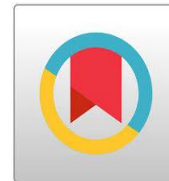


**Examining the Role of ICT in Addressing Potential Issues in Indonesian Absentee Voting in Malaysia**



**Menelaah Peran TIK dalam Mengatasi Masalah Potensial dalam Pemungutan Suara Tanpa Kehadiran di Malaysia**

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	
<p><b>Keywords</b>                      Absentee Voting;                      2024 General Election;                      Voter Disenfranchisement;                      Information and                      Communication                      Technology (ICT);                      Digital Voter Registration;</p>	<p><b>ABSTRACT</b>                      This paper investigates the challenges and potential solutions for absentee voting among Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia during the 2024 General Election. Key issues include administrative inefficiencies, outdated voter lists, legal ambiguities, and vulnerabilities in postal voting, exacerbated by geographic and socio-economic barriers, particularly for rural and undocumented workers. Using qualitative content analysis with NVivo, the study explores how Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as digital voter registration and blockchain voting, can enhance transparency, data accuracy, and election security. The research is novel in its focus on ICT solutions tailored to the unique challenges faced by Indonesian migrants in Malaysia, a topic that has been largely overlooked. It underscores the importance of coordinated efforts among government agencies, NGOs, and technology providers for effective implementation. While ICT offers promising opportunities for reform, challenges related to infrastructure, digital literacy, and voter trust remain significant. The study provides practical recommendations for improving absentee voting, with broader implications for countries with large expatriate populations, emphasizing the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration to ensure inclusivity and electoral integrity. Future recommendations should focus on addressing these challenges and maximizing the potential of ICT. Comprehensive policy reforms are needed to clarify legal ambiguities and streamline administrative processes, making voter registration and voting mechanisms more accessible and efficient. Governments should invest in robust digital infrastructure and implement digital literacy programs to empower migrant workers, especially those in rural areas or with undocumented status. Advanced technologies like blockchain should be further explored to enhance transparency, security, and data accuracy in absentee voting systems. Collaboration among government agencies, NGOs, and technology providers is essential for successful implementation. Future research should also examine the long-term impact of ICT-based voting systems on voter trust and participation, as well as conduct comparative studies with other countries facing similar challenges.</p>
<p><b>Kata Kunci</b>                      Pemungutan Suara                      Tanpa Kehadiran;                      Pemilihan Umum 2024;</p>	<p><b>ABSTRAK</b>                      Artikel ini menginvestigasi tantangan dan solusi potensial untuk pemungutan suara absen bagi pekerja migran Indonesia di Malaysia pada Pemilu 2024. Masalah utama meliputi inefisiensi administratif, daftar pemilih yang tidak terbaru, ambiguitas hukum, dan kerentanan dalam pemungutan suara pos,</p>

<p><i>Pencabutan Hak Pilih;                  Teknologi Informasi Dan                  Komunikasi (TIK);                  Registrasi Pemilih                  Digital;</i></p>	<p>yang diperparah oleh hambatan geografis dan sosio-ekonomi, terutama bagi pekerja di pedesaan dan yang tidak memiliki dokumen resmi. Dengan menggunakan analisis konten kualitatif melalui NVivo, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana Teknologi Informasi dan Komunikasi (TIK), seperti pendaftaran pemilih digital dan pemungutan suara berbasis blockchain, dapat meningkatkan transparansi, akurasi data, dan keamanan pemilu. Keunikan penelitian ini terletak pada fokusnya terhadap solusi TIK yang disesuaikan dengan tantangan khusus yang dihadapi oleh migran Indonesia di Malaysia, sebuah topik yang masih kurang mendapat perhatian. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya upaya terkoordinasi antara lembaga pemerintah, LSM, dan penyedia teknologi untuk implementasi yang efektif. Meskipun TIK menawarkan peluang reformasi yang menjanjikan, tantangan terkait infrastruktur, literasi digital, dan kepercayaan pemilih tetap signifikan. Studi ini memberikan rekomendasi praktis untuk meningkatkan pemungutan suara absen, dengan implikasi yang lebih luas bagi negara-negara yang memiliki populasi ekspatriat besar, serta menekankan pentingnya kolaborasi multi-pemangku kepentingan untuk memastikan inklusivitas dan integritas elektoral. Rekomendasi ke depan harus berfokus pada mengatasi tantangan ini dan memaksimalkan potensi TIK. Reformasi kebijakan yang komprehensif diperlukan untuk memperjelas ambiguitas hukum dan menyederhanakan proses administratif, membuat mekanisme pendaftaran dan pemungutan suara lebih mudah diakses dan efisien. Pemerintah harus berinvestasi dalam infrastruktur digital yang kuat dan menerapkan program literasi digital untuk memberdayakan pekerja migran, terutama yang berada di daerah pedesaan atau tanpa dokumen resmi. Teknologi canggih seperti blockchain perlu dieksplorasi lebih lanjut untuk meningkatkan transparansi, keamanan, dan akurasi data dalam sistem pemungutan suara absen. Kolaborasi antara lembaga pemerintah, LSM, dan penyedia teknologi sangat penting untuk implementasi yang sukses. Penelitian selanjutnya juga perlu mengkaji dampak jangka panjang sistem pemungutan suara berbasis TIK terhadap kepercayaan dan partisipasi pemilih, serta melakukan studi komparatif dengan negara-negara lain yang menghadapi tantangan serupa.</p>
<p><b>Article History</b>                  Send 17<sup>th</sup> February 2025                  Review 01<sup>th</sup> March 2025                  Accepted 04<sup>th</sup> March 2025</p>	<p>Copyright ©2024 Jurnal Aristo (Social, Politic, Humaniora)                  This is an open access article under the <a href="#">CC-BY-NC-SA</a> license.                  Akses artikel terbuka dengan model <a href="#">CC-BY-NC-SA</a> sebagai lisensinya.</p>



