi Covid-19 saat ini telah menewaskan puluhan juta orang. Salah satu cara untuk menghindari covid-19 adalah dengan menjaga jarak satu sama lain. Pada saat yang sama, Indonesia menggelar pemilihan kepala daerah secara langsung di 270 daerah, yang mengharuskan pemilih datang dan berkumpul di Tempat Pemungutan Suara (TPS). Penelitian

ini dilakukan untuk menganalisis hubungan antara covid-19 dan pembelian suara dengan partisipasi pemilih dalam pemilihan kepala daerah langsung di Indonesia yang dilaksanakan pada tanggal 9 Desember 2020. Untuk pendekatan penelitian digunakan metode campuran baik deskriptif kuantitatif maupun kualitatif. . Metode kuantitatif dilakukan dengan menyebarkan kuesioner secara langsung ke 139 TPS di Kabupaten Sumenep, Jawa Timur, pada saat pemilihan kepala daerah. Sedangkan pendekatan kualitatif dilakukan dengan mengamati kondisi secara langsung di Tempat Pemungutan Suara (TPS). Selain itu, wawancara mendalam dengan panitia pemilihan dan pemilih juga dilakukan. Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa partisipasi pemilih sangat tinggi meskipun pemilihan kepala daerah dilaksanakan pada masa pandemi covid-19. Peningkatan partisipasi ini rupanya berkorelasi dengan maraknya praktik jual beli suara yang dilakukan tim pemenangan dua pasangan calon kepala daerah.

Kata kunci: Covid-19; pembelian suara; pemilihan kepala daerah; politik uang; pemilih.

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INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 has become a pandemic that has been hitting almost all countries in worldwide (Dube et al., 2021). The number of victims of covid-19 continues to increase from time to time (Szekely et al., 2021). Many countries are considered successful in handling the covid-19 pandemic when measured by the small number of infected citizens and the minimal number of deaths (AITakarli, 2020). But not a few countries have failed, as seen the high number of citizens infected with covid-19 and the number of victims who died (Olufadewa et al., 2021). All countries that are being hit by covid-19 are continuing to work hard to deal with this pandemic (Duek & Fliss, 2020). All countries that are being exposed to covid-19 allocate the resources they have, both in the form of budgets and human resources, to get out of the crisis caused by the covid-19 pandemic (Mana et al., 2021).

Some democracies face a double problem. On the one hand, they have to do prevention and treatment by keeping a distance and avoiding crowds (Khan et al., 2021). But on the other hand, they have to hold elections which of course have to invite citizens to come and vote at the polls, as happened in the United States (Norris & Gonzalez, 2020). this condition is, of course, a potential for spreading of covid-19 (Landman & Splendore, 2020). In addition, candidates who participate in general election contestations also carry out campaign activities that gather large numbers of people. They must come to the same place to follow the campaign carried out by the candidate. Likewise, the election organizing committee is involved in meetings involving large numbers of people (Rusydi & Sulchan, 2020). With this activity, the struggle to overcome covid-19 is getting tougher, and challenges are also getting more diverse.

Indonesia is one of the democracies that has held a democratic party in the form of regional head elections during the covid-19 pandemic (Mutiarasari & Herawati, 2020). At least 270 regions in Indonesia have held regional head elections, nine provincial levels, 224 district levels, and 37 cities in 2020 (Rosanti, 2020). The high number of covid-19 spreads in Indonesia has indeed postponed the implementation of the regional head election which should have been held in June 2020, until it was postponed to December 2020 (Haridison et al., 2020). The implementation of the regional head election in December 2020 has also been criticized by many groups, because it is feared that it will become an arena for the spreading covid-19. However,

the government continues to implement it despite the high risk of the potential spread of covid-19 (Ramadani & Rezah, 2021).

Before the election, The Terukur Survey Institute surveyed Sumenep Regency, East Java on December 1-7 2020. As a result, as many as 92.1% of prospective voters will participate in exercising their right to vote directly in the regional head election which will be held on September 9, 2020. December 2020. Only 0.6% of voters said they would not participate or would not vote. Meanwhile, 4.9% of them are still unsure whether to exercise their right to vote or not. The rest, 2.4% of potential voters, did not give an answer (Terukur, 2020).

