An Analysis of The Voting Behavior of University Students and The Impact of The Presidential Election on The Regional Election in Central Java

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Abstract*. This journal aims to analyze student voting behavior in the context of the 2024 Central Java Gubernatorial Election which is influenced by the dynamics of the 2024 Presidential Election (Pilpres). Using a qualitative approach, this study collects data through in-depth literature research to explore the factors that influence students' voting decisions. The results of the study show that students are greatly influenced by the relevance of national issues raised during the Presidential Election, as well as the quality of policy programs offered by candidates. The use of social media as a means of information and interaction also plays an important role in shaping students' political preferences. In addition, the image and reputation of candidates, as well as the emotional connection of candidates with voters, are significant determinants of students' choices. This study found that the influence of the 2024 Presidential Election on Pilkada creates a complex relationship between national and local political dynamics. These findings are expected to provide insight for regional head candidates and other stakeholders in designing more effective campaign strategies to increase young voter participation in the democratic process.*

Keywords: *Gubernatorial Election, Presidential Election, influence students' voting*

1. INTRODUCTION

Democracy, etymologically, originates from the Greek words *demos*, meaning people, and *kratos*, meaning sovereignty. Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865) defined democracy as "Government of the people, by the people, and for the people". (Dede, M., & Paskarina, 2008) In this definition, democracy signifies a system in which the people have the right to form a government for their own benefit. Moreover, democracy demands that the government formed should be oriented toward serving and fulfilling the needs of the majority. (Fatah, 1994)

The implementation of democracy from a political perspective in Indonesia can be seen in the conduct of general elections. According to Surbakti (1992), elections are understood as a mechanism for the selection and delegation, or transfer, of sovereignty to a trusted individual or political party. The Law No. 8 of 2012 on the Election of Members of the People's Representative Council, the Regional Representative Council, and the Regional People's Representative Council in Article 1, Section 1, defines general elections as a means of exercising the people's sovereignty, conducted directly, publicly, freely, secretly, honestly, and fairly within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. (Surbakti, 1992)

The regional elections (Pilkada) are a mechanism in a democratic system that grants the people the freedom to choose leaders based on equal political rights and transparency. Pilkada represents a process in which the people can participate in the election of local leaders. It is also an element reflecting the stability and dynamism of democracy in a country. Pilkada is held to elect a mayor and deputy mayor who will lead a region. According to Cucu Sutrisno, the success of Pilkada is a reflection or benchmark of modern democracy in Indonesia. (Sutrisno, 2017)

Pilkada is crucial because it enables the public to directly participate in the governmental agenda of a country, allowing citizens to freely determine their choices without external interference. Pilkada must adhere to the principles of direct, general, free, honest, and fair elections (Luber Jurdil). This means that Pilkada should be free from lies and fraud, which could harm the parties involved. It is also a mechanism for granting legitimacy from the people to the elected regional leaders.

Political participation, in simple terms, refers to citizenship activities aimed at fulfilling political ideals through expected policies. In a democratic system, political participation is the most important element of a nation's political life. Citizens are expected to be active in political life, whether by accepting or rejecting government policies. Political participation is vital because it represents the rights and duties of individuals and groups, aiming to influence decision-making processes in line with their aspirations. (Heri Kusmanto, 2013)

General Elections (Pemilu) are a significant event in a democratic country, including Indonesia. The year 2024 will be a pivotal year with the upcoming series of elections, including the Presidential Election (Pilpres) and Regional Head Elections (Pilkada), particularly in Central Java. Although Pilpres and Pilkada have different characteristics and dynamics, they are interconnected, especially when considering young voters, such as university students.

Students are often seen as a critical force capable of influencing the course of democracy. They have the potential to be informed and active voters, given their strategic role in social and political change. (Rahman, A., 2020) However, with the Pilpres taking place in the same year, an interesting question arises regarding how it will affect student voting behavior in the Pilkada, especially in Central Java. The issues that emerge during the Pilpres campaign might distract students from local issues, or conversely, may make them link the two in their decision-making process.

Several factors can influence students' voting behavior, including educational background, political tendencies, and the impact of social environments and media. (Annas, F. B., Petranto, H. N., & Pramayoga, 2019) Additionally, the influence of political figures and

narratives emerging from the Pilpres may alter how students view regional candidates and the policies proposed in the Pilkada. Therefore, understanding how the Pilpres impacts student voting behavior in the context of Pilkada is crucial.

The contest for the position of Governor and Deputy Governor of Central Java in 2024 is expected to be fierce. Former Indonesian Military Commander Andika Perkasa and former Central Java Police Chief Ahmad Luhtfi will compete for the Central Java 1 seat. Both gubernatorial candidates, Andika Perkasa-Hendrar Prihadi (Number 1) and Ahmad Luthfi-Taj Yasin (Number 2), are preparing for the Pilgub stage in the upcoming November 2024 election. So far, both candidates have conducted their respective campaigns.

Andika Perkasa, a former TNI Commander, is well-known to the public, while Ahmad Luthfi, a former Police Chief, has extensive experience in Central Java. Hendrar Prihadi, known as Hendi, achieved success as the Mayor of Semarang, while Taj Yasin Maimoen, or Gus Yasin, has experience as the Deputy Governor of Central Java and has strong connections with the santri community.

Both pairs, Luthfi-Yasin and Andika-Hendi, face their own challenges. Luthfi-Yasin's coalition, comprising nine parties—Gerindra, PAN, Golkar, PSI, Democrats, PPP, PKB, NasDem, and PKS—presents a challenge in terms of party consolidation, especially at the district/city level, where cooperation can vary. On the other hand, Andika-Hendi's challenge lies in the fact that Andika is relatively new to Central Java. However, the PDIP party apparatus has a proven track record in winning the Central Java gubernatorial race in 2008 and 2013, which will likely aid their efforts. (www.detik.com, 2024)

Central Java, traditionally known as a stronghold for the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), is experiencing a shift in political support. In the 2024 Pilpres, the pair of Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka secured more votes than Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD. This has created a new challenge for PDI-P in maintaining its dominance in the upcoming Pilkada.

