



Identifying the Voting Behavior and Its Determinants: A Case of the 2015 Local Executive Election in Malaka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to identify the voting behavior and its determinants in the local executive election in Malaka Regency in 2015. The study defines the voting behavior as the voter decision to vote or not to vote for a pair of candidates at the polling day, and operationally measures it based on the voter turnout and candidate choice. The study identifies that voters choose a pair of candidates on the basis of one or more of the following considerations toward these factors. Geopolitical characteristics, candidate figureship, and emotional relationship are the primary determinants of candidate choice. And two another factors, namely political platform and party identification, appear to be the characteristics that closely relate to the voting behavior.

Key Words: East Nusa Tenggara; Indonesia; Local Executive Election; Malaka Regency; Voting Behavior.

1. Introduction

Malaka is a new regency lying in East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. At the beginning, Malaka was a part of the main regency of Belu. Malaka was legalized to be a regency based on Law No. 3/2013 at Januari 11, 2013. As a new regency, Malaka needed the local heads (regent and vice-regent) to lead the new autonomous locality.

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Malaka was one of 269 localities (9 provinces, 36 municipalities, 224 regencies) that held the concurrent local executive election of batch 1 in December 9, 2015, based on Law No. 8/2015 and Law No. 10/2016 [1]. The direct and concurrent local executive election (Indonesian: *pilkada langsung serentak*) is an important and strategic instrument to establish the democratic local government. It encourages people (voters) to democratically elect the local heads, including regent and vice-regent (*bupati* and *wakil bupati*). Voter's participation to vote for the pairs of candidates in the local executive election in Malaka Regency in December 9, 2015, was considered low as well. Data from the General Election Commission of Malaka Regency reported that only 61.59% of the total of 140,237 registered voters voted, while 38.41% did not [2, 3]. Despite the low percentage of voter turnout in particular, the fact provides a background to understand some factors that determine the voting behavior of voters in the context of Malaka Regency conducting the 2015 local executive election for the first time. The study of voting behavior focuses on three questions: (1) how many do people participate to vote? (2) which candidate does a voter vote for? (3) why does a voter vote for that candidate? To answer these questions, the study, therefore, aims to describe the voter turnout and candidate choice and to identify the determinants of voting behavior in the 2015 local executive election in Malaka Regency.

2. Theoretical Framework

Local executive election can be defined as the voter choice to elect the candidate at the polling day, and the candidate competes to gain the vote of voter. In the local executive election, the vote of voter is given to elect a trusted candidate for positing the seat of power as a regent and vice-regent. The process of free and fair local executive election becomes a necessary prerequisite for the process of implementing the local executive election, namely free and fair participation and contestation. The definition is described in the bellow framework (Figure 1) [4].

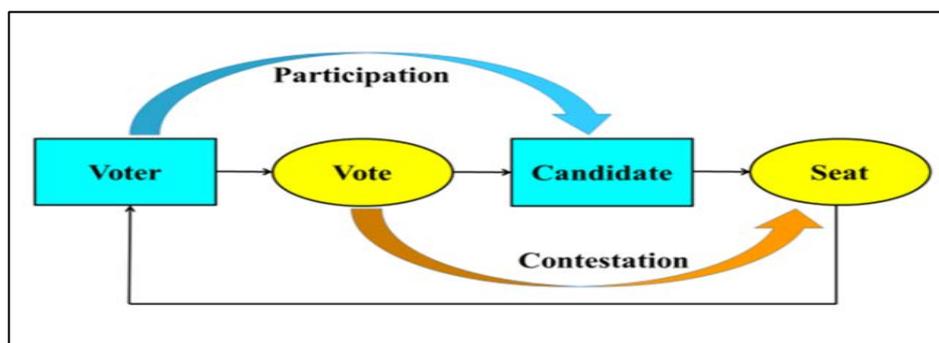


Figure 1: Framework of Meaning and Process of Local Executive Election

Samuel Huntington thought that election, in this case of local executive election, was an entry point toward democratization, that freely enabled the competing candidates to gain votes, and voters voted for. In this context, Robert A. Dahl said that democracy contained two key dimensions, namely contestation and participation [5]. Contestation related to an equal chance for all individuals to compete each other in positing the seat of power through the free and fair process. Participation related to involving the individuals as many as possible to freely and fairly elect the leader.