Tabel 1. Voter Participation Survey in 2020 Direct Election

Vote	Not Voting	Doubtful	No answer
92,1%	0,6%	4,9%	2,4%

(Source: Terukur Survey Institute, December 2020).

The survey also obtained data on the high number of vote-buying in the regional head elections in Sumenep Regency, East Java in December 2020. 81% of residents

claimed to be ready to accept money politics and 19.0% refused. It can be seen in the following table.

Tabel 2. Voter Acceptance of Vote Buying in the 2020 Regional Head Election

Accept Money Politics	Receiving and Selecting Regional Head Candidates	Accepting but choosing according to conscience	Reject Money Politics
81%	58,5%	22,5%	19,0%

(Source: Terukur Survey Institute, December 2020).

This condition is also not much different from other regions in Indonesia. Voters in various regions who have conducted regional head elections are permissive to money politics. There are many violations related to money politics

in the regional head elections in December 2020. Such as in Gunung Kidul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta. Money politics in regional head elections here reaches 76% (Pramana et al., 2021). In Sleman Regency, Special Region of

Yogyakarta, novice voters consider money politics normal (Harjanto, 2021).

This study was conducted to reveal the relationship between covid-19 and vote-buying in the regional head election in Sumenep Regency, East Java, Indonesia which was held in December 2020. How does vote-buying affect the attendance of voters at the polling station (TPS) in the head election area? This study seeks to reveal how money politics affects voter behavior, in this case to come to polling stations (TPS), even though they face the threat of being exposed to the Covid-19 disease. Money politics has a major influence in shaping voter behavior in regional head elections. Prospective voters who have received money know the candidate or winning team who has given money.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used is a mixed method both quantitative descriptive and qualitative descriptive which was carried out by distributing questionnaires directly to voters at polling stations (TPS) during the regional head elections on December 9, 2020. The results of the questionnaire were then tabulated and analyzed.

This study's population is the citizens registered in the general election, assuming that at one polling station (TPS), the average number of registered participants is around 300. Of the 340 villages in Sumenep Regency, East Java, 139 villages were sampled. This means that about 1,700 people represent the survey population conducted at the regional head election in Sumenep Regency. This amount is equivalent to 5% of the final voter list (DPT) in Sumenep Regency which reached 822,320 people.

For quantitative data collection, the sample used for this study refers to Isaac

and Michael's table with a population of 41,700 people with an error rate of about 10%, which is 126 people. Sampling was carried out using quota sampling technique, because sampling had a quota. In each village took only 1-2 voters because time was limited. Sampling must also be conducted as soon as possible, because the regional heads' election lasts only half a day, starting at 07.00 am to 13.00 pm.

As for the qualitative data collection, it was carried out by observing directly the implementation of regional head elections at polling stations (TPS) spread across various regions in Sumenep Regency East Java. Observation activities have then been documented in the form of photographs. Some photos of documentation from observation activities are included in this research article, and others are attached to research documents.

Data collection was also carried out by conducting in-depth interviews with informants consisting of voters and the implementing committee for regional head elections at the polling level (TPS). Some of the results of the in-depth interviews are presented in this research article in the form of direct statements quoted by the researcher, and others are attached to the research document.

