

Voter Behavior of Local Community in Indonesia: Evidence from The Ambaipua Village Community in Regional Head Elections of South Konawe 2020

Dian Trianita Lestari, Iriyani Astuti Arief, Shinta Arjunita Saputri

University of Halu Oleo

dian.trianita@uho.ac.id, riyanirief@gmail.com, shinta.a.saputri@uho.ac.id

Abstract

The research aims to determine and analyze the voter behavior of the Ambaipua Village community in regional head elections of South Konawe in 2020. This research uses political participation and voter behavior concept to see what underlying the community in determining the choice of their regional head, whether influenced by sociological, psychological or rational aspects. The data collection techniques used were interviews, literature studies and documentation. The results showed that the voting pattern of the Ambaipua Village community could be understood from three approaches, namely sociology, psychology and rational. A sociological approach in which the majority of informants stated that the religious aspect greatly affects who the candidate will be elected, that they will choose a candidate who has the same belief/religion. Meanwhile, from the psychological approach, it was found that the informants were not influenced by the political parties carrying the regional head candidates, but the majority would choose the incumbent with the assumption that they had succeeded in developing the region in the previous period. On the other hand, the rational approach was seen from the tendency of informants to choose candidate who have good political experience. Based on the results by the writers, it can be concluded that the sociological approach especially religion is more prominent than the other two approaches. This is because religious knowledge will have a great influence on aspects of people's lives, including their political choices.

Keywords: *Ambaipua villagers, regional head elections, voter behavior, local community*

Introduction

The application of a good democratic system is inseparable from the participation of the community to vote in general elections, whether the presidential election and regional head election in certain area. A person's efforts to determine prospective leaders to be chosen, are usually not always based on the vision, mission or ability possessed by prospective candidates, but more often based on the emotional proximity side of voters and the selected candidates. This comes from the basic assumption that every human being is bound in various social circles, such as family, workplace, neighborhood and so on. Every individual is encouraged to adjust, so that his/her behavior can be accepted by his/her social environment. This context also applies in terms of voting in elections.

The voter's behavior as described previously often occurred in several regions in regional head elections. The regional head election is successfully carried out by the Indonesian government which is divided into several waves. The first wave, the 2015 elections for regional head elections whose term of office was expired in the year or in the first half of 2016. Then, the second wave, was held in 2017 for regional heads whose term ended in the second half of 2016 and 2017. The third wave, was held in 2018 for the Regent whose term was expired in 2018 and 2019.

The Regional Head election was also held in one of the districts in Southeast Sulawesi Province, namely South Konawe. In 2015, South Konawe has held a direct regional election with the elected Regent H. Surunuddin Dangga and his deputy H. Arsalim, SF, defeated the pair Muhammad Endang and his deputy Nurfa Talib. Competition in the regional election always illustrates that the existence of freedom for every candidate for the Regent to try to work as much as possible to be elected. This shows progress in a democratic life for the community in South Konawe.

The fourth wave, regional head elections are held on December 9, 2020. There are 7 (seven) areas that attend a democratic party in the election, namely Wakatobi, North Buton, Muna, North Konawe, East Kolaka, Konawe Islands and South Konawe. All candidates who run in this regional election will try as much as possible to get the most votes. South Konawe Regency is one of the districts who have incumbent candidates namely Surunuddin Dangga who logged back as the regent for office term 2020-2025. But in the nomination of this second period, Surunuddin took Rasyid as his representative.

The South Konawe District Election in 2020 was attended by three candidate pairs, namely the first pair, Rusmin Abdul Gani-Senawan Silondae. The number two candidate pair was filled by the candidate Surunuddin Dangga and Rasyid. While the number three candidate pair is Endang-Wahyu Ade Pratama. The competition for the three candidate pairs in the regional head election in South Konawe, did not escape various problems. There was even a dispute in this regional election between Surunuddin-Rasyid's camp and Endang-Wahyu Ade Pratama. Candidate Pair Number 3 (Endang-Wahyu) with his supporters, assumed that there was cheating carried out by the candidate pair number 2 (Surunuddin-Rasyid), starting from the problem of vote counting that was not on schedule, money politics, dowry of politics and neutrality of state civil apparatus in the election, there was even a village

that does not get ballot paper, so that the number 3 candidate pair begged the Constitutional Court to hold re-voting, but was rejected by the Constitutional Court.

