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Public Participation in the 2024 Regent and Vice Regent Election of Kutai Kartanegara Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the dynamics of public participation in the 2024 Regional Head and Deputy Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) of Kutai Kartanegara Regency, addressing the core problem of fluctuating voter engagement and the factors that shape citizens' willingness to participate in both the main election and the mandated revote (PSU). The objective of this research is to analyze the level of public participation and identify the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing voter behavior, particularly in relation to the implementation of KPU Regulation No. 9 of 2022 and the use of local wisdom-based outreach strategies. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana. The results show that the principles outlined in PKPU No. 9 of 2022, especially those pertaining to public engagement, have been effectively implemented through collaborative, adaptive, and culturally grounded socialization efforts that improve political understanding. Supporting factors of participation include political awareness, civic responsibility, emotional proximity to candidates, and pragmatic motivations such as money politics. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors include political apathy, distrust in the political system, limited knowledge of candidates, limited time for socialization, geographical barriers, natural disasters, and limited understanding of the PSU mechanism. Overall, public participation in both the Pilkada and the PSU in Kutai Kartanegara reflects a dynamic interaction between enthusiasm and structural and cultural constraints, forming a complex landscape of idealistic and pragmatic voter motivations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) are a crucial mechanism in Indonesia's democratic system, enabling the public to elect regional leaders directly. Pilkada serves not only as an electoral process but also as a manifestation of citizen political participation in determining the direction of development policies and overseeing government operations [1]. Therefore,

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high levels of public participation are an indicator of the quality of local democracy and also determine the legitimacy of the elected leaders [2]

Despite its strategic role, voter participation in several regional elections in Indonesia, including in Kutai Kartanegara Regency (Kukar), remains below national targets. Low voter participation reflects limited public political awareness and also indicates the existence of structural barriers preventing people from exercising their right to vote [3]. This situation presents a challenge for the General Elections Commission (KPU), as the election organizer, to ensure that the democratic process is inclusive and participatory.

In an effort to improve the quality of public participation, the General Elections Commission (KPU) issued KPU Regulation No. 9 of 2022, which regulates the mechanisms for public participation in general elections and regional elections. This regulation emphasizes the importance of voter education, the involvement of civil society organizations, and the use of information technology for electoral outreach [4]. This KPU Regulation also emphasizes the need to compile an accurate voter list, including for voters in special locations, to ensure that no citizen is deprived of their right to vote.

In the context of Kutai Kartanegara Regency, various challenges contribute to low public participation. The vast territory and numerous remote areas hamper the dissemination of information about the regional elections. Access to polling stations (TPS) in several sub-districts also poses a challenge, particularly in difficult-to-reach upstream areas. In addition to geographic factors, low levels of trust in the political process among some residents have led to apathy, thus reducing their willingness to exercise their right to vote. This political apathy is usually triggered by dissatisfaction with the results of previous regional elections or the perception that their vote has not significantly impacted change [5].

The Kukar Election Commission (KPU) has implemented various voter education programs to increase voter participation, including social media-based outreach, voter education in schools, and training for sub-district and village-level election officials. However, the effectiveness of these programs still needs to be evaluated to ensure that voter education messages reach all community groups, especially those in remote areas with limited access to information.

In the 2015 Regional Head Election in Kutai Kartanegara Regency, data from the Kutai Kartanegara General Elections Commission (KPU) recorded a voter participation rate of around 57.9%, with around 294,381 voters exercising their voting rights out of a total of 515,644 registered voters. This figure is well below the KPU's national target of 77.5%, as many voters did not exercise their voting rights. Several factors influencing this low participation include a lack of public understanding of the importance of elections, as well as logistical factors such as long distances and difficulty in accessing polling stations, especially in more remote rural areas. People in more urban areas or city centers tend to be more active in participating, while in rural areas, voter participation is often lower due to accessibility barriers. In the 2020 Pilkada, the number of registered voters decreased to around 488,055, and the voter participation rate fell to 56.67%, with around 276,580 voters casting ballots. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided important lessons about the need for adaptation in regional elections, both in campaign methods and in strategies to increase participation. KPU Regulation No. 9 of 2022 then became the regulatory framework for

reinforcing aspects of public participation through the involvement of democracy volunteers, increasing election literacy, and structuring voter lists, so that regional elections can be conducted more inclusively and democratically [6]

Extensive research has been conducted on election regulations and the dynamics of public participation. The implementation of the General Elections Commission (PKPU) regulation on campaign materials continues to face numerous violations, as found in research conducted in Bondowoso [7]. Meanwhile, a study on campaign fund reporting under PKPU Number 24 of 2018 emphasized the need for transparency and accountability in the campaign fund accounting process [8]. Big data analysis of the Spanish elections demonstrated that **social media can be an effective tool** for predicting **voter** behavior through machine learning models [9]. In the area of campaign policy evaluation, research in Lampung found that the facilitation of campaign materials (APK) was ineffective and not evenly felt by all candidate pairs [10]. Furthermore, international research on direct democracy shows that its effects on voter participation vary by ethnic group and generation [11].

