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Political Participation of Novice Voters in the Implementation of Regional Head Elections

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the forms of political participation among first-time voters during the 2024 simultaneous Regional Head Election in Bone Bolango Regency, with a focus on three main indicators: political campaigns, political discussion, and voting. The research employed a qualitative method with data collection techniques including observation, interviews, and documentation from various sources, such as the General Elections Commission (KPU), Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu), the National Unity and Politics Agency (Kesbangpol), and the first-time voters themselves. The findings indicate that participation in political campaigns tends to be symbolic; most first-time voters take part due to social influences and peer encouragement rather than a deep understanding of the candidates' visions and missions. Regarding political discussions, only a small proportion of first-time voters actively engage in conversations about political issues, while the majority remain passive, citing a lack of understanding or interest in politics. In terms of voting, decisions are heavily influenced by family, particularly fathers, who serve as key references in political choices. In addition to participation patterns, this study identifies three primary factors that determine the level of first-time voter engagement: (1) social media, as the main source of political information and digital discussion; (2) political party identification, which shapes loyalty and preference; and (3) family ties, which serve as the dominant influence in political decision-making. These three factors interact to form a distinctive pattern of political participation among first-time voters in Bone Bolango Regency.

Keywords: Political Participation, First-Time Voters, Regional Head Election.

INTRODUCTION

In political discourse, there is often a debate about whether political participation and election participation are the same thing or two different concepts. Both indeed reflect the involvement of citizens in the life of the nation and the state, but in practice, the form and scope of the two are not always identical. Elections are just one means of participation, while political participation encompasses a wider range of activities, such as expressing aspirations, engaging in public discussions, or participating in the activities of political organizations. This difference

is an important starting point in understanding the meaning of community involvement in the democratic system. Political participation, especially in elections and regional elections, is part of the obligations of citizens in a democratic country. What is suggested through the constitutional basis in Articles 27-34 of the 1945 Constitution emphasizes the rights and obligations of citizens, which regulate the right to vote and vote, as well as the obligation to participate in the success of the people's sovereign agenda through elections. This is as stated in Article 1 Paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution, which emphasizes that the highest sovereignty is in the hands of the people. As a social contract, every citizen is obliged to participate in determining to whom sovereignty over power should be granted. Elections, including the Regional Elections, have now undergone a regulatory change with the term simultaneous elections, which is a manifestation of citizens' political rights in upholding their sovereignty over political choices through simultaneous elections. This is because elections or simultaneous elections are an important part of people's sovereignty as an element of democracy that must be realized by the state. The state is present to ensure and ensure that the democratic process runs in accordance with the provisions of the applicable laws.

To carry out the mandate of the constitution in the state, the democratic apparatus through the organizers of the elections, both technical and ethical organizers, such as the KPU and Bawaslu as supervisory institutions, as well as the Election Honorary Council (DKPP) which maintains the dignity of the organizers must ensure the accuracy of the method in the implementation of elections in democratic countries. For the record, Miriam Budiardjo (2008:461) stated that elections are one of the main characteristics of a democratic country. Elections function as a vital instrument for the people to be involved in the life of the nation and the state through the election of representatives who will hold control of the government. By holding elections in a transparent manner, people have the opportunity to participate and express their political freedom. This thinking underlines that elections—or in the current context, simultaneous elections to elect the President and Vice President, members of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, DPD RI, Provincial DPRD, Regency/City DPRD, as well as Governors and Regents/Mayors and their deputies, are the inevitable logical consequences of the democratic system.

In this context, both from a regulatory and theoretical perspective, the strengthening of a country's democracy is highly dependent on the active participation of the community in simultaneous elections as a manifestation of people's sovereignty over the political elite. As stated by Joan and Samuel (1994:4), political participation is a political attitude that includes all activities or activities that have political relevance, including efforts to influence government officials in the decision-making process. In relation to this, Gabriel (1984) divides political participation into two forms, namely *conventional* (direct) and *unconventional* (indirect) political participation. With regard to the object of this writing, it can be concluded that the urgency of research is more focused on conventional political participation. The measure of conventional political participation that is the object of the study is the involvement of citizens in the electoral process through political discussions, political campaigns, and public participation in determining their political rights (voting). This condition is different from indicators of unconventional political participation, such as petition submissions, demonstrations, strikes, and acts of political violence such as vandalism, bombings, and murder.

In relation to the above argument, the perspective of political participation of novice voters in this paper places the urgency of efforts based on the indicators of political participation by Gabriel (1984). This means that novice voters as the object of the study refer to their political preferences in involvement in political discussions, political campaigns, and direct involvement at polling stations to delegate power to candidates for governor/deputy governor of Gorontalo Province and candidates for regent/deputy regent of Bone Bolango. The

measure of this condition can be seen through the political preferences of novice voters in following the 2024 Simultaneous Election contestation agenda. In fact, political participation in the form of people's political choices is an effort by the community to influence the decision-making process that concerns their interests in elections. Participation in elections is part of the right of citizens to participate in government, as guaranteed by Article 27 paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution. The active participation of the public in every stage of the election also includes the right to express their thoughts, both orally and in writing, in accordance with the provisions of Article 28 of the 1945 Constitution. As a constitutional right, the provision of participation space at every stage of the election is inevitable. In fact, according to the mandate of Article 28I paragraph (4) of the 1945 Constitution, these rights must continue to be advanced through the legislative process and the implementation of the government's agenda, especially the holding of elections.