The shift in political dynamics for the 2024 Central Java Gubernatorial Election, driven by the influence of the Pilpres, will significantly impact students as voters. They have the potential to play a crucial role in determining the region's political future, with increased participation and heightened political awareness. However, challenges such as distrust in the system and political polarization also need to be addressed. Therefore, political parties and candidates must approach students in a more inclusive and responsive manner to their aspirations.

Gap

In the journal "Analysis of Student Voting Behavior: The Influence of the 2024 Presidential Election on the 2024 Central Java Regional Election," the research question addresses how the 2024 Presidential Election affects student voting behavior in the context of the Central Java Regional Election, which also takes place in the same year. This study aims to identify and analyze the factors influencing students' voting decisions, including how issues arising during the presidential campaign may interact with local issues relevant to young voters. In addition, the research also seeks to explore the extent to which social media plays a role in shaping students' political opinions and preferences, as well as to analyze their participation rate in the 2024 Regional Election. By understanding the relationship between national and local political dynamics, the study hopes to offer recommendations that could enhance voter education and student involvement in the democratic process. Through addressing these questions, this research seeks to provide a more profound understanding of the political dynamics among students and how they contribute to Indonesia's democratic process, particularly in the context of the upcoming elections.

2. METHODS

The type of research used is library research. This research involves examining literature as the subject of study, where the researcher explores books, sources, and writings related to the topic under investigation. The purpose of this study is to gather information from reports, readings, and libraries that are closely connected to the research problem.

Additionally, the research adopts a juridical approach by interpreting laws and regulations, and using legal materials, which may include information sourced from journals, scholarly papers, research reports, and other written sources, both electronic and printed.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Dynamics of the 2024 Central Java Governor and Vice Governor Election.

The 2024 Central Java Governor Election (Pilgub Jateng) has become a major focus in the national political arena. In a race filled with tension and anticipation, the two competing candidates, Andika Perkasa and Ahmad Luthfi, have emerged as strong and influential figures. With distinguished backgrounds in the military and police, both are now vying for the governor's seat, signaling a competition that is not only important for the province but also for the broader political future of Indonesia.

Andika Perkasa, former Commander of the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), has chosen Hendrar Prihadi as his running mate. Supported solely by the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), Andika represents a symbol of tested military strength. On the other hand, Ahmad Luthfi, a retired General of the Indonesian National Police (Polri) and former Chief of Police of Central Java, has selected Taj Yasin Maimoen, commonly known as Gus Yasin, as his partner. Gus Yasin, the son of prominent cleric KH Maimoen Zubair, brings a spiritual and social aura to this contest. Ahmad Luthfi and Taj Yasin Maimoen are supported by a broad coalition of political parties, which provides a significant advantage in their campaign for the 2024 Pilgub Jateng. In this competition, the candidates are not only fighting for a position but also for the hearts and minds of the people of Central Java, who have a unique and diverse character.

Despite being nationally recognized, Andika Perkasa may face challenges in connecting with voters in Central Java. In an era where local familiarity is highly valued, Andika must build deeper connections to gain the trust of the electorate. He needs to demonstrate that he understands the needs and aspirations of the people, not only as a general but as a compassionate gubernatorial candidate.

Interestingly, the rivalry between Andika and Ahmad Luthfi reflects a deeper dynamic in national politics. Ahmad Luthfi, considered close to President Joko Widodo, brings a political nuance that contrasts with Andika, who is solely supported by the PDIP and is often seen as representing the opposition. This tension adds an intriguing layer to the Pilgub Jateng, where the outcome may be interpreted as an indication of political strength at the national level.

In response to survey results that show him trailing behind Ahmad Luthfi, Andika maintains an optimistic stance. He emphasizes that surveys are merely tools for measurement, not final outcomes, and reiterates his commitment to convincing the public of his vision and mission. In this context, Andika's attitude and perseverance are key to attracting voter sympathy. By focusing on decisive leadership and extensive managerial experience, he aims to present himself as a leader capable of bringing about positive change.

Meanwhile, Ahmad Luthfi will highlight his experience as the former Chief of Police in Central Java. Drawing from his law enforcement background, he seeks to present himself as more relatable and approachable to the people. His experience in security and law enforcement further boosts his credibility with voters, giving them confidence that he

understands the challenges the community faces. In this respect, the communication style and personality of each candidate will play a significant role in shaping voter decisions.

The role of supporting parties and coalitions is also crucial in this contest. As a major party with a strong base in Central Java, PDIP provides a valuable asset for Andika. The party has extensive networks and experience in handling elections in the region. On the other hand, Ahmad Luthfi, alongside Gus Yasin, has the potential to leverage the strong pesantren (Islamic boarding school) and santri (students of Islamic boarding schools) networks in Central Java. Gus Yasin's presence may serve as a bridge between the candidate and communities that have long been loyal to religious leaders and pesantren.

The campaign issues raised by both candidates will play an important role in determining voter preferences. In the face of social, economic, and infrastructure challenges, voters are expected to choose candidates who offer concrete solutions. Both Andika and Ahmad Luthfi are expected to appeal to the public with promises and programs that are tangible and demonstrate their commitment to improving the welfare of the people.

However, it is not just the campaign issues that will determine the outcome, but also how each candidate communicates effectively. Their speaking styles, how they present their visions, and how they engage with the public will be key factors in building trust. Andika, with his military background, may emphasize discipline and decisiveness, while Ahmad Luthfi, with his police experience, will seek to appear more connected to the people.