Research on the implementation of election regulations in the local context also yields important findings. An evaluation of the implementation of KPU Regulation Number 13 of 2020 in the Serdang Bedagai Regional Election found that violations of health protocols were still widespread during the campaign [12]. Efforts to increase first-time voter participation through direct and indirect outreach, including the use of Election Smart Houses, proved highly effective, according to research in Batu City [13]. In the context of fulfilling the rights of people with disabilities, research in Majene found that polling station accessibility (TPS) did not fully comply with the provisions of KPU Regulation Number 15 of 2018 [14]. Other research found that implementing the Bengkulu General Elections Commission (KPU) voter education policy did not optimally reduce abstentions [15]. Furthermore, the Lamongan KPU's voter segmentation strategy was an important finding in efforts to increase participation in the 2024 Election [16].

The series of studies revealed that the dominant issues include the effectiveness of implementing the KPU Regulation (PKPU), outreach strategies, barriers to voter access, and the use of digital technology to increase participation. However, no study has specifically analyzed public participation in the 2024 Kutai Kartanegara Regency Pilkada, particularly within the framework of KPU Regulation Number 9 of 2022, the vast geographic dynamics of Kukar, the post-pandemic context, and the effectiveness of local voter education. Therefore, this study is novel in that it focuses on a previously unexplored regional context, provides a novel regulatory approach, and provides an empirical analysis of the strategic factors influencing public participation in the 2024 Kutai Kartanegara Pilkada.

Based on the description, this study analyzed Public Participation in the 2024 Election for the Regent and Deputy Regent of Kutai Kartanegara Regency, focusing on factors influencing participation levels and the effectiveness of the KPU's strategy in encouraging voter participation. The objectives of this study are 1) to determine public participation in the 2024 Election of the Regent and Deputy Regent of Kutai Kartanegara.

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2) to determine factors that support and hinder public participation in the 2024 Election of the Regent and Deputy Regent of Kutai Kartanegara.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach, which aims to in-depth describe the phenomenon of public participation in the 2024 Kutai Kartanegara Regency Regent and Deputy Regent Election through data in the form of words, actions, and documents, rather than numbers. This approach was chosen to explore the meanings, perceptions, and social processes underlying public participation dynamics across various regions of Kukar. The research was conducted in Kutai Kartanegara Regency. The study's data sources included both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews and observations with informants from various categories, namely the Kukar General Elections Commission (KPU) Commissioners, the Kukar KESBANGPOL (Election and Political Affairs Agency), the Elections Committee (PPK), the Elections Committee (PPS), the Elections Working Committee (KPPS), community leaders, voters from three regional zones, youth, and people who did not exercise their right to vote (golput).

Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from official KPU documents, PKPU Number 9 of 2022, mass media news, voter participation reports, activity photos, archives, as well as relevant journals and scientific literature. Data collection techniques included non-participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations were used to directly document the dynamics of socialization, voter turnout, and organizers' field activities. Interviews were used to explore informants' perceptions, motivations, obstacles, and experiences related to public participation, while documentation strengthened the data through written and visual evidence. The collected data were then organized, classified, reduced, and categorized to identify thematic patterns relevant to the research focus. The data analysis technique used the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) Interactive Analysis Model, which includes four iterative stages: data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the condensation stage, data were selected, simplified, and coded based on themes such as forms of participation, implementation of the PKPU, and driving and inhibiting factors. Data presentation was carried out in narrative form and with patterns of relationships between categories, making it easier for researchers to understand the phenomenon comprehensively. Conclusions were drawn after the data were assessed as consistent, robust, and capable of addressing the problem formulation. To ensure the validity of the data, this study applies four criteria, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which are carried out through triangulation of sources, techniques, and cross-checking of field evidence.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

3.1.1 Participation in the Election of the Regent and Deputy Regent of Kutai Kartanegara

a. Community Participation

Overall, the level of public participation in the 2024 Kutai Kartanegara Regent and Deputy Regent Election and the 2025 PSU showed different patterns in the three regional zones, namely the Central, Downstream, and Upstream Zones, with characteristics and determinants of participation that were not uniform.

1) Central Tenggara Region.