These political preferences can be measured through the political motives or preferences of novice voters in representing their interests, and the definition of novice voters is regulated in Law No. 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections, Law No. 10 of 2016 concerning Regional Head Elections, PKPU No. 9 of 2024 concerning Community Political Participation in Elections, and Perbawaslu No. 6 of 2024 concerning Participatory Supervision, All of which are guidelines for all citizens, including novice voters, in aggregating political interests through the implementation of elections. Referring to the strengthening of the theory of Almond and Verba (1963) and the above regulations, it can be concluded that in the context of political participation, voters, especially novice voters, focus more on conventional political participation aspects, namely political discussions, political campaigns, and voting. The question is, can these three indicators be carried out by novice voters as individuals who are given the right by the state to realize their political interests? Mahmud, et., al (2024) in his research stated that the political preferences of novice voters tend to be influenced by the political preferences of their parents as a consideration of kinship, which in turn reflects the level of political electability of novice voters.

Based on these political preferences, there are motivations and factors that affect the activeness of novice voters in participating or not being involved in the entire procession of the 2024 Simultaneous Elections. In representing political interests, every citizen, including novice voters, acts according to political rationality and preferences at every stage of the election. What was stated by Rush and Althof (1989) should be considered to identify the driving and inhibiting factors for political participation of the community, especially novice voters, to be directly involved in the 2024 Simultaneous Elections in Bone Bolango Regency. Voter turnout (VTO) has been widely accepted as one of the parameters for assessing people's political participation, as participation involving many people in similar actions over almost the same time span is relatively easy to measure. Based on data from the KPU RI in 2024, the level of public political participation in elections and regional elections shows a relatively high trend but tends to decline at the regional level. The highest participation was seen in the Presidential Election (Pilpres) at 89.78%, followed by the DPD, DPR RI, DPRD Province, and Regency DPRD, all of which were in the range of 89.5%. However, there was a decrease in participation in the regional head elections, namely the gubernatorial election (88.26%) and the election (88.23%). This decline indicates that people are more enthusiastic about elections at the national level than at the regional level, which may be due to a lack of socialization, a lack of attraction for local candidates, or a perception that the regional elections have less direct impact on people's daily lives.

The data shows that the trend of political participation of the Bone Bolango people in each stage of the election and regional elections has fluctuated. The highest participation rate was recorded in the election of the President and Vice President, which was 89.78%, while the lowest was in the election of the Regent and Deputy Regent, which was 88.23%. There is a

difference of about 1.5% between the level of political participation in elections and regional elections. This condition illustrates that 10.22% of people do not use their political rights in elections, while around 11.77% of voters do not use their political rights in elections. On the other hand, Bone Bolango Regency is ranked first in the highest level of political participation in Gorontalo Province, but it is necessary to take seriously the problem of representation of registered voters in the DPT who do not exercise political rights. From the 2014, 2019, to the 2024 Simultaneous Elections, Bone Bolango Regency has always recorded the highest level of political participation, both nationally and at the provincial level. The pure participation rate of the community in the 2024 Simultaneous Elections in Bone Bolango Regency needs to be taken seriously by examining the motives of their political preferences. What Rush and Althof (1989) put forward is an important factor that must be considered as the basis of citizens' motives in choosing candidates who fight. Rush and Althof (1989) also put forward several factors that affect the political preferences of people, including novice voters, in political participation in simultaneous elections.

Rush and Althof (1989) identified indicators of the influence of people's political participation in elections, including social media aggregation as strengthening the involvement of novice voters in simultaneous elections; party identification as a consideration closely related to the procession of kinship and political decisions of novice voters based on margaism; Also, in the perspective of citizenship politics as a modern political narrative, this is also part of the identification of the stately character of citizens, including first-time voters, in representing rights and obligations on every election agenda. The political participation rate in Bone Bolango Regency in 2024 was identified as a total of 122,929 registered voters spread across 18 sub-districts with fairly diverse distributions. In terms of gender composition, there is an almost perfect balance between male voters (60,958 people or 49.6%) and women (61,971 people or 50.4%), indicating equal political participation between the two genders. The variation in the number of voters between sub-districts is quite significant. Kabila District recorded the highest number of voters with 17,579 voters (14.3% of the total), followed by Tilongkabila (14,512 voters/11.8%) and Suwawa (9,846 voters/8%). On the other hand, Pinogu District has the lowest number of voters (1,514 voters/1.2%), followed by Bulango Ulu (3,181 voters/2.6%) and Bulawa (3,893 voters/3.2%).