## **Introduction**

The Indonesian government has established procedures for absentee voting abroad, including in Malaysia, but several challenges hinder their effective implementation. These challenges encompass administrative inefficiencies, legal ambiguities, socio-economic barriers, and technological limitations (Wydra, 2015). For instance, the limited number of polling stations often requires voters to travel long distances, which is a significant hurdle for many, particularly migrant workers with demanding schedules. Legal ambiguities regarding voter eligibility and registration further complicate the process, leading to confusion and disenfranchisement. Additionally, socio-economic factors, such as lack of awareness and financial constraints, prevent many Indonesians in Malaysia from participating in the electoral process (Rodan, 2018). Technological limitations, including inadequate internet access and digital literacy, further exacerbate these challenges, making it difficult to disseminate information and facilitate voting (Kozyreva et al., 2020).

Understanding these issues is essential to improving the absentee voting process and ensuring that all eligible Indonesians in Malaysia can exercise their voting rights (Ali & Yusoff, 2022). The 2024 Indonesian General Election holds immense significance for both citizens within the nation and expatriates, especially those residing in Malaysia. As preparations for the electoral process unfold, it becomes increasingly crucial to scrutinize and anticipate potential challenges that may arise, particularly concerning absentee voting among Indonesian citizens living abroad. Ensuring the participation of the Indonesian diaspora not only strengthens democratic representation but also reinforces the ties between expatriates and their home country (Giotis & Hall, 2023). This paper aims to delve into the intricacies of absentee voting in Malaysia, shedding light on the potential issues that could affect its integrity and efficacy.

**Table 1.** The Problems of Election Voting in Abroad

Country	Issues Identified
Malaysia	Prone to fraud, non-representative districts
Singapore	Marginalized migrant worker data collection
Hong Kong	Chaotic election schedule, lack of transparency

**Source:** rumahpemilu.org.

In Malaysia, electoral processes are marred by concerns of fraudulence, where instances of vote manipulation or electoral malpractices undermine the integrity of elections. This susceptibility to fraud raises questions about the transparency and fairness of the democratic process. Furthermore, the delineation of electoral districts in Malaysia is criticized for being non-representative, failing to accurately reflect the demographics and population distribution of the country. This imbalance in district boundaries can result in unequal representation and disenfranchisement of certain groups within the electorate. Moreover, The deliberate inflation of voter numbers by the Kuala Lumpur Overseas Election Committee (PPLN) highlights flaws in the 2024 election organization (Afifa, 2024). This manipulation is just one aspect of proven fraud, awaiting further scrutiny by the Constitutional Court. Despite convictions, the seven responsible individuals received light sentences. Political party influence led to voter list alterations, increasing the count from 64,148 to 491,152 (Afifa, 2024). Other fraud indicators include pre-punched ballots and 200,000 omitted voters in Malaysia (Purnamasari, 2024). This problem extends beyond Kuala Lumpur and warrants deeper investigation. The Constitutional Court's scrutiny is crucial to uncover systemic flaws and enhance electoral credibility. Moreover, the data report stated as in previous years, the 2024 election saw severe overcrowding at polling stations, particularly in major cities such as Kuala Lumpur and Penang. Reports indicated that voters waited in line for several hours, with some stations unable to accommodate the influx of voters by the end of the day. There were widespread reports of ballot paper shortages at numerous polling stations. Some locations ran out of ballots early in the day, leaving many voters unable to cast their votes. In other cases, ballot papers were misallocated, with too many sent to some polling stations and too few to others. Many Indonesian migrant workers faced significant difficulties in accessing polling stations due to remote work locations and restrictive job schedules (Wu, 2021). This issue was exacerbated by employers who were unwilling to grant time off for voting.

Absentee voting, often referred to as overseas voting, is a critical mechanism that allows citizens residing outside their home country to participate in their nation's democratic processes (Caramani & Grotz, 2015). For Indonesia, the world's third-largest democracy, ensuring the enfranchisement of its diaspora is a significant undertaking. Malaysia hosts an estimated 2.5 million Indonesian expatriates, many of whom are migrant workers (Bustami et al., 2016). This demographic represents a crucial segment of the Indonesian electorate, and their participation in elections is vital for inclusive representation. Ensuring the smooth and fair conduct of absentee voting in Malaysia is paramount to upholding democratic principles and preserving the integrity of Indonesia's electoral process. However, organizing absentee voting in Malaysia presents unique challenges and complexities that warrant careful examination (Ostwald & Oliver, 2019). From compiling voter lists to executing voting procedures, various factors can hinder the seamless conduct of absentee voting and potentially undermine its credibility.