Table 1. Central Region Participation

Regional Election			
No	Information	Amount	Percentage (%)
1.	Permanent Voter List	81,474	100
2.	Using the Right to Vote	57,869	71.03
3.	Not using the right to vote	23,605	28.97
PSU			
No	Information	Amount	Percentage (%)
1.	Permanent Voter List	81,474	100
2.	Using the Right to Vote	54,897	67.37
3.	Not using the right to vote	26,577	32.63

Source: KPU/Independent Commission of Kutai Kartanegara Regency (2024)

The Central Zone, particularly Tenggara District, has a relatively stable participation rate, supported by better access to information, more intensive political education, and proximity to the center of government. Residents and youth in this region demonstrate a tendency toward active participation, both as voters and as participatory observers, resulting in a turnout of over 71% in the regular regional elections. Despite a decline in the 2025 revote (to 67.37%), the political engagement of the Central Zone community continues to demonstrate a more mature democratic awareness than the other two zones.

2) Downstream/Coastal Area of Muara Badak.

Table 2. Downstream Region Participation

Regional Election			
No	Information	Amount	Percentage (%)
1.	Permanent Voter List	35,762	100
2.	Using the Right to Vote	25,092	70.17
3.	Not using the right to vote	10,670	29.83
PSU			
No	Information	Amount	Percentage (%)
1.	Permanent Voter List	35,762	100
2.	Using the Right to Vote	24,093	67.36
3.	Not using the right to vote	11,669	32.64

Source: KPU/Independent Commission of Kutai Kartanegara Regency (2024)

Downstream/Coastal Zones such as Muara Badak exhibit more fluctuating participation patterns, heavily influenced by economic factors, job mobility, and coastal geographic conditions. Fishermen, fish traders, and coastal economic actors tend to have high situational participation when work hours do not overlap, but it declines during the peak fishing season. In the 2024 regular regional elections, participation reached around 70%, but dropped to 67.36% in the 2025 re-election. Interviews with coastal communities revealed that their involvement was more influenced by direct invitations from neighborhood heads (RT), voting committees (PPS), and local figures than by intrinsic political motivations. Workloads, distance from polling stations (TPS), and a lack of substantive information were the main causes of the fluctuations in participation rates in this region.

3) Upstream Area of Bangun City.

The Upstream Zone, such as Kota Bangun District, exhibited relatively high participation, even slightly exceeding other zones in the regular regional elections (73.05%). Strong family-based social ties and a strong sense of togetherness among residents often led to voting decisions being driven by family and community discussions. However, in the 2025 revote, participation also declined to 67.34%. Geographical factors, transportation access, and political saturation contributed to the decline in participation in the revote. Nevertheless, local community cohesion remains a crucial social asset in encouraging participation in the upstream region.

Table 3. Upstream Region Participation

Regional Election			
No	Information	Amount	Percentage (%)
1.	Permanent Voter List	16,762	100
2.	Using the Right to Vote	12,245	73.05
3.	Not using the right to vote	4,520	26.95
PSU			
No	Information	Amount	Percentage (%)
1.	Permanent Voter List	16,762	100
2.	Using the Right to Vote	11,296	67.34
3.	Not using the right to vote	5,466	32.66

Source: KPU/Independent Commission of Kutai Kartanegara Regency (2024)

A comprehensive look at the three zones reveals that regular regional elections had higher participation rates than repeat elections, suggesting that voter fatigue was a significant factor in the decline. Furthermore, the main causes of abstention across all zones include: political fatigue due to repeat elections, candidates not aligned with those in regular elections, geographic factors, employment, distance from polling stations, and distrust in the effectiveness of elections and the quality of leadership. Therefore, public participation in the 2024 Kukar regional elections in both the Central, Lower, and Upper Zones is influenced by a combination of political awareness, socioeconomic conditions, access to information, social relations, and the presence of organizers on the ground. These findings emphasize that

future strategies to increase participation must be based on the local characteristics of each zone, rather than a *one-size-fits-all approach*.

Visually, this diagram confirms that the PSU requires specific strategies to maintain participation levels, such as personal approaches, increasing TPS accessibility, and more intensive information campaigns to keep people motivated to attend and vote. The PSU experienced a decline in voting participation and an increase in abstentions. As a comprehensive comparison in the Kutai Kartanegara region, the researcher presents the following comparison image:

