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# Political Participation in Village Head Elections: A Qualitative Study of Voter Engagement in Ratte Village, Indonesia

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**Abstract**

*Political participation is a fundamental indicator of democratic governance, particularly at the village level where citizens directly influence local leadership through electoral processes. This study aims to examine the forms of political participation and the factors influencing voter participation in the Village Head Election in Ratte Village, Tutar District, Polewali Mandar Regency, Indonesia. A descriptive qualitative research design was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of community participation in the electoral process. The study was conducted in the natural setting of the village using purposive sampling to select four key informants, comprising two members of the Village Head Election Committee and two community members who were eligible voters. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and document analysis, while the data were analyzed using the interactive model of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that political participation in the village election is reflected through three primary forms: political discussion, campaign participation, and voting behavior. Political discussions within families and community groups contributed to increasing citizens' political awareness and understanding of the candidates. Campaign activities provided opportunities for direct interaction between candidates and voters, strengthening political engagement and encouraging informed electoral choices. Voting participation was influenced not only by individual political awareness but also by public trust in the election committee and the perceived fairness and transparency of the electoral process. Conversely, limited political knowledge and varying levels of confidence in electoral institutions remained challenges affecting voter participation. The study concludes that strengthening political education, increasing transparency in election management, and enhancing public trust in electoral institutions are essential strategies for promoting greater citizen participation and improving the quality of local democratic governance at the village level.*

## Introduction

Village Head Elections (Pilkