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Analysis of the public political participation index for the 2024 simultaneous regional elections in West Sulawesi

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the level of political participation in the upcoming 2024 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections in West Sulawesi Province. A mixed-method approach was employed, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to assess the political participation index and patterns of participation behavior. The research was conducted from January to April 2024, focusing on participants aged 20 years and above, all of whom were registered voters. The target population included active voters from various districts in West Sulawesi, using stratified sampling to ensure demographic and geographic representation. The sample comprised 122 survey respondents and 15 key informants selected purposively based on their roles in the electoral process. Results indicate that political participation is projected to increase compared to previous elections, though gaps remain between districts. Districts with better access to information and local leaders' involvement show higher participation. Factors influencing participation include: (1) demographic factors, with the 30–45 age group showing higher participation, while younger generations (under 30 years) demonstrate apathy; (2) socio-cultural factors, where traditional norms and the role of religious leaders influence voter mobilization; and (3) political factors, including trust in candidates and local issues such as infrastructure. Barriers to participation include a lack of political education, apathy due to dissatisfaction with government performance, and administrative issues. Efforts to enhance participation include community-based education and social media, although these have not been fully optimized.

Keywords: political participation; voter engagement; socio-cultural factors; regional election; West Sulawesi

1. Introduction

The role of public political participation in the democratization process is crucial for maintaining the health and sustainability of the democratic system. A society that is aware of its role can create a strong foundation for more active and responsible participation in the country's democratization process. This can also help maintain stability during elections and strengthen social networks to build collective awareness (Sulistyowati et al., 2024). Furthermore, Studies show that active involvement of citizens in political processes plays a vital role in advancing democracy and promoting societal well-being. Such participation strengthens the legitimacy of democratic systems and enhances the efficiency of public policy implementation (Marques, 2011). By fostering accountability and enabling the creation of more sustainable policies, civic engagement becomes a cornerstone of democratic governance (Damanik et al., 2023). Local and national governments are instrumental in encouraging participation, which is recognized as a core democratic value (Roşca and Ursu, 2021). Recent developments highlight a growing intersection between civic and political activities,

with participation increasingly driven by post-materialist values (Nassimova et al., 2024). Although public involvement can range from consultations to active collaboration in shaping policies, barriers such as limited access and insufficient community skills often impede its effectiveness (Damanik et al., 2023). Despite these challenges, public engagement remains indispensable for fostering better governance, minimizing social tensions, and ensuring decisions align with the broader community's priorities and expectations.

The cause of low political participation is usually due to apathy and a priori attitude towards political activities, where people prefer daily activities such as work, sports, social clubs, traveling, and so on, which are considered more tangible than political participation. Another factor closely related to political participation is people's level of education: the more educated people are, the more likely they are to participate in politics, which paradoxically leads to low levels of political engagement in many developing countries where literacy levels are low (Putri, 2016). Furthermore, in countries that embrace democracy, it is easier to measure public political participation when elections are held. The intensity of citizen engagement can be measured by comparing the percentage of people who exercise their right to vote (voter turnout) with the total number of citizens who are eligible to exercise their right to vote. In countries with stable democratic systems, the level of political participation is generally very stable and does not fluctuate. Therefore, an increase in the abstention rate is a bad sign for the development of democracy in Indonesia because when the abstention rate increases, democracy does not work well (Djunayandi, 2014).

The simultaneous regional elections scheduled for 2024 in Indonesia pose significant challenges to public political participation. Research emphasizes the critical role of synergy among stakeholders and active community engagement in achieving successful democratic processes (Dairani and Islami, 2023; Iswanto and Pamungkas, 2023). Findings suggest that political behavior is shaped by sociological, psychological, and rational choice factors, with family playing a pivotal role in influencing political decisions (Arief et al., 2024). While formal procedural aspects of elections may be well-executed, realizing substantive democracy remains an ongoing challenge (Haris et al., 2022). To address these challenges, stakeholder mapping has been identified as a strategic method to enhance public participation (Iswanto and Pamungkas, 2023). Furthermore, active public involvement in monitoring elections is essential to reduce violations and uphold the integrity of the electoral process (Dairani and Islami, 2023).

The literature on people's political participation in local elections in Indonesia reveals significant factors that influence engagement, particularly relevant for the upcoming 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections in West Sulawesi. Studies show that community leaders and access to information play an important role in encouraging political participation, as evidenced by the high level of engagement in Sangihe Islands Regency during the 2017 election (Putra et al., 2024). In addition, the impact of social media and political awareness during the pandemic highlighted the adaptability of community participation, as seen in the North Sulawesi Governor Election (Aziz and Nadila, 2024). Therefore, many citizens expressed disinterest due to unfulfilled promises by candidates, leading to a decrease in engagement (Stepani et al., 2024). Meanwhile, participation varies significantly between urban and rural areas, with rural

communities often showing higher engagement due to stronger social ties (Suastini et al., 2024). While these studies underscore the importance of community dynamics in political participation, they also reveal fundamental challenges that could affect voter turnout in the 2024 election. Addressing these issues will be critical to improving democratic engagement in West Sulawesi.

The analysis of the political participation index is of great consequence in this context. An understanding of the level of public participation, both directly in elections and through various forms of political activity, can provide profound insights into the political dynamics in West Sulawesi. Through the political participation index, groups that may experience inequality in political access can be identified, and strategies to increase their participation can be designed. In addition, analyzing the political participation index can help design public policies that are more targeted and responsive to people's needs. By understanding the level of participation and the factors that influence it, the government and related institutions can develop initiatives that support inclusive community participation. Thus, the urgency of analyzing the political participation index not only provides an in-depth understanding of local political realities but also serves as a foundation for building a stronger and more inclusive democracy in West Sulawesi.

2. Materials and methods

This research uses a mixed approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to analyze the political participation index as well as patterns of people's participation behavior in local elections in West Sulawesi Province. The research was conducted between January and April 2024, with a focus on participants aged 20 years and above and registered as voters.

The target population included active voters living in various districts in West Sulawesi Province. Sampling was conducted using stratification techniques, which ensured representation from various demographic and geographic segments. The sample consisted of 122 respondents for the survey and 15 key informants for the in-depth interviews, who were selected through purposive sampling based on their roles as community leaders or stakeholders in the electoral process.

Data collection was conducted in two phases: the survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire that had been validated for reliability and consistency, while qualitative data was obtained through semi-structured interviews. The variables analyzed included the political participation index (dependent variable), and socio-demographic factors such as age, education level, and access to political news (independent variables).

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics while qualitative data was analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) thematic approach to identify patterns and insights from the responses.

3. Results and discussion

The results of study the are summarized as follows:

3.1. Respondent data

a) Age

In **Figure 1**, the age of the respondents was mostly 23–27 years old, as many as 48 people (39.3%), age 17–22 years old as many as 36 people (29.5%), while aged 28–32 years old, as many as 11 people (9%), age 38–42 years old as many as 9 people (7.4%), and age 43–47 years old as many as 6 people (4.9%), age 48–52 years old as many as 6 people (4.9%), age 33–37 years old as many as 3 people (2.5%) and also age 52 years and over as many as 3 people (2.5%).
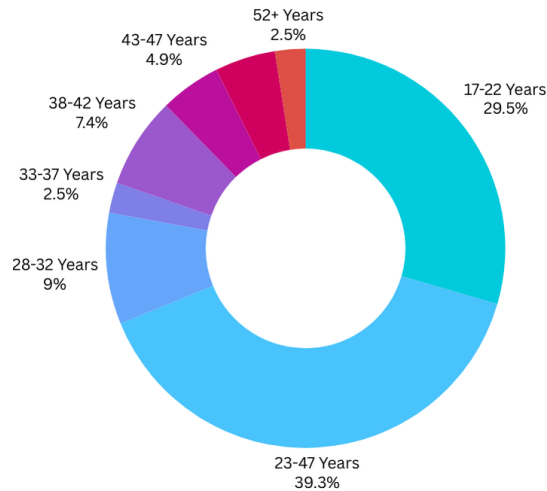

Figure 1. Age.

The data reveals that the majority of respondents are relatively young, with the highest concentration in the 23–27 age group. This suggests that the study's sample predominantly consists of younger individuals, which may reflect higher political engagement among this age group. The underrepresentation of older age groups (above 38 years) may indicate either lower political participation or a demographic shift in electoral engagement.

This age distribution is significant as it can provide insight into the political behaviors and attitudes of younger generations, who may have different political priorities and modes of participation compared to older generations. Furthermore, the visualization in **Figure 1** allows for a clearer understanding of how different age groups are represented in this study, providing a useful foundation for analyzing political engagement across these demographics.

b) Gender

The gender of the research respondents in **Figure 2** was mostly male (67.2%) and female (32.8%).
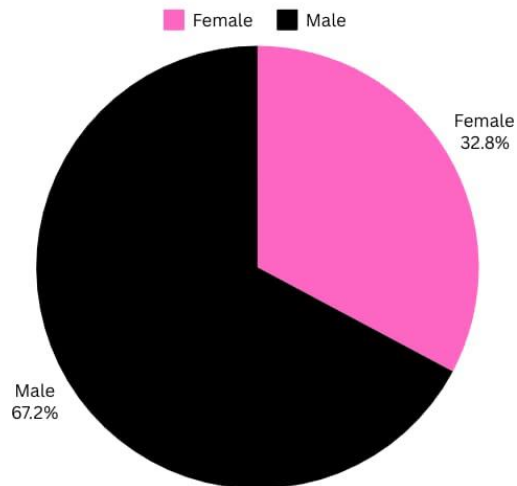
Figure 2. Gender.

The gender of the research respondents, as depicted in **Figure 2**, was predominantly male (67.2%) compared to female (32.8%). This indicates that the majority of participants involved in this study were men, which may reflect the gender composition of registered voters in the area or specific gendered trends in political participation. The lower representation of women could also be indicative of underlying socio-cultural factors, such as traditional gender roles or barriers to participation, which may limit women's involvement in political activities. Further exploration is necessary to determine whether this disparity is due to sampling or a reflection of broader societal patterns in West Sulawesi.

Based on **Figure 3**, The majority of respondents, 67 out of 120 (55.8%), have a Bachelor's Degree, indicating that this group dominates the education level. A total of 41 respondents (34.2%) had only completed high school, while only 11 respondents (9%) had completed a Master's Degree.

This data shows the trend that the majority of the population has higher education (Bachelor's Degree) with a sizable proportion, while the group with further education (Master's Degree) makes up the smallest part of the population. This can be an indication of the level of education in West Sulawesi province.
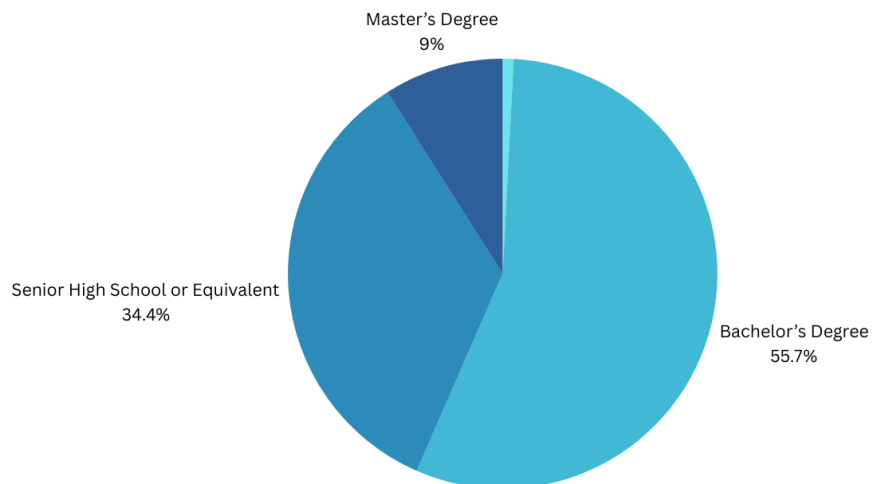

Figure 3. Education background.

This distribution of education levels reflects the educational background of respondents, the majority of whom are at the Bachelor's level. This may illustrate that access to higher education is quite good in the area or population studied. The low percentage of respondents with a Master's degree (9%) may indicate that there is limited interest or access to further education, either due to financial factors, professional needs, or individual priorities. With the majority of respondents having a Bachelor's degree (55.7%), their insights and opinions are likely influenced by their higher academic background compared to respondents with a high school education level (34.4%). This level of education could also potentially influence how they view certain issues, such as their political preferences, social views or level of participation in society.

3.2. Respondent's responses

a)   Personal candidate

Based on **Figure 4** respondents' responses regarding whether you vote for candidates who benefit themselves and their families are strongly disagreeing 45.1%, moderately agreeing 26.2%, then disagreeing 12.3%, while agreeing 9.8% and strongly agreeing 6.6%.
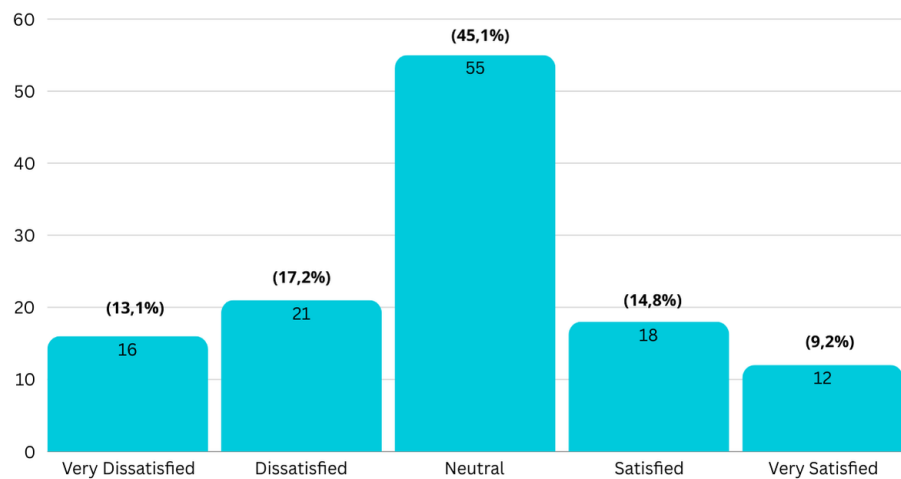

Figure 4. Personal candidate.

Based on **Figure 4**, the majority of respondents (45.1%) strongly disagree with voting for candidates who prioritize benefits for themselves and their families. This indicates that most of the public holds high expectations for candidates who prioritize public interests over personal gains.

Additionally, 26.2% of respondents moderately agree, suggesting that some individuals might consider such candidates under specific circumstances. Meanwhile, 12.3% of respondents disagree, 9.8% agree, and only 6.6% strongly agree with the idea of voting for candidates focused on personal or familial benefits.

Overall, these findings illustrate that the majority of the public tends to reject candidates perceived as prioritizing personal or familial interests, emphasizing a preference for leaders committed to public service and broader societal interests.

b)   The main motivation for choosing

Based on **Figure 5**, 110 respondents (90.2%) think that the main motivation for voting in elections is due to their obligations as citizens, and 25 people (20.5%) believe that the main motivation for voting in elections is to support government policies, while the answers of respondents related to motivation because there are family ties, ethnicity and do not want certain candidates.
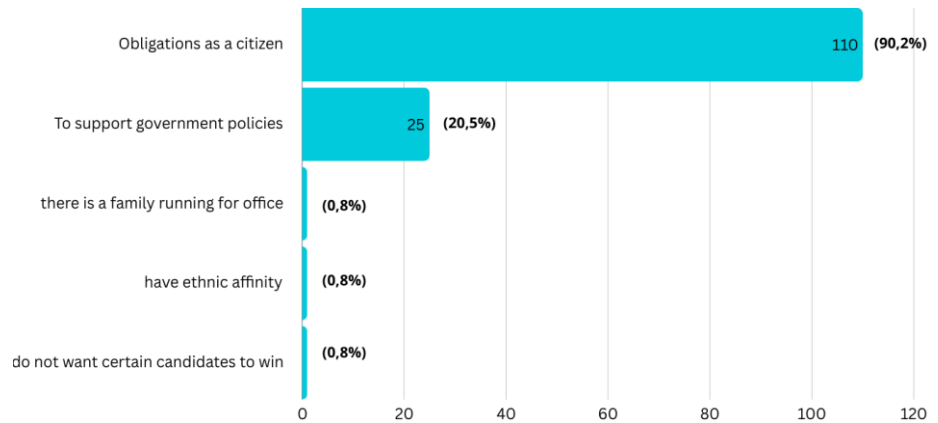

Figure 5. The main motivation for choosing.

The data presented in **Figure 5** highlights the primary motivations behind respondents' participation in elections. A significant majority, 110 respondents (90.2%), consider their obligation as citizens to be the main reason for voting, indicating a strong sense of civic responsibility. Additionally, 25 respondents (20.5%) state that their motivation to vote is driven by support for government policies, reflecting alignment with or endorsement of the current administration's initiatives.