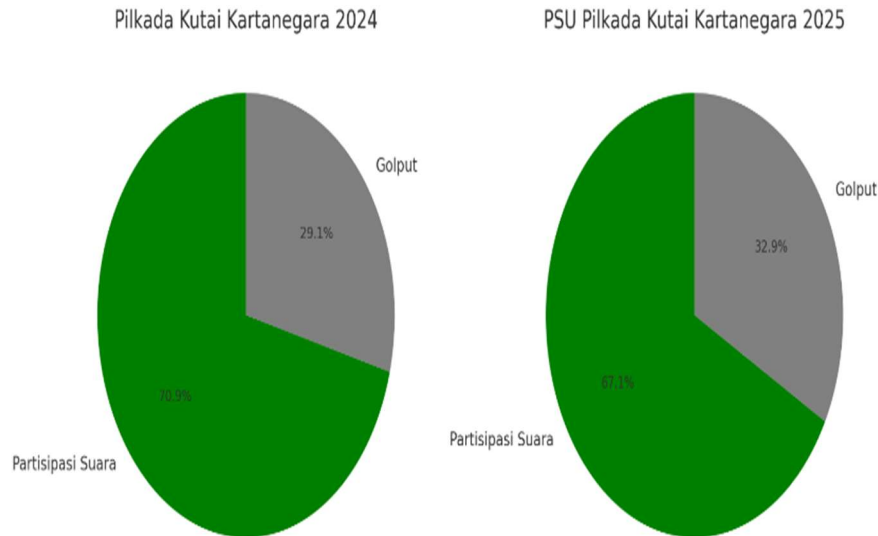


Figure 1. Comparison of Public Participation in the 2024 Regional Head Election and the 2025 Re-election
Source: Processed by Researchers (2025)

The pie chart above shows that in the Kutai Kartanegara Regent and Deputy Regent Election, there were 392,161 voters participation (out of a total of 552,469 DPT), so the Golput vote (did not vote) was 161,000 people. Meanwhile, in the PSU of the Kutai Kartanegara Regent and Deputy Regent Election, there were 370,541 Voter Participation (out of a total of 552,469 DPT), while the golput or non-voting rate was 181,928.

b. Organizer Participation

The participation of election organizers in Kutai Kartanegara generally demonstrated quite intensive efforts to increase community involvement. The outreach strategy was implemented through various means, including social media and digital platforms, as well as field-based activities such as mass meetings, sports events, and outreach through community leaders. Creativity in the form of casual events and entertainment was also used to attract community interest and maintain participation. Despite technical constraints such as limited outreach time, weather conditions, or community boredom, these methods were generally considered quite effective in maintaining public political participation in Kukar. The researcher mapped the results of the interviews above as follows:

1). KPU

- Developing digital and conventional socialization strategies

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- PPK in each sub-district is tasked with directly disseminating information and education to the community.
 - Optimizing banners, flyers, print media, and Zoom and YouTube.
 - He stated that the main challenge was the limited time for socialization and the public's uneven understanding of PSU.
- 2). Kesbangpol of Kutai Kartanegara Regency
- Together with the KPU, we support the smooth flow of information by observing public participation and identifying influential social and political factors.
 - Encourage cooperation with local government officials and local stakeholders.
- 3). PPK/PPS organizers (upstream, middle, downstream)
- Creative socialization: Healthy exercise, watching together, advertising with cars and sound systems, spreading information through social media, and direct visits.
 - Inviting community leaders, RT heads, Babinsa, and mass organizations as driving nodes for participation.
 - Partnering with print media, social media, and government officials as communication channels.
 - Prioritize emotional approaches and informal figures.
 - Focus on distributing information close to the community, including through mosques, patrol posts, and community activities.
 - PPK and PPS actively distributed leaflets and appealed to residents from house to house.
- 4). The Role of the Community, Youth, and Local Figures
- Intrinsic motivation: sense of responsibility, desire to see change, emotional closeness to the candidate.
 - Extrinsic motivation: the practice of money politics, the lure of activity prizes, or encouragement from village officials.
 - Election outreach in Kukar was collaborative and multi-level, involving the General Elections Commission (KPU), technical administrators at the sub-district and village levels, local governments, and the community. The strategy employed a combination of digital, conventional, and personal approaches, adapting to each region's geographic and sociocultural characteristics.

Based on the results of interviews with those involved and participating as organizers, the details are as follows:

Table 4. Community Participation and Methods

Party		Participatory Method
General Commission	Election	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital & conventional socialization strategies (banners, flyers, Zoom, YouTube). • PPK distributes information directly to the community. • Constraints: short time & limited understanding of PSU.
Kesbangpol Kartanegara Regency	Kutai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the KPU, monitor participation & socio-political factors. • Build cooperation with local governments & stakeholders.
PPK/PPS	(Upstream, Middle, Downstream)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative socialization: gymnastics, watching together, broadcasting, social media, and direct visits. • Involve community leaders, RT, mass organizations, and officials. • Use local routes (mosques, guard posts, leaflets, door-to-door).
Community, Local Figures	Youth,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intrinsic motivation: responsibility, hope for change, proximity to the candidate. • Extrinsic motivation: money, politics, gifts, and encouragement from village officials. • Collaborative socialization: digital, conventional, personal, according to regional character.