The political battle of these three candidate pairs was finally won by the number two candidate pair (Surunuddin and Rasyid). As an incumbent candidate who has served a period in the previous regional head elections, of course Surunuddin has had supporters from the South Konawe community, especially in Ambaipua Village. Community voter behavior in Ambaipua Village tends to prioritize kinship elements in choosing, so that if there are relatives or families who have set their choices to candidate pairs number 2, they will follow him. In addition, residential factors also greatly affected voter behavior in determining the Regent in South Konawe District. This is because the community in Ambaipua Village lives in a social circle that is very close to their residence. So if the majority of the neighbors or people around Ambaipua village choose Surunuddin-Rasyid, it will be more easily followed by people who are around the village.

The voter behavior in the regional head election of the South Konawe is one of the real examples that, in choosing candidates for community leaders not only prioritizing the competencies or abilities possessed by the candidates for the regents they choose. But it can also attach importance to the elements of family, the social environment and also residence. This sometimes causes problems in the quality of democracy in Indonesia, because it does not prioritize the political quality of the leaders chosen by most people in Indonesia, especially in South Konawe Regency.

The research question of this study is how is the voter behavior formed in the Ambaipua village community in the South Konawe District General Head Election in 2020. Meanwhile, the main assumption is that in determining his political choices, the Ambaipua community must have a basis or reason that encourages them to choose the Prospective head of the area. It can be analyzed by using the concept of voter behavior consisting of three approaches, namely sociological (socio-economic influence, religion, gender, tribe), psychological (developing political issues) and rational choice (consideration of rational profits or losses). So, it can be ascertained that community motivation in choosing regional head candidates is based on one or three approaches at once.

Literature Review

Political Participation

Political participation in the Big Indonesian Dictionary online has the meaning of activities carried out voluntarily by the community in the process of selecting rulers and forming public policies. According to Miriam (in Miaz, 2012: 33), political participation is actions that aim to influence government decisions, although the main focus is broader but abstract, namely efforts to influence the authoritative allocation of values for society. In simple terms, political participation can be seen as citizen participation related to state political activities. Political participation can be found in various forms of political systems but is a vital measure in a democratic political system where power is oriented to the public. Therefore, political participation also describes how the prevailing political system, the democratic situation, and the level of political literacy of the people of a country/region are.

One of the clearest examples of political participation is the granting of voting rights in general elections both at the regional and national levels. Another example is the diversity of political parties and candidates competing in elections. In this case, both citizens and rulers have their respective territories in the concept of political participation which in essence opens communication between citizens and authorities in conveying political messages and receiving feedback. According to Paige (in Miaz, 2012: 41) there are four forms of political participation, namely:

1. If political awareness and public trust are high, participation is also high;
2. On the other hand, if political awareness and public trust are low, participation is also low;
3. High political awareness but low trust means low political participation;
4. Political awareness is low but trust in government is high, so political participation is not active.

The relationship between political awareness and public trust that affects political participation as described above is influenced by various factors such as social status, economy, parental party, and organizational experience (Miaz, 2012:41). These factors illustrate how the sociodemographic influence of voters has a major influence and a causal relationship in the dynamics of political participation that occurs. Social status, for example,

is influenced by economic factors that provide broad access to information, including access to relations through organizational experience. In addition, in a society with kinship relationships that are still difficult to stand alone objectively, such as Indonesia, parties closeness based on family references is also a factor. This is in line with three factors that influence the level of community political participation according to Nimmo (in Miaz, 2012: 34), namely: Official opportunities (opportunities to participate supported by state policies); social resources (in this case the difference in access to information and political means is related to sociodemographic factors of the community); and personal motivation (related to the subjective political views of a person/society).

