

Research Article

Wiliam Otniel Malala^{1*}, Irwan Waris², Siti Chaeriah Ahsan³

Voter Political Participation in the 2024 Poso Regency Regional Election

*Corresponding Author: **Wiliam Otniel Malala**: Universitas Tadulako, Indonesia; Samgarleonelmalala@gmail.com

Irwan Waris: Universitas Tadulako, Indonesia; irwanwaris@untad.ac.id

Siti Chaeriah Ahsan: Universitas Tadulako, Indonesia; chaeriah67@gmail.com

Received: Sept 29, 2026; **Accepted:** Oct 3, 2026; **Online:** Oct 9, 2026 | DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47353/ijema.v3i12.429>

Abstract: *Voter political participation is an important indicator for assessing the quality of democracy at the local level. This study aims to analyze factors associated with the decline in voter participation in the 2024 Poso Regency regional election, identify efforts by the government and election administrators to increase participation, and examine public understanding of direct regional elections. The study employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Informants included voters, people who did not vote, election administrators, and government agencies responsible for population administration. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that voter turnout in the 2024 Poso Regency regional election reached 67.50%, with 122,743 voters casting ballots out of 181,852 registered voters. This was lower than the 79% recorded in the 2020 regional election and the 75.41% recorded in the 2024 general election. The decline was associated with a political culture that is not yet fully participatory, voter fatigue caused by elections held within the same year, perceptions of the electoral process, voter-list updating issues, limited access to civil registration documents, changes in regulatory information, and limited information about candidates. Increasing participation requires sustained political education, improved voter-data quality, more accessible civil registration services, consistent information, transparent electoral administration, and stronger public engagement.*

Keywords: *political participation; voters; regional elections; political culture; Poso Regency.*

Introduction

Democracy places citizens among the principal actors in political life. In a democratic system, public involvement is expressed not only through the existence of political institutions but also through citizens' participation in selecting leaders, expressing preferences, and influencing the direction of public policy. Regional head elections are an important democratic mechanism because they allow communities to choose local leaders directly. Meaningful participation therefore provides one indication of whether citizens can exercise their political rights and influence the institutions that govern them.

The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Article 18(4), stipulates that governors, regents, and mayors—as heads of regional government—are to be elected democratically. The legal framework for regional elections is further regulated, among other provisions, by Law No. 10 of 2016. Within this framework, voting is an expression of popular sovereignty at the local level. However, the existence of a formal right to vote does not by itself ensure that citizens can or will exercise that right. Effective participation also depends on access to information, administrative readiness, political awareness, trust in electoral institutions, and the perceived relevance of electoral competition to everyday life.

Political participation should not be understood solely as physical attendance at a polling station. It is also connected with political knowledge, attitudes, trust, access to information, opportunities to exercise political rights, and broader involvement in democratic processes. Almond and Verba (1963) emphasize political culture as a factor shaping citizens' orientations toward the political system. Dahl (1989) highlights the importance of effective opportunities for citizens to participate, while Verba, Scholzman, and Brady (1995) show that participation is shaped by resources, engagement, and recruitment into political activity.

These perspectives suggest that turnout figures need to be examined alongside the social, institutional, and informational conditions that shape voters' decisions.

The research data indicate that the 2024 Poso Regency regional election involved 181,852 voters recorded across the Permanent Voter List (DPT), Additional Voter List (DPTb), and Special Voter List (DPK). A total of 122,743 voters cast ballots, while 59,109 did not vote, producing a turnout rate of 67.50%. This was lower than the 79% turnout in the 2020 regional election and the 75.41% turnout in the 2024 general election. The decline raises questions about how electoral administration, political communication, and public perceptions interacted in this local context.

The timing of the elections is one relevant consideration. Indonesia's general election took place on 14 February 2024, while the regional election was held on 27 November 2024. Interviews conducted for this study indicate that some residents experienced political fatigue after facing several electoral contests in the same year. Nevertheless, fatigue alone cannot explain the decline. The study also identified issues involving voter administration, access to civil registration documents, distribution of Form C notification letters, understanding of regulations, campaign information, perceptions of candidates, and confidence in the electoral process. Such factors may interact: a voter who has limited information about candidates and encounters administrative obstacles may be less motivated to participate.

Research on local elections in Indonesia has likewise examined the relationship between political participation and the social and institutional context in which elections occur (MZ, 2014; Sa'ban et al., 2019; Yunus et al., 2017). Building on these discussions, the present study considers turnout in Poso not simply as an individual choice, but as an outcome associated with political culture, election administration, accessibility, communication, and public trust. This framing is important for developing responses that go beyond short-term appeals to vote and address the conditions that make participation informed and feasible.

This study addresses three questions: (1) what efforts did the government and election administrators make to communicate information about the regional election; (2) what factors were associated with the decline in voter participation; and (3) to what extent did residents participate in and understand the purpose of direct regional elections? By addressing these questions, the study seeks to identify practical implications for strengthening local democratic participation in Poso Regency.