Source: Results of Interviews with the Community

The participation of the Pilkada organizers in Kutai Kartanegara shows an adaptive and collaborative work pattern in fulfilling the mandate of Article 2 Paragraph (2) of PKPU No. 9 of 2022 concerning the facilitation of community participation.

c. Achieving the Goals of Community Participation

Based on the implementation of the Kutai Kartanegara Regency Pilkada in 2024 and the 2025 PSU, community participation was carried out with the following objectives based on PKPU No. 9 of 2022 :

1) Dissemination of Election/Voting Information

Information dissemination was carried out through various methods, both conventional and digital. The use of *flyers*, banners, social media, and YouTube demonstrated that organizers were striving to reach all levels of society. Collaboration between organizers and local actors (RT/RW, community leaders, and village officials) was a key strategy for reaching communities in areas with limited access to information. Despite time constraints, especially during the PSU, organizers still reached most voters, though not as intensively as in regular regional elections. The objective of disseminating information in Article 3 has been maximally pursued, although its effectiveness faced challenges during the PSU due to time constraints and certain geographical conditions.

2) Increasing Public Political Knowledge, Understanding, and Awareness

Fieldwork findings indicate that public political awareness is increasing, particularly among young people, students, and educated groups. This is evident in their involvement in political discussions, their service as democracy volunteers, and their enthusiasm for candidate debates. Participation not only involves attendance at polling stations but also substantively demonstrates an understanding of the meaning of voting rights. However, gaps in understanding persist in remote areas and informal worker groups. This indicates the need for a more intensive educational approach tailored to local characteristics. The goal of increasing public understanding and awareness has been achieved in most groups, but not evenly. This underscores the importance of a sustainable and effective socialization strategy.

3) Increasing Voter Participation

The description of quantitative data and interviews shows that there was an increase in participation from the 2020 Pilkada (57%) to the 2024 Pilkada (71.10%), which is a significant achievement. In the 2025 PSU, the figure decreased to 67.76%, but this is still considered high for the PSU context. The main factors in the decrease in participation were political fatigue, a lack of understanding of the PSU's urgency, the short implementation period, and boredom from repeated elections. However, there were no symptoms of total apathy, because most people remained enthusiastic, only faced technical and emotional constraints. Voter participation increased, but implementing the PSU poses challenges that require a more adaptive participatory strategy going forward.

Therefore, public participation in the General Election and Voting is an important indicator of the quality of democracy. Article 3 of PKPU No. 9 of 2022 emphasizes that the main objectives of public participation are: (a) disseminating information about the General Election or Voting, (b) increasing public knowledge, understanding, and awareness of political rights and obligations, and (c) increasing voter participation in the voting process. These three objectives can serve as benchmarks to assess the extent to which the implementation of the Regional Election and the Revote (PSU) in Kutai Kartanegara Regency has encouraged active public involvement. For further details, see the following figure:

3.1.2 Factors that Support and Inhibit Community Participation

Table 5. Factors Supporting Community Participation

Supporting Factors	
Internal Factors	External Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness as a citizen • Expectations for leaders • Emotional bond with the candidate • Family/social closeness • Political responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative socialization (exercise, watching together, <i>door prizes</i>) • Announcements in the mosque • Social media and digitalization • The role of RT, community leaders • <i>Money Politics</i>

Source: Interview results recap

Field findings indicate that the factors supporting and inhibiting public participation in the regional elections and revote (PSU) in Kutai Kartanegara are complex and interrelated. As seen in Table 5 above.

Interviews with the National Unity and Politics Agency (Kesbangpol), the General Elections Commission (KPU), the Elections Committees (PPK/PPS), and the public revealed that the primary contributing factor was the high level of public political awareness that voting confers legitimacy on the candidate pairs. Favored candidate figures, emotional closeness, and intergroup contestation contributed to increased voting motivation. Furthermore, collaboration between organizers, local governments, mass organizations, community leaders, and local forums strengthened the participation ecosystem. Creative outreach programs such as exercise, fun walks, debate screenings, mosque announcements, and digital campaigns through social media, Zoom, and YouTube successfully reached various voter segments. Community outreach, the role of local media, and budget support for mass organizations also increased the effectiveness of outreach programs. Internal societal factors, such as expectations of leaders, political responsibility, and social ties, also strongly encouraged participation. On the other hand, the practice of *money politics* remains a significant pragmatic driver in various regions.

Meanwhile, inhibiting factors are more likely to arise from technical, regulatory, and psychological aspects. See the following table:

Table 6. Factors Inhibiting Community Participation

Inhibiting Factors	
Internal Factors	External Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political saturation • Apathy • Disappointment • Distrust in the political system • Do not know the candidate • Lazy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short socialization time • Geographical conditions • Voter data is inaccurate • At PSU, the schedule is tight, and public understanding of the university is limited. • Currently working outside the area.