The distribution pattern shows that major sub-districts such as Kabila, Tilongkabila, and Suwawa have significant voter turnout, while smaller or perhaps more remote districts such as Pinogu record much lower voter turnout. These differences may reflect variations in population density, urbanization rates, or other geographic factors. From the gender aspect at the sub-district level, most of them show a good balance between male and female voters, with a difference that is not too striking. This indicates gender equality in political participation in the region, although more in-depth analysis is needed to understand the underlying social dynamics. Novice voter refers to people who are eligible to vote in an election for the first time, usually because they have just reached the age of eligibility to vote, such as 17 in many countries. Novice voters are often considered a group that has great potential to influence the outcome of elections, as they may be more open to new ideologies and candidates. The term novice voter is also used to refer to individuals who are first and foremost entitled to vote in an election. In this context, novice voters are often associated with age or first-time voting experience, which can influence their choices and political mindset.

Regarding novice voters in Bone Bolango Regency, data shows that the number of voters in the distribution of the number of novice voters in the 2024 Election in Bone Bolango Regency was recorded at a total of 426 novice voters spread across 18 sub-districts. Of the total number, Kabila District ranks highest with the highest number of novice voters, which is 72 people. This figure shows that Kabila is the area with the most dominant potential for novice voters among other sub-districts. Following in second place is Tilongkabila District with 47

first-time voters, then Bone District with 45 people. These three regions have a high concentration of novice voters and have the potential to make a major contribution to increasing political participation in the implementation of regional head elections. In addition, South Bulango District also has a fairly high number of novice voters, namely 38 people, followed by Suwawa District as many as 37 people. Several other sub-districts have a moderate to low number of novice voters, such as Kabila Bone (24 people), Botupingge (19 people), Bonepantai (16 people), Bone Raya (15 people), and East Suwawa (14 people). Meanwhile, there are several sub-districts that show relatively low numbers, such as Bulango Ulu (10 people), South Suwawa and East Bulango (9 people each), and Bulawa (11 people). The sub-district with the least number of novice voters is Pinogu, with only 5 people.

This uneven distribution shows the demographic variation and density of the novice population in each sub-district. This is an important indicator in planning political education strategies and election socialization, considering that areas with high numbers of novice voters such as Kabila, Tilongkabila, and Bone require a more intensive approach to maximize their participation. On the other hand, sub-districts with a smaller number of novice voters still need attention so that this group is not neglected and still gets the right to information and political education proportionally.

Purwanto (2020) reaffirmed that novice voters are those who are involved in elections for the first time and are at risk of ignorance or lack of understanding of the electoral process, so political education is an important key to optimizing their participation. In addition, Haris (2017) defines novice voters as individuals who have the right to vote in an election or general election for the first time, usually 17 years old and above, and have the potential to become a new force in elections due to a more open attitude to political change and innovation. The same thing was expressed by Suryadinata (2019), who said that novice voters are people who are given the right to vote in an election for the first time—generally because they have only reached the age of 17 and often need political education to be able to make wiser decisions and not be easily influenced by momentary or emotional factors.

In addition to the three definitions above, Dahlan (2015) stated that novice voters are voters who are 17 years old or older and have never participated in the election process before. This group has distinctive characteristics, including tending to be more idealistic, vulnerable to media influence, and less experienced in making rational political choices. What the experts stated is in line with the provisions of Article 1 number 6 of Law No. 7 of 2017 which states that "Voters are Indonesian citizens who are 17 years old or older, or have been married." Although the Election Law does not contain a specific definition of "novice voter," in practice this term refers to Indonesian citizens who have only met the age of 17 or marital status for the first time, so they are only entitled to participate in the election process.

Novice voters are often considered a group that needs special attention in order to improve the quality of political participation in a country, especially through political education and better media provision. Referring to this, what Rush and Althof (1989) put forward about the factors that affect the political participation of voters, especially novice voters, must be identified and solutions are sought to strengthen their political preferences. The results of preliminary observations show that the influence of political participation of novice voters in the Regional Head Election in Bone Bolango Regency consists of: first, social media because most of the political preferences of novices are formed based on information obtained through social media; second, the identification of the party for consideration of choosing a certain candidate is based on the choice of parents who are affiliated or fanatical towards a certain political party; and third, the politics of kinship and family ties which are the dominant factor for novice political preferences to participate in the 2024 Regional Head Election process.

