


The Role of Local Government in Increasing Young Voter Participation in the 2024 Regional Head Elections

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Young Voters, Local Government, Political Participation, 2024 Regional Elections, Political Awareness.</p>	<p>Young voters have great potential to determine the direction of regional policies, but often show low levels of participation due to various factors, such as lack of information, political apathy, and minimal involvement in the democratic process. This study aims to analyze the role of local governments in increasing young voter participation in the 2024 Regional Head Elections (Pilkada). This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods to examine local government strategies and policies in educating and motivating young voters. Data were collected through interviews, document studies, and observations of relevant government programs. The results of the study show that young voters play an important role in the 2024 Regional Head Elections (Pilkada), with high enthusiasm even though their political decisions are often influenced by external factors such as the social environment, mass media, and peers. The lack of political experience makes them vulnerable to unverified information and emotional campaigns. Therefore, the Regional Government needs to increase the participation of young voters by providing intensive political education, disseminating accurate information, and involving them directly in the election process through cooperation with schools, universities, and youth figures. To overcome apathy, it is also important for the Regional Government to ensure that the 2024 Pilkada is carried out with transparency and fairness, so that young voters can make wiser decisions and actively participate in determining quality future leaders.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Voter participation in elections and elections is an important foundation for the success of the democratic process. This is not only the responsibility of election organizers, but also involves the government, political parties, and all citizens (Nurfadilla & Nurdin, 2024). Inclusive and participatory elections reflect the legitimacy of the elected government and public trust in the democratic system. Therefore, the responsibility for increasing participation cannot be placed on one party alone, but requires synergistic collaboration from all elements of society according to their respective capacities (Suyatno, 2016).

Election organizers play a role in ensuring that the election process is transparent, fair, and accountable. The government, on the other hand, is responsible for providing adequate infrastructure, conducting outreach, and ensuring that every citizen has access to participate

(Nugroho & Sukmariningsih, 2020). Political parties play a strategic role in building public political awareness through cadre formation, conveying visions and missions, and strengthening connections with voters. Meanwhile, citizens also have a moral and social responsibility to exercise their voting rights wisely, become active and critical voters, and support the creation of a peaceful and conducive election atmosphere (Ansori & Herlina, 2024).

Collaboration between all parties requires an integrated and adaptive strategy to the needs and challenges of the election. Election organizers can collaborate with the government to expand the reach of socialization through digital media, while political parties can improve political education to address public concerns (Afifuddin, 2020). On the other hand, the government needs to identify barriers to participation, such as low political literacy or voter accessibility in remote areas, to create targeted solutions. If all parties are able to carry out their roles well, voter participation can be significantly increased, strengthening democracy, and creating a more representative government (Aditya & Wutoy, 2024).

The participation of new voters is often in the spotlight in every election, including regional head elections. The younger generation, as a group that is exercising its right to vote for the first time, has great potential to influence election results (Maulida et al., 2022). However, public attention to this group often focuses on the high level of apathy, especially since the development of social media use. Many young people are seen to be more involved in online activities than in the real world, which often makes them less concerned about political and democratic issues (Prasetyawati & Adi, 2021).

This apathy of the younger generation does not occur without reason. Lack of adequate information, coupled with the spread of false information or hoaxes and black campaigns on social media, makes it even more difficult for them to understand the importance of their role in the election (Alamri et al., 2023). This situation is further complicated because the younger generation, who tend to imitate the behavior of those around them, often do not find role models. The home, school, and community environments that provide few good examples of political participation contribute to the emergence of an attitude of indifference towards the election (Prasetyo et al., 2022).

This condition is made worse by the lack of inspiring figures that they can look up to. Distrust of people around them, be it political leaders, community figures, or other adults, drives most of the younger generation to withdraw from political issues (Tuhuteru, 2022). This shows that the social environment plays an important role in shaping the attitudes of the younger generation towards politics. When young people grow up in an environment that does not support political involvement, they tend to feel unfamiliar with the concept of political participation, and may even consider it irrelevant to their lives (Karyaningtyas, 2019).

The younger generation as first-time voters have a strategic role in determining the future direction of the nation through active participation in the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections (Pilkada), which will take place on November 27. As a group with a significant number, the involvement of the younger generation can be a catalyst for positive change in the democratic process (Fajri et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important for them to

use their voting rights wisely, based on a deep understanding of the vision, mission, and work programs of prospective leaders. By voting consciously and responsibly, the younger generation not only contributes to the success of the Pilkada, but also helps produce competent, visionary leaders who are able to bring progress in the future (Manggasing et al., 2023).