The National Unity and Politics Agency (Kesbangpol) and the General Elections Commission (KPU) highlighted the very short timeframe for publicizing the revote (coinciding with Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr), which prevented voters from understanding the urgency of the revote. Regulatory constraints (the KPU Regulations deemed inoperable), inaccurate voter data updates, and administrative errors (Sirekap input, unregistered citizens) also undermined public trust. In certain areas, geographic conditions and flooding posed significant obstacles, forcing voters to use boats to reach polling stations (TPS). Several Election Committee (PPK) and Election Committee (PPS) members emphasized that political fatigue, apathy, distrust of political promises, and ignorance about the revote led to a decline in participation. The mobility of community workers (farmers, plantation workers, fishermen), the lack of incentives, and perceived political bias also weakened voting motivation. The practice of *money politics* can even serve as an ambivalent factor: it can increase participation but diminish the quality of democracy.

Overall, supporting factors stem from the synergy between internal motivation (political awareness, emotional closeness, hope for change) and external incentives (creative outreach, the role of local figures, digital media, publicity campaigns, government mobilization). Meanwhile, inhibiting factors are structural (short schedules, inaccurate voter

data, challenging geography), psychological (boredom, apathy, disappointment), and technical-administrative (data input, information distribution). To increase participation in the future, a more inclusive and consistent outreach strategy, substantive political education, and improved election administration are needed to maintain public trust.

3.2. Discussion

1. Participation in the Election of the Regent and Deputy Regent of Kutai Kartanegara

a. Community Participation

Public participation in the 2024 Kutai Kartanegara Regent and Vice Regent Election and the 2025 Revote showed significant variation across the three regional zones, Central, Lower, and Upper, influenced by social, geographic, and economic conditions, as well as access to information. Despite these differences, all zones showed a general pattern of higher participation in the regular election than in the revote, indicating voter fatigue and specific challenges in the revote.

In the Central Zone (Tenggarong), the turnout in the 2024 regional elections reached 71.03%, with 57,869 voters exercising their right to vote out of a total of 81,474 registered voters. In the 2025 revote, turnout decreased to 67.37%. The stability of turnout in this region was supported by better access to information, intensive political education, and proximity to the center of government. The community, especially young people, demonstrated active participation not only as voters but also in participatory oversight. Despite the decline in revote turnout, the people of the Central Zone still demonstrated greater political maturity than those in other regions.

In the Downstream/Coastal Zone (Muara Badak), participation in the 2024 regional elections reached 70.17%, but dropped to 67.36% in the second revote. This fluctuation was influenced by the economic patterns of coastal communities, particularly fishermen and fish traders, who are highly mobile and have irregular working hours. Their participation tends to be situational, dependent on fishing conditions, distance from polling stations (TPS), and the often limited availability of information. Field interviews indicated that coastal voter engagement was largely influenced by direct invitations from local figures, neighborhood associations (RT), and election committees (PPS), rather than intrinsic political motivation.

Meanwhile, the Upstream Zone (Kota Bangun) recorded the highest participation rate in the regular regional elections at 73.05%, though it decreased to 67.34% in the revote. The primary strength of participation in the upstream region lies in strong community-based and familial social ties, so voting decisions are often made through family or local community discussions. However, geographical challenges, transportation access, and political saturation also contributed to lower participation in the revote, although social capital in upstream communities remains a key driver of participation.

Overall, the three zones showed a consistent pattern of declining participation in the revote due to political fatigue, candidate changes, lack of understanding of the revote, geographic factors, work commitments, distance from polling stations, and some voters' distrust of the election's effectiveness. These findings confirm that public participation in the 2024 Kukar Pilkada results from an interaction among political awareness, socioeconomic conditions, access to information, the strength of social relationships, and the effectiveness

of organizers' field presence. Because each zone has distinct characteristics, strategies to increase participation cannot be standardized; they must be tailored to each zone.

Visually, a comparison of the regional election participation rate and the revote (PSU) shows a significant decline in the latter. In the 2024 regional elections, 392,161 voters participated out of 552,469 registered voters (DPT), resulting in approximately 161,000 abstentions. In the 2025 revote, the number of eligible voters decreased to 370,541, while abstentions increased to 181,928. This data confirms that the revote requires a specific strategy, including a personalized approach, increased polling station accessibility, and a more intensive information campaign to keep the public motivated to vote.

b. Organizer Participation

The Kukar Regency Election Commission (KPU) coordinated a mixed-channel strategy (online and offline) to reach the characteristics of upstream, midstream, and downstream regions. Digital outreach was conducted through social media, YouTube, podcasts, and the distribution of educational content. At the same time, offline approaches included face-to-face meetings, tiered coordination, mobile campaigning, and community activities such as exercise, fun walks, and watching candidate debates together. A KPU commissioner emphasized that "the biggest challenge was the very tight timing of the PSU, so outreach had to be carried out quickly and in parallel across multiple channels" (Interview, May 6, 2025). This approach demonstrated that organizers integrated regulatory guidelines with field flexibility to maintain public engagement.

