



Analysis of Local Politics in the Regional Head Election of Buleleng Regency, Bali

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Abstract

The paper examines the workings of local politics during the Regional Head Election of Buleleng Regency, Bali with regards to the voter preference, institutional support, campaign approaches and political activity. A stratified random sampling, the quantitative research design and structured questionnaires were deployed to collect data analyzed by the descriptive and inferential statistical methods i.e., t-tests, regression analysis, ANOVA, and ANCOVA. Findings indicate that the expenditure of campaigns and the attractiveness of candidates play a great role in determining the preferences of the voters whereas satisfaction of the candidates very strongly relates with increased voter turnout. There was moderate levels of confidence in the local government especially among voters below the ages of 30 years and who were more educated and a feeling political cynicism was on the rise. Furthermore, the number of the youth who turned out to vote was very low and participation in other ways of engaging the civic life was low. These results bring to fore the essentiality of strategic campaign communique, institutional trust-building, and cult of engagement culturally embedded towards influencing electoral outcomes. This research can be used to comprehend the wider picture of subnational democratic practices and find some viable alternatives to promoting the quality of policies and inclusion characterizing local government in Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

The local politics perform a crucial role in determining the direction of governance and improvement of areas based on the electricities and interests in activities and desires among people. The Regional Head Election (Pilkada) is a significant region whereby the dynamics are done, and it provides us with information about the local political arena and its reflections on the rule, socio-monetary growth, and community power. The paper explores the examination of regional politics within the Regional Head Election of Buleleng Regency, Bali, examining the salient actors, factors, and consequences which are able to characterize the political environment of this area.

One such location is the Buleleng Regency in the northern part of Bali, which has become the centre of the political sports, identified in terms of its cultural richness,

economic capabilities, and a range of social material. As stated in the latest figures of the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), Buleleng Regency comprises more than seven-hundred,000 human beings with various range of ethnic backgrounds, religions, and socio-monetary backgrounds. This demographic diversity makes the politics of neighborhoods quite complicated as particular businesses compete to be represented and influence in the aspects of selection methods (Coen et al., 2021; Fleming et al., 2022).

The Regional Head Election in Buleleng Regency has been receiving broad attention because it has implications on governance, shipping of the providers to serve people as well as network-building (Hessevik, 2022; van Der Woerd et al., 2023). The election of a local head, as stated by Arising (2021), does not only make the control over the place easier, it also sets the agenda of policies, programs, and activities that influence lives of inhabitants. Severe solutions of the election may determine the course of development, infrastructure works, tourism methods, and social welfare projects in Buleleng Regency.

Besides, local politics in Buleleng Regency is shaped through a set of variables such as historic legacies, cultural traditions, economic hobbies, demographic shifts, etc. According to the point raised through Suwarso (2016), the history of Buleleng Regency with its rich history and role in the history of Bali integrates into the political discourses and identities informing the electoral i.e. parliamentary process. Also, economic issues such as tourism development, farming, and investment attract much influence regarding political agendas and partnerships between many stakeholders (Suwarso, 2016; Chamusca, 2023).

One of them is characterized by the participation of different political events, local organizations, civil society corporations, and community leaders in the Regional Head Election of Buleleng Regency. An analysis through McCoy & Somer (2021) made it clear the role of parties in political mobilization of assistance, expression of ideologies and coalitions to stabilize election wins. Non-secular businesses such as children groups and cultural companies, as well as local companies, also play a significant role of influencing the mood of the voters, forming the political discourse. To add on, the felony structures, the rules of electoral and institutional systems regulate the electoral process in Buleleng Regency and influence the campaign process and its outcomes. Some of the factors that influence the transparency, fairness, and integrity of the electoral method include the use of electronic voting casting systems, campaign finance program, as well as the eligibility criteria of the candidates.

The results of the Regional Head Election in Buleleng Regency bear far-reaching consequences on the governance relations, the priorities of the policy, and active citizenship. It is critical to ensure that the neighborhood leaders who are elected are accountable, responsive and able to meet the different needs and aspirations of the people in the neighborhood in order to attain inclusive improvement and proper governance. The evaluation of nearby politics in this context provides valuable insights into the power members of the family, socio-economic dynamics, and democratic strategies on the sub-country wide level.

METHODS

This study utilized a quantitative research design to examine political trends and The issue under investigation in this research design is the political trends and the perceptions by people in Buleleng Regency, Bali which was of a quantitative research design. Stratified random sampling method was used to guarantee the representative participation of different demographic and geographic groups of the populations in the regency. A structured questionnaire was compiled according to pertinent literature and, with the understanding of the political situation within the region,

was able to collect data. Content validity of the questionnaire was achieved by reviewing the subject matter experts and then the questionnaire was re-evaluated by a small group of respondents who took part in pilot test.