Regional governments have a strategic role in increasing the participation of first-time voters among the younger generation in regional head elections. As one of the main stakeholders, local governments need to design and implement effective measures, such as creative digital-based socialization programs that are relevant to the characteristics of young people to convey the importance of political participation, election procedures, and the impact of the policies of elected leaders (Sa'ban et al., 2022). Collaboration with schools, universities, and youth organizations can be carried out through political education activities, such as seminars, interactive discussions, or debate competitions that increase political literacy while motivating the younger generation to get involved. In addition, the delivery of information must be inclusive and free from political bias to build trust and minimize apathy. With a planned and collaborative approach, local governments can encourage first-time voters to exercise their voting rights wisely, thereby strengthening the legitimacy of democracy and ensuring the election of quality leaders (Harianja et al., 2024).

This study aims to analyze the role of local governments in increasing the participation of first-time voters, especially the younger generation, in the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections (Pilkada). Through this study, it is hoped that effective strategies, programs, and policies can be identified to encourage the active involvement of the younger generation in the democratic process. The benefits of this study are to provide insight to local governments and other stakeholders regarding relevant and innovative approaches to increasing political literacy and awareness of first-time voters. In addition, this study can be a reference for academics, election organizers, and the wider community in designing interventions that support increasing political participation of the younger generation, thereby creating a more inclusive election process and stronger leader legitimacy.

METHOD

This research is a qualitative research that uses qualitative descriptive methods to explore the role of local governments in increasing the participation of new voters, especially the younger generation, in the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections (Pilkada). As a qualitative research, the main focus of this study is to describe the social phenomenon related to the low participation of the younger generation in elections, by considering the social, cultural, and political factors that influence their behavior. Data collection techniques were carried out through literature studies, namely by tracing various literature, official documents, and previous research results that are relevant to the political participation of the younger generation and the role of local government as one of the policy makers (Yulianah, 2022). Data analysis in this study was carried out in stages, starting from data collection, data reduction to select relevant information, data presentation in the form of descriptive narratives, to drawing conclusions that describe effective strategies that can be

implemented by local governments (Sugiyono, 2016). Through this approach, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the efforts that local governments can make to increase the involvement of the younger generation in the Pilkada, while also contributing to the development of more inclusive and participatory policies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

New Voters in the 2024 Regional Head Elections

Political awareness is a determinant factor that plays an important role in election participation, including in the Regional Head Election (Pilkada). This awareness includes a person's understanding of their rights and obligations as citizens, as well as knowledge of the political process and its impact on people's lives. The higher the level of political awareness, the greater the possibility of a person being actively involved in the democratic process, either through voting or participating in public discussions (Suharyanto, 2016). Conversely, low political awareness is often a major barrier to community involvement, especially the younger generation, in determining the direction of local government. Political awareness not only reflects the extent to which individuals understand their rights, but also the extent to which they feel responsible for contributing to building the future through choices made in elections (Prasojo, 2004).

First-time voters, consisting of students, college students, and individuals aged 17 to 21 years, are a group that has unique characteristics compared to other voters in the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections (Pilkada). One of the main differences lies in their limited political experience, considering that this is their first time participating in an election. This makes their decisions in making choices often still uncertain and unstable. First-time voters tend to be more easily influenced by the information they receive, whether from social media, peers, family, or their surroundings. Because they do not have sufficient experience in assessing the track record of potential leaders, their choices often depend on external factors that can change quickly (Kafka et al., 2022).

Despite their high enthusiasm to participate in the regional elections, many new voters have not yet made a firm decision. This inconsistency shows that they are still in the exploration stage, seeking information and forming opinions about who they consider worthy of leading. One of the factors that influences the instability of this decision is the large influence of those closest to us, such as parents, siblings, and friends. The presence of figures close to them is often the basis for determining political choices, although sometimes this influence can be more emotional or based on personal relationships rather than rational considerations of the vision and mission of prospective leaders (Loho et al., 2023).

In addition, with the advancement of technology and open access to information, first-time voters are now more exposed to various sources of information, especially through social media. The presence of platforms such as Instagram, Twitter (Now X), and TikTok provide space for young voters to filter information and determine their choices, but also open up opportunities for them to be influenced by fake news, hoaxes, or black campaigns. Information that spreads quickly and is sometimes unverified can easily shape their opinions and preferences in choosing a candidate for leader. Therefore, the role of social media in

shaping the political opinions of new voters is very significant, but also high risk if not balanced with a good understanding of digital and political literacy (Rohim & Wardana, 2019).