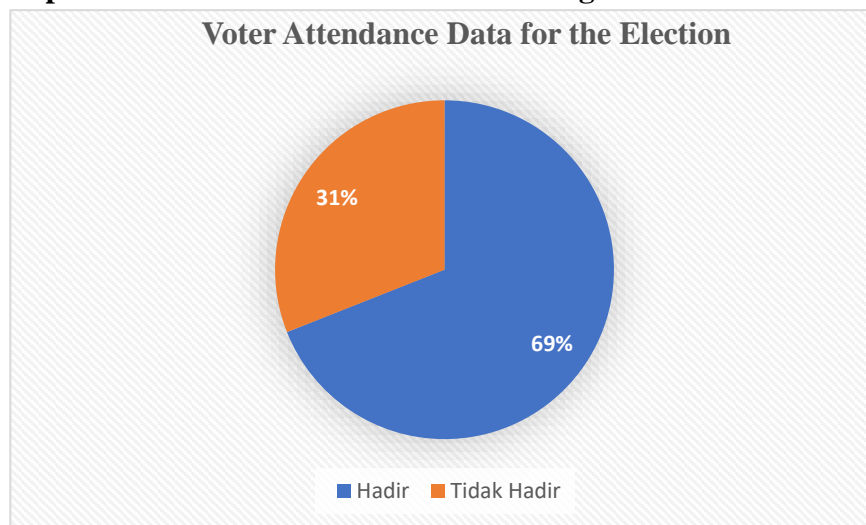
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The regional head election which was held on December 9, 2020, has been held in 270 regions consisting of 9 provinces, 224 regencies, and 37 cities (Wahyuningsih, 2021). it is a challenge for the Indonesian government, considering that around 106 million voters are involved in it. This number can potentially to spread COVID-19 in Indonesia (Marisa et al., 2020). One of the regions that held regional head elections in Indonesia in December

2020 was Sumenep Regency, Madura, East Java. There are two pairs of candidates have competed in the regional head election in Sumenep Regency. First, the candidate pair for Regent Achmad Fauzi and candidate for Deputy Regent Dewi Khalifa. Second, the candidate pair for

Regent Fattah Jasin and candidate for Deputy Regent Moh. Ali Fikri. In this regional head election in Sumenep Regency, East Java, the voters turnout was fairly high. This can be seen from the following graph.

Graphic 1. Voter attendance data in the Regional Head Election



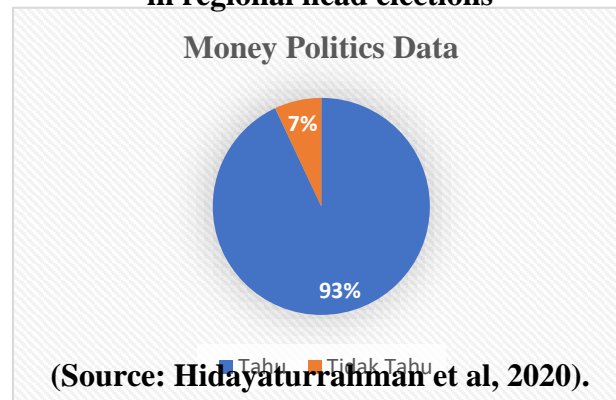
(Source: Hidayaturrahman et al, 2020).

From the graph above, it can be inferred that the number of voters who came to TPS in the regional head election was more than those who did not. About 69% of the voters who came and those who didn't came around 31%. The attendance rate of 69% is quite a high number, considering that in many regions previously regional head elections were also held, the participation rate was below 69%. This happened in Kuningan, West Java, in the regional head elections held in 2018, where the participation rate was only around 67% (Nasuha & Cholikh, 2019). There are also regions where the voter turnout rate is only around 50%, such as in the regional head election in Brebes Regency, Central Java, which was held in

2017, where voter turnout was only around 55% (Suparto & Edy, 2018).

The high voter participation in the regional head election in Sumenep Regency, East Java in December 2020 was apparently caused by money politics carried out by the two pairs of candidates for Regent and their supporting team. This is evidenced by the finding that there are 93% of voters who claim to know about money politics and the remaining only about 7% who do not know about money politics. This can be seen in the following graph.