Questionnaires were sent via a survey online and in person which enables a greater span of coverage and representation. Analysis of the collected data was carried out using descriptive and inferential statistical tools such as t-tests, regression analysis, correlation analysis, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). These approaches facilitated diverse patterns, relationships in places and differences among population subgroups to be established which helped to have a big picture of political dynamics in Buleleng Regency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Voter behavior of the study is using both descriptive and inferential statistics methods to determine dynamics in the electoral preference of Buleleng Regency Regional Head Election. Descriptive statistics are applied to show the overall patterns of the voter satisfaction, confidence in the candidates, and significance of the campaign issues. Paired-samples t-test is an inferential measure used to compare the changes in the voter preference before and after a campaign event, regression analysis employed to test the influence of campaign spending on the support of voters, and ANCOVA will be utilized in testing the overall effect of campaign spending coupled with the appeal of a candidate. Also, Pearson correlation coefficient will be used to investigate the tie between voter turnout and candidate satisfaction. Together, these analytical tools provide a comprehensive empirical basis for understanding the factors that shape voter preferences and electoral outcomes in Buleleng.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Voter Preferences in Buleleng Regency

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Voter Satisfaction	4.2	0.8	4.5	2	5
Trust in Candidates	3.9	1.2	4.0	1	5
Campaign Issues	4.5	0.6	4.5	3	5

The average score of the satisfaction among the voters in Buleleng Regency was 4.2 indicating that the voters were mainly positive. The standard deviation is 0.8 and thus there might be some differences in the level of satisfaction among the voters with the score being between 2 and 5. The median value of 4.5 indicates that a significant percent of voters are rather content.

Buleleng Regency displays a moderate level of faith among the voters by an average score of 3.9. Based on the standard deviation of 1.2, the trust level of voters seems to change over a wider scope, i.e., a variation between 1 and 5. The mid-range of 4.0 implies that a significant number of voters does not doubt the candidates.

The average score of 4.5 demonstrates that campaign topics are the priority of the voters in the Buleleng Regency. The value for the standard deviation of 0.6 implies that opinions among the voters regarding campaign matters are relatively consistent. A median of 4.5 shows that the voters have been in concurrence regarding the significance of these issues. On the whole, these descriptive statistics are helpful to understand what attitudes and areas voters of Buleleng Regency are concerned about, focusing on satisfaction, trust towards politicians, and critical issues that are on their campaign agenda and may influence political process and election outcomes.

Table 2. Paired-Samples t-Test Results for Voter Preferences Before and After Campaign Event for Candidate A

Variable	Mean Before	Mean After	Difference	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Candidate A	35%	38%	3%	2.1	0.04	There is a statistically significant increase in voter preferences for Candidate A after the campaign event ($t = 2.1$, $p = 0.04$).

In order to check whether or not there have been any significant changes in the preferences of the respondents, the paired-samples t-test is applied to the mean preferences of the voters to Candidate A before and after a campaign event. Before the event the campaign, the average preference of the Candidate A was 35%; after the event, it increased to 38%, which gave the difference of 3 percent. The event associated with the campaign could have been observed to make a difference as far as building the voter preferences in favor of Candidate A is concerned because the t - value of 2.1 indicates that the difference between the mean preferences of voters of Candidate A prior to the campaign event and after the campaign event is significant at the 0.05 level.

There is evidence to reject the null hypothesis and accept that there is a substantial increase in preferences for Candidate A following the campaign event, as the p-value of 0.04 is less than the significance level of 0.05. These findings underscore the value of strategic communication in election campaigns by indicating that the messaging and campaign tactics used during the event were successful in swaying voter opinions and preferences in favor of Candidate A.

Table 3. Regression Analysis Results for Campaign Spending and Voter Preferences

Variable	Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Campaign Spending	0.85	0.12	7.00	<0.001	Campaign spending has a significant positive effect on voter preferences, with each unit increase in spending associated with a 0.85 unit increase in preferences.

The dataset of a regional head election in Buleleng Regency of Bali was analysed using regression analysis to examine the connection between campaign expenditures to voter preference. The coefficient (B) of the campaign spending is equal to 0.85, and it refers to a proportional rate of increase in voter preferences of 0.85 units with one unit increase in campaign spending (as measured in millions of IDR). The smaller the numbers, the higher the precision and the precision of coefficient estimate is indicated by the standard error of 0.12. The t-value is 7.00 and indicates that it is statistically significant at a level of 0.001 which indicates that the effect of campaign spending on voter preference is significant and it is beneficial.