Additionally, the research examining the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in addressing potential issues in Indonesian absentee voting in Malaysia is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia represent a significant demographic whose participation in elections is essential for upholding democratic principles and ensuring inclusive representation. However, these workers face numerous challenges, including administrative inefficiencies, outdated voter lists, legal ambiguities, and vulnerabilities in postal voting systems, which are further compounded by geographic and socio-economic barriers, particularly for those in rural areas or without proper documentation. These issues not only disenfranchise a large portion of the migrant population but also undermine the integrity and legitimacy of the electoral process. The adoption of such technologies could streamline administrative processes, reduce errors, and provide a more accessible and reliable voting mechanism for migrant workers. Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of addressing infrastructural and digital literacy challenges to ensure the successful implementation of ICT-driven solutions. Given the growing reliance on technology in various aspects of governance, this research offers timely insights into how ICT can be leveraged to overcome longstanding barriers in absentee voting, not only for Indonesia but also for other countries with large expatriate populations. Ultimately, this study underscores the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration to create an inclusive, secure, and efficient electoral framework that empowers migrant workers to exercise their democratic rights effectively.

Furthermore, this research focuses specifically on Indonesian absentee voting in Malaysia, offering a localized analysis that integrates the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in addressing unique bilateral relations and migration

patterns. While absentee voting has been studied in various global contexts, the specific dynamics between Indonesia and Malaysia—such as historical, socio-political, and economic interactions—remain underexplored in relation to electoral processes and the application of ICT. Given the substantial number of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia, this study provides crucial insights into how migration status and conditions impact voting behavior, access, and the potential for ICT to enhance participation. The research explores how socio-economic factors specific to Indonesian expatriates in Malaysia influence their participation in absentee voting and assesses the extent to which ICT solutions, such as online registration and e-voting, can mitigate logistical and administrative challenges. This study is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it fills a gap in the existing literature by providing a detailed analysis of the challenges faced by Indonesian absentee voters in Malaysia, with a focus on how ICT can address these issues. Secondly, it offers practical recommendations for leveraging technology to improve the absentee voting process, which can enhance democratic participation among the Indonesian diaspora. Finally, the findings may have broader implications for other countries with significant expatriate populations, providing insights into how ICT can be applied to improve absentee voting systems globally.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Absentee voting refers to the ability of eligible voters to cast a ballot without being physically present at a polling station (Meredith & Endter, 2016). This concept has been extensively studied in terms of accessibility, logistical challenges, and voter engagement. Studies have explored absentee voting in the U.S., Europe, and Southeast Asia (Tambe, 2021). Research highlights issues like administrative challenges (ballot distribution, ensuring voter identity), fraud, and disenfranchisement, all of which are amplified in the context of ICT-based voting. For example, Boardman (2019) emphasize the administrative complexity and voter accessibility challenges in absentee voting systems, and ICT introduces both solution. Absentee voting, designed to enfranchise citizens residing overseas, presents unique hurdles in nations with substantial overseas populations (Lafleur & Mescoli, 2018). The Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia, grappling with large numbers of migrant workers and overseas citizens, face particular challenges in ensuring effective absentee voting. These challenges, highlighted by studies like Erlingsson (2019) on Filipino overseas voting, can be broadly categorized into logistical and political barriers. Logistically, managing absentee voting on a massive scale across vast distances poses significant obstacles. The volume of overseas voters often overwhelms the limited resources of embassies and consulates responsible for registration,

ballot distribution, and collection (Jaca & Torneo, 2021). This burden is compounded by geographical remoteness, time zone differences, and limited resources at these diplomatic missions. The sheer logistical complexities of managing absentee voting processes for large diasporas can hinder effective participation from overseas citizens (Martin, 2014). Politically, absentee voting can be a contentious issue due to concerns about its potential impact on election outcomes and the integrity of ballots cast abroad. There may be political reluctance to facilitate overseas voting due to fears that these voters, potentially less connected to domestic concerns, could sway elections unpredictably (Delacourt, 2013). Additionally, worries about potential fraud and the difficulty of verifying absentee ballots cast from afar can create political obstacle.

Research by Aspinall & Mietzner (2019) delves into the intricate workings of Indonesia's overseas voting process, highlighting the pivotal role of the Overseas Election Committee (PPLN) in its organization. This committee is responsible for facilitating the voting process for Indonesian citizens residing abroad, ensuring their participation in the democratic process despite geographical distance (Freedman & Tiburzi, 2012). The study sheds light on the complex logistics involved in overseas voting, including voter registration, ballot distribution, and vote counting. It also explores the challenges faced in ensuring the integrity and security of the overseas voting process, particularly in preventing fraud and ensuring fair access to polling stations for all eligible voters (Lubis et al., 2016). Furthermore, the research highlights the politicization of absentee voting, with concerns raised about potential manipulation and influence on overseas voters (Frye et al., 2014). This underscores the importance of transparency and accountability in the overseas voting process to maintain public trust in the electoral system. In addition, scholars like Raganata (2019) have focused on the specific challenges faced in overseas voting, such as fraud risks and limited access to polling stations. These concerns highlight the need for ongoing efforts to improve the accessibility and security of the overseas voting process, ensuring that all Indonesian citizens, regardless of their location, have the opportunity to exercise their right to vote.