Graphic 2. Voters who claimed to know and do not know about vote buying in regional head elections



Through in-depth interviews, one of the informants stated that they accepted vote buying because it has become a culture for local people to get money politics during the election campaign. "Money politics can be said to have become a habit that cannot be separated from the political system. Even in the neighborhood where I live, people are used to having money when there is an election." (Interview with RA, voter at polling station/TPS 02 Aeng Merah Village, Batuputih District, Sumenep Regency at TPS on December 9, 2020). AM also conveyed the same thing. According to him, he accepted the money politics given by the supporting team from one of the candidates for regent. "I personally choose to remain silent and will not report about the existence of money politics, because even though I boast that there is money politics, my voice will not be heard. I do not have a position equal to or higher than the candidate for regional head. I also will not forbid my family and people I know from accepting the money politics, even if it is only 50 thousand rupiahs." (AM interview, voter at polling station / TPS 10, Kolor Village, Sumenep City District at TPS on December 9, 2020). The same thing was also acknowledged by RL, one of the voters who accepted money

politics. He admitted that he was offered money amounting to Rp. 25,000. "I want to report myself, but I think again that the current economic condition is unstable. Our expenses do not match the income we get. Then I will remain silent. I also don't have the authority to forbid my family from accepting it, because I myself also accept the gift of money politics." (RL interview, voter at polling station/ TPS 19, East Kalianget Village, Kalianget District, Sumenep Regency at TPS on 9 December 2020).

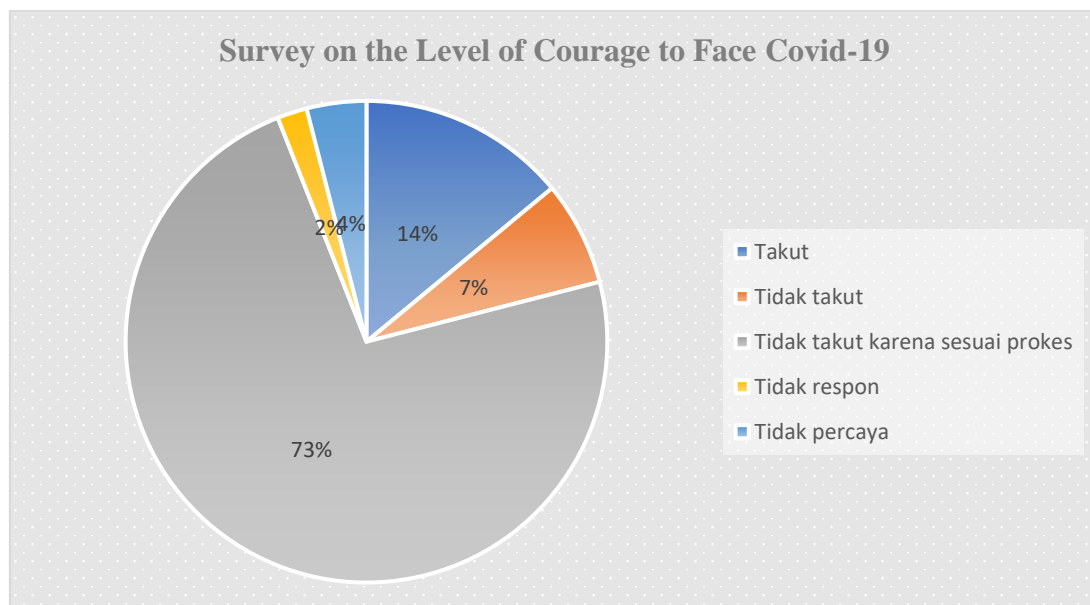
Even so, there are still voter who argue that the culture of vote buying is contrary to the principles of honest and fair elections. He/she believes that if the wrong candidate is chosen, and if a leader is chosen only because of his money, society will not know the impact for the next five years. This was conveyed by SJ. "In my opinion, money politics is the wrong thing to do in our political culture. Because basically, money politics is an act of bribery that can turn leaders into corruptors because they are moved to return the capital that has been spent." (SJ interview, voter at polling station/TPS 04, Rubaru Village, Rubaru District, Sumenep Regency at TPS on December 9, 2020). RK conveyed the same thing. He admitted that he refused even though subtly the vote-

buying given to him, because money politics was of no use to him at all. “Even if it’s for the reason of tired money or something, I won’t accept it. For now, I’m keeping quiet, because in most of every pilkada there must be money politics, which seems to have become an entrenched tradition. And if I resisted, I would definitely be excommunicated.” (RK interview, voter at polling station/TPS 02, Pakandangan Sangra Village, Bluto District, Sumenep Regency, at TPS on December 9, 2020).