As the election day approaches, the 2024 Pilgub Jateng is predicted to be highly competitive. Both camps will utilize every resource and strategy to garner voter support. Mass media and social media will play a crucial role in shaping public opinion. In this digital age, the ability to manage one's image online has become increasingly important. Both candidates will need to deliver their messages in an engaging and relevant way to voters.

In a broader context, the outcome of the 2024 Pilgub Jateng will have significant implications for the future of Indonesian politics. Regardless of the result, the election is expected to be democratic, peaceful, and full of integrity. A victory for either candidate will not only signify personal success but also serve as a reflection of the strength of the respective party and alliance.

With all the dynamics at play, the people of Central Java are now faced with an important choice. The contest between two powerful figures creates a historic moment for a province rich in culture and tradition. The decision they make will determine the

direction of development and progress in Central Java for the next five years and send a signal to the national political landscape. The 2024 Pilgub Jateng is not just a battle for votes, but a mirror of the hopes and aspirations of the people for a better future. (www.kompasiana.com, 2024a)

B. The Relationship Between the Central Java 2024 Regional Election and the 2024 Presidential Election

The Presidential Election (Pilpres) and Regional Election (Pilkada) are examples of the realization of a rule of law and democracy, inviting the public to actively participate in determining who will bear the significant responsibility for the country. The election of the president and vice president to lead the nation, alongside the election of regional heads as the president's representatives with authority over each region in Indonesia, follows strict procedures and regulations. This is because those elected must be individuals who are clean, honest, and just within the unity of the NKRI (Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia), which is based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. (Triwahyuningsih, 2018)

The regulations regarding the presidential and vice-presidential elections are contained in Law No. 42 of 2008 on the Election of the President and Vice President and in Law No. 7 of 2017 on General Elections. Presidential and vice-presidential elections are held every five years, with a maximum of two terms, or 10 years, for the president. Every individual in society has the right to vote directly, provided they are 17 years of age or older or possess an identity card (KTP). Presidential and vice-presidential candidates are selected from political parties or coalitions of political parties before the general election, and to be elected, the presidential and vice-presidential pair must secure at least 20% of votes from each province in Indonesia. The election process is supervised by independent institutions such as the General Elections Commission (KPU) and the Elections Supervisory Board (BAWASLU). The organization of presidential and vice-presidential elections is carried out by the KPU and overseen by BAWASLU. This is stipulated in Article 4, Paragraph (1) of Law No. 42 of 2008.

The qualifications for the election of the president and vice president in a presidential system are as follows:

1. The president and vice president will be elected directly.
2. The president will serve as both the head of state and the head of government.
3. The responsibility of the president will be held by the state ministers.
4. The parliament cannot impeach the president.

According to Mahfud M.D., direct democratic elections:

1. Open the door for the president and vice president to be elected according to the will of the majority of the people.

2. Direct election of the president and vice president is necessary to maintain governmental stability so that the leadership is not easily removed mid-term. (Sumono, 2014)

In a country implementing a presidential democracy, the president plays a crucial role. If the chosen leader fails, it will affect the effectiveness of the president's political agenda and the democracy will be perceived as a failed system. This makes the study of voter behavior and the quality of individuals seeking public office highly significant, especially when these individuals could become key figures in governance. Key characteristics include high capacity in knowledge, vision or goals aligned with the responsibilities of the position, intelligence, leadership abilities, decisiveness, risk-taking readiness, and the absence of moral defects. Moreover, candidates should uphold ethics, defend human rights, and be committed to enforcing the law.

This principle also applies to the election of regional heads, where candidates are directly elected by the people in the region where they reside. Typically, regional elections include the election of governors, mayors, and regents. The purpose of regional elections is to oversee and manage regional issues, and the authority of regional heads is limited to the region in which they are elected. The regulation of regional elections is stated in Law No. 16 of 2020. (Johan, 2021)

After understanding the regulations regarding regional elections in a presidential system, it is important to examine how Pilkada (regional elections) are conducted according to the applicable laws. Simultaneous regional elections must comply with the law, as they are a form of democracy implemented directly by the people at the regional level. Additionally, conducting regional elections in accordance with the law helps prevent legal violations, such as black campaigns. Ensuring that the regional elections are conducted properly is essential to guarantee that they are democratic, transparent, and of high quality. (Anggiyanti, Destina Balqis, 2023)

Factors Influencing Students' Decision-Making

1. **The Constitutional Court's Decision on the Regional Head Election Candidacy Threshold Included in the Draft Bill on Regional Elections**

The Draft Bill on Regional Elections (RUU Pilkada) includes provisions on the candidacy threshold for regional heads, in line with the Constitutional Court's decision No. 60/PUU-XXII/2024. Political parties or coalitions without seats in the Provincial Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) are now permitted to register candidates for regional head positions.

The Constitutional Court (MK) revisited the threshold for nominating regional heads, which was previously regulated under Law No. 10 of 2016 concerning the Election of Governors, Regents, and Mayors (Pilkada). Additionally, in Decision No. 60/PUU-XXII/2024, the Court declared Article 40, Paragraph (3) of Law 10/2016 unconstitutional, as it had restricted candidacies to only those political parties with seats in the DPRD. The decision stated: "The petitioners' request is granted in part. Article 40, Paragraph (3) of Law 10/2016 is in conflict with the 1945 Constitution and has no binding legal force."

This ruling, which alters the candidacy threshold for the 2024 simultaneous Pilkada elections, was met with surprise by many. Consequently, the Legislative Body (Baleg) of the House of Representatives (DPR), the Regional Representative Council (DPD), and the government agreed to incorporate the Court's decision into the Draft Bill on the Fourth Amendment to Law No. 1 of 2015, which established the Government Regulation in Lieu of Law (Perppu) No. 1 of 2014 concerning the Election of Governors, Regents, and Mayors.