These studies highlight specific obstacles faced in Malaysia when attempting to engage with Indonesian workers, particularly those without proper documentation, and how the current electoral system inadvertently marginalizes a significant portion of the workforce. The challenge of reaching undocumented workers stems from their often precarious legal status, which may lead them to avoid contact with authorities or official organizations out of fear of deportation (Lafleur & Mescoli, 2018). This makes it difficult to provide them with information, assistance, or access to services, including healthcare or legal aid. Additionally, the centralization of polling stations in urban areas disenfranchises rural workers, primarily those

in the agricultural or plantation sectors, who may find it challenging to travel long distances to vote, especially on a workday (Pitzer et al., 2021). This creates a disparity in political representation, where the voices and concerns of rural workers are less likely to be heard or addressed.

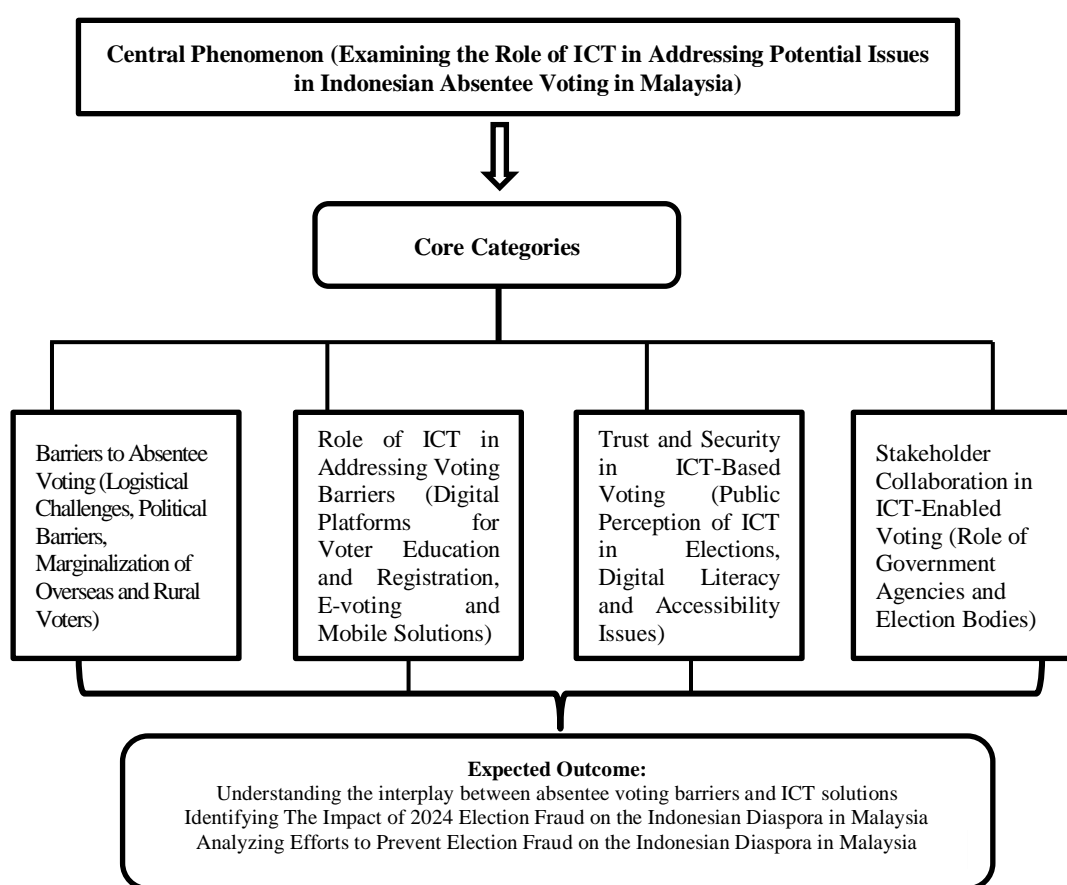
The role of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in empowering marginalized communities and bridging socio-political gaps has been well-documented in academic literature. ICT has been recognized for its capacity to address challenges related to access, inclusion, and empowerment in various contexts, including absentee voting and political participation. In Malaysia, the potential of ICT to tackle the unique difficulties faced by undocumented Indonesian workers and rural populations has emerged as a significant area of research. Numerous studies have explored the barriers that undocumented workers encounter in accessing crucial information, such as their legal rights, healthcare, and social protections (Suphanchaimat et al., 2015). Language barriers, coupled with fears of deportation, often exacerbate these challenges (Boehm, 2016; Lovato et al., 2018; Messing et al., 2015). ICT, particularly mobile applications and social media platforms, has been identified as an effective means of overcoming these barriers. For instance, research by Williams (2020) highlights that mobile platforms designed with user-friendly interfaces in local languages like Indonesian can serve as secure channels for disseminating critical information and enabling anonymous reporting of labor abuses. These platforms, when complemented by SMS and voice messaging services, ensure that even individuals with limited internet access are informed and empowered (Rahman & Huq, 2023).

Geographical disenfranchisement, particularly in rural areas, also poses significant challenges to political participation, especially for Indonesian expatriates working in the agricultural sector. The centralization of polling stations in urban centers has long been identified as a barrier to voting access for rural workers (Stride, 2022). ICT, through online voter registration platforms, voter education initiatives, and the deployment of mobile polling stations equipped with digital tools, presents a potential solution to this issue (Faruk et al., 2024). Scholars like Ikram & Nassar (2022) argue that ICT can reduce the burden on rural populations and enhance their engagement in democratic processes. While e-voting systems have been proposed as a long-term solution, concerns regarding security, access, and trust remain key topics of debate (Benabdallah et al., 2022).