The observation also recorded a fairly high level of political participation among novice voters, namely 89.6% based on data from the Bone Bolango KPU. Overall, these factors show

that although novice voters have the same voting rights as other voters, there are still many challenges that need to be overcome to increase their participation in the 2024 Bone Bolango Regency Elections. Therefore, efforts are needed to increase political understanding, better access to information, and more open social support so that novice voters can be more active in the democratic process. Based on these problems, this study will focus on the political participation of novice voters in the implementation of the 2024 Bone Bolango Regency Regional Head Election.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative type of research using a case study approach, in line with the philosophy of postpositivism described by Sugiono (2016). The case study approach is considered an important element in qualitative research, where the goal is to explore the condition of the research object naturally. The data sources in this study were collected directly by the researcher through primary data and secondary data. Primary data, as stated by Sugiyono (2017), is a data source that provides direct information to data collectors, which in this case is obtained through interviews, polls, or observations of objects, events, or objects. The researcher used survey and observation methods involving the Bone Bolango KPU, Bawaslu Bone Bolango, Kesbangpol Bone Bolango, and novice voters in Bone Bolango Regency as the main data source. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from indirect sources such as books, archives, records, or relevant documents, whether published or not, through searching libraries and documents at study centers or related agencies, as explained by Sugiyono (2017) in a qualitative research approach.

Furthermore, the data collection techniques in this study include observation, interviews and documentation. The data collection technique in this study refers to the qualitative method as stated by S. Bachri (2010), namely through direct observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations are carried out to observe ongoing social phenomena as the basis for problem identification, in accordance with the opinions of Nasution and Sugiyono (2016) who emphasize the importance of observation of empirical reality. Interviews are used to dig up information directly from respondents about the case being studied, while documentation is used to collect visual and written evidence from various sources, as explained by Hamidi in Dewi (2019). This study uses a mixed methods approach (qualitative and quantitative) with a focus on the political participation of novice voters (aged 17–25 years) in the 2024 Bone Bolango Regional Elections, through participatory observation, structured questionnaires (Likert scale), in-depth interviews with 30–50 respondents purposively, and analysis of social media content (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok). The data analysis technique refers to the concept of Bogdan and Sugiyono (2016) which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions/verification, where the entire analysis process is carried out continuously. The validity of the data is strengthened by triangulation techniques that include triangulation of sources, time, and theory, to ensure credibility and a deep understanding of the data obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Political Participation of Novice Voters in Political Discussions, Political Campaigns and Voting for the 2024 Regional Head Election in Bone Bolango Regency

1. Participation of Novice Voters in Political Discussions

The theoretical foundation built by Gabriel A. Almond, 1963 in his book "The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations" emphasizes that political discussion is a form of political participation that reflects the awareness and interest of individuals on various political issues. This discussion takes place when individuals share their views on government policies, elections, and other political issues, both in private and public

spaces. These activities reflect participation in a subject-type and participant-type political culture, where citizens are not only positioned as policymakers, but also actively involved in the political process through discussions and exchange of ideas.

The findings of this study reveal the existence of two significant phenomena in responding to the political participation of novice voters that are relevant to the theoretical framework used. First, the level of political apathy among first-time voters ahead of the 2024 simultaneous elections and regional elections in Bone Bolango Regency is relatively high. Most of the informants showed disinterest in political discussions, which were based on dogma and negative perceptions of the political process, especially those related to the implementation of elections and regional elections. Distrust in the effectiveness of the political system is the dominant factor behind this passive attitude. Second, there is a small group of novice voters who show a relatively higher level of political awareness, which is reflected in their active involvement in political discussions as a form of participation that serves to strengthen political preferences in determining political choices. Thus, these findings confirm that novice voters in the region can be categorized into two main groups: those who have political awareness and actively participate in political discourse, and those who are apathetic and tend to avoid involvement in political dynamics, particularly those related to regional head elections.

When juxtaposed with the theory of Gabriel A. Almond (1963), it shows that the level of political participation of novice voters in Bone Bolango Regency is divided between the political culture of the subject and the participant. The low interest and awareness of most novice voters in political discussion reflects the characteristics of the subject's political culture, where citizens are more passive and only accept policies without active involvement, as Almond explains that political participation in the form of discussions reflects awareness and interest that is not optimal. In contrast, the small percentage of novice voters who actively discuss exhibit a participatory political culture, in which they are not only the object of policy, but also actively engaged in the exchange of political ideas. Thus, these findings reinforce the foundation of Almond's theory that political discussion is a form of participation that signifies the level of individual political awareness and involvement in the political culture of a society.

This study found two main phenomena related to the political participation of novice voters in Bone Bolango Regency ahead of the 2024 Simultaneous Elections and Regional Elections. First, there is a fairly high level of political apathy among first-time voters. Most of the informants showed disinterest in political discussions, motivated by negative perceptions of the political process and low trust in the effectiveness of the political system. This phenomenon is in line with the study of Almond and Verba (1963) in *The Civic Culture*, which explains that political culture dominated by parochial types or subjects tends to produce a passive society in political participation.

Furthermore, according to Putnam (1993), low political participation can be attributed to a lack of social trust and weak social networks, which are important social capital in shaping citizen participation. In the Indonesian context, Budiardjo (1998) emphasized that the level of political participation is closely related to public perception of the legitimacy and credibility of the political system and the elites involved in it. If the system is considered incapable of producing real change, then apathy is a common response among young voters.