Based on the four forms of political participation above, it is also re-differentiated into two types of political participation, namely direct and indirect. In this case, political participation can be seen in a political context (direct), for example voting in elections, and a social context (indirect but has a political effect) for example joining an organization such as a religious organization (Pausch, 2012:4). Further details can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Political Participation Forms (Pausch, 2012:5)

Activity	Direct political participation		Indirect political participation
	Conventional	Unconventional	
Voting in elections or referenda.	X		
Party-membership	X		
Membership in interest groups, trade unions, political NGOs.	X		
Letters to politicians, petitions, citizen movements.	X		
Demonstrations		X	
Strikes		X	
March-ins		X	
Civil disobedience		X	
Membership in social organisations, charity associations, religious groups.			X
Participation in cultural organisations, sports clubs, etc.			X
Help in the neighbourhood			X

Political participation basically looks at the willingness of citizens to use the rights granted by the state in a democracy. However, there are various factors that influence the dynamics of political participation in society, especially in its participation in elections. In this research, the concept of political participation looks at the participation of the Ambaipua village community in the 2020 regional head election. Sociodemographically, the Ambaipua village community has various social, economic, and ethnic statuses as well as regional head candidates who are not only filled by incumbents but also from "newcomers".

Voter Behavior

Behavior in the Big Indonesian Dictionary online means "an individual response or reaction to a stimulus or environment". In an election situation, voter behavior can simply be seen as how voters react to candidates and parties competing for power where this reaction is a feedback on what voters receive/observed/feel. Voter behavior can also be interpreted as a typical citizen's perception and direction of the political system that plays a role in the government system (Almon & Verba in Miaz, 2012:45). By looking at the voters behavior, it can also be seen how the constellation of expectations and the community's interests in the context of democratic politics (Miaz, 2012:13).

People as voters who carry on their rights in elections have their own patterns in decision making. Especially in a heterogeneous society, the voters' behavior in determining their choice is a separate phenomenon that adds to the dynamics of elections as the main arena. The victory of competing candidates, especially if the winner is not an incumbent, can be an illustration of how the pattern of voter behavior tends to occur, including the factors that influence it. There are several factors that influence voter behavior according to Sastroadmodjo (in Miaz, 2012: 43), namely the political system, economy, culture, mass media, family influence, religion, education, personal relationships in society, up to coercion.

The voting pattern can be classified into three approaches, namely sociological, psychological, and rational economic/political approaches. These three approaches sort out voter patterns from various factors based on their own field of study. Further details can be seen in the following points (Miaz, 2012:34-37):

1. Sociological Approach

In this approach, the composition of the society stratum becomes the main focus related to voting patterns. What is meant in the society stratum is the role of class/group as well as the position of a person/group in voting where the class means is a political group in society that develops according to socio-economic aspects, religion, skin color, gender, occupation, age, family, and social relations in society. Basically, this approach looks at how the position of voters in the social structure of society determines voter behavior in choosing candidates/parties in elections;

2. Psychological Approach

In this approach, voter behavior is seen from the attitudes and feelings/perceptions of voters towards candidates and parties in elections. In the psychological approach, attitude and perception factors will shape voter behavior in determining the direction of their vote, including experiences formed during growing up. There are three functions related to the perception, namely, attitudes are formed on the basis of the need for objects which in this case are candidates/elections, attitudes are formed after adjustment to other people, and attitudes are self-defense to overcome conflicts/psychological pressures within a person, either in the form of insight, idealism, or thought.

3. Rational Political Economy Approach

This approach combines the two previous approaches by looking at the relation between the rational profit and loss assessment that will be obtained by someone in choosing a political party. Information about candidates/parties and current political issues is the main focus that determines the voter's consideration of profit and loss. The information referred to is aspects of position, personal information, character, and competence in certain fields. In this case, the voter will give a reasonable rater and weighing the pros and cons in making his choice, including looking at the country's economic condition.

Some of the above approach models can be used to analyze how voters behave in an election. By focusing on certain factors, it is possible to analyze the uniqueness of voter behavior from one region to another in the same election. So that the election results, even unexpected ones, can be explained by looking at some of the approaches above. Voter behavior in a society with a heterogeneous social structure in a developing economy country such as Indonesia, especially in Ambaipua village, is an interesting phenomenon. As the focus of the research, the concept of voter behavior will be used to explain voter behavior that was formed in Ambaipua village in the general head election of South Konawe 2020.