At the sub-district and village levels, the PPK and PPS played the primary role in driving locally-based outreach. The Tenggara PPK, Wahono, stated that the success of the outreach was supported by cross-actor collaboration organizers, sub-district heads, village heads, neighborhood associations, community leaders, and the media, as well as creative methods such as activity prizes, joint screenings, and mobile campaign campaigns (Interview, May 6, 2025). In the upstream region, the PKK Kota Bangun Seberang combined indoor outreach with community activities, while the Tenggara Seberang PKK added *door-to-door campaigns* and loud-pickup-truck outreach to reach agricultural voters returning in the afternoon (Interview, May 9, 2025). The role of the KPPS (Election Working Group) was crucial as the spearhead for delivering invitations and direct education; the Loa Kulu KPPS emphasized that personal invitations, when delivered, were proven to increase voter turnout (Interview, May 13, 2025). These patterns demonstrate the communicative, personal, and contextual nature of the organizers' participation.

Overall, the participation of election organizers and the revote (PSU) in Kukar proved significant in maintaining public participation, despite declining numbers in the revote due to political fatigue, time constraints, and limited public understanding of the revote. The National Unity and Politics Agency (Kesbangpol) emphasized the direct relationship between participation and political legitimacy, as well as the importance of cross-stakeholder collaboration as a model of collective participation (Interview, May 6, 2025). Thus, the pattern of election organizer participation in Kukar reflects local democratic practices that combine digital, conventional, and sociocultural approaches. From a public administration perspective, these efforts demonstrate a responsive managerial mechanism aligned with

Gilbreth's principles of flexibility and efficiency, and they show that the election's effectiveness depends on harmonizing organizers' work across levels to ensure information access, message relevance, and public engagement.

c. Achieving the Goals of Community Participation

Article 3 of KPU Regulation No. 9 of 2022 stipulates three objectives for public participation: disseminating information, increasing political knowledge and awareness, and increasing voter participation. These three objectives were essentially achieved in the 2024 Kutai Kartanegara regional election and the 2025 rerun, although several structural and situational obstacles remain that require ongoing management.

First, regarding information dissemination, the General Elections Commission (KPU), the Elections Committee (PPK), the Elections Committee (PPS), the National Unity and Politics Agency (Kesbangpol), village officials, and community leaders have conducted outreach through conventional media (banners, flyers, public announcements, exercise sessions, and joint debates) and digital media (social media, YouTube, Zoom, and local media). This strategy reaches all upstream, midstream, and downstream regions, thereby achieving the goal of disseminating information. The main challenges were in remote areas with limited media access and during the PSU (Puncak Rejuvenation), when outreach was also limited.

Second, the goal of increasing public political knowledge and awareness is evident in citizen participation patterns, which extend beyond polling station attendance to include political discussions, democracy volunteering, and voter education activities. Interviews indicate that people understand voting as a civic responsibility; for example, a student named Rizal expressed interest in voting after participating in candidate discussions and debates. However, gaps in understanding remain between upstream and downstream regions, as well as among low-educated or highly mobile groups, requiring a more intensive educational approach.

Third, regarding increased voter participation, the 2024 regional elections recorded a figure of 71.10%, up from 57% in 2020. This achievement demonstrates the success of collaborative outreach efforts by election organizers and partners. In the 2025 revote, participation decreased to 67.76%, which is still high for a revote. This decline was primarily due to political fatigue, a lack of understanding of the revote mechanism, the very short schedule, and decreased enthusiasm when candidate choices remained unchanged, rather than a failure to facilitate participation.

Overall, the three objectives of Article 3 of KPU Regulation No. 9 of 2022 have been achieved, demonstrating that political socialization and education efforts in Kukar have been effective. However, sustaining these achievements requires consistent strengthening of political education, contextual communication patterns, and specific strategies to anticipate voter fatigue during the revote (PSU) or follow-up elections. Therefore, the quality of public participation is not only measured quantitatively but also supported by increased awareness, understanding, and critical engagement in the political process.