The second phenomenon is the emergence of a small group of novice voters who show relatively higher political awareness. This group is active in political discussions, both in person and through social media, as a form of political participation that can strengthen their political preferences and choices. Milbrath and Goel (1977) divide the level of political participation into three categories: gladiators (very active), transitionals (sometimes active), and spectators (passive). In this context, politically conscious groups fall into the category of gladiators and transitionals, which suggests that political participation is not completely dead among young voters.

Access to extensive political information through the internet and social media also influences the increase in political awareness among novice voters. Norris (2001) in his study on the Digital Divide shows that advances in communication technology can open up new spaces for participation for groups that were previously unreached by conventional political channels. However, as Verba, Scholzman, and Brady (1995) emphasize, effective political participation requires political education and involvement in activities that form an understanding of the political process. Ultimately, the divide between apathetic and politically conscious groups shows the need for a more systematic and sustainable approach to political education. Huntington and Nelson (1976) reminded that political development in developing countries, such as Indonesia, will only succeed if it is accompanied by efforts to expand and deepen political participation that reflects democratic values and equality.

2. Participation of Novice Voters in Political Campaigns

Political discussion is part of the process of political communication, where individuals exchange views, values, and information about political issues in a society. According to Almond, political discussions reflect the political culture of the participants, which is the type of culture in which citizens actively dialogue and engage in political issues, which is an important characteristic of a healthy democratic system. "Political communication, such as discussion among citizens, is a vital function within the political system, shaping political attitudes and reinforcing participation." (Almond & Verba, 1963). In other words, political discussion is a means of disseminating political values and a social political learning mechanism, which strengthens individual and collective political identities in society.

Responding to the phenomenon of political participation of novice voters in the regional head election in Bone Bolango Regency, the results of the study show that there are three main indicators of involvement in political discussions, namely active participation in citizens' forums, participation in open campaigns, and involvement in public dialogues organized by election organizers. This finding indicates that some novice voters have a fairly good level of political awareness, by using political campaigns as a channel to obtain information about candidates for the Regent and Deputy Regent of Bone Bolango for the 2024–2029 period.

However, the data also revealed that there was a group of novice voters who did not show interest in political campaign activities. This group tends to find involvement in a campaign irrelevant or unimportant to them. This attitude reflects a tendency towards political apathy based on indifference to electoral issues and the political programs offered by the candidates. Furthermore, the information that shapes the political attitudes of these apathy groups is largely obtained from the immediate environment, particularly the elderly, who tend to influence their political preferences. This shows that although there are novice voters who are active in campaign activities, there are also voters who are passive because they are influenced by negative perceptions of political campaigns and low interest in political information.

The findings of this study show that there is a polarization of attitudes among novice voters in responding to political campaigns ahead of the Regional Elections in Bone Bolango Regency. Some first-time voters show active involvement in citizen forums, grand campaigns, and public dialogue, while others are passive and show apathy towards the political process. This phenomenon can be analyzed through the approach of political culture put forward by Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba (1963), which distinguishes between parochial, subject, and participant political cultures. Novice voters who are active in the campaign exhibit the characteristics of the political culture of the participants, where citizens are aware of their role in the political system and actively engaged.

On the other hand, those who are apathetic tend to be in the category of subject or even parochial political culture, due to the lack of trust and interest in the political system. This division is also in line with the theory of political participation from Milbrath and Goel (1977),

which divides participation into three layers: gladiators (very active), transitionals (sometimes active), and spectators (passive). Novice voters involved in the campaign can be categorized as gladiators or transitionals, while those who are not interested at all belong to the group of spectators who are politically passive. This phenomenon is also related to the theory of political apathy, which emphasizes that apathy arises due to distrust of the system, lack of political efficacy, as well as the perception that their votes have no impact (Rosenberg, 1954).

Apathy in novice voters can also be influenced by the lack of political education and the dominance of information from the family environment, especially the elderly, who often shape their political views uncritically. In this context, the theory of political socialization becomes relevant, where Almond and Powell (1966) state that socialization agents such as the family, school, and media have an important role in shaping the political orientation of individuals. Passive informants indicate that the process of political socialization they experience may be limited or biased. On the other hand, the emergence of active novice voters can also be explained through political communication theory, where political campaigns are understood as a form of two-way communication between elites and society to convey visions and programs (Nimmo, 1978).

Campaigns, citizen forums, and public dialogue are effective political communication channels in strengthening the political knowledge and preferences of active novice voters. In addition, the theory of voter behavior also provides an important explanation. According to Campbell et al. (1960), voting behavior is influenced by party identification, issues, and candidate image. In the context of Bone Bolango, active novice voters show interest in local issues and the quality of candidates, while passive groups do not seem to associate political choices with their interests directly. Furthermore, the theory of digital democracy from Norris (2001) can also be used to explain the role of social media in increasing political awareness among the younger generation. Information that is widely disseminated through digital media opens up opportunities for some novice voters to gain previously limited access to political information, while increasing the possibility of political participation through non-conventional channels such as online discussions, social media campaigns, and symbolic endorsements. However, Norris also emphasized the digital divide, which is the gap in access to and quality of political information that citizens receive, which may explain why some voters remain apathetic despite the information available. Thus, these seven theories integratively explain that the political participation of novice voters in the campaign in Bone Bolango is influenced by a combination of structural factors (political system and education), cultural (political culture and socialization), and technology (access to digital information), all of which contribute to their involvement or indifference to the local political process.