Meanwhile, a smaller portion of respondents mention other factors such as family ties, ethnicity, or opposition to certain candidates as their motivation for voting. These findings suggest that while civic duty remains the dominant factor, secondary influences such as policy support and socio-cultural ties also play a role in shaping voter behavior. Understanding these diverse motivations can provide valuable insights for policymakers and election organizers to better address voter engagement and participation strategies.

3.3. West Sulawesi leader's character

a)   Leadership experience

Based on **Figure 6** The respondents' responses regarding the character of Sulawesi leaders who have ethics and integrity were 74.6% strongly agree, 9.8% moderately agree, 7.4% strongly disagree and 4.9% agree and then the lowest level of 3.3% disagree.
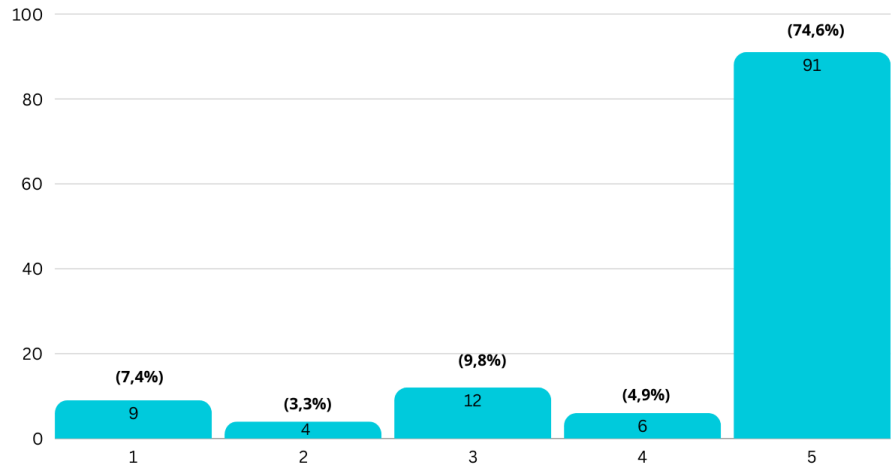
Figure 6. West Sulawesi leader's character.

The statistical results from **Figure 6** highlight a strong consensus among respondents regarding the importance of ethics and integrity in Sulawesi leaders. A majority of 74.6% of respondents strongly agree that these qualities are crucial for leadership, indicating a significant emphasis on moral values and integrity in governance. This is further supported by 9.8% of respondents who moderately agree and 4.9% who agree, collectively representing 89.3% of the population sampled.

On the other hand, a minority of respondents expressed disagreement, with 7.4% strongly disagreeing and 3.3% disagreeing. This small percentage could reflect differing perspectives or experiences with leadership in the region. Overall, the findings underscore the community's expectation for ethical conduct and integrity in leaders, which are seen as essential attributes for effective governance and public trust.

b) Speech ability

Based on **Figure 7**. 26, respondents' responses regarding the character of the leader of West Sulawesi are based on the ability to give speeches, namely 52.5% strongly agree, and 21.3% agree, then 21.3% moderately agree. While 2.5% disagree and 2.5% strongly disagree.
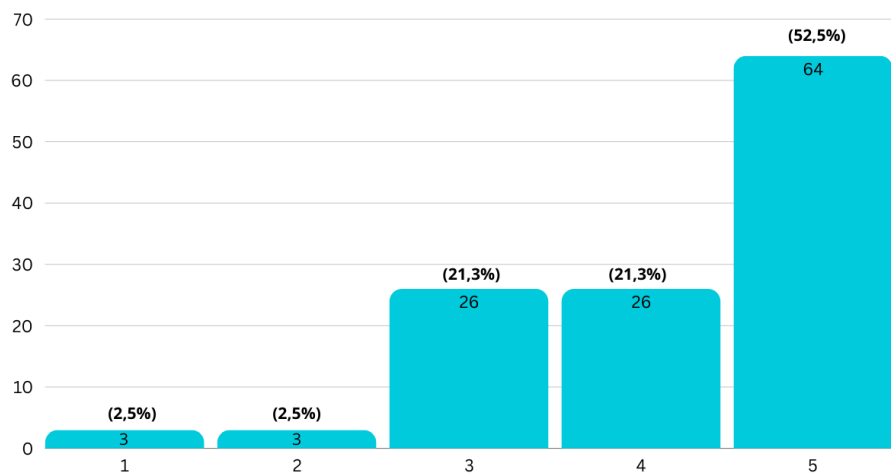

Figure 7. Speech ability.