The agreement was reached during a working committee meeting (Panja) involving the DPR, the DPD, and the government. The Vice Chairman of Baleg DPR, Achmad Baidowi, emphasized that the adopted Constitutional Court decision in Article 40 of the Draft Bill essentially opens the opportunity for political parties without seats in the DPRD to propose regional head candidates.

This agreement resulted in an amendment to Article 40 of the Pilkada Law. Paragraph (1) of Article 40 now allows political parties or coalitions with seats in the DPRD to register candidates, provided they meet the requirement of securing at least 20 percent of the valid votes in the previous DPRD election in the respective region. Paragraph (2) stipulates that political parties or coalitions without seats in the

Provincial DPRD may nominate a candidate for Governor and Deputy Governor, provided they meet four criteria.

First, in provinces with a population of up to 2 million, political parties or coalitions must secure at least 10 percent of the valid votes in the region. Second, in provinces with a population between 2 million and 6 million, the minimum requirement is 8.5 percent. Third, in provinces with a population between 6 million and 12 million, the requirement is 7.5 percent. Fourth, in provinces with a population exceeding 12 million, political parties or coalitions must secure at least 6.5 percent of the valid votes.

Article 40, Paragraph (3) allows political parties or coalitions without seats in the DPRD of a Regency or Municipality to nominate candidates for Regent, Deputy Regent, Mayor, and Deputy Mayor, subject to four conditions. First, in regencies/municipalities with populations of up to 250,000, the minimum vote requirement is 10 percent. Second, in regions with populations between 250,000 and 500,000, the requirement is 8.5 percent. Third, in regions with populations between 500,000 and 1 million, the threshold is 7.5 percent.

Fourth, for regencies or municipalities with a population exceeding 1 million as recorded in the Voter List (DPT), political parties or coalitions of political parties participating in the election must obtain at least 6.5 percent of valid votes in those regencies or municipalities. (www.hukumonline.com, 2024)

In its consideration, the Constitutional Court stated that the provision in Article 40, paragraph (3) of Law No. 10/2016 is in conflict with Article 18, paragraph (4) of the 1945 Constitution, which mandates that regional head elections must be conducted democratically. Article 40, paragraph (3) states, "If a political party or coalition of political parties proposes a candidate pair based on the provision of obtaining at least 25 percent of the total valid votes as referred to in paragraph (1), this provision only applies to political parties that have seats in the Regional Representative Council (DPRD)."

"The existence of such a provision clearly limits the fulfillment of the constitutional rights of political parties that have obtained valid votes in the election, even if they do not have seats in the DPRD. This reduces the democratic nature of regional head elections as mandated by Article 18, paragraph (4) of the 1945 Constitution," said Constitutional Judge Enny Nurbaningsih. The existence of Article 40, paragraph (3), which requires political parties or coalitions to hold seats in the

DPRD before they can propose regional head candidates, is seen as causing valid votes for political parties to be disregarded. Meanwhile, Article 18, paragraph (4) of the 1945 Constitution demands that regional elections be democratic.

2. **The quality of public programs or policies proposed by the candidates for regional leadership.**

The quality of programs or public policies proposed by gubernatorial candidates has a significant impact on the voting decisions of students. In this context, students, as young voters, have unique needs and expectations that can influence how they make their electoral choices. (Adman Nursal, 2004)

As an educated and enthusiastic group, students tend to seek candidates who not only possess a clear vision but also offer realistic and impactful programs. The relevance of these programs to their lives is a key factor. Regional head candidates who can connect their policies to issues that resonate with students, such as education, employment, and social welfare, have a high potential to gain support. For instance, if a candidate proposes scholarship programs or job training initiatives that are relevant, this could attract students who are seeking opportunities to enhance their competencies.

Transparency and clarity in the presentation of programs are also crucial. Students want clear and unambiguous information regarding the proposed policies. They value transparency in the policymaking process, and candidates who can present their programs with solid data and evidence are more likely to earn their trust. For example, if a regional head candidate can demonstrate that their previous education programs successfully improved graduation rates in other regions, this would add value and enhance their credibility among students.

Innovation in the proposed programs is another significant draw. Students tend to favor fresh and creative approaches to problem-solving. Candidates who can think outside the box and offer innovative solutions, such as integrating technology into education, will likely capture more attention. In this digital age, candidates who offer programs aligned with the current generation's character are more likely to gain student support.

Moreover, the social and economic impact of the programs should not be overlooked. With growing social awareness, students are more likely to favor candidates who offer solutions that not only benefit individuals but also provide advantages for the broader society. Policies focusing on equitable access to education

and improving the quality of life for communities are often viewed positively, and candidates who champion such a vision are likely to benefit.

Accessibility is another important factor. In this regard, students seek programs that they can not only enjoy but also easily access. Candidates who propose policies responsive to students' needs, and who can engage students in political and social processes, will be more favored.

Overall, the quality of the public programs or policies offered by regional head candidates plays a critical role in shaping students' voting decisions. By understanding the needs and aspirations of young voters and effectively communicating these programs, candidates can build strong connections and attract students' interest, ultimately leading to support in elections.

Student voters are generally focused on the policies proposed by a candidate to win an election, specifically how well these candidates can offer solutions to the fundamental problems faced by voters. Voters will objectively choose parties or candidates who are sensitive to the social issues affecting the wider community. Political parties or contestants with unclear policy directions tend to be overlooked by voters. This is because voters harbor hopes and desires for renewal in the nation's governance and societal structures.