However, the successful implementation of ICT in addressing absentee voting challenges requires more than just technological interventions. Several scholars have emphasized the need for comprehensive digital literacy programs tailored to marginalized



communities, ensuring that individuals from all backgrounds can fully utilize these innovations (Sharma et al., 2016). Equally critical is the establishment of robust data privacy and security frameworks to protect sensitive voter and user information, thereby maintaining public trust in the system (Danezis et al., 2015). Finally, a recurring theme in the literature is the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration. Researchers emphasize that collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, and technology providers is essential for developing ICT solutions that are responsive to the specific needs of marginalized groups. Only through such coordinated efforts can ICT interventions meaningfully contribute to reducing social exclusion and enhancing democratic participation.



**Figure 1 Theoretical Framework**

Source: Authors.

## Method

This study employs a qualitative content analysis approach using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, to systematically analyze data derived from two primary sources: (1) academic literature on ICT and absentee voting, and (2) 50 news articles related to Malaysia

Migrant absentee voting issues. The goal of this research is to identify key themes, patterns, and challenges regarding the use of ICT in facilitating absentee voting among Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia. The first phase of data collection involved a comprehensive review of academic literature on absentee voting, ICT in elections, and the experiences of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia. Scholarly articles were retrieved from academic databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, and Scopus. The inclusion criteria focused on articles published within the last 10 years that discuss ICT applications in electoral processes, absentee voting, and political participation among migrant workers. This literature provided a foundation for understanding existing knowledge and guiding the coding framework in NVivo. The second phase involved gathering 50 online news articles from major Malaysian news outlets, including The Star Online, New Straits Times, Malaysiakini, and Free Malaysia Today. The articles were selected based on their relevance to the research topic—covering issues related to Indonesian migrant workers, absentee voting, and the use of ICT in elections. Articles published between 2018 and 2024 were included to ensure a contemporary analysis. A combination of search terms like “Indonesian absentee voting Malaysia,” “ICT in voting Malaysia,” and “Indonesian migrant workers voting” was used to locate the relevant articles.

Once the data was collected, all academic literature and news articles were imported into NVivo for analysis. Each document was assigned a source classification (e.g., "academic" or "news") to differentiate between the two types of data for more targeted analysis. An initial coding framework was developed based on key themes identified in the literature review, such as “ICT challenges,” “voter accessibility,” “fraud risks,” “digital literacy,” and “administrative complexity.” In addition to thematic coding, NVivo’s word frequency tool was used to identify commonly occurring terms across the news articles, such as “e-voting,” “migrant workers,” “disenfranchisement,” and “cybersecurity.” Sentiment analysis was also conducted to gauge public opinion and media portrayal of ICT's role in absentee voting. Positive sentiments often highlighted the potential of ICT to increase access, while negative sentiments focused on security concerns and systemic barriers.

**Table 2. Research Outline and Detailed**

<b>Research Component</b>	<b>Explanations (Description)</b>
Research Approach	Qualitative content analysis using NVivo to systematically analyze data from academic literature and news articles.
Primary Data Sources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Academic Literature on ICT and absentee voting.</li> <li>2. News Articles (50) on absentee voting issues for Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia.</li> </ol>
Data Collection Phases	<p><b>Phase 1: Academic Literature Review</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sources: JSTOR, Google Scholar, Scopus.</li> <li>2. Focus: ICT in elections, absentee voting, and migrant worker participation.</li> <li>3. Timeframe: Last 10 years.</li> <li>4. Purpose: Develop theoretical foundation and coding framework.</li> </ol> <p><b>Phase 2: News Article Collection</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sources: The Star Online, New Straits Times, Malaysiakini, Free Malaysia Today.</li> <li>2. Focus: Indonesian migrant workers, absentee voting, ICT in elections.</li> <li>3. Timeframe: 2018-2024.</li> <li>4. Search Terms: "Indonesian absentee voting Malaysia," "ICT in voting Malaysia," "Indonesian migrant workers voting."</li> </ol>
Data Processing in NVivo	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Documents categorized as "academic" or "news" for targeted analysis.</li> <li>2. Initial coding framework based on themes: ICT challenges, voter accessibility, fraud risks, digital literacy, administrative complexity.</li> <li>3. Word frequency analysis for recurring terms (e.g., "e-voting," "migrant workers," "disenfranchisement," "cybersecurity").</li> <li>4. Sentiment analysis to assess public and media perspectives:</li> <li>5. Positive Sentiments: ICT enhances voter access.</li> <li>6. Negative Sentiments: Security concerns, systemic barriers.</li> </ol>
Research Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify key themes, patterns, and challenges in ICT-based absentee voting for Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia.</li> <li>2. Provide a nuanced understanding of ICT's role in electoral participation.</li> </ol>

Source: Authors.