New voters have high enthusiasm for the Regional Head Elections (Pilkada), but their political decisions are often not yet final. They occupy a very strategic position in the election because of their nature which can be greatly influenced by the dynamics of local politics and the surrounding social environment. As swing voters, first-time voters are at a point where they can move in choosing a candidate, depending on various factors that influence them. Therefore, their decisions are not yet driven by strong ideological motivations or fixed political views, but rather tend to be situational and emotional factors.

One of the main factors that influences the choices of first-time voters is their social environment, especially family and peers. First-time voters are highly influenced by the opinions and views of those closest to them, be they parents, siblings or friends. In many cases, a first-time voter may place more importance on the advice or views of someone they trust, thus influencing their decision. This social factor is very strong, especially for teenagers who tend to seek support or influence from their social group. Therefore, new voters often view politics more through the lens of interpersonal relationships rather than a deeper understanding of politics.

Mass media plays an equally important role in influencing the political choices of young voters. Various forms of media, from television, banners, brochures, to posters spread around them, become sources of information that can influence the perception and choice of prospective leaders. Young voters who are often exposed to various political messages through mass media can be easily influenced, especially if the information is delivered in an interesting, visual way, or according to their interests. Campaigns through mass media that prioritize interesting visuals and easily digestible messages are more effective in gaining their attention.

On the other hand, first-time voters, especially teenagers, tend to have more relaxed, free cultural values, and tend to avoid things that seem formal or boring. They are more interested in things that are fun and relevant to their lifestyle, which are often informal. If a political campaign feels too rigid or does not touch their lifestyle, first-time voters may lose interest and be reluctant to get involved further in the political process. Therefore, it is important for campaign organizers to understand these characteristics and convey political messages in a more interesting way, such as using social media or other creative ways that are relevant to them.

Peer groups are also a very important element in a teenager's life. They tend to rely heavily on the influence of their peers in various aspects of life, including in determining political choices. Therefore, peer groups can be a reinforcing factor or a hindrance in the formation of adolescent political opinions. In many cases, when an adolescent sees their friends participating in politics or voting for a particular candidate, they will feel influenced to follow in their footsteps, even if they do not fully understand the reasons behind their choice. Peer groups with strong political opinions can serve as a source of social pressure that also influences the decisions of young voters.

The behavior of new voters who tend to be indifferent and unstable towards the world of politics is often caused by a lack of political awareness and understanding of the importance of their voting rights. This has an impact on their low participation in the election process, which should be a forum for the people to voice their aspirations in choosing leaders who can represent the interests of the community. Therefore, voter education and intensive socialization are needed to build political awareness among new voters. Through a deeper understanding of their rights and obligations as citizens, they are expected to be able to play an active role in using their voting rights wisely. Elections and regional head elections are not just routine events, but the main means for realizing people's sovereignty which is carried out directly, generally, freely, secretly, honestly and fairly. With more active participation and better understanding, first-time voters can contribute to the election of aspirational, qualified, and responsible leaders, in accordance with the basic principles of the Indonesian state based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. As the next generation of the nation, first-time voters have an important role in building a better future for the country.

The Role of Local Government in Increasing Participation of First-Time Voters in the 2024 Regional Elections

The success of the 2024 Regional Head Election (Pilkada) is not only the responsibility of election organizers such as the Regional General Election Commission (KPUD), the Regional Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), and the Election Organizer Honorary Council (DKPP), but also the collective responsibility of various parties, including the Regional Government. The Regional Government has an important role in supporting the smooth running of the election process, from the preparation stage to voting. One of the main responsibilities of the Regional Government is to ensure that all citizens, especially first-time voters, understand and can exercise their voting rights properly and correctly. This can be achieved through various socialization, outreach, and political education efforts that target communities at the local level, as well as facilitating easy and transparent access to the election process.

The Regional Government also plays a role in creating a conducive environment for the implementation of the Regional Election by overcoming potential violations or riots, and ensuring that all election mechanisms run fairly, honestly and transparently. In this case, local governments need to collaborate with various parties to make the election a success, including supporting the supervision efforts carried out by Bawaslu and ensuring that every voter can access polling stations without obstacles. The success of the 2024 Pilkada is highly dependent on the active involvement and synergy between election organizers, local governments, and the community, so that dignified elections can be created, reflecting the sovereignty of the people, and producing leaders who are able to bring positive change to the regions they lead.