Voting behavior is a voting participation – as the voter decision to vote or not to vote for a pair of candidates at the polling day [6, 7]. The study measures the voting behavior based on the voter turnout and candidate choice [8, 9, 10, 11], and identifies some factors that determine it. They are geopolitical characteristics [12], candidate figureship [13, 14, 15, 16, 17], emotional relationship [18, 19, 20, 21], political platform [22, 23, 24, 25], and party identification [26, 27, 28, 29, 30]. Relation of the determinants to voting behavior is described in the bellow framework (Figure 2).

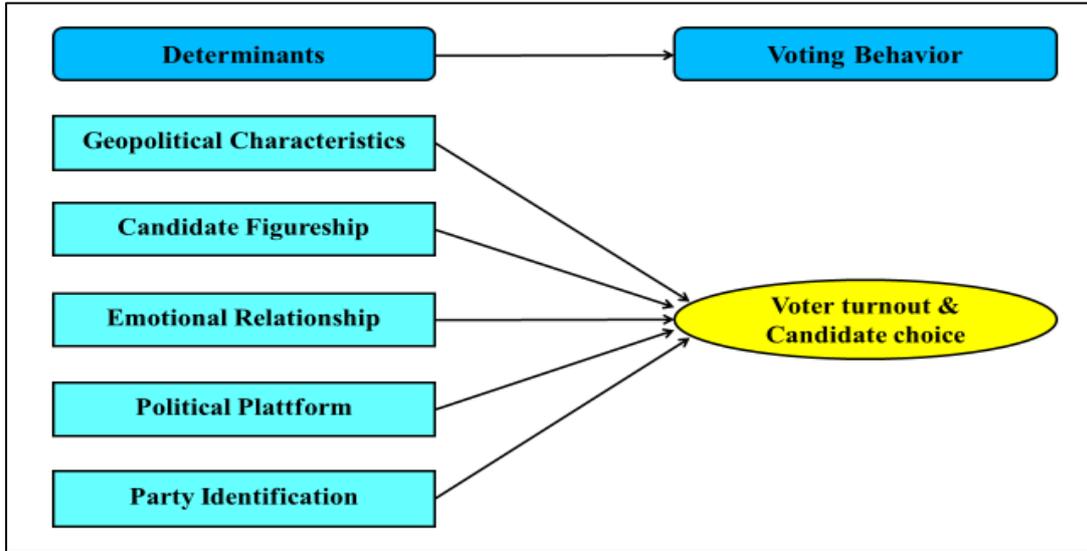


Figure 2: Framework of Relation of Determinants to Voting Behavior in Local Executive Election

3. Method

Variables of the study are the voting behavior and its determinants that are operationally defined in Table 1.

Table 1: Operationalization of Variables

No.	Variable	Indicator
1.	Voting behavior	Voter turnout
		Candidate choice
2.	Determinants of voting behavior:	
	Geopolitical characteristics	Socio-cultural regionality
	Candidate figureship	Credibility/personality of candidate
		Capacity/quality of candidate
		Image of candidate
	Emotional relationship	Etnicity/kinship
		Regionality
Political plattform	Issue orientation	
	Working program	
Party identification	Emotional engagement	

The study attempts to explore by identifying the voting behavior and its determinants in the 2015 local executive election in Malaka Regency. The study uses both primary and secondary data. The primary data are collected by field study that uses in-depth interview with voters. The secondary data are collected by desk study that uses literature and documentation. Data of the study are qualitatively described to identify the voting behavior

and its determinants.

4. Result

The study identifies the voting behavior in the 2015 local executive election in Malaka Regency based on the voter turnout and candidate choice.

Firstly, the voting participation measured by the voter turnout. The voters participated to vote for the pairs of candidates (voter turnout) as shown below (Table 2) [31].