## Results and Discussion

### Organizing the 2024 General Election for the Indonesian Diaspora in Malaysia

The 2024 General Election is an important momentum because it provides an opportunity for citizens to redefine the future direction of the Indonesian Nation (Djumadin, 2023). Every Indonesian citizen has the same rights and opportunities to participate in the democratic process by exercising their right to vote (Wartoyo & Tungga, 2019). Participation in elections does not only involve people who are in Indonesia, but also Indonesian citizens who are abroad, such as in Malaysia. A visual depiction showing the trend of words that emerged in this discussion can be seen in the figure below:



**Source:** NVivo Data Processed by Authors.

The word cloud above shows the frequency of words that appear based on the data obtained. The larger the size of the word in the word cloud, the more frequently it appears. Based on the image, some words that stand out are "election", "Malaysia", "voter", and "fraud". This shows that the organization of elections in Malaysia is one of the highlights because it has the largest number of overseas voters. The issues related to voters and alleged fraud are the main concerns. Indonesian citizens in Malaysia can only vote for members of the House of Representatives of the Jakarta II region as well as the President and Vice President. There are three methods used in voting in Malaysia (Sunarso et al., 2022). First, Indonesian citizens who have been registered in the Permanent Voters List can vote directly at overseas polling stations. Second, voters can vote at the Mobile Ballot Box brought by the Overseas Election Committee. Third, voters can vote by sending ballots, which are then voted on and sent back to the committee

According to the embassy's records, Indonesian citizens residing in the working area of the Kuala Lumpur Foreign Election Committee, which includes the Kuala Lumpur Fellowship Territory, Putrajaya Fellowship Territory, Selangor, Perak, Kedah and Terengganu are the locations with the largest number of potential overseas voters in the world (Novia & Djelantik, 2024). The percentage reaches 40 to 45 percent of the total special ballots in the Kuala Lumpur working area. This makes Malaysia an important center for election contestants to gain votes. On the other hand, the General Election Supervisory Agency revealed that Malaysia is the country most prone to violations of the fulfillment of voting rights and the quality of the voter list in the 2024 elections. This is because Malaysia has 6 representative regions with the largest number of voters, which is half of the total overseas voter data. The six regions are Kuala

Lumpur, Johor Bahru, Kota Kinabalu, Kuching, Penang, and Tawau. As a result, the organization of the 2024 elections in Malaysia experienced a number of problems, including:

1. Invalid and inaccurate Permanent Voters List

This problem occurred because the Permanent Voter List in Malaysia had been set long before the vote, which was in July 2023. In fact, in the waiting period of 7-8 months, the data of Indonesian citizens who come and go to Malaysia has changed a lot. This condition caused many Indonesian citizens with new passports not to be registered on the Permanent Voters List. However, when they tried to enter data with their old passport or identity card, their names were listed on the Permanent Voter List. This shows that the updating of voter data was done carelessly.

2. Poor socialization for voters

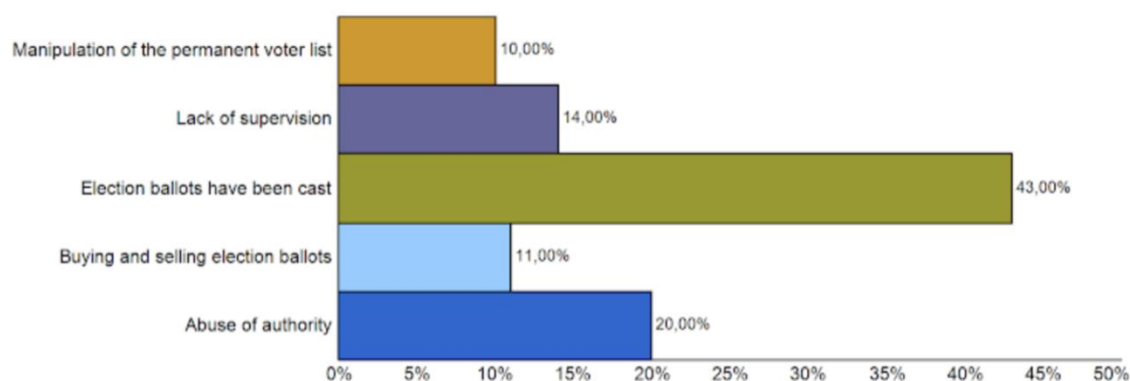
The monitoring results of the Board of Trustees of the Association for Elections and Democracy show that many Indonesians are confused about the category of voters they get, namely at the Polling Station, Mobile Ballot Box, or voters by postal method. This is due to the determination of the voter method carried out by the Overseas Election Committee without prior confirmation to the voters concerned.

3. Unprofessional recruitment of the Overseas Election Committee

Based on Migrant Care's findings, many overseas election committees in Malaysia are recruited from among first-time voters. They are freshmen who will have their first experience of voting in the 2024 elections. As a result, they do not understand the essence of the problems faced due to a lack of knowledge, and cause their performance to be less professional. This had a serious impact on the election process at polling station locations, especially at the World Trade Center (WTC) building in Kuala Lumpur. Voters registered in the special voter list and additional voter list had been overcrowded since the morning, so voters were allowed to vote as early as 10am local time. In fact, according to the rules, voters registered in the special voter list are only allowed to vote after 12:00 local time.

The above problems create conditions that allow fraud to occur in the 2024 elections in Malaysia. In addition, according to the Indonesian Survey Institute report, there are several parties that are considered by the public to have the potential to commit fraud in the 2024 elections. The three parties with the highest potential are political parties, successful teams of presidential and vice-presidential candidates, and election organizers. This shows that fraud in the 2024 elections is indeed a public concern and causes concern because it can threaten political stability and democratic integrity.