Local governments have a crucial role in increasing public political participation, especially for first-time voters, through various policies and initiatives that encourage the active involvement of the younger generation. for this reason, there are a number of roles that local governments can play.

Voter Education and Counseling.

Voter education and counseling are fundamental steps that can be taken by the Regional Government to increase the participation of young voters in the 2024 Regional Head Elections (Pilkada). This program aims to provide young voters with a deeper understanding of their rights and obligations as voters, as well as the importance of participating in the democratic process. Through voter education, the younger generation can understand more about the election system, how to vote, and the impact of their decisions in determining regional leaders. This education program can be held in various educational institutions such as high schools and universities, which are where the majority of young voters gather.

In addition, voter education can also be carried out through interactive and interesting activities, such as election simulations, discussion forums, or counseling in public places that are often visited by young voters. In this activity, local governments can collaborate with educational institutions, NGOs, and local media to introduce the election process in a more enjoyable way, especially through the use of social media that is widely accessed by the younger generation. With this approach, it is hoped that young voters will not only have sufficient knowledge about their voting rights, but also feel encouraged to actively exercise their voting rights in the 2024 Pilkada.

Socialization and Information Campaign

Effective socialization and information campaigns are very important in increasing the participation of young voters in the 2024 Regional Head Elections (Pilkada). Local governments can utilize various media platforms, especially social media, to reach young voters. With more and more young people accessing information through apps like Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok, creative and relevant campaigns on these platforms can be an effective tool. Local governments can create engaging content, such as short videos, infographics, and easy-to-understand memes to explain election procedures, the importance of voting, and the role of young voters in determining regional leaders. In addition, they can also collaborate with influencers or local youth figures to educate young voters in a more casual and easily accepted way.

Not only social media, information campaigns can also be carried out through traditional media such as local television, radio, and banners in public places that are often visited by young voters, such as campuses, entertainment venues, or shopping centers. Through a combination of new and old media, local governments can ensure that messages about the importance of participation in the 2024 Pilkada can reach a wider audience, especially those who are less active in the digital world. A well-coordinated campaign can help break down the ignorance and apathy of young voters towards the election process, and encourage them to play an active role in determining the future of their region through the voting rights they have.

Providing Easy Access to Polling Stations (TPS)

Facilitating access and ease in the election process is an important step that can be taken by the Regional Government to increase the participation of young voters in the 2024 Regional Head Elections (Pilkada). Young voters, especially those who are voting for the first

time, may feel confused by the complicated election procedures if they are not given ease in the process. Therefore, the Regional Government can play a role in facilitating access for young voters, for example by providing clear and easily accessible information regarding the location of TPS (Polling Stations), election times, and the steps that voters must take to cast their votes.

In addition, the Regional Government can introduce technology in the election process to make it easier for young voters to exercise their right to vote. The use of technology-based applications to confirm voter registration or to search for information related to the Regional Election can provide convenience for young voters who are more familiar with the digital world. For example, local governments can launch platforms or applications that allow young voters to check their registration status, find out the location of polling stations, and access information about local leaders that can help them make more informed decisions. Easy and practical access will reduce barriers for young voters and increase their likelihood of coming to the polling stations and voting.

In addition to access to information, local governments can also facilitate participation by introducing easier voter registration mechanisms. One way is to ensure that voter registration can be done online and provide assistance in places where young voters often visit, such as campuses or youth centers. Reducing the bureaucracy that hinders voter registration and ensuring that they can be registered quickly and efficiently will encourage more young voters to participate. This ease of access not only increases participation but also builds their sense of involvement and responsibility in the democratic process.

Collaboration with Educational Institutions

The Regional Government has a strategic role in increasing political awareness among students and college students, who are potential young voters in the 2024 Regional Head Elections (Pilkada). One effective way is through cooperation with schools and universities to organize various educational and participatory activities. Political discussions held on campus and in schools can be a good forum to introduce the importance of voting rights and the election process in more depth. Through these discussions, young voters can be invited to understand current political issues, as well as learn about their role in determining aspirational and qualified regional leaders.

In addition to political discussions, election simulations and student elections can also be fun and educational activities to involve young voters in the democratic process. Election simulations in schools and universities can create direct experiences for students on how to vote correctly, as well as provide a better understanding of the stages in the Regional Head Election. This simulation can also provide an overview of the importance of voting rationally and based on accurate information, not just based on emotions or pressure from outside parties. By inviting them to be directly involved in the election process, they will be more aware of their obligations as citizens to participate in the election.

