

Voter Participation in the 2024 General Election in North Bolaang Mongondow Regency

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Abstract

General Elections (Pemilu) are the main pillar in a democratic system, where voter participation is an important indicator of the legitimacy and success of the election. North Bolaang Mongondow Regency as one of the regions in North Sulawesi Province has its own social and geographical characteristics that influence the dynamics of voter participation. This study aims to analyze the level of community participation in the 2024 Election and identify factors that encourage and inhibit such participation. The research method used is a qualitative descriptive approach with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation studies. The results of the study show that voter participation in this area has increased compared to the previous Election, although there are still challenges such as low political literacy, limited information distribution, and the strong influence of local figures. These findings provide an important overview for election organizers and policy makers to design more effective participatory strategies in the future.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country that adheres to a democratic system with the concept of a government system of the people, by the people and for the people. Thus, all forms of power are determined by the people and implemented for the prosperity of the people. Based on Article 1 paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Indonesia is a democratic country, namely "Sovereignty is in the hands of the people and is implemented according to the Constitution." This aims to position the people as the holders of power or state sovereignty and all government activities are entirely based on the will of the people.

In the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD NRI 1945) paragraph 4, it is stated that "Indonesian National Independence is then formulated in a Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which is formed in a structure of the Republic of Indonesia with people's sovereignty based on the One Almighty God, just and civilized humanity, the Unitary State of Indonesia and Democracy." This statement shows that the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia based on the 1945 UUD NRI is a state based on the principles of a democratic state. This principle of a democratic state is further emphasized in Article 1 paragraph (2) which states that "Sovereignty is in the hands of the people and is implemented according to the Constitution."

A characteristic of a democratic country is the extent to which the state involves the public in the planning and implementation of general elections. This is because political participation by the public (voters) is a crucial aspect of a democratic state. In relation to democracy, political participation influences the public's legitimacy of the running of a

government. In elections, for example, political participation influences the public's legitimacy of the elected candidate or candidate pair. Each member of society has their own preferences and interests that determine their choice in elections. It could be said that the future of public officials elected in an election depends on the preferences of the public as voters. Furthermore, public political participation in elections can be seen as a form of public evaluation and control of leaders or the government.

With this awareness, this entire report is structured systematically, with the initial section discussing the substance of public political participation in elections in a democratic country. Elections are the mechanism used in a democratic system to produce leaders or public officials. Therefore, the basic principles of a conscious citizenry for participating in elections must be established within the community.

General elections are still widely believed to be the most representative means of realizing democracy in a country. Almost no country that claims to be a democracy does not hold elections, regardless of whether the elections are merely a promotional tool or are held to truly implement democratic principles.

Based on Article 22E paragraph (1) it explains that general elections are one of the very important objects of democracy and must also be held directly, publicly, secretly, freely, honestly, and fairly every five years. The implementation of general elections is a form of participation or involvement of the community to make a change or progress in using their voting rights to elect leaders and representatives of the people in government seats. Based on Law Number 7 of 2023 concerning the Stipulation of Government Regulation in Lieu of Law Number 1 of 2022 concerning Amendments to Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections, it has been determined that voters are Indonesian citizens who are 17 (seventeen) years old or older, married, or have been married. Voters are expected to be able to use their voting rights well. Voter participation in general elections is a crucial aspect of a healthy democracy. However, various obstacles can impact voter turnout, including a lack of voter education, apathy, and distrust in the political system. One debate that also discourages first-time voters from participating in elections is that the multiparty system allows too many parties to compete in elections, creating a dilemma for first-time voters. Based on data obtained from the General Election Commission (KPU) of North Bolaang Mongondow Regency, the voter participation rate in the 2024 Election reached 85.57% of the total Permanent Voter List (DPT) of 63,161 people and 54,065 voters in the DPT. When compared to the 2019 Election of the total Permanent Voter List (DPT) of 58,325 and 50,850 voters in the DPT, thus recording a participation of 87.18%, there is a decrease in participation of 1.61%.

The decline in several regions was caused by geographical conditions that were difficult to reach, minimal political understanding, and distrust of legislative candidates and following the election process in accordance with applicable regulations.

This low level of political participation is a problem that continues to be addressed by various parties, including the government, election organizers, and non-governmental organizations. Broadly speaking, various factors have been found to cause people to be reluctant to participate in politics, namely, low levels of public trust in political parties or candidates competing in elections, the strengthening of "reward" politics that makes people vote if they are given a certain amount of money, the still low level of public knowledge regarding political rights, an abundance of information, especially in digital media, the abundance of partisan media, and the growing political divisions.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This type of research is this research, so the research used is empirical research. Empirical research (*field research*) or field research, namely research whose object concerns

symptoms, events and phenomena that occur in society, institutions or countries which are non-literary in nature by observing.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Voter Participation in North Bolaang Mongondow Regency

Based on data obtained from the General Election Commission (KPU) of North Bolaang Mongondow Regency, the voter participation rate in the 2024 Election reached 85.57% of the total Permanent Voter List (DPT) of 63,161 people and 54,065 voters in the DPT. When compared to the 2019 Election of the total Permanent Voter List (DPT) of 58,325 and 50,850 voters in the DPT, thus recording a participation of 87.18%, there is a decrease in participation of 1.61%.