**Figure 2.** Factors causing 2024 election fraud on the Indonesian Diaspora in Malaysia



**Source:** NVivo Processing by Authors.

Based on the figure above, there are five main factors that cause fraud in the 2024 elections in Malaysia. These factors include the presence of spoiled ballots, abuse of authority by the election committee, manipulation of the Permanent Voters List by the Overseas Election Committee, lack of supervision, and the practice of buying and selling ballots. The main cause of electoral fraud in Malaysia is the presence of spoiled ballots, reaching a level of 43%. While other frauds such as abuse of authority reached 20%, lack of supervision as much as 14%, ballot buying practices as much as 11%, and manipulation of DPT as much as 10%.

This shows that the 2024 elections in Malaysia are vulnerable to various forms of manipulation and fraud. Less than a week before the polling station voting was held, there was illegal activity of casting thousands of ballots for overseas elections in Malaysia. This was supported by photographic and video evidence showing a number of people casting legislative ballots for certain parties and legislative candidates. Not only that, the evidence also shows an attempt to cast presidential election ballots for certain candidates. The General Election Commission informed that there were 1,972 ballots cast by unauthorized people. The voting activity allegedly involved members of the Foreign Election Committee and employees of the Indonesian Embassy in Malaysia.

On the other hand, seven members of the Kuala Lumpur Foreign Election Committee were named as suspects by the Criminal Investigation Police for manipulating voter data by adding 493,856 votes for the Kuala Lumpur area. This action is a violation of Law No. 7/2017 on General Elections which prohibits deliberately adding or reducing the voter list after the determination of the final voter list, as well as deliberately falsifying data and voter lists in elections. This shows that the Foreign Election Committee as the election organizer has abused its authority by manipulating the Permanent Voter List.

The postal voting method is the most vulnerable to fraud. This is because ballots sent by post are not received directly by the voter and there is no adequate supervision, so this method causes the practice of buying and selling ballots. Based on Migrant Care's monitoring, the value of one ballot ranges from Rp 65,000 to Rp 164,000. The ballots are then offered to certain parties, especially to teams of legislative candidates who are competing for votes abroad.

### **The Impact of 2024 Election Fraud on the Indonesian Diaspora in Malaysia**

The impact of the fraud in the 2024 elections in Malaysia was the implementation of a re-vote (Afifa, 2024). The re-voting has cost the state billions of rupiah. Migrant Care found that there was a waste of more than Rp 15.6 billion in the re-run election in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (Migrant Care, 2024). The budget had been used to send ballots through the postal method, but due to violations committed by the organizers, the process led to re-voting, so the budget that had been used was wasted (Afifa, 2024). In addition, re-voting also led to reduced voter participation. Initially, the Permanent Voter List in Kuala Lumpur was recorded at 491,152 voters, but the re-voting only reached 62,217 or 13.9% of the number of the previous Permanent Voter List (Purnamasari, 2024). This shows that electoral fraud in Malaysia has resulted in huge financial losses and lower voter turnout. In addition, electoral fraud also undermines the integrity of the democratic process and the political system as a whole, especially when the perpetrators come from the organizers themselves (Giotis & Hall, 2023). Therefore, strict and effective measures are needed to prevent electoral fraud, and there is a need for in-depth reform of overseas electoral systems, especially in Malaysia (Lafleur, 2018).

### **Efforts to Prevent Election Fraud on the Indonesian Diaspora in Malaysia**

Election fraud in Malaysia did not only occur in this year's election. In 2019, electoral fraud in Malaysia also occurred with similar problems, mainly related to spoiled ballots and discrepancies in the permanent voters list (Dressel, 2024). In fact, at this year's democratic party, the problem was even worse than before. Migrant Care's director has recommended that the Election Commission abolish the postal voting method in Malaysia since the 2009 elections, but the recommendation has never been heeded (Dettman, 2023). In fact, according to one of the members of the Board of Trustees of the Association for Elections and Democracy, it recommended that the General Election Commission review the postal and mobile ballot box election methods (Goodman et al., 2024). This is because both methods are prone to fraud and difficult to monitor for accountability. In addition, the postal method also

has a high cost so the potential for corruption is also wide open. However, the pull of political interests is too great and there is no good intention from the General Election Commission to make changes.

The Director of Migrant Care also stated that the preparation of the overseas permanent voters list can be improved if there are no sectoral egos between stakeholders (Migrant Care, 2023). The Election Commission can cooperate with the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency, which has data based on the names and addresses of migrant workers working in Malaysia (Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency, 2023). In addition, the General Election Commission can re-apply the revised permanent voter list for voter data collection in Malaysia (General Election Commission, 2023). This is done so that voter data is valid and accurate. Based on this, it can be seen that efforts to prevent election fraud in Malaysia can be addressed early on if the General Election Commission learns from previous mistakes (Afifa, 2024). It takes commitment and courage from the Election Commission to make substantive changes in the electoral process, including the elimination of the postal method, which is prone to fraud (Purnamasari, 2024). It also requires the adoption of more transparent and accountable practices in compiling the overseas permanent voters list (Rodan, 2018).