On the other hand, most of the voters in the regional elections in Sumenep Regency, East Java, admitted they were not

afraid of being exposed to covid-19. They came to the polls to distribute their right to vote in regional head elections and were not at all worried about covid-19. Most of the residents who came were not afraid of being exposed to covid-19 with the argument that the things they had done were in accordance with the health protocols, 73%. Around 14% said they were afraid of contracting covid-19. There are 7% of respondents who are not afraid of covid-19 at all. Around 4% of respondents do not believe in the existence of covid-19. About more than 1% of respondents did not answer this question. This can be seen in the following graph.

Graphic 3. Voters who are afraid and not afraid of covid-19 in the regional head election



(Source: Hidayaturrahman et al, 2020).

A paired test was conducted to find out how much influence vote buying culture has on the regional head election in Sumenep Regency, East Java in December 2020. In addition, it is also tested whether

the Covid-19 pandemic also affects the attendance of voters to come to the polling station (TPS) to channel their political rights or not.

Table 3. Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Vote Buying – Covid-19	,410	,600	,051	,309	,511	8,062	138	,000

(Source: Hidayaturrehman et al, 2020).

Hypothesis

H0: There is no influence between the culture of money politics and the covid-19 pandemic in the regional head election.

H1: There is an influence between the culture of vote-buying and the covid-19 pandemic in carrying out general elections.

According to Singgih (2014: 265), in deciding on the paired sample t test, the significance value is as follows:

1. If the value of sig. < 0.05 then rejected H0 and accepted H1
2. If the value of sig. > 0.05 then accepted H0 and rejected H1

In the paired sample test results, it was found that the significant value was below 0.05 or rejected H0 and accepted H1, which means that there is a relationship between vote buying culture and the covid-19 pandemic. This means that many regional head candidates and their winning teams have carried out a vote buying culture so that people ignore the Covid-19 pandemic in the Regional Head Elections held in Sumenep Regency, East Java in December 2020.

Photo 1. Polling Station (TPS) 06, Gapura Barat Village, Gapura District, Elections to Regency Regions



(Source: Hidayaturrehman et al documentation, 9 December 2020).

In in-depth interviews with informants consisting of voters and election committees at the polling station (TPS) level, they admitted that they came to polling stations without fear of being exposed to Covid-19 because they felt they had implemented health protocols. It was conveyed by YN, one of the voters in the Bangselok Village, Sumenep City. "I'm not worried about getting Covid-19 because the election is in accordance with health protocols." (Interview with YN at

the polling station/TPS 04, Bangselok Village, Sumenep City on December 9, 2020). The same thing was also stated by RF, one of the voters from Daramista Village, Lenteng District, Sumenep Regency. "I'm not afraid of being exposed to Covid-19, because all the committee at TPS have been wearing masks." (Interview with RF, one of the voters at the polling station/TPS 02, Daramista Village, Lenteng District, Sumenep Regency, on December 9, 2020).

Photo 2. Polling Station (TPS) 01, Bungbungan Village, Bluto District, Sumenep Regency



(Source: Hidayaturrahman et al, 9 December 2020).

From the research that has been carried out in the 2020 regional head election in Sumenep Regency, East Java, the rise of vote buying carried out by the two supporting teams for the regional head candidate pair encouraged voters to come to the polling station on December 9, 2020. According to data released by the Regency General Election Commission Sumenep, the voter attendance rate reached 75%. The covid-19 pandemic, which suppressed the income and economy of residents in Sumenep Regency, encouraged voters to think pragmatically. Even though the money they received was only around Rp. 25,000 to Rp. 50,000 per person, they were

already happy. The gift is considered. To lighten the economic burden on that day. The number of residents who voted for a candidate for regional head who gave money was also quite large, at around 58%. They received the money to make sure to choose the regional head candidate who gave them the money. Some voters still accept vote-buying, but voted according to their conscience, not because of the money they receive. Their number is about 22%. The rest are voters who do not accept money politics, which is around 19%. These voters absolutely refused to accept money politics, both in the form of money and goods.