Methods

This type of research is qualitative by using a situation analysis model or case study approach that will analyze the situation for certain events. This research focuses on the people of Ambaipua Village as the object of research to be studied intensively and in depth. The data obtained consists of general and specific descriptions of phenomena that occur in the field

(real data). Meanwhile, quantitative data is only supportive, such as the number of informants and the number of voter participation in the 2015 and 2020 elections.

This research located in Ambaipua Village, Ranomeeto District, South Konawe Regency. This choice was based on regional head elections in South Konawe district that has been held in December 2020. In addition, the main research problem, namely the analysis of community voter behavior in the elections and research informants were in this location.

Data collection techniques in this research are divided into three techniques, namely: Interviews that were conducted directly to obtain data from research informants which consists of 20 people from Ambaipua Village; literature study to obtain additional data sourced from books, journals and online including the writers's field notes; and documentation in the form of official documents, pictures, photos, video recordings, and audio that are relevant to the research problem either obtained from the research location or the official website.

The Case of South Konawe Community in Regional Head Elections 2020

This research was conducted in two weeks with the main data collection through direct interviews with purposively selected informants. The selected informants are believed by the writers to be able to represent the overall picture of the Ambaipua Village community because they come from various occupational, ethnic and age backgrounds that differ from one another. The following are the results of the research as well as the discussion that is analyzed using the main concept, namely the concept of voter behavior from Miaz through his book entitled *Political Participation: Patterns of Voter Behavior in the New Order and Reform Elections*, which was written in 2012. The main assumption of the concept of voter behavior is the classification of voting patterns into three approaches, namely sociological, psychological, and rational economic/political approaches.

Political Participation of the Community

Political participation is an action that can portray the condition of a country's political system, which show the progress of democracy and the level of people's political awareness (political literacy). Political participation in an area can be seen from whether or not the community is active in voting in general elections, both national and regional level elections. Every region that conducts regional head elections will of course depend on the political

awareness of its people. If the level of political awareness and the level of public trust is high in the government, it will create high political participation in the elections. Vice versa, if the people in an area have minimal political awareness, it will certainly lead to low community political participation. Thus, this can be an indicator for the decline of democracy which results in the political system of a region.

Regional head elections have been held simultaneously in several districts/cities in December 2020, including in South Konawe Regency. Although this election was held during the Covid-19 pandemic and some claimed it would cause clusters to spread new variant of the viruses, it did not decrease the enthusiasm of the community to channel their political rights. It is proven from the increase in the number of voter participation in the 2020 elections when compared to the 2015 elections.

*Table 2. Comparison of voter participation in the 2015 and 2020 general head elections**

	2015 Elections	2020 Elections
Number of voters	206.984	206.004
Number of Voting Rights Users	152.545	172.002
Participation (%)	73.70 %	83.50%

The presence in voter participation of 9.8% when analyzed from four forms of political participation according to Paige (in Miaz, 2012:41), then what is formed to the people in South Konawe Regency is the first form, namely if political awareness and public trust are high, participation will also increase. This is supported by the results of interviews with all informants who stated that they participated in the 2020 regional head elections. This means that the political awareness of the people of South Konawe Regency is high.

Meanwhile, the high level of public trust in competing candidates is also another cause of the increasing number of voter participation in the 2020 elections. The trend of people's choice is to candidates who have previous political experience which means they believe that it is necessary for a regional leader to have knowledge and experience in politics. The answers as above were given by 87.5% of the informants in this research.

* Source: Decision of the General Election Commission of South Konawe Regency Number: 858/PL.02.6-Kpt/7405/KPU-Kab/XII/2020 and Voting Place Count Results of South Konawe Regency retrieved from: <https://pilkada2015.kpu.go.id/konaweselatankab>

The Voter Behavior

As described at the beginning of this research, the main concept in analyzing the pattern of voting behavior of this research's informants is the concept of voter behavior according to Miaz which is divided into three approaches, namely sociology, psychology, and rational economics/politics. Of the three approaches, each has its own portion to describe the pattern of voting behavior of the people of Ambaipua Village. However, the most prominent are the sociological and rational approaches.