The statistical results in **Figure 4**. 26 show that the majority of respondents rated the ability of West Sulawesi leaders to give speeches as an important aspect of

leadership. A total of 52.5% of respondents strongly agreed that the ability to speak in public is an important characteristic that must be possessed by a leader, followed by 21.3% of respondents who agreed and another 21.3% who moderately agreed. This significant percentage reflects the public's appreciation of good communication skills as an indicator of effective leadership ability.

On the other hand, only a small proportion of respondents disagreed (2.5%) and strongly disagreed (2.5%) that the ability to give a speech is an important characteristic. This low number suggests that most people have high expectations of leaders who can clearly articulate their vision, mission and policies to the public. Overall, these results confirm that public speaking ability is considered a key element in creating public trust and influencing people's decision-making.

c)   Candidate background expectations

Based on **Figure 8**. 40, it can be seen that the responses of respondents regarding what kind of background you expect from candidates are 81.5% leadership, 38.7% intelligence, and 35.3% faith as well as 10.1% wealth and 6.7% region of residence then then 1.7% many billboards.
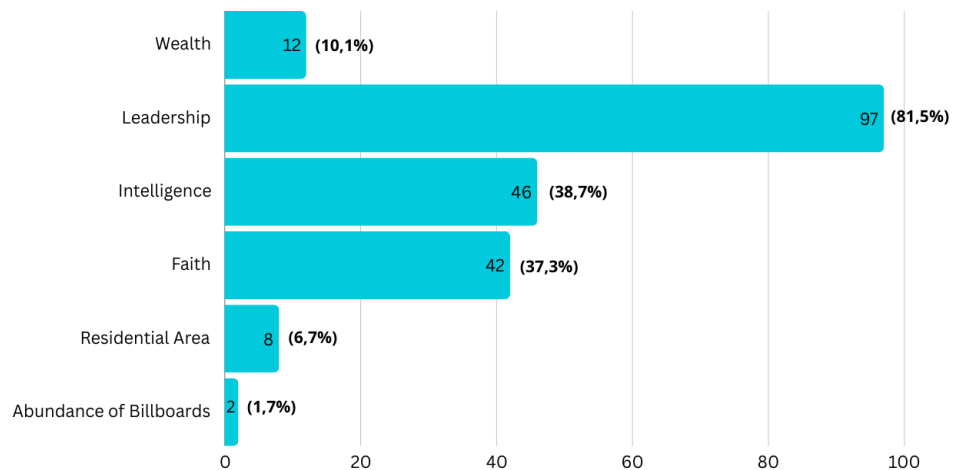

Figure 8. Candidate background expectations.

Based on **Figure 4**. 40, the majority of respondents (81.5%) consider leadership background as the primary factor expected from a candidate. This indicates that the public values managerial abilities and leadership skills as key determinants of a candidate's quality. Additionally, 38.7% of respondents also prioritize intelligence as an important criterion, reflecting expectations for candidates with strong analytical skills and strategic decision-making capabilities.

Furthermore, 35.3% of respondents emphasize the importance of faith, highlighting the expectation for candidates with moral and spiritual integrity. Wealth and region of residence were less prioritized, with 10.1% and 6.7% of respondents selecting these factors, respectively, indicating that material and geographic attributes are not the primary considerations for most individuals. Meanwhile, the factor of "many billboards" was selected by only 1.7% of respondents, suggesting that visual campaign attributes like billboards have minimal influence on public preferences for candidates.

Overall, these findings underscore that leadership qualities, intelligence, and faith are the dominant characteristics expected by the public in selecting a credible and competent leader.

Based on data collected from respondents about the young generation and political participation: Theoretical Perspectives and Data.