Method

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. This approach was selected because the research sought to understand the experiences, perceptions, knowledge, and views of residents and election administrators concerning political participation in the 2024 Poso Regency regional election.

The research was conducted in Poso Regency, Central Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. Informants included voters, residents who did not vote, election administrators, and government agencies involved in population administration. Primary data were obtained through interviews and observation, while secondary data were drawn from regional-election administration documents, voter data, election-supervision documents, regulations, and relevant literature.

Data-collection techniques consisted of observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis involved data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The credibility of the information was strengthened by comparing interview findings with observations and documentary evidence. The substantive analysis drew on Almond and Verba's perspective on political culture, Huntington's work on democracy, and Dahl's account of direct participation.

Results and Discussion

Voter Turnout

The research data show that turnout in the 2024 Poso Regency regional election was 67.50%. A comparison with the two earlier elections used in this study indicates a change in the level of public electoral engagement.

Table 1. Comparison of Voter Participation in Poso Regency

Election	Registered voters	Voted	Did not vote	Turnout
2020 Regional Election	161,961	127,484	34,477	79%
2024 General Election	184,391	139,052	45,339	75.41%
2024 Regional Election	181,852	122,743	59,109	67.50%

Source: Research data, processed by the author.

This comparison shows that turnout in the 2024 regional election was lower than in both comparison elections. The finding provides a starting point for understanding factors associated with residents' decisions to vote or abstain.

Political Culture and Public Understanding

The findings indicate that some residents understood the regional election primarily as an event for choosing a regional head. The relationship between political choice and public-policy direction, government oversight, and performance evaluation was not uniformly understood. In the framework of Almond and Verba (1963), this may be interpreted as a characteristic of subject political culture: citizens recognize the political system but do not always see themselves as active actors capable of influencing political processes.

This finding underscores the importance of political education that goes beyond encouraging people to attend polling stations. Political education should explain the relationship between electoral choices, government mandates, public policy, public services, and community welfare.

Political Fatigue

The 2024 general election and regional election took place in the same year, approximately nine months apart. Interviews suggest that some residents experienced political fatigue or boredom. The intensity of electoral competition may reduce some voters' attention to a subsequent election, particularly when they do not perceive clear differences between the contests or candidates.

However, political fatigue should not be treated as the sole cause. The decision to vote is also associated with administrative factors, information, trust, perceptions of candidates, and prior political experiences.

Voter Administration and Distribution of Form C Notifications

Voter administration emerged as an important finding. Of the 179,678 voters used as the basis for distributing Form C notification letters, 139,261 received the form and 40,417 did not.

Table 2. Categories of Voters Who Did Not Receive Form C Notification Letters

Category	Number
Deceased	509
Changed residence	1,237
Transferred voting location (outgoing DPTb)	590

Category	Number
Voter not recognized	14,464
Changed status to military/police	550
Not present at the address during distribution	23,067
Total not receiving notification	40,417

Source: Research data, processed by the author.

These data do not mean that every voter who did not receive a notification letter automatically lost the right to vote. They do, however, indicate the importance of accurate voter data and alternative strategies for communicating election information.

Access to Civil Registration Documents

The study found that some residents faced difficulties obtaining electronic identity cards (e-KTP), particularly in areas with long travel distances and limited transport access. One finding concerned residents of Lore Selatan and Lore Barat, who had to travel to the Pamona Puselemba area to access services. These geographic conditions show that administrative access is part of the broader environment affecting political participation.

Civil registration services should be adapted to local conditions through mobile services, outreach services, service points at subdistrict level, and coordination with village and urban-village governments.

Regulations and Reliable Information

The study recorded KPU Letter No. 2734/PL.02.6-SD/06/2024, dated 26 November 2024, which clarified provisions for voting and vote counting. Technical clarification issued very close to election day may create communication challenges if it is not promptly understood by all election personnel and the public.

This finding emphasizes that reliable and clear information is part of the quality of voter services. Requirements concerning identity documents, voter status, voting procedures, and voter assistance should be communicated early, consistently, and in accessible language.

Campaigns and Candidate Information

The campaign period is intended to provide information about candidates, their visions, missions, and programs. The study found that limited time and geographic conditions made it difficult to reach all residents. Voters in areas far from political activity centers may have different access to information from residents in urban areas.

The 2024 Poso regional election featured four pairs of candidates and three rounds of public debates. Formally, voters had alternatives and opportunities to obtain information. However, the presence of several candidates does not automatically mean that all voters feel equally connected to the contest. Candidate appeal should be considered in relation to voters' perceptions of track records, social proximity, programs, and the relevance of campaign issues.

Trust in Electoral Administration

Some residents perceived that problems or alleged violations did not always receive the follow-up they expected. The study also found that reports were submitted to the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), but only some met the requirements for formal registration. The gap between public perceptions and the formal and substantive mechanisms for handling reports is therefore important.

Transparent information about reporting procedures, case status, and outcomes under applicable rules can help residents understand the process. Trust in institutions is built not only through final outcomes but also through clear and understandable communication about procedures.