The political behavior of voters, in regional head elections, as happened in Sumenep Regency in 2020 shows that voters are pragmatic in making political choices. This is actually relevant to rational choice theory. In rational choice theory, a person takes action, based on self-interest. One form of self-interest is economic interest. Regardless of the nominal economic benefits obtained by the voters during the contestation of the regional head election, it means for them, to make a choice. This was also expressed by Mark P. Petracca when explaining the theory of rational choice related to individual interests in politics (Petracea, 1991).

The public needs to be aware of the negative side of political pragmatism that occurs in regional head elections. Such behavior is prohibited by law. As stated in Article 187A of Law Number 10 of 2016 concerning the Election of Governors, Regents, and Mayors, regarding the prohibition of money politics in regional head elections (Prasetyo, 2020). Sanctions for perpetrators of money politics in regional head elections are actually quite heavy, namely a fine of up to Rp. 1 billion or a maximum imprisonment of six years (Febrianto et al., 2020). The Election Supervisory Body or Bawaslu (Asmawi et al., 2021). has also promoted socialization and awareness regarding the prohibition of the practice of money politics.

The cause of the widespread practice of money politics culture in regional head elections is due to weak law enforcement against the perpetrators. The law enforcement process that has taken place so far has only touched the actors in the field. Meanwhile, the intellectual actor or the mastermind has never been touched by the law (Suparnyo & Aji, 2020). Weak law enforcement is getting worse by the lack of facilities, infrastructure, and tools which

allows the implementation of law enforcement against violators of money politics down to the level of intellectual actors. Infrastructure and legal instruments in the regions are inadequate to process all money political actions carried out by the supporting team for the candidate pair for regional head (Indriadi, 2021). In addition, the permissive and pragmatic attitude of the voters also contributes to the growth of money politics in regional head elections (Fitriyah, 2020).

The practice of vote buying in regional head elections has harmed on local government. Regional heads who are elected through vote buying generally become corrupt. Hundreds of regional heads have been arrested by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) for committing acts of corruption (Suyatna, 2020). The number does not seem to be stopping. Many regional heads will become suspects in corruption cases in the future (Ubwarin, 2021). In Lampung Province, for example. Four regional heads have been arrested by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) for committing criminal acts of corruption (Kurniawan et al., 2020). One of the corruption loopholes carried out by regional heads is related to projects sourced from the Regional Budget and Revenue and Expenditure (APBD) (Indrawan et al., 2020).

Several approaches and efforts continue to be made to prevent the increasingly massive culture of vote buying in regional head elections. Among them is by seeking transparency in party financial reporting and the financial reports of candidates (Ashsyarofi, 2021). In addition, a clean and halal regional head election campaign without vote buying is also being pursued (Septiadi et al., 2020). An example of the implementation of this

effort is the formation of a civil society group movement that rejects vote buying in the regional head election in Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta. The culture of money politics in regional head elections will only damage democracy and create more regional corruptors. However, regional heads who are elected because of vote buying will try to return their money in various ways, one of which is through corruption (Pahlevi et al., 2020).

Conclusion

The regional head election held in Sumenep Regency, East Java on December 9, 2020, was colored by the culture of vote buying carried out by the two supporting teams for the candidate for regional head. The nominal of the vote buying given varies, ranging from Rp. 25,000 to Rp. 50,000. The rise of money politics carried out by the two supporting teams for the regional head candidate pair encouraged voters to come to the polling station on December 9, 2020. That is because the voters feel responsible for the money received and appreciate the gift from the team supporters of regional head candidates. On the other hand, most of the voters who attended the polls were not afraid of being exposed to Covid-19. They believe that the election committee has implemented health protocols. The turnout rate of voters at this polling station reached 69% to 75%.

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