3. **Professional Experience of Regional Leader Candidates**

The work experience of a prospective regional leader is a significant factor influencing student choices during elections. As a generation with critical and analytical thinking, students tend to consider the track record of candidates in their previous positions as an indicator of their competence and suitability to lead the region. In this regard, students strive to look beyond political promises and focus on tangible evidence derived from the candidate's experience.

One of the key aspects of work experience is its relevance to the desired position. Candidates with a background in government, public administration, or social fields are typically considered more competent and experienced in bringing about the expected changes. Students seek leaders who understand the intricacies of bureaucracy and can effectively manage regional resources. If a candidate has previously served as a deputy regional leader, a member of the legislature, or has experience in government institutions, this further enhances students' trust in the candidate's abilities.

Experience is not limited to political positions. Candidates with experience in social organizations, community development, or the private sector oriented toward public service may also offer added value in the eyes of students. This shows that the candidate not only possesses theoretical knowledge but also has a practical understanding of the needs of the community. Students often seek figures who resonate with their values, are optimistic about change, and can empathize with the aspirations of the people.

Moreover, a clean track record and verifiable achievements from the past serve as strong attractions. Students tend to avoid candidates with previous involvement in scandals or ethical issues. They expect candidates who are honest, transparent, and strongly committed to good governance. If a candidate can demonstrate success in policies or programs previously implemented, such as improvements in education quality, reductions in unemployment rates, or successes in public health programs, this would be a significant asset.

When students perceive that a candidate has relevant and effective work experience, their decision to vote is likely to be positive. They are more willing to support that candidate, believing that the experience will translate into good policies with a positive impact on society. In this way, a candidate's work experience becomes one of the main considerations influencing students' voting decisions, reinforcing their confidence that their choice is for a better future for both themselves and the wider community.

Overall, a prospective regional leader's work experience reflects their potential to govern effectively. Students, as informed and discerning voters, will seek candidates who not only speak but also provide evidence and experience supporting their vision and mission for the region they wish to lead.

Work experience has a significant and positive influence on the voting decisions of young voters in the 2024 simultaneous regional elections. This indicates that the work experience of a regional leader candidate holds a substantial weight in the eyes of voters before making their final decision. The extensive relevant work experience expected for the role will influence their considerations, leading to decisions made with the hope that the outcome of these well-thought-out considerations will contribute to the common good.

4. **The Educational Background of Regional Head Candidates**

The educational background of prospective regional leaders is a significant factor influencing students' voting decisions in elections. As political awareness among students increases, they become more cognizant that the candidates' educational qualifications may serve as a crucial indicator of the leadership quality and the policies they are likely to implement. (Ginting, Loficha Metesa Br, 2014)

Students, as an educated and critical generation, tend to seek candidates with a solid academic background. Higher education is often viewed as a symbol of competence and intellectual capacity. Regional head candidates with advanced degrees, such as a master's or doctorate, may instill confidence that they possess a strong foundation of knowledge in various fields, including public policy, economics, and management. This is especially important to students who believe that good, people-oriented policies can emerge from leaders with higher education.

Furthermore, students also consider the relevance of a candidate's education to the position they aim to hold. For instance, a candidate with a background in law, social sciences, or public management may be perceived as having a better understanding of the challenges faced by society. Expertise in a particular field could make them more capable of formulating effective and efficient policies. In this regard, students tend to prefer leaders who are not only academically intelligent but also pragmatic and able to confront real-world challenges.

Another factor that attracts students' attention is the candidate's commitment to education and human resource development. Candidates who have demonstrated concern for improving the quality of education in their region, such as through scholarship programs or educational facility improvements, are highly valued. Students appreciate leaders who prioritize education and have a vision to enhance the quality of life and opportunities for future generations. When a candidate shows that education is a central focus of their policies, students are more motivated to offer their support.

Meanwhile, the level of education is often associated with an open mindset and a critical attitude towards social issues. Candidates who are receptive to new ideas and willing to listen to the aspirations of the community are better able to build connections with voters, including students. Students tend to be more interested in candidates who can communicate well, present clear ideas, and understand the complexities of the problems facing society.

The level of education significantly and positively influenced the voting decisions of young voters during the 2020 simultaneous regional elections. This suggests that, in the eyes of the public, particularly among youth groups, the educational background of a regional head candidate is an important consideration. Society believes that the higher the level of education, the broader the knowledge and insight of the individual. In the public's view, a leader should possess a higher level of education than their subordinates, making the candidate's educational background a critical factor in the decision to vote.

In conclusion, the education level of a regional head candidate plays a crucial role in influencing students' voting decisions. Students are more likely to support candidates with strong educational backgrounds, relevance to current issues, and a commitment to the development of education and society. In their view, education is not merely a formality but an indicator of potential to create high-quality, fair, and people-centered policies. Therefore, candidates who demonstrate educational excellence and commitment to empowering the community are more likely to gain support from students.

5. Socioeconomic Background of Regional Head Candidates

The socio-economic background of regional head candidates can serve as a crucial factor in influencing the electoral decisions of university students. As political awareness among young voters increases, students not only assess the quality of a candidate's programs or experience but also consider how the candidate's socio-economic background might impact their policies and understanding of societal issues.

Students who observe the socio-economic background of candidates are often more likely to support those with life experiences relevant to the challenges faced by society. Candidates who come from disadvantaged backgrounds or have experienced economic hardship are often perceived as more empathetic and in tune with the needs of the community. They are seen as more committed to addressing issues related to social and economic inequality.

On the other hand, candidates with favorable socio-economic backgrounds also draw attention, albeit in a different context. Students tend to analyze the candidate's life journey and their contributions to society. If a candidate from a wealthy family can demonstrate that they have actively contributed to the community through essential programs, service, or social initiatives, this can help create a positive image.

Students appreciate individuals who use their privilege to improve others' lives, rather than merely for personal or business interests.