Table 2: Amount and Percentage of Voters that Vote and Not Vote

No.	Subregency	Polling Station	Registered Voter	Vote		Not Vote	
				Amount	%	Amount	%
1	Malaka Tengah	66	30,712	18,186	59.21	12,526	40.79
2	Malaka Timur	19	6,735	4,884	72.52	1,851	27.48
3	Malaka Barat	42	18,820	10,192	54.16	8,628	45.84
4	Weliman	32	14,820	9,290	62.69	5,530	37.31
5	Wewiku	27	14,285	8,748	61.24	5,537	38.76
6	Rinhat	28	9,889	6,694	67.69	3,195	32.31
7	Kobalima	27	13,317	8,415	63.19	4,902	36.81
8	Kobalima Timur	16	4,701	3,030	64.45	1,671	35.55
9	Laenmanen	24	10,723	6,124	57.11	4,599	42.89
10	Botin Leobebe	9	3,878	2,487	64.13	1,391	35.87
11	Sasitamean	17	5,967	4,409	73.89	1,558	26.11
12	Io Kufeu	15	6,390	3,907	61.14	2,483	38.86
	Total Amount	322	140,237	86,366	61.59	53,871	38.41

Table 2 presented that only 61.59% of the total of 140,237 registered voters voted, while 38.41% did not. Besides, the voting participation by gender indicated the female voters (64.69%) more than male voters (58.11%) as shown below (Table 3) [32].

Table 3: Voting Participation by Gender

No.		Male	Female	Total
1.	Registered Voter	66,945	72,398	140,237
2.	Voter	38,905	46,833	86,366
3.	Voting Participation (%)	58.11	64.69	61.59

Based on the total of 86,366 votes at the polling day, there were 85,130 valid votes (98.57%) and 1,236 invalid votes (1.43%).

Secondly, the voter choice for candidate. Based on the total of 85,130 valid votes at the polling day, each pairs of candidates gained valid votes as shown below (Table 4) [33].

Table 4: Valid Votes Gained by Each Pairs of Candidates

No.	Subregency	Vote by Pair of Candidates		
		Agustinus Klaran & Paulus Seran Bauk	Stefanus Bria Seran & Daniel Asa	Taolin Ludovikus & Benny Chandradinata
1	Malaka Tengah	643	9,442	7,779
2	Malaka Timur	883	1,032	2,870
3	Malaka Barat	708	6,669	2,706
4	Weliman	762	6,067	2,337
5	Wewiku	673	4,986	2,961
6	Rinhat	203	4,199	2,191
7	Kobalima	586	4,167	3,545
8	Kobalima Timur	256	1,365	1,351
9	Laenmanen	193	1,948	3,925
10	Botin Leobebe	64	1,036	1,341
11	Sasitamean	17	2,751	1,623
12	Io Kufeu	87	1,114	2,650
	Total Amount	5,075	44,776	35,279

Table 4 described three facts:

- Firstly, no subregency was won by Pair of Candidates No. 1 (Agustinus Klaran & Paulus Seran Bauk). The pair gained 5,075 votes (5,96%).
- Secondly, Pair of Candidates No. 3 (Taolin Ludovikus & Benny Chandradinata) won in four subregencies, namely Malaka Timur, Laenmanen, Botin Leobebe, and Io Kufeu. The pair gained 35,279 votes (41,44%).
- Thirdly, Pair of Candidates No. 2 (Stefanus Bria Seran & Daniel Asa) won in eight subregencies, namely Malaka Tengah, Malaka Barat, Weliman, Wewiku, Rinhat, Kobalima, Kobalima Timur, and Sasitamean. The pair gained 44,776 votes (52,60%).

Description of the voter turnout and candidate choice serves as a basis for the study to furthermore identify and explain some factors that determine the voting behavior of voters in the context of Malaka Regency.

5. Discussion

The study identifies that voters choose a pair of candidates on the basis of one or more of the following considerations toward these factors explained in detail below.

Firstly, geopolitical characteristics. In the 2015 local executive election of Malaka Regency, the political constellation covers all areas including 12 subregencies, 127 rural areas, width of the region of 1,160.63 km² and 186,622 populations. In this context, the conspicuous geopolitical indicator is considering the regionality of *fehan-foho*. *Fehan* represents people of Malaka residing at the plains (lowlands), while *foho* represents people of Malaka residing at the plateaus (uplands).