3. Participation of Novice Voters in Political Voting

Within the framework of the theory of political participation developed by Gabriel A. Almond, voting is seen as the most basic and widespread form of political participation in a democratic society. Almond emphasized that the act of voting in elections is not only a formal activity, but also an important indicator of citizens' involvement in the political system. He states that, "voting is the minimal act of participation in a democratic political system and a measure of the citizen's involvement in the political process" (Almond & Verba, 1963: 139). This means that voting is a basic measure to see the extent to which citizens have awareness and concern for public affairs. Furthermore, Almond explained that voting behavior reflects the integration of individual politics in the system, as well as showing the functioning of the political system in establishing communication between the state and society. In this case, voting is not only meaningful as a political right, but also as a normative obligation that strengthens the legitimacy of democratic institutions

The findings of this study reveal that the political participation of novice voters in the form of voting in the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Head Election in Bone Bolango Regency is more influenced by socio-cultural factors, especially the dominance of the role of parents, especially father figures, in determining their children's political choices. The representation of the data obtained shows that although novice voters have been exposed to political discussion and campaign activities, the final preference in voting tends not to be born as a result of rational reflection or personal political orientation, but rather comes from the direction or strong influence of the family environment. This confirms that their participation in the form of voting does not fully reflect the consciousness of autonomous politics, but rather is a form of socially derived delegated participation. In the context of Gabriel A. Almond's theory of political participation, voting is the most basic form of political participation that should be a manifestation of citizens' involvement in the political system consciously and independently. Almond states that, "Voting is the minimal act of participation in a democratic political system and a measure of the citizen's involvement in the political process" (Almond & Verba, 1963: 139).

However, in the case of Bone Bolango, this act of voting does not fully represent the political attitudes of individuals, but is still strongly influenced by power relations in the family structure and the paternalistic local culture. This shows that novice voters are not fully included in the category of active participants as Almond intended, but are still in the early stages of forming a participatory political culture. Political discussions and campaigns that are supposed to be a means of forming political rationality have not been effective in forming an autonomous political orientation. Thus, although quantitatively novice voters appear to participate in the voting process, qualitatively the participation is still symbolic and rooted in family normative considerations, not in independent political decisions.

The finding that the political decisions of novice voters in Bone Bolango Regency in the 2024 regional head election are more influenced by father figures as the main reference than the results of participation in political discussions or campaigns, suggest that voting among novice voters is not yet fully autonomous and rational. In this context, the theory of political cognition of young generations (Zeglovits & Aichholzer, 2014) emphasizes that young voters tend to form political preferences based on the influence of the immediate environment, especially the family, due to the limitations of political experience and the skills to critically assess information. This phenomenon is also strengthened by the theory of intergenerational political transmission (Dinas, 2013) which states that the political preferences of parents, especially fathers, can be transmitted directly to children through normative family interactions.

In a paternalistic society like Bone Bolango, this form of transmission is stronger because of the cultural legitimacy of authoritative figures in the family. In addition, the theory of embedded partisanship (Hatalsky & Wronski, 2018) states that political loyalty formed from the primary social environment can be unconsciously inherent in voting decisions, which explains why public discussions or political campaigns have not been able to shake inherited political affiliations. On the other hand, the theory of digital political efficacy (Boulianne, 2015) suggests that digital political participation can increase a sense of ability and confidence in the political process; However, if digital access or understanding is low, then political preferences are still affected by the old pattern, namely the father figure. From the perspective of the performative theory of citizenship (Isin & Nielsen, 2013), the act of choosing should reflect one's self-expression as an active citizen; But in this case, the act of voting functions more as a normative performance, i.e. following family choices, rather than individual expressions. In addition, the theory of relational political socialization (Quintelier, 2015) explains that close social relationships such as family are more influential than formal political education institutions in shaping the political decisions of young voters.

Finally, the situated political agency approach (Weinberg, 2020) emphasizes that young people's political agency is always within a specific structural and cultural context, and in this case, Bone Bolango's cultural structure places the role of parents as the main determinant of political orientation. Thus, although novice voters are formally involved in voting, the fact that their political choices are more determined by family roles suggests that such participation is dependent and does not yet reflect the critical and independent political consciousness as idealized in contemporary deliberative democracy.