Student election activities, which are usually held by campuses or student organizations, can also be a good medium for building political awareness. Although internal, these activities can reflect the dynamics of real elections and provide an understanding of the importance of student voices in the democratic process. Activities like

this can be a forum to facilitate young voters in expressing their political choices, while also giving them a deeper understanding of their true voting rights. With cooperation between local governments, schools, and universities, political awareness among young voters can be built effectively, so that they are not only involved in the Pilkada, but also understand their important role in maintaining the quality of democracy.

Overcoming Apathy and Increasing Trust in the Election Process

Local governments play an important role in overcoming the apathy that often arises among young voters, especially those caused by distrust of the election process. One of the most effective steps to overcome this is to ensure that all stages of the 2024 Pilkada are transparent, fair, and free from fraud. Young voters, who often have limited political experience, need to be convinced that their votes have equal value and can influence the election results. Therefore, local governments need to work together with the General Election Commission (KPU), the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu), and various other related parties to ensure that all election procedures are carried out with high integrity.

Transparency in regional elections can be built through the publication of clear information regarding regional head candidates, their vision and mission, and an unbiased election mechanism. The Regional Government must provide easy access for young voters to obtain this information, either through social media, applications, or other platforms that are often accessed by the younger generation. In addition, efforts to maintain the independence of the KPU and Bawaslu in overseeing the implementation of the Pilkada are very important so that the public, especially young voters, feel confident that the election process is carried out fairly and without any manipulation or cheating. This will also strengthen their belief that their participation in voting truly contributes to better change.

Trust in the election process will have a significant impact on the level of participation of young voters. When they feel that the results of their choice will not be tainted by fraudulent practices or injustice, they will be more motivated to exercise their right to vote. On the other hand, if young voters feel that the election process is not transparent or full of fraud, they will tend to withdraw and choose not to get involved. Therefore, maintaining this trust through real actions from the local government will be very important in encouraging young voters to be actively involved, so that they are not just spectators, but also play a role as agents of change in the democratic process.

Strengthening the Role of Young Figures and Local Influencers

Local governments can leverage the influence of young figures, local influencers, or public figures who are popular among young voters to increase awareness and participation in the 2024 Pilkada. These figures have a great influence, especially on social media, which is the main channel of communication for the younger generation. By involving them in election campaigns, local governments can spread the message about the importance of voting rights and involvement in the democratic process in a more relatable and engaging way. Local influencers or young celebrities who already have a loyal following on social media can be a bridge between election organizers and young voters, given that they already have credibility and closeness to their audience.

As campaign ambassadors, these figures can carry out various activities, such as sharing messages through videos, posting on social media, or even doing live streaming that encourages young voters not to abstain and to exercise their right to vote. They can also hold discussions or webinars about the election, where they can have direct dialogue with young voters to eliminate confusion or apathy that may arise. In addition, campaigns involving public figures who are liked and respected by the younger generation also have the potential to introduce the importance of elections in a more relaxed and fun way, but still educational. Through this approach, it is hoped that a broader political awareness can be created among young voters and encourage them to be actively involved in the 2024 Pilkada.

CONCLUSION

First-time voters have a very important role in the 2024 Regional Head Elections (Pilkada). Although their enthusiasm to participate is high, their political decisions are often not yet unanimous and are influenced by various external factors, such as the social environment, mass media, and peer influence. The characteristics of first-time voters, who generally have limited political experience, make them more vulnerable to unverified information and emotional or situational campaigns. To increase their political awareness and participation, it is important to involve intensive voter education, as well as using relevant media and interesting communication methods, such as through social media or a more informal approach. By providing a deeper understanding of their rights and obligations as citizens, first-time voters are expected to be able to make wiser decisions in determining qualified and responsible leader candidates. As the nation's next generation, first-time voters have great potential to contribute to building a better future for Indonesia. The role of the Regional Government in increasing the participation of young voters in the 2024 Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) is very important to create an inclusive and effective democratic process. The Regional Government can make various strategic efforts, such as providing political education, disseminating accurate information, and creating direct involvement between young voters and the election process through activities that actively involve them. Through collaboration with schools, universities, and local youth figures or influencers, the Regional Government can strengthen political awareness and motivate young voters to participate. In addition, to overcome the apathy that often arises among young voters, it is important for the Regional Government to ensure that the 2024 Pilkada is carried out transparently, fairly, and free from fraud. This will increase young voters' trust in the election system and encourage them to exercise their voting rights more consciously and responsibly. With these steps, it is hoped that young voters can be created who are more informed, actively participate, and have an influence in determining future leaders through democratic and quality Pilkada.

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