Synthesis of Factors Associated with Declining Participation

Table 3. Synthesis of Factors Associated with Voter Participation

Factor	Finding	Implication
Political culture	Understanding of the regional election was often limited to choosing a regional head.	Political education should connect electoral choices with public policy.
Political fatigue	The general and regional elections took place in the same year.	Maintain political communication over time.
Trust	Some residents expressed concerns about procedures and follow-up on problems.	Improve procedural transparency and communication.
Administration	40,417 people did not receive Form C notifications from a distribution base of 179,678.	Improve voter-list updating and alternative information distribution.
Civil registration documents	Access to e-KTP services was difficult in some areas.	Integrate services between KPU and the civil registration agency.
Candidate information	Access to information was uneven.	Communicate candidate programs clearly and equitably.
Regulations	Some technical clarifications were issued very close to voting day.	Ensure consistency and simplify regulatory information.

Source: Research data, processed by the author.

The synthesis indicates that declining participation is multidimensional. No single factor can explain the entire change in turnout.

Implications for Local Democracy

From Dahl's perspective (1989), democracy requires effective opportunities for citizens to participate. These opportunities must be more than formal: they also require access to information and administrative conditions that enable people to exercise their political rights. The findings from Poso Regency indicate that the quality of participation is connected with institutional quality and citizens' capacity.

Huntington (1991) emphasizes institutional consolidation and stable participation. Increasing participation therefore requires sustained political education and institutional strengthening.

From the perspective of political culture, stronger participation also involves developing citizens' cognitive, affective, and evaluative orientations. Residents need to understand political processes, feel connected to them, and be able to evaluate the performance of institutions and candidates.

Conclusion

Voter participation in the 2024 Poso Regency regional election reached 67.50%, lower than the 79% recorded in the 2020 regional election and the 75.41% recorded in the 2024 general election. The decline was associated with several interacting factors.

The factors identified include a political culture that is not yet fully participatory, fatigue following several electoral contests in the same year, voter-administration and Form C distribution issues, access to civil registration documents, clarity of regulatory information, unequal access to candidate information, and perceptions of electoral administration.

Participation can be strengthened through sustained political education, voter-list updating, accessible civil registration services, consistent regulatory information, transparent electoral administration, and equitable political communication. Meaningful participation should be assessed not only by attendance at polling stations but also by citizens' knowledge, trust, and engagement.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank the Government Studies Program of the Postgraduate Program at Tadulako University, the Poso Regency Government, the Poso Regency General Elections Commission, the Poso Regency Election Supervisory Agency, the Poso Regency Population and Civil Registration Office, and all informants and residents of Poso Regency for the information and support provided for this research.

References

- Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1963). *The civic culture: Political attitudes and democracy in five nations*. Princeton University Press.
- Dahl, R. A. (1989). *Democracy and its critics*. Yale University Press.
- Huntington, S. P. (1991). *The third wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century*. University of Oklahoma Press.
- MZ, H. I. (2014). Pemilihan kepala daerah secara langsung sebagai momentum strategis dalam pengembangan otonomi daerah dan demokrasi lokal [Direct regional head elections as a strategic momentum for developing regional autonomy and local democracy]. *Jurnal Valid*, 11(2), 57–72.
- Nasution, S. (2003). *Metode penelitian naturalistik kualitatif* [Qualitative naturalistic research methods]. Tarsito.
- Sa'ban, L. M. A., Sadat, A., & Nastia. (2019). Partisipasi politik masyarakat dalam pemilihan kepala daerah Kota BauBau tahun 2018 [Public political participation in the 2018 regional election in BauBau City]. *Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan: Kajian Ilmu Pemerintahan dan Politik Daerah*, 4(1), 29. <https://doi.org/10.24905/jip.v4i1.1072>
- Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Harvard University Press.
- Yunus, N. R., Sholeh, M., & Susilowati, I. (2017). Rekonstruksi teori partisipasi politik dalam diskursus pemikiran politik negara [Reconstructing political participation theory in the discourse of state political thought]. *SALAM: Jurnal Sosial dan Budaya Syar-i*, 4(3), 289–302. <https://doi.org/10.15408/sjsbs.v4i3.10289>
- Republic of Indonesia. (1945). *The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia*.
- Republic of Indonesia. (2016). Law No. 10 of 2016 concerning the second amendment to Law No. 1 of 2015 on the election of governors, regents, and mayors.
- General Elections Commission (KPU). (2024). KPU Regulation No. 17 of 2024 concerning voting and vote counting in elections for governors and deputy governors, regents and deputy regents, and mayors and deputy mayors.
- Poso Regency General Elections Commission. (2024). Data on the recapitulation of voters exercising their voting rights in the 2024 election of the Regent and Deputy Regent of Poso Regency.

Poso Regency Election Supervisory Agency. (2024). Supervision data on the stages of the 2024 election of the Regent and Deputy Regent of Poso Regency.