Factors Determining the Political Participation of Novice Voters in the 2024 Regional Head Election in Bone Bolango Regency

1. Social Media Factors

According to Rush and Althof (1989), social media aggregation is an important process that involves the collection and dissemination of political information through various digital platforms such as social media. This process serves as a strategic tool to strengthen the involvement of novice voters in political activities. Through social media, young voters can not only access a wide range of politically-related information sources, but also have the opportunity to actively participate in public discussions that take place online. Such involvement allows them to form and develop political opinion critically. The opinions formed can then influence their attitudes towards political issues as well as determine their political choices when participating in elections. Thus, social media is not only a communication channel, but also a space for political interaction that plays a significant role in shaping the political awareness and participation of novice voters.

The findings of the study regarding the factors that determine the political participation of novice voters in Bone Bolango Regency show that social media has a huge influence on political participation, especially in the current digital era. Informant data reveals that platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube make it easier for novice voters to interact with political issues and actively participate in the political process. This indicates that social media plays a very effective role in increasing political participation by providing direct and fast access to political information, especially related to news, campaigns, and candidates' work programs in real time. In addition, social media also serves to disseminate political information widely, including educational content, opinions, and propaganda. Social media also contributes to increasing political awareness while encouraging the involvement of novice voters in participating or conducting political discussions.

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In addition, this study shows that the great influence of social media on the political participation of novice voters in Bone Bolango Regency can be analyzed using theories from a number of Indonesian thinkers who discuss politics and communication today. First, according to Arif Budiman (2012), social media as a digital public space provides space for more inclusive political participation, allowing young groups such as novice voters to be actively involved in political discourse without geographical and social restrictions that have been hindering participation. Furthermore, Budi Setiyono (2015) emphasized the importance of social media in the process of modern political socialization, where digital platforms are the main source of fast and diverse political information, changing traditional political communication patterns to be more interactive and dynamic.

According to M. Quraish Shihab (2017), political awareness is not only influenced by formal education, but also by broad and fast access to information that can be obtained through digital media, so that social media becomes an important instrument in shaping the critical mindset of young voters. Furthermore, Ikrar Nusa Bhakti (2018) argues that in the context of digital democracy in Indonesia, social media serves as an alternative medium for the younger generation to express political aspirations and increase active participation, especially in situations where mainstream media tends to be biased or limited.

Selo Soemardjan's (2010) theory of social change is also relevant here, which explains how modern communication technologies such as social media drive the transformation of political culture by accelerating the flow of information and expanding social networks, thereby encouraging wider and more diverse political engagement. Then, Koentjaraningrat (2013) highlights the importance of socio-cultural context in understanding political behavior, where social media becomes a new arena that reflects social interactions and cultural values that affect political participation, including among novice voters.

Finally, the theory from Hendra Gunawan (2019) emphasizes that social media as a new mass communication medium facilitates more active and critical political participation by providing a platform for young voters to dialogue, debate, and criticize political issues directly, which ultimately strengthens the quality of democracy. By integrating the views of these experts, it can be understood that social media not only facilitates access to political information, but also serves as a strategic space that encourages the political awareness and involvement of novice voters more effectively in the context of digital democracy in Indonesia.

2. Political Party Factors

According to Rush and Althof (1989), political party identification is a process by which novice voters develop a sense of emotional and social attachment to a particular political party. This attachment is not solely based on a rational analysis of the party's policies or programs, but is also influenced by the social and cultural experiences that shape their political preferences. Party identification is an important foundation in building political loyalty that influences voter behavior when making choices in elections. In other words, party identification serves as a guide and source of political orientation that provides meaning and direction for young voters in the political decision-making process (Rush & Althof, 1989).

The findings of the study on the identification of political parties in the participation of novice voters in Bone Bolango Regency show that political parties are the main consideration in determining political rights for some novice voters. Voters with this tendency tend to limit the information space to only the candidate pairs carried by the political party of their choice,

so they are less open to other candidate pairs. They are more active in seeking and collecting information related to candidates from these political parties compared to other candidates. This condition indicates that some novice voters play an active role in obtaining information as the main basis for political decision-making that focuses on candidate pairs supported by the party of their choice. On the contrary, they tend to be passive towards candidate pairs who are not supported by the political parties that are the basis of their fanatical support.

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If the research on the identification of political parties in the participation of novice voters in Bone Bolango Regency can be analyzed using seven different theories that discuss voter behavior and political dynamics, outside of the previous theory. First, the Social Identity Theory of Tajfel and Turner (1979) explains that individuals tend to identify with a particular group—in this context, a political party—so novice voters vote based on their group affiliation and tend to reject information from outside the group. Second, Party Loyalty Theory (Campbell et al., 1960) states that loyalty to political parties is a key factor in voter decision-making, which reinforces selective behavior in accessing information and restricts space for other candidates outside the party of choice.

Third, the Theory of Limited Rationality (Simon, 1957) provides a framework that voters use heuristics such as party identification to facilitate the decision-making process in conditions of limited information and time, so that focusing on known party candidates is more practical than seeking broad information. Fourth, according to the Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957), voters tend to seek information that is consistent with their initial beliefs in this case the candidate of the party of choice and avoid conflicting information to reduce psychological discomfort.