Based on the socio-cultural characteristics (ethnic, language and custom), there are 12 subregencies of Malaka Regency described as following: (a) Six subregencies having characteristics as *fehan*, namely Malaka Tengah, Malaka Barat, Weliman, Wewiku, Kobalima, and Kobalima Timur. (b) Six subregencies having characteristics as *foho*, namely Malaka Timur, Laenmanen, Botin Leobebe, Sasitamea, Io Kufeu, and Rinhat.

The regionality of *fehan-foho* is translated into the pairs of candidates, namely Stef Bria Seran (representing *fehan*) and Daniel Asa (representing *foho*), Taolin Ludovikus (representing *foho*) and Benny Chandradinata (representing *fehan*), Agustinus Klaran (representing *foho*) and Paulus Seran Bauk (representing *fehan*). In the local executive election of Malaka, the geopolitical factor of *fehan-foho* is the primary basis and the significant determinant for the candidate to gain the vote choice of voter.

In the local executive election of Malaka, the ideology is important to take place of candidate on the certain geopolitical order. The ideology – as a system of value, belief, symbol, myth, ritual, and jargon convinced by a certain social group (ethnic and region) – becomes an identity to unify a certain social group and a distinguishing factor to another social group (ethnic and region). *Fehan-foho* really represents the ethnic politics and social ideology. In the local executive election of Malaka, such ideology affects the political preference of someone or group to the candidate [34].

Secondly, candidate figureship. In the local executive election, the voter votes for candidate, not for party. The candidate having the high figureship tends to be more elected. The voter elects because the candidate has the credibility or integrity and the capability or quality. Two factors contribute to form the attitude of voter on the figure. The voter is attached to the candidate because of the figure. The main factor for the voter is the attachment of voter on the candidate.

In the local executive election of Malaka Regency, the voter elects the pairs of candidates. In this context, the profile or personality of figure affects the voting behavior. The qualities of personal figure like integrity (trusted, honest, firm, clean from corruption), empathy (concerned with people) and competence (clever, insight) reflect an appreciation of voter on some characteristics of a figure. The appreciation is an important factor that affects the positive behavior of voter on the figure. In the local executive election, the quality of candidate becomes the primary determinant that affects the preference of voter choice.

In the candidate figureship, there is the image of candidate. The image of candidate can be defined as the construction or representation and perception of voter on the candidate regarding all things, both personality, socio-political activities, and the working experiences. In the local executive election of Malaka, the image is important as a distinguishing factor among candidates. The image can be categorized as a positioning strategy among the competing candidates. The image of candidate describes the personal characteristics of candidate attracting the voter. The voter is interested in the candidate because of the personal factors like intelligence, education, experience, and background of family.

Based on the pairs of candidates, there can be described the profiles of each candidates (Table 5).

Table 5: Profiles of the Pairs of Candidates

No.	Candidate as Regent		Candidate as Vice-Regent	
	Name	Description	Name	Description
1	Agustinus Klaran	businessman, scholar of technics, representing people residing at plateaus/uplands (<i>foho</i>)	Paulus Seran Bauk	civil servant, scholar of law, representing people residing at plains/lowlands (<i>fehan</i>)
2	Stefanus Bria Seran	civil servant, doctor, scholar of medicine, master of public health, head of health office, representing people residing at plains/lowlands (<i>fehan</i>)	Daniel Asa	civil servant, scholar of administration, secretary of the Regional People's Representative Council, inspector of inspectorate, representing people residing at plateaus/uplands (<i>foho</i>)
3	Taolin Ludovikus	civil servant, bachelor of arts, vice chairman of the Regional People's Representative Council, vice regent, representing people residing at plateaus/uplands (<i>foho</i>)	Benny Chandradinata	businessman, scholar of economics, vice chairman of the Regional People's Representative Council, representing people residing at plains/lowlands (<i>fehan</i>)

Thirdly, emotional relationship. Based on the geopolitical characteristics of Malaka, someone tends to vote for because of having an emotional propinquity in the context of the similarity of ethnicity, kinship and regionality. The emotional relationship is represented in the geopolitical characteristics of *fehan-foho* on each pairs of candidates. Someone is interested in a candidate because of having a similar value system. The more similarity of characteristics between the voter and the candidate tends to raise the attraction.