4. Theoretical perspective

4.1. Social context and political participation of the young generation

Youth are often considered the main agents of social change due to their passion, creativity and openness to new perspectives. According to Azmy et al. (2024), In this study, a significant proportion of participants were aged 17–22 (29.5%) and 23–27 (39.3%), with students making up 40.2% of the sample. This finding highlights the higher level of political consciousness among youth, with nearly 89.3% of respondents indicating their participation in elections. The digital landscape has become a crucial space for youth to engage with political content, allowing them to mobilize around issues such as climate change and social justice (Singh, 2023; Wilf et al., 2023). Moreover, Social media has significantly enhanced political participation among youth, allowing them to engage in fundraising, debates, and mobilization efforts (Kahne and Bowyer, 2019). Despite high digital access, many young people tend to consume rather than produce political content, suggesting a gap in active participation (Catalina-García et al., 2019). Active engagement of young people in political matters can enhance civil society and improve democratic governance, as their involvement reflects a commitment to social issues (Catalina-García et al., 2019; Literat et al., 2018).

4.2. Generation theory perspective

The advent of the digital era has had a profound influence on the younger generations, particularly Generation Z and Millennials, shaping their social and political experiences. Raised in an environment where the internet is a fundamental aspect of daily life, these cohorts possess the ability to swiftly access and disseminate information (Faisal et al., 2023; Penyiaran et al., 2023). While digital technology offers significant benefits, such as fostering global connectivity and facilitating exposure to diverse cultures, it also presents challenges, including the proliferation of detrimental cultural influences and emerging concerns related to mental health (Deandra et al., 2024; Penyiaran et al., 2023). Social media has become an indispensable platform for political engagement, enabling more direct and frequent interactions between the public and political leaders (Faisal et al., 2023). However, it is not without its risks, such as the dissemination of misinformation and the exacerbation of societal divisions. In light of these challenges, it is imperative that younger generations engage with social media in a conscientious manner, integrating the values of Pancasila into their online interactions (Fina and Dinie, 2021).

The survey results show a strong consensus among respondents in Sulawesi on the importance of ethics and integrity in leadership, with 89.3% of the population rating these qualities as essential for effective governance. This overwhelming

preference for moral leadership can be understood through the lens of Karl Mannheim's theory of generations. Mannheim posits that generational experiences shape the collective worldview of a group, influencing their expectations and social behaviors (Mannheim, 1929). In this context, the community's high regard for ethical conduct in leadership may stem from a shared generational experience of governance and political culture that has fostered a collective consciousness valuing moral integrity. As such, the emphasis on ethics in leadership could reflect broader socio-political conditions and the collective memory of the population, which align with Mannheim's theory of how generations develop distinct perspectives based on their lived experiences.

4.3. The influence of education on political participation

In this research, a significant proportion of respondents (55.7%) possess a bachelor's degree or its equivalent, highlighting the influence of formal education on shaping political perceptions. In line with Zeynep Tufekci's (Tufekci, 2017) thoughts in Twitter and Tear Gas, which emphasizes that education level plays an important role in influencing individual involvement in social media-based political participation, the findings in this study show that the majority of respondents in West Sulawesi Province have a Bachelor's degree. This indicates that they have greater potential to utilize technology to participate in political discourse, as described by (Tufekci, 2017). However, although social media platforms provide broad access to participate in social and political movements, groups with lower education levels, such as those with only a high school education, may face difficulties in utilizing this technology to its full potential. This phenomenon illustrates the digital divide affecting equitable political participation in the digital age, which needs attention to create platforms that are more inclusive for all levels of society.

Higher education levels correlate with increased political awareness and participation, as educated individuals are more likely to engage in political discussions and activities (Rahmat, 2023). Furthermore, despite the positive influence of education, many young individuals still lack adequate political knowledge, which may hinder their participation in elections (Patriansyah et al., 2024).

4.4. Perspectives on gender theory and politics

The Indonesian developmental state has been critiqued for its narrow focus on economic and infrastructural development, often neglecting the transformation of traditional gender structures, which perpetuates gender inequality in participation (Syukri, 2023). Furthermore, Ethics and integrity are fundamental pillars of effective political leadership, as emphasized by Anne Phillips in her theory of representation, which argues that "representation is not just about making present the absent voices but also about the quality of engagement and the moral responsibilities of representatives" (Phillips, 1995, p. 62). This perspective resonates with the findings, where 74.6% of respondents in Sulawesi strongly agree that these qualities are essential for leaders. The emphasis on moral values reflects Phillips' assertion that effective governance relies not only on diversity in representation but also on the ethical alignment of leaders with community expectations. Additionally, 9.8%

moderately agree and 4.9% agree, collectively representing 89.3% of the sampled population who prioritize ethical conduct in leadership. Conversely, a small minority—7.4% strongly disagree and 3.3% disagree—may indicate differing experiences or perspectives on leadership. Overall, these findings affirm the critical role of ethical conduct and moral integrity in building public trust and fostering legitimate governance.