Fifth, Political Framing Theory (Entman, 1993) states that the media and political communication often frame candidates and parties in a way that favors certain groups, so that novice voters who are fanatical about their party will be exposed to and receive information that corroborates their preferences. Sixth, the Theory of Political Participation from Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) asserts that resources such as information and social networks related to parties affect the level of political involvement, so that limited access to information outside the party causes voters to be more passive towards non-party candidates of their choice.

Finally, the Cultural Theory of Politics (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982) theory which states that cultural values and social norms of groups influence political choices, where novice voters in this context are influenced by the political culture of party fanaticism that shapes perceptions

and exclusive attitudes towards other candidates outside their party. Thus, this analysis shows that a combination of social identity factors, loyalty, limited rationality, and political cultural influence also form the pattern of political participation of novice voters who are focused and limited to the choice of a particular political party.

3. Kinship Factors

The findings of the study related to kinship factors in the political participation of novice voters in Bone Bolango District show that although most informants are active in political discussions and campaigns, either directly through their neighborhood affiliations or through social media that shape their political preferences, when it comes to determining political rights, novice voters tend to be more influenced by kinship or proximity to candidates based on blood ties or close family. This condition is understandable due to the lack of adequate political understanding, especially for those who are exercising their right to vote for the first time, making novice voters prioritize emotional and social closeness to a particular candidate rather than considering aspects of political knowledge rationally.

The findings of this study reinforce the view of Rush and Althof (1989) that kinship plays a crucial role in shaping the political orientation of novice voters. In the context of Bone Bolango Regency, although novice voters actively participate in political discussions and campaigns, their decisions in determining voting rights are influenced more by close kinship with candidates who are related by blood or family ties. This shows that social relationships and values inherited through family ties are still the dominant factors influencing political preferences, especially among voters who are exercising their voting rights for the first time and have limited political understanding. Thus, kinship not only creates a sense of social solidarity but also becomes a social mechanism that connects an individual's political identity with the cultural and social structure of his or her community. These findings confirm the relevance of Rush and Althof's theory, that the political orientation of novice voters is a reflection of strong social interactions in kinship networks that shape their political mindsets and behaviors emotionally and socially, rather than mere rational decisions.

Research on the influence of kinship factors on the political participation of novice voters in Bone Bolango Regency can be analyzed through seven different theories and relevant to the socio-cultural context and political behavior of Indonesian people. First, the Theory of Political Patronage (Hadiz, 2010) explains that kinship relationships and close social networks play a role in the patron-client pattern that influences political choices, where voters prioritize personal closeness and social ties over rational considerations. Second, Traditional Political Theory (Geertz, 1963) states that family- and clan-based social structures are still dominant in political decision-making, so novice voters tend to prioritize loyalty to kinship groups as a source of political legitimacy.

Third, according to Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000), social relationships and kinship form strong social capital that strengthens collective bonds and influences political participation through close interpersonal networks. Fourth, the Social Dependency Theory (Scott, 1972) explains how an individual's dependence on a social group or family makes them more receptive to political direction and preferences from close relationships than relying on independent information.

Fifth, in the perspective of the Social Construction Theory of Reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), political knowledge and understanding are formed through social interactions in the family environment, so that the political views of novice voters are strongly influenced by narratives and values that are constructed collectively within the scope of kinship. Sixth, the Theory of Political Emotion (Marcus et al., 2000) states that strong emotional ties to family and social groups influence political behavior, so voters are more likely to vote for candidates they feel emotionally close.

Finally, the theory of Cultural Embeddedness (Geertz, 1973) emphasizes that local culture and kinship values are strongly embedded in the political practices of Indonesian society, including in the pattern of novice voters, so that political decisions are not only based on rational logic, but also on the socio-cultural aspects that shape political loyalty and identification. Thus, this analysis confirms that kinship as social and cultural capital plays a major role in shaping the participation and political decision-making patterns of novice voters in the area.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research on the political participation of novice voters in the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Head Election in Bone Bolango Regency, it can be concluded that the political participation of novice voters still shows complex dynamics and is not fully established. On the indicators of political discussion, only a small percentage are actively involved due to limited interest and understanding, while most others show a passive attitude. In political campaigns, the participation of novice voters is symbolic and driven by the social environment, not because of a substantial understanding of the candidate's visions and missions. Meanwhile, in the voting indicators, their political decisions are heavily influenced by their families, especially the father figure as the main reference in voting. The factors that determine their political participation include the influence of social media which provides quick access to political information and encourages discussion engagement; identification of political parties that form emotional and social loyalty so that information is focused on candidates from certain parties; as well as kinship factors that show that emotional closeness and family relationships are more dominant than rational political considerations. These three factors influence each other and form the pattern of political participation of novice voters, some of whom are active and conscious, but most of which still depend on the social and cultural structures around them.

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