First, from the sociological approach, according to Miaz, the standards are socio-economic aspects, religion, skin color, gender, occupation, age, family, and social relations in society. Ambaipua Village is part of the South Konawe Regency, which residents came with various backgrounds, such as religion, ethnicity, gender, and different occupations. This of course affects the choices of the residents themselves. From the results of interviews with informants, 75% of informants stated that having the same religion/belief as the candidate was one of the aspects that influenced their choice, while ethnicity had no influence on their choice. As stated by the first informant who is a 48-year-old works as civil servant:

“Ethnic background does not affect my choice, religion has an influence on the tendency to choose candidates”

Similarly, the answer given by the fifth informant, who is a 38-year-old entrepreneur, stated that:

“Having the same ethnicity does not affect my choice, but will tend to choose those who have the same beliefs as the candidate for Regent”

Meanwhile, family factors did not seem to be very specific in influencing the choice, where there are only 25% of informants who stated that the candidate for regional head chosen by the family, especially the head of the family, will also be chosen by other family members. The rest, namely 75% of the informants stated that they were not influenced by their families in determining which candidate to choose. This was conveyed by the fourth informant, a 31-year-old housewife:

“My choice is not easily influenced by other people, including my family, I will choose a candidate for regent based on my own choice”

On the other hand, the phenomenon of money politics has also become one of the issues that has been protracted in Indonesian society, including the Ambaipua Village community. The results of this research indicate that work background affects the attitude of informants

regarding the issue of money politics, where those who work as civil servants state that the monetary reward given by the candidate will not affect their choice. In contrast to informants who work outside civil servants, such as entrepreneurs, housewives and students, who choose to be pragmatic about this phenomenon. As revealed by the seventh informant, a 23-year-old student who argued:

“Money politics issue still occurs in elections, but it goes back to each individual. I myself disagree with that but I will be pragmatic”

Second, the psychological approach with the main assumption is to look at the voters' behavior from the attitudes and feelings/perceptions of voters towards candidates and parties in elections. From the results of interviews with informants, it was obtained that 62.5% of the informants stated that they were not influenced by the supporting political party of the regional head candidates. As revealed by the third informant, a 34-year-old civil servant who stated that:

“The supporting party of the candidate does not affect the tendency of my choice, but I will look at the figure, track record and if there is a family relationship”

In the 2020 South Konawe regency election, there are three competing pairs of candidates, one of which is the incumbent. Regarding this, it seems that the people of Ambaipua Village are more likely to choose candidates for regional heads who are incumbents because they are believed to have shown real work programs and developments that have been carried out for a period of approximately five years. So that, many people of Ambaipua village, decided to re-elect the incumbent as Regent in South Konawe, in order to continue work programs that have not been fully implemented. This is supported by the results of interviews with the first informant:

“I tend to choose the incumbent with the consideration that they have built this area and who have emotional closeness to me”

Third, the political/rational economy approach that focuses on aspects of the position, personal information, character, and competence in certain fields of the candidate. From the interviews, it was found that informants tend to make their choices on candidates who have good political experience or are indeed judged as figures who are able to lead South Konawe Regency (in other words, they have a leader figure in themselves). As stated by the second informant, a 38-year-old civil servant who argues that:

“The political experience which are owned by the candidate will influence my choice, such as having served as Regent before including work programs that were carried out during his serving as Regent”

In addition, this approach is also more focused on the relation between profit and loss appraisal that will be obtained by a person in choosing a political party, or choosing a candidate for leader in his area. This last approach is very rational among villagers, especially Ambaipua Village. For example, one villager who was interviewed stated that the decision to choose the incumbent candidate was based on the benefits that they received from the Regent candidate, whether it was economic gain, because he had been given a sum of money or in infrastructure. This is because in the previous administration the incumbent had built several facilities intended for the welfare of the people, for example infrastructure development in terms of repairing roads to Andoolo and the construction of other public facilities.