The decline in several regions was caused by difficult-to-reach geographical conditions, minimal political understanding, and distrust of legislative candidates.

Political participation is a public action, either directly or indirectly, related to government policy. This activity can be carried out by individuals or groups, either voluntarily or in an organized manner. On the other hand, political participation can be understood as activities undertaken by individuals or groups to actively contribute to political affairs, such as electing national leaders, either directly or indirectly, and attempting to influence government policy.

New voters in the political arena are a group exercising their right to vote for the first time. The political mindset of these new voters tends to be flexible and can change according to the prevailing situation and various influencing factors. However, despite this, the presence of new voters certainly has great potential in every general election, as it serves as a way to secure the strategic position each participating candidate seeks. Anyone who can attract this group's attention will benefit.

A lack of support from them would be highly detrimental to the target audience. New voters, consisting of schoolchildren, university students, and those aged 17-21, are a highly distinctive segment, often providing surprises and certainly possessing promising potential. They are called distinctive because new voters exhibit high levels of enthusiasm, tend to be more rational, seek change, and are less influenced by pragmatism.

First-time voters' participation in elections includes campaign activities. These activities are designed to influence, attract attention, and gain support from voters, encouraging them to vote for a particular candidate and help them achieve victory. Campaigns play a significant role in the general election process. Many first-time voters already understand the purpose of campaigns: to convey information about the election and explain the vision and mission of the candidate in order to attract their attention and encourage them to vote.

Candidates employ various strategies to garner support during their campaigns, such as featuring artists, both singers and celebrities, at open campaign events, holding social activities, and supporting the construction of places of worship. All of these efforts aim to attract voters, especially first-time voters, to cast their ballots.

New voters' perceptions that campaigning is time-consuming and disruptive to their daily routines make them hesitant to participate. Furthermore, some new voters feel reluctant to participate because they dislike the crowds present in open campaign settings. These views reflect a lack of interest in campaigning, although others are unable to participate due to conflicts with their school schedules.

Increasing public understanding of the meaning of democracy has a significant impact on the nation's political development. One sign that politics is operating

democratically is public political involvement. To observe this, we can examine the various forms of public political participation.

In connection with the general election, the public expressed their right to vote at this event, including first-time voters. Many were very excited to cast their ballots, as for many of them, this was their first time at a polling station (TPS), and they didn't want to miss this opportunity.

B. Inhibiting Factors in Voter Participation in the 2024 General Election in North Bolaang Mongondow Regency.

One of the main obstacles is geographical **conditions of the region** of North Bolaang Mongondow Regency has a complex topography, with many villages and hamlets located in mountainous, hilly, or remote areas with limited road access. This difficult terrain forces some residents to undertake long and tiring journeys to reach polling stations (TPS), ultimately dampening their enthusiasm or desire to vote, especially if the election takes place during the rainy season or in extreme weather. In many cases, the long distances and inadequate road infrastructure are the main reasons why people are reluctant to exercise their right to vote, even if they initially intend to participate.

Furthermore, the lack of equitable information dissemination and outreach from election organizers, such as regional KPUs or other relevant parties, also hampers participation, particularly among first-time voters, those with low levels of education, and those living in remote areas. Many of them do not fully understand voting procedures, the voting schedule, polling station locations, or the importance of their vote in determining the direction of public policy. This lack of understanding is often not due to apathy, but rather to a lack of political education that directly and sustainably reaches the grassroots.

Another contributing factor is issues with the voter list, particularly those related to the accuracy and updating of the Permanent Voters List (DPT). Many voters found their names missing from the DPT despite meeting the requirements to vote, or encountered difficulties due to changes in domicile that had not been administratively reported to the Population and Civil Registration Office. When faced with such obstacles on election day, many voters chose to return home and not exercise their right to vote, unwilling to engage in bureaucratic processes that were perceived as cumbersome or opaque.

Furthermore, the level of public trust in the political process and election institutions also influences participation. Some voters are skeptical about the effectiveness of their votes or believe that election results are predetermined by certain political forces, leading them to opt out of participating, believing their votes will not bring about real change. This attitude often stems from past experiences, such as broken political promises by elected officials, allegations of vote buying, or unclear accountability for public officials after taking office.

Finally, high population mobility, particularly among productive-age voters working outside the region, also impacts voter turnout. Many of them are unable to return to their hometowns or fail to obtain voter transfer documents, thus losing their right to vote. This is quite common in areas with a large migrant population, such as North Bolaang Mongondow.

4. CONCLUSION

Political participation is a series of activities involving public involvement, either directly or indirectly, with the aim of influencing government decisions related to the public interest. Forms of political participation for first-time voters in elections include voting, campaigning, and speaking out on political issues.

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