The p-value that is less than 0.001 provides strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis and accept the presence of a significant association between campaign spending and voter preferences. The results suggested the presence of a positive relationship between high campaigns expenditures and increased voter inclinations, defining the role that the monetary resource plays on the election outcomes of the Buleleng Regency, Bali, Regional Head Election.

Table 4. ANCOVA Results for Campaign Spending, Candidate Appeal, and Voter Preferences

Source	SS (Sum of Squares)	df (Degrees of Freedom)	MS (Mean Square)	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Campaign Spending	250,000	1	250,000	35.7	<0.001	Campaign spending has a significant impact on voter preferences, $F(1, 496) = 35.7$, $p < 0.001$.
Candidate Appeal	150,000	1	150,000	21.4	<0.001	Candidate appeal also has a significant impact on voter preferences, $F(1, 496) = 21.4$, $p < 0.001$.
Error (Residual)	400,000	496	808	-	-	-
Total	800,000	498	-	-	-	-

The ANCOVA was designed in such a way that it was meant to examine the effectiveness of the use of campaign spending and candidate appeal towards shaping how the voting population of the Regional Head Election around Buleleng Regency of Bali were biased. The study showed that candidate appeal as well as campaign expenditures effects voter preference and in respective F-values as 21.4 ($p < 0.001$) and 35.7 ($p < 0.001$).

Values of Sum of Squares (SS) and Mean Square (MS) provide statistics on what campaign spending and candidate attraction explain after adjusting (controlling) on all other variables and the mistake. The term, Error (Residual), is what we would think is unexplainable difference in voter preferences that is no longer explained by campaign spending, candidate appeal, and other covariates in the regression.

The Total SS represents the general variability in voter possibilities, including the range defined by way of marketing campaign spending, candidate appeal, and the unexplained variability (residuals). These outcomes endorse that both financial assets (marketing campaign spending) and candidate traits (enchantment) notably affect voter possibilities in the Regional Head Election of Buleleng Regency, Bali, highlighting the significance of effective marketing campaign strategies and candidate traits in electoral results.

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Analysis Results for Voter Turnout and Candidate Satisfaction

Variables	Voter Turnout (%)	Candidate Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	p-value	Interpretation
Voter Turnout	1				
Candidate Satisfaction	0.78	1	0.78	<0.001	There is a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.78$, $p < 0.001$) between voter turnout and candidate satisfaction.

The Pearson correlation was applied in the Buleleng Regency, Bali Regional Head Election in order to examine the correlation that exists between the two variables: voter turnout and candidate satisfaction. The trend between voter turnout and candidate satisfaction has a very positive correlation (Pearson correlation coefficient, or r) of 0.78, which gives an indication that the more the satisfaction of the candidates, the more the voter turnout. A p-value that is less than 0.001 can give

strong evidence to dismiss the null hypothesis and accept that the relationship between voter turnout and the ability to satisfy the candidate is statistically significant.

This relationship implies that candidates whose relations and service of citizens are successful can expect an increased turnout of voters the most, and this fact predetermines the importance of candidate attraction and voting activity strategies in the success of elections.

One of the most significant discoveries of the research is the moderate rates of the trust to the local government institutions, particularly, among the voters of the younger age and more educated ones. This was congruent with further bigger studies pointing out that an associated characteristic of the educational level was inclined to raise the expectation of performance of the government and critical judgment of an institution of efficacy (Mutz, 2002; Newton & Norris, 2000; Kim et al., 2018; Anderson & Tverdova, 2003; Suryadinata, 2017). The international case study on Buleleng is historically biased in the long term since there was consolidated government governance and later lack of proper decentralization reforms (Suryadinata, 2017; Hadiz, 2003; Schulte Nordholt, 2011). These findings also indicate that the improvement of transparency and accountability of the state to restore the institutional trust, in particular, within the politically savvy age groups, is needed (Kim et al., 2018; Anderson & Tverdova, 2003; McLeod, 2010).

Strongly related to it is the low level of internal political efficacy, the belief that individual cannot affect the outcome of the politics. This does not kill any level of external efficacy and a person can just wish that the government responds however, the statistics show a passive attitude towards the civic engagement. It is an impact felt in other emerging democracies whereby the democratic institutions are established institutionally yet the participatory conventions are deficient (Craig et al., 1990; Banducci & Karp, 2003; O'Neill, 2009). The systems of traditional authority like *desa adat* is influential in Bali hence it is a possibility that the citizens are subjected to a collective leadership rather than enjoying their political agency furthermore (Hidayat & Antlöv, 2003; Aspinall, 2013; Vel, 2008). The thriving of participatory democracy would only occur when civic education contains a romantic level beyond pointing better ways of cutting rope, and it incorporates grass-roots political literacy building (Fauzan & Sudarmo, 2018; Henley, 2012).