From the overall results of interviews with informants, it can be seen that each of the three approaches can be used to analyze the voting behavior patterns of the Ambaipua Village community in the 2020 elections. However, based on the results of the research by writers, the sociological approach, especially religion, is more prominent than the other two approaches. This is because religious knowledge will have a great influence on aspects of people's lives, including their political choices.

Conclusion

From the results of the research, it can be concluded that the people of Ambaipua village can be said to be no longer influenced by fear of the spread threat of the Covid-19 virus at polling stations. This was proven from all informants who stated that they actively participate in channeling their political rights in the 2020 South Konawe Regency General Election. The voting pattern of the Ambaipua Village community can be understood from three approaches, namely sociology, psychology and rationality. A sociological approach in which the majority of informants stated that the religious aspect greatly affects who the candidate will be elected, that they will choose a candidate who has the same belief/religion. Meanwhile, from the psychological approach, it was found that the informants were not influenced by the supporting political parties of the regional head candidates but the majority would choose the incumbent with the assumption that they had succeeded in developing the region in the previous period. On the other hand, the rational approach is seen from the tendency of informants to choose candidates who have good political experience or are indeed considered as leaders who are able to lead South Konawe Regency. From this research, the research team recommends that it is necessary to hold a collaborative program between the South Konawe

Regency government with the General Election Commissions and academics to provide political education for its citizens. This is because the majority of respondents are pragmatic towards money politics, so it is necessary to clarify this understanding in order to be able to realize the principles of elections in Indonesia, namely direct, general, free, confidential, honest and fair.

References

- Bisnis.com. *Pilkada Konawe Selatan, Pasangan Surunudin-Rasyid Menang Telak di TPS 03 Desa Langgea*. Retrieved from <https://sulawesi.bisnis.com/read/20201209/539/1328646/pilkada-konawe-selatan-pasangan-surunudin-rasyid-menang-telak-di-tps-03-desa-langgea>
- Jurdi, F. (2018). *Pengantar Hukum Pemilihan Umum*, Jakarta: Kencana.
- Keputusan Komisi Pemilihan Umum Kabupaten Konawe Selatan Nomor: 858/PL.02.6-Kpt/7405/KPU-Kab/XII/2020 tentang Penetapan Rekapitulasi Hasil Penghitungan Suara Pemilihan Bupati dan Wakil Bupati Konawe Selatan Tahun 2020. retrieved from <https://jdih.kpu.go.id/sultra/konsel/detailkepkpk-424d5458705535555a79557a5241253344253344>
- Kpu.go.id. Hasil Hitung TPS Kabupaten Konawe Selatan. Retrieved from <https://pilkada2015.kpu.go.id/konaweselatankab>
- Mashudi. (1993). *Pengertian-Pengertian Mendasar Kedudukan Hukum Pemilihan umum di Indonesia Menurut Undang-Undang Dasar 1945*. Bandung: Mandar Maju.
- Miaz, Y. (2012). *Partisipasi Politik: Pola Perilaku Pemilih Pemilu Masa Orde Baru dan Reformasi*. Padang: UNP Press.
- Pausch, M. 2012, *What is Political Participation Good for? Theoretical Debate and Empirical Data from Austria*, Resistance Studies Magazine No 1. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/230881449_What_is_political_participati_on_good_for_Theoretical_debate_and_empirical_data_from_Austria
- TenggaraNews.com. *Menang di MK, Surunuddin Jadi Bupati Konsel*. Retrieved from <https://tenggaranews.com/2021/03/19/menang-di-mk-surunuddin-jadi-bupati-konsel/>
- Tutik, T.T. (2010). *Konstruksi Hukum Tata Negara Indonesia Pasca Amandemen UUD 1945*. Jakarta: Kencana.
- Yustiningrum, RR. E. dan Ichwanuddin, W. (2015). *Partisipasi Politik dan Perilaku Memilih pada Pemilu 2014*. Pusat Penelitian Politik, LIPI.