4.5. Dynamics of the young generation in democracy

Youth participation in policy-making, particularly in public health, education, and social work, enhances the relevance and effectiveness of policies. This involvement is crucial for strengthening democratic practices by ensuring that policies reflect the needs and perspectives of younger populations (Helleve et al., 2023).

In the context of West Sulawesi, where issues such as education, economics and leadership ethics are of major concern, the younger generation acts as agents that drive change towards better governance. Moreover, young people are characterized by dynamic political participation, often influenced by short-term issues such as climate change and economic policies. This volatility can lead to shifts in voter turnout and party allegiances, suggesting a flexible approach to political engagement that can encourage broader democratic engagement (Kiess and Portos, 2023). Youth volunteering has been identified as a potential tool to increase voter turnout among young people, especially those from politically disengaged backgrounds. This suggests that volunteering can serve as a pathway to greater political participation and engagement in the democratic process (Fox, 2023). While youth involvement in democratic governance is increasing, challenges remain. For example, despite their active participation, young people often face institutional barriers that limit their influence in decision-making processes (Arora et al., 2022). Moreover, while digital platforms have empowered youth, the effectiveness of this empowerment can vary based on political interests and other moderating factors (Tariq and Zeib, 2023). Addressing these challenges requires sustained efforts to integrate youth voices and utilize digital tools to increase their impact on democratic governance.

4.6. Charismatic leadership

The data highlights that 81.5% of respondents consider a candidate's leadership background as the most critical factor in evaluating their suitability for leadership roles. This finding reflects a strong public emphasis on managerial and leadership competencies, which aligns with Max Weber's theory of charismatic authority, wherein a leader's legitimacy stems from extraordinary qualities that inspire trust and devotion among followers (Weber, 1947). A robust leadership background, combined with proven managerial abilities, is often perceived as a modern embodiment of charisma, especially when it meets public expectations of competence and effective governance. Furthermore, 38.7% of respondents prioritize intelligence, emphasizing the value placed on analytical skills and strategic decision-making. This suggests that the public's preferences are increasingly aligned with leadership traits that reflect intellectual capability, a characteristic Weber identified as essential for charismatic

leaders who can navigate complexity and inspire confidence through visionary decisions.

In addition to leadership and intelligence, 35.3% of respondents emphasize faith as a vital attribute in leaders, underscoring the public's expectation for moral and spiritual integrity. This supports Weber's assertion that charismatic authority is often intertwined with ethical and moral values that resonate with the collective consciousness of a community. While attributes such as wealth (10.1%) and region of residence (6.7%) appear to be less significant in influencing preferences, their minimal impact signals a societal shift towards prioritizing merit-based leadership. Additionally, the negligible emphasis on campaign tools such as billboards, selected by only 1.7% of respondents, reflects a growing political maturity, where public preferences are driven by substantive leadership qualities rather than superficial visual cues. Collectively, these findings illustrate the alignment of public expectations with Weber's theory of charisma, emphasizing exceptional leadership, intellectual depth, and moral values as central components of effective governance.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings from this study highlight the critical role of education, ethics, digital engagement, and generational factors in shaping public political participation, particularly among the youth in West Sulawesi during the 2024 simultaneous regional elections. The significant emphasis placed on leadership integrity and ethics, alongside the growing influence of digital media, underscores the evolving dynamics of political engagement in the digital age. However, challenges remain, such as the digital divide, the need for more inclusive political participation platforms, and institutional barriers that limit the youth's political influence. Drawing from theoretical perspectives such as Mannheim's generational theory, the study demonstrates how socio-political conditions, shaped by past experiences, have created a collective consciousness that values ethical leadership. Political literacy initiatives are critical to empowering young voters, as seen in community service programs that increase understanding of the political process (Keban et al., 2024; Wahyudi et al., 2024). Therefore, engaging youth through interactive discussions fosters critical thinking and counter-narratives to misinformation (Wahyudi et al., 2024). By addressing these barriers and fostering greater youth involvement, the region can further strengthen its democratic processes and build a more engaged, inclusive political culture.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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