Students' trust in evaluating regional head candidates is also strongly influenced by how candidates address socio-economic issues. Candidates who can demonstrate sensitivity to issues such as unemployment, poverty, and social injustice are more likely to gain student support. When a candidate clearly identifies with the struggles of the lower and middle classes and offers concrete solutions, students feel a stronger connection, which leads to the formation of voter loyalty.

Another important factor is the candidate's direct involvement in social or community activities. Candidates with a history of activism or volunteer work in social fields give the impression that they not only understand societal issues but are also taking concrete steps to create change. Students, often driven by a desire to make an impact, are more likely to support candidates whose values align with theirs, especially if the candidate is open to the input and aspirations of younger generations.

Finally, students also pay attention to how candidates engage with different social and economic groups. Candidates who demonstrate the ability to collaborate and form partnerships with diverse societal elements signal that they do not only speak for themselves but also represent the voices of many. By building strong relationships with various groups, candidates can unite aspirations and focus on inclusive development.

Overall, the socio-economic background of regional head candidates plays a significant role in shaping students' electoral decisions. Students tend to favor candidates whom they believe can represent their values, needs, and hopes. Social injustice, commitment to change, and the ability to understand and address economic issues faced by the community are key elements in students' assessments of regional head candidates. By understanding this relationship, candidates can develop more effective campaign strategies aimed at young voters and increase their participation in the democratic process.

6. The Influence of the Political Culture of Regional Head Candidates

The political culture of regional head candidates is a crucial factor influencing the voting decisions of students. In this context, political culture encompasses the values, norms, beliefs, and practices adopted by the candidates, which in turn shape how they interact with the public and manage public affairs. (Citrayani, Sherli Alyfah, 2021)

Students, as part of the youth who are sensitive to social and political changes, pay significant attention to the political culture promoted by regional head candidates. They tend to seek leaders who are committed to democratic principles, transparency, and accountability. Candidates who demonstrate an open, cooperative, and inclusive political culture are more likely to attract greater interest among students. Students desire leaders who listen to the voices of the people, especially the youth, and are willing to engage in two-way dialogue. When candidates show a willingness to involve the public in the policymaking process, it enhances trust and encourages active participation from students.

Moreover, candidates with a proven track record in fostering a positive political culture, such as promoting anti-corruption values and integrity, are of primary consideration to students. With high political awareness, students are reluctant to support candidates involved in corruption or practices detrimental to society. They are more likely to back candidates who have shown a commitment to advocating for justice, public welfare, and the creation of a clean and effective governance system.

Political culture also encompasses how candidates communicate and educate the public on key issues. Candidates who can present their programs and policies in an informative and easily understandable manner are more appealing to students. They want leaders who can clearly explain their ideas and be transparent about the steps to be taken in governance. This not only strengthens trust but also increases the likelihood of students spreading information and encouraging others to engage in the election process.

It is also important to note that the political culture of regional head candidates can reflect their support for youth participation in decision-making processes. When candidates initiate efforts to enhance the role of youth in governance, through youth empowerment programs or support for student organizations, it can strengthen their connection with students. Students are more inclined to vote for candidates who are committed to empowering youth to contribute to society and the nation.

A candidate with a strong and positive political culture can create a powerful resonance with students. Thus, students' decisions on which candidate to support are heavily influenced by how well the candidate represents their political culture and how effectively they engage with the aspirations and hopes of young voters. Candidates who align with the political values shared by students are more likely to gain their support and active participation in upcoming elections.

Overall, the influence of a regional head candidate's political culture should not be underestimated in the context of student voters. By adopting an inclusive, transparent approach focused on active public participation, candidates can build stronger connections with the younger generation and highlight their commitment to creating a government that serves the people.

7. The Impact of Social Media

Social media has become an influential tool in political campaigns, particularly among young voters such as students. In the context of local elections, the impact of social media on student voters cannot be underestimated. Given that students are typically active on digital platforms, the way regional candidates utilize social media can significantly affect how they are perceived by this generation.

First, social media offers a fast and wide-reaching channel for information dissemination. Candidates who effectively use platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok can directly reach student audiences. Through engaging content—such as short videos, infographics, and creative posts—candidates can deliver their messages in a more relatable and digestible way. When students find accessible and appealing information on social media, they are more likely to engage, share, and even feel inspired to support the candidate.

Moreover, social media enables direct interaction between candidates and voters. These platforms facilitate two-way dialogue, allowing students to ask questions, provide feedback, and even critique the candidate's programs and policies. When a candidate demonstrates a positive and open response to student input, it fosters trust and loyalty. Students value leaders who not only listen to their concerns but also respond seriously, and social media provides a space to build closer relationships.

Social media also serves as an effective tool for mobilization. Candidates who successfully rally their followers to participate in campaign events, voter drives, or public discussions can generate significant momentum. Students who feel involved in social movements or campaigns discussed on social media are more motivated to vote. When they see their peers or people they know participating in a campaign, it encourages them to join in, creating a positive snowball effect for the candidate receiving support.

Equally important, social media allows candidates to strategically build their public image. Regional candidates who are savvy in selecting content and crafting their message on social media can control the narrative they present to the public. They can showcase their human side through personal stories, success experiences, or social initiatives they have undertaken. A positive image built on social media can influence students' perceptions, making them more likely to vote for candidates they perceive as relatable and concerned with the issues they face.

However, social media also has the potential to spread misinformation or negative content. As a digitally savvy generation, students need to be empowered to identify inaccurate information and biased criticism. Candidates who meet this challenge with transparency and integrity, providing supporting facts and data, will be more valued by students.

Overall, social media plays a crucial role in influencing student voters in local elections. Through its effective use, regional candidates can leverage these platforms to establish clear communication, form personal connections, and influence student voting decisions. In a world where information circulates rapidly and interactions are increasingly digital, a deep understanding of social media's impact will be key for candidates seeking to gain the support of this intelligent and active younger generation.