2. Factors that Support and Inhibit Community Participation

a. Supporting Factors for Community Participation

Public participation in the 2024 regional elections and the 2025 revote in Kutai Kartanegara was supported by a combination of internal and external factors. Internally, several key elements drove citizen political engagement. Citizenship awareness served as the foundation for participation, as voters understood that exercising their right to vote was a constitutional obligation that impacted the region's future. This awareness was reinforced by political responsibility, particularly among educated groups and first-time voters who viewed elections as a means of change. Furthermore, hopes for improved public services, welfare, and governance served as a strong motivator. Participation was also influenced by emotional closeness to candidates, whether through social ties, cultural proximity, or social interaction, which fostered electoral loyalty. In rural areas and small communities, kinship and family ties strengthened voting decisions because candidates were considered part of their social group.

Externally, several factors also played a significant role. Creative outreach programs such as exercise, fun walks, debate viewing, and door prizes attracted the attention of various community groups and made political education more accessible. Local officials and figures, such as neighborhood associations (RTs), village heads, religious leaders, and traditional leaders, played a crucial role in connecting organizers and residents; their social legitimacy made outreach messages more effective, particularly in remote areas. Furthermore, the General Elections Commission (KPU) used social media and digital platforms, including YouTube, podcasts, Zoom, and Instagram, to reach young voters and strengthen engagement. Furthermore, the practice of money politics, while not normatively ideal, remains a political reality that encourages some citizens to vote, especially in areas with low political literacy. Overall, public participation was supported by ideal (awareness, responsibility, hope), relational (closeness and kinship), and instrumental (creative outreach, the role of figures, and economic incentives) motivations.

b. Factors Inhibiting Community Participation

In addition to supporting factors, several internal and external obstacles reduced public participation, particularly in the 2025 re-election. Internally, the main obstacle was political fatigue resulting from a series of elections held too close together. Many citizens felt tired and perceived the political process as occurring too frequently. This situation was exacerbated by the lack of concrete results from previous elections, giving rise to a sense of futility. Another factor was political apathy, stemming from disillusionment with political parties and alienation from the political process. Voters, particularly young people, felt disengaged and believed the available options did not reflect their aspirations. Furthermore, distrust of the political system emerged, particularly when administrative inaccuracies, unclear regulations, or allegations of election officials' lack of impartiality were identified. Another internal obstacle was ignorance or unfamiliarity with the candidates, particularly in rural areas with limited access to information, leading citizens to be reluctant to vote because they lacked clear preferences.

Externally, the biggest obstacle was the very short socialization period, particularly during the second general election (PSU), which had a gap of less than 2 months, leading to

uneven information dissemination. Another obstacle was flooding in several villages, which forced the relocation of polling stations and made access difficult, especially for vulnerable groups. Furthermore, the complex geography of upstream and coastal areas limited transportation access, long distances to polling stations, and high job mobility constrained participation. Another external factor was the PSU's timing, which was too close to the national election, leaving political residue and adding to public emotional fatigue. Finally, many residents did not understand the concept of the PSU, including its rationale and its impact on the election results. The lack of substantive education led some to view the PSU as unimportant.

All of these inhibiting factors indicate that low participation is not solely due to technical issues, but also to psychological, social, administrative, and geographic factors. Therefore, a more comprehensive, sustainable participation strategy is needed, oriented toward political education and increased public trust, to ensure more stable, high-quality future public participation.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that public participation in the 2024 Kutai Kartanegara Regent and Deputy Regent Election and the 2025 Revote (PSU) is shaped by a complex interaction of political awareness, socioeconomic conditions, geographic challenges, and the effectiveness of election organizers' outreach strategies. Participation levels varied across the Central, Downstream, and Upstream zones, with each region demonstrating distinct patterns influenced by access to information, community ties, and local work routines. Although regular election participation was relatively high, the consistent decline in the revote reflects voter fatigue, limited understanding of the PSU, and situational barriers such as natural disasters and geographic constraints.

The findings imply that improving public participation requires maintaining continuous political education, strengthening contextual communication strategies, and ensuring that outreach is tailored to the social characteristics of different regions. The integration of digital and face-to-face approaches, collaboration with local figures, and culturally rooted outreach methods proved effective and can serve as a model for future election management. These implications are relevant not only for election organizers but also for policymakers seeking to increase electoral legitimacy and build long-term political trust.

This research is limited to a qualitative analysis within one regency, drawing on interviews, observations, and documents from a specific electoral period. It does not measure causal relationships quantitatively, nor does it examine the long-term effects of participation dynamics beyond 2025 in the PSU. Future research may expand the scope to comparative studies across regions, employ mixed-method designs to more precisely measure participation determinants, or examine the behavioural mechanisms underlying voter fatigue and political disengagement.

For the general public, this study contributes a deeper understanding of the factors that encourage and discourage participation, highlighting the importance of political awareness, community engagement, and access to clear information. For subsequent

researchers, it offers a foundation for developing more comprehensive participation models and encourages further inquiry into how local wisdom, social networks, and digital media can be synergized to strengthen democratic participation at the regional level.

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