The voter is more interested in the candidate that has the similarity and propinquity of value system. Ethnicity, kinship and regionality are the main determinants for voting for the candidate. In national election and another local executive elections in Indonesia, for example, the candidate usually wins in the region of origin. The fact proves that the emotional propinquity is still an effective factor to determine the vote choice. The local executive election of Malaka tends to perform that fact.

Fourthly, political platform. Political platform is related to the working programs prepared by the candidate to respond the problems (issues) faced by people of Malaka. In the local executive election of Malaka Regency, political platform is an important determinant for the voters, particularly well-educated voters. The voters certainly pay attention to how the candidate struggles for these issues like poverty, education, health, occupation, agriculture, flood, infrastructure, tourism, mining, and income. The capability of candidate to raise these fundamental issues has positively impact on the voter's perception and behavior.

In the context, the most important thing for the voters is how far the candidate can offer the working programs and their solutions to overcome the problems (issues) faced by people of Malaka. Perspective of issue orientation affirms that the issue position of a candidate can motivate a voter to vote for that candidate. Therefore, there is the impact of issue position of a candidate on the preference of vote choice. The issue position of a candidate can present an expectation that the voter tends to vote for that candidate [35].

Fifthly, party identification. Someone participates to vote in local executive election because of party identification. Party identification determines voting behavior. Voter is emotionally attached to a sure political party. Malaka is mostly a basis for Party of the Functional Groups (Partai Golkar) and then Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP). Voters, therefore, vote for the sure pair of candidates because of the candidacy by a sure political party. The pair of candidates Stefanus Bria Seran-Daniel Asa, nominated by Party of the Functional Groups (Partai Golkar) and Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), tends to be elected by voters because of party identification (Table 6) [36].

Table 6: Candidacy by Political Party

No.	Pair of Candidate	Political Party
1	Agustinus Klaran & Paulus Seran Bauk	National Mandate Party (PAN); Indonesian Justice and Unity Party (PKPI); United Development Party (PPP)
2	Stefanus Bria Seran & Daniel Asa	Party of the Functional Groups (Partai Golkar); Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP); National Democratic Party (Partai Nasdem); Democratic Party (PD)
3	Taolin Ludovikus & Benny Chandradinata	National Awakening Party (PKB); Great Indonesia Movement Party (Partai Gerindra)

Based on the voter choice for candidate, there are really only two pairs of candidates competing in the 2015 local executive election in Malaka Regency, namely Stefanus Bria Seran-Daniel Asa and Taolin Ludovikus-Benny Chandradinata. If comparing among five determinants of voting behavior in particular, the two pairs win in some subregencies because of geopolitical characteristics, candidate figureship, and emotional relationship. While the pair of candidates Stefanus Bria Seran-Daniel Asa surpasses the pair of candidates Taolin Ludovikus-Benny Chandradinata in some another subregencies because of political platform and party identification.

6. Conclusion

As the concluding remarks, the study identifies some factors that determine the voting behavior as follows:

- Voters choose a pair of candidates on the basis of one or more of the following considerations toward these factors, namely geopolitical characteristics, candidate figureship, emotional relationship, political platform, and party identification.
- Among these factors, geopolitical characteristics, candidate figureship, and emotional relationship are the primary determinants of candidate choice.
- And two another factors, namely political platform and party identification, appear to be the characteristics that closely relate to the voting behavior.

7. Recommendation

Based on the conclusion, findings of the study provide an empirical understanding of voting behavior contributing to enrich the theory of voting behavior and moreover make use of them as a reference to explain the voting behavior in another local executive elections. Despite in one case of local executive election, the study provides an understanding of electoral dynamics at the local politics. The study mainly focuses on identifying by describing the voting behavior and its determinants. Therefore, the next will broaden the scope of study and deeply analyzes the relationship of determinants to the voting behavior.

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