8. The Public Perception of Regional Head Candidates

The image of a regional head candidate refers to the public perception of that individual, and this factor plays a crucial role in influencing the voting decisions of students. In the fast-paced information era, where news and opinions can spread rapidly with just one click, the image of a candidate is not only shaped by their achievements or policies but also by the narratives that evolve in the public sphere.

One key element of a candidate's image is their reputation and track record. Students, as a generation inclined to be critical and analytical, often conduct in-depth research on the candidates they intend to vote for. They seek information about the candidate's political experience, past successes, and integrity. A candidate with a clean record, free from corruption or scandal, is likely to gain more trust from students. A good reputation is particularly important because students want to ensure that their vote goes to a leader who not only speaks well but truly has a strong commitment to the community.

Furthermore, a candidate's image is often shaped by the influence of mass and social media. Candidates who actively engage with the public through both traditional and digital media have the opportunity to build a positive narrative about themselves. For example, if a candidate successfully creates a social initiative that benefits the community and the media portrays it well, the candidate's image will be further enhanced in the eyes of the public. This directly impacts students, who may be inspired by these success stories.

The image can also be influenced by how candidates interact with the public. Candidates involved in social activities, such as community service, public dialogues, or local events, can build an image of being a leader who is caring and close to the people. Students, who often value social involvement, tend to appreciate candidates who demonstrate a real presence within the community. When students observe a candidate striving to understand the issues faced by society, this positive image can influence their voting decisions.

However, it is important to remember that the image of a candidate can also be affected by rumors or negative information. Issues that tarnish a candidate's image can spread rapidly in society, especially if they are not managed effectively. Students, with their access to vast information, can be influenced by rumors or fake news related to a candidate's image. Therefore, candidates who seek support from students must realize the importance of image management—not only through achievements but also through transparent communication and addressing negative issues clearly.

Moreover, the image shapes the public's expectations of the candidate. Students, who have high expectations of a candidate based on the positive image they have of them, will be more motivated to cast their vote. They are more likely to see the candidate as an agent of change, not just in governance, but also in representing the values of the younger generation.

In conclusion, the image of a regional head candidate in society is a crucial factor in determining the voting decisions of students. With a good reputation, effective communication, social involvement, and the management of negative issues, candidates can create an image that supports voting decisions. Students, as voters with hopes and aspirations, are more likely to support candidates they believe can represent their voice and have the potential to bring about positive change for society. (Meliala, 2020)

9. Emotional Factors

Emotional factors play a crucial role in influencing the decision-making of students when selecting regional head candidates. Although voter decisions are often perceived as rational, emotions serve as a key element that can alter perspectives and shape responses, particularly among students. (J. Kristiadi, 1996)

Students, as part of the younger generation, are often emotionally connected to candidates who are able to evoke a sense of care, empathy, and hope for a better future. When a regional head candidate speaks sincerely about the issues faced by society, including challenges related to education, employment, and social welfare, they tend to elicit an emotional response from voters. Students are particularly responsive to messages that are inspiring and heartfelt, making them feel that their voices can contribute to the positive change promised by the candidate.

Many students share similar life experiences with the challenges faced by the community, and when candidates can relate their personal stories, backgrounds, or life experiences to relevant issues, it fosters a strong sense of connection. For instance, if a candidate speaks about their struggle to obtain an education or how they fought for their family, students may feel inspired and motivated to offer their support. They view the candidate not only as a leader but also as someone who understands their journey and aspirations.

Emotions can also be triggered by a candidate's image in the media, whether through visual campaigns, advertisements, or social media platforms. Engaging video clips or powerful personal story narratives can evoke empathy, enthusiasm, and even a resurgence of hope among students. When a candidate conveys a message with warmth and sincerity, it can create an emotional bond that influences the tendency to vote. Students who feel emotionally connected are more likely to make a stronger decision to vote, as they believe the candidate represents their aspirations and dreams.

Emotional involvement also plays a role in campaigns that align with social issues reflecting the values held by students. When a candidate supports relevant social movements and shows empathy toward issues such as injustice, equality, and diversity, it is highly appealing to students. They are more inclined to support candidates who resonate with their struggles and demonstrate a commitment to advancing the issues that matter most to the younger generation.

Furthermore, direct interactions with candidates, such as attending campaign events, public dialogues, or social activities, can reinforce emotional factors. Students who have the opportunity to meet candidates in person and experience their sincerity and commitment are more likely to strengthen this connection. These moments can leave a deep impression and emotional mark, significantly influencing voting decisions.

However, it is important to note that emotional manipulation can also occur. Unethical campaign practices, such as spreading false information or exploiting fear, can trigger negative emotional responses. Critical and educated students must be empowered to distinguish between sincere campaigns and those using emotional psychology for manipulation.

Overall, emotional factors are crucial in influencing students' decisions when voting for regional head candidates. The connection through narratives, shared experiences, and common values forms the foundation for students to choose a candidate they feel can represent them and their hopes for the future. Candidates who succeed in establishing this emotional connection with young voters are more likely to gain support and win the election.

C. The Role of Student Voters in the 2024 Central Java Governor and Deputy Governor Election

In 2024, Indonesia will conduct simultaneous regional elections, known as Pilkada, at a national level. This will involve the election of Governors alongside the election of Regents and Mayors, including in Central Java Province.

Given that the election of Governors and Regents will occur concurrently, the associated issues and challenges become more complex and competitive. These challenges include the neutrality of civil servants (ASN), the military and police (TNI/Polri), village heads, and village apparatus. Other concerns include money politics, the politicization of ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group relations (SARA), misinformation (hoaxes), threats and intimidation, as well as the neutrality and professionalism of election organizers.