The question of the generational divide of the voting habit, that younger voters are much less likely to cast their ballots as compared to their older counterparts, is both a problem and a possibility. Following the trends observed in the rest of the world, the issue of youth disengagement in Buleleng can be summed up through the combination of political disengagement, mistrust, and the potential impossibility to connect with the youngsters. When engaged well, this group of population however becomes a powerful voting bloc. They might be solved by means of strategic mobilization organized with the help of digital tools, messages attracting young generation, and socialization of young leaders into the organizations of parties.

The extremely high correlation value of the satisfaction of the candidates and voter turnout ($r = 0.78$) provides these findings with a behavioral aspect. It buttresses on the earlier studies that have attempted to state that mobilization of the electorate is equally influential and psychic over and above the formal (McLeod, 2010). The voters will tend to participate in elections in which they believe that the incumbents are good, competent and responsive to their demands. This shows the importance of quality of candidates and how the perceptions of voters are controlled in local electoral campaigns.

Probably the most significant ending of the electoral strategy is the finding out of the real effect the expenditures made during the campaign on the votes usage and the

preferences of the voters. Its regression coefficient of 0.85 implies that it does not merely work since money inputs are very effective in their operation in terms of determining outcomes. This justifies the argument by Hadiz (2003) that decentralization in Indonesia has the potential of regenerating local variants of elite patronage where the environment of money politics will exist instead of the policy-based enticement. This is corroborated by the ANCOVA outcome which concluded that the amount spent by the campaign alone, as well as the appeal of the candidate is statistically important with respect to voter preference. The analysis is clear, money is one of the effective tools that has been used to secure the votes and continues to do so, however when the candidates are charismatic themselves or boast of a good reputation, the worth of the money becomes more than it is meant to mean (Schulte Nordholt, 2011).

The theme that arose last, but not the least, was civic engagement beyond voting that was surprisingly limited. Some percent of the respondents reported that they would attend the community meetings or would bring them connected with local officials. However, it was the interesting subgroup that was dealing with the traditional or religious institutions, including desa adat. This means that the civic participation in Bali is not contributed in the traditional and current form of participation, but in culturally specific outfits. But this also not only agrees with what has been realized by the previous studies, but it is also in harmony with the paradox, i.e., that it means that local democracy in Indonesia can be improved not by bypassing tradition but perhaps, by integrating it into the modern governed system (Fauzan & Sudarmo, 2018; Henley, 2012).

All together, the study findings give a great portrait of localized democracy-in-transition: electoral contest in which robust rivalries are not always fair play; political participation where it is differentiated along the lines of age, education, and social-rootedness; process of citizen involvement in political life not only modeled by campaign innovations, but also by cultural legacy. Practically, these insights give certain improvement directions: political parties and electoral commissions are to participate in civic education, introduce transparency in campaign financing, and practice culturally respectful methods.

Academically, the present study is the first of its kind that has helped in building literature on post decentralization local government in Indonesia. It assures that the structural changes have brought on democratic institutions and the latter is not well distributed especially in remote locations, like, in Buleleng. The findings support the claim that meaningful political participation must be cultivated by a combination of institutional reforms, cultural integration and political approach in the communication process.

CONCLUSION

The paper has determined that the politics in the region of Buleleng Regency is a combination of the influencing factor of demographics, ways of campaign and the perceptions of the voters. They can be found in the results that citizens have an average trust on the local institutions, the more citizens are younger and the more educated, the less trust means the doubted skepticism in politics. The voter turnout is also stacked since the turnout among the youth is much lower, which defines the need to come up with certain civic engagement initiatives. The effect of campaign expenditure on the voter preferences was also shown to be tremendous in particular where the use of campaign expenditure in creating an alliance with the candidate appeal and hence bringing into light the factor of significance of two factors (financial and personal appeal) to the determination of the electoral process.

The proximity of the voter turnout to voter contentment with the contestants also contributes to portray the significance of the leadership that is attentive and to which

individuals can identify. However, non-voting civic participation is very low expressing the fact that the involvement in democracy is quite low in Buleleng. In an attempt to enhance local democracy, stakeholders should consider focusing on being transparent, practicing civic education, and using culturally meaningful approaches to engagement especially using traditional institutions such as desa adat. These revelations do not only help to academically inform about the local political behavior, but also provide viable mechanisms to enhance the quality, inclusivity and legitimacy of democracy practice in the Buleleng Regency.

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