Efforts to combat election fraud in Malaysia, especially in relation to the absentee voting process for Indonesian migrant workers, have encountered persistent challenges such as discrepancies in the permanent voter list, spoiled ballots, and the vulnerability of postal voting to fraud (Ali & Yusoff, 2022). Over the years, issues like tampered or invalid ballots and inconsistent voter records have raised concerns about the credibility and transparency of the electoral process (Afifa, 2024). Furthermore, calls for reform, such as the elimination of postal voting, have been largely ignored, despite repeated warnings from advocacy groups like Migrant Care about the method's susceptibility to fraud and its high costs (Giotis & Hall, 2023). In this context, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) offers a range of potential solutions that could address many of these long-standing problems, helping to improve both the security and accessibility of the absentee voting process (Farooq et al., 2024).

One of the most significant ways ICT can help is through the implementation of digital voter registration systems. These systems can help resolve discrepancies in the voter list by integrating real-time data from multiple official sources, such as the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency, which holds detailed information about Indonesian workers living abroad. Digital registration could ensure that voter data is automatically updated, reducing the likelihood of errors and making it easier to maintain accurate voter records. Moreover, the use



of biometric identification technologies, such as fingerprinting or facial recognition, could prevent duplicate registrations and minimize opportunities for identity fraud. This would not only make the voter list more reliable but also streamline the entire registration process.

ICT can also offer more secure and transparent voting alternatives to postal voting, which has been particularly vulnerable to tampering and corruption. One such alternative is blockchain-based voting systems, which provide a tamper-proof, decentralized ledger of votes that can be audited in real-time by electoral authorities and third-party observers. Every vote cast using blockchain is stored in an immutable format, ensuring that no single actor can alter the results, which greatly enhances the integrity of the election. Blockchain systems also offer transparency, allowing voters and officials to verify the status of a vote throughout the election process without compromising voter anonymity.

ICT can help overcome this issue by creating cloud-based, interoperable data-sharing platforms that allow for real-time communication and data exchange between government bodies and NGOs (Danezis et al., 2015). This collaborative approach would enable the Election Commission to access the most up-to-date and accurate data on Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia, ensuring that the voter registration process is more efficient and accurate (Sani et al., 2019). While the implementation of these ICT solutions requires adequate infrastructure and resources, it can significantly streamline the electoral process and enhance the accuracy of voter data (Rahman & Huq, 2023).

In addition to improving the voting process, ICT can also enhance the transparency and accountability of voter data collection through real-time monitoring systems (Sharma et al., 2016). Data analytics and machine learning algorithms can be employed to track voter registration trends and flag any irregularities, helping authorities address potential fraud before it can impact the election results (Danezis et al., 2015). These systems can also provide stakeholders, including the public and election observers, with real-time insights into the election process, ensuring greater transparency and accountability (Kozyreva et al., 2020). The ability to detect and address issues early on can significantly reduce the risk of fraud, particularly in high-stakes elections involving large overseas voting populations (Farooq et al., 2024).

Finally, the role of ICT in facilitating inter-agency collaboration is crucial. One of the key challenges identified by stakeholders like Migrant Care is the lack of coordination between the Election Commission and other agencies, such as the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency. ICT can help overcome this issue by creating cloud-based, interoperable data-sharing platforms that allow for real-time communication and data exchange between

government bodies and NGOs. This collaborative approach would enable the Election Commission to access the most up-to-date and accurate data on Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia, ensuring that the voter registration process is more efficient and accurate.

While the implementation of these ICT solutions holds great promise, it would require a strong commitment from the Election Commission and other relevant stakeholders to make substantive changes to the existing electoral process. Ensuring digital literacy among voters, establishing robust security protocols to protect voter data, and maintaining public trust in these new technologies are all essential factors for success. Nevertheless, by adopting ICT in key areas of voter registration, voting, and data management, Malaysia could significantly reduce the risk of electoral fraud and improve the integrity and inclusivity of absentee voting for Indonesian migrant workers. These technological innovations could not only resolve many of the issues that have plagued previous elections but also serve as a model for improving absentee voting systems globally.

## **Conclusion**

This study has highlighted several critical challenges in the absentee voting process for Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia, including inaccuracies in the Permanent Voters List, insufficient voter education, and the unprofessional recruitment of the Overseas Election Committee. These issues have contributed to electoral fraud, confusion, and a decline in trust in the democratic process. While ICT offers promising solutions—such as digital voter registration systems, blockchain-based voting, and mobile or online platforms—to enhance real-time voter data updates, secure voting mechanisms, and accessibility for rural voters, significant limitations remain. Implementing advanced technologies like blockchain and mobile voting requires substantial infrastructure investment and technical expertise, which may not be immediately feasible. Additionally, the digital divide persists, particularly among migrant workers who may lack digital literacy, access to smartphones, or reliable internet connectivity. Concerns about the security and transparency of online voting systems also pose challenges to widespread adoption. To address these weaknesses, future research should focus on several areas. First, studies should evaluate the effectiveness of ICT solutions, such as digital voter registration and blockchain-based voting, in addressing absentee voting challenges for Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia. This includes examining user experiences, identifying barriers related to digital literacy and technology access, and assessing the security and trustworthiness of online voting systems. Second, research should explore collaborative models between government agencies, NGOs, and technology providers to improve voter data

management and streamline absentee voting processes. Third, investigating the impact of tailored voter education programs on engagement and participation could provide valuable insights for enhancing the absentee voting process. Finally, comparative studies with other countries facing similar challenges could offer best practices and innovative approaches for leveraging ICT in electoral systems. By addressing these areas, future research can contribute to the development of more inclusive, secure, and efficient absentee voting frameworks that uphold the democratic rights of migrant workers.

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