Amid these numerous issues and challenges, the participation of all stakeholders becomes essential. Participation refers to the voluntary involvement of the public in every stage of the election process. Participation is not only about voting at the polling station, which is later tallied, but also about the extent to which voters are aware of and willing to monitor and oversee the entire election process.

Why is participation important? First, it helps minimize problems and challenges in elections and regional elections. Second, it ensures the efficient and effective organization of elections, in terms of time, effort, and cost. Third, it guarantees that the election process is democratic.

One group that is expected to actively participate is university students, who possess rational, analytical, and critical thinking skills. As agents of change and control in the nation, students can play a key role. First, by conducting socialization and voter education. This can take the form of discussions and seminars on democracy and elections. Second, by conducting research or studies that contribute to policy recommendations for both election organizers and candidates. In this regard, universities can encourage students to explore electoral or regional election themes in their thesis work.

Third, students can become election organizers and observers. With their knowledge, students are well-suited to oversee and monitor the democratic process at the local level.

However, student participation in elections must follow certain conditions. Among these are: not showing bias that benefits or disadvantages any candidate, not disrupting the election process, and ensuring that participation aims to enhance political engagement in society and foster a conducive atmosphere for a safe, peaceful, orderly, and smooth election. (www.kompasiana.com, 2024)

One of the main responsibilities of students is to educate voters. A significant portion of the population still lacks an understanding of the importance of regional elections (Pilkada) and how to select the right candidates. Students can play an active role in organizing public outreach and discussions on Pilkada. Through these activities, the public can gain a better understanding of the candidates' visions, missions, and track records. Such education is crucial to enable voters to make decisions based on accurate and objective information.

This Pilkada year, Indonesia enters a critical phase in strengthening its democracy and political participation. Pilkada provides an opportunity for citizens to directly engage in selecting local leaders who will represent and manage their needs and aspirations. This process forms a crucial foundation for building transparent and accountable governance, where the people's voices have real power in shaping regional policies. Honest and competent leaders will not only bring about positive changes in their regions but also set an example for others in implementing good governance practices and integrity.

As students, our role in this Pilkada is essential. Students are recognized as agents of change, with broad perspectives, critical thinking skills, and high ideals. In the context of Pilkada, students can actively participate in various aspects, from educating the public on the importance of choosing the right leader, overseeing the election process to ensure honesty and fairness, to directly engaging in positive campaigns that support quality candidates. Furthermore, students can serve as a bridge between candidates and the public, conveying the people's aspirations and needs to the candidates, and ensuring that the proposed programs align with the region's actual requirements. Through active involvement, students can help ensure that this year's Pilkada produces not only the best leaders but also strengthens political awareness and active participation across all segments of society.

Students also play a significant role in overseeing Pilkada as active agents of social control. They can collaborate with independent monitoring institutions to observe the election process at polling stations and ensure transparency and fairness. Their involvement helps prevent fraud and supports the integrity of the election by reporting any violations that may occur. Additionally, students can raise public awareness about the rights and responsibilities of voters and use technology to report findings in real-time. In doing so, they not only enhance the democratic process but also develop their leadership and analytical skills, making their participation an essential step in maintaining the quality and fairness of elections.

Youth participation in Pilkada is often low, yet students have great potential to change this by acting as catalysts for change. Through creative and innovative campaigns utilizing social media, seminars, and community activities, students can engage young people more actively in the political process. By designing relevant and engaging initiatives—such as interactive content on social media platforms, panel discussions with community leaders, and community events that facilitate political dialogue—students can inspire youth not only to vote but also to actively engage in discussions and decision-making processes.

This increased participation ensures that the youth's voices are heard and have a meaningful impact on local policy directions, strengthening their representation in the democratic process and advancing the interests of future generations.

As change agents, students bear the responsibility to educate voters, monitor the Pilkada process, and boost youth participation. With active student involvement, we can hope for a more transparent, honest, and fair Pilkada this year. Let us collectively safeguard this democratic process for a brighter future for Indonesia.

4. CONCLUSION

The academic paper titled *"Analysis of Student Voting Behavior: The Impact of the 2024 Presidential Election on the 2024 Central Java Regional Election"* concludes that there is a significant influence between the 2024 Presidential Election and student voting behavior in the context of the 2024 Central Java Regional Election. The analysis indicates that the national political dynamics occurring concurrently with the regional elections create a complex interaction, where issues raised during the Presidential Election can affect students' understanding and preferences toward regional candidates.

This study identifies several key factors shaping student voting behavior, including:

1. **Relevance of Issues**: Students show a high level of interest in candidates who can connect their programs to current and relevant issues at both the national and local levels. Welfare, education, and employment opportunities are central issues that concern students.

2. **Quality of Programs and Policies**: Students are more likely to support candidates who present clear, realistic policies with direct impacts on their lives. Candidates with a strong track record and measurable programs are more likely to gain support from students.

3. **Influence of Social Media**: Social media has proven to be the primary platform for students to obtain information, engage in discussions, and interact with candidates. Effective use of social media by regional candidates can enhance their image and build emotional connections with young voters.

4. **Image and Political Culture**: Students tend to prefer candidates with a positive image, integrity, and a commitment to representing the people's voice. An open and responsive political culture also plays a crucial role in shaping students' decisions.

5. **Emotional Factors**: The emotional connection between candidates and students is an important factor in voting decisions. Candidates who communicate with empathy and sincerity are more likely to secure student support.

Overall, this research emphasizes the importance for regional candidates to understand the factors influencing student voting behavior. Therefore, comprehensive and relevant campaign strategies can be implemented to enhance student participation in the democratic process. The findings of this study are expected to provide insights for candidates, political parties, and other stakeholders in preparing for increasingly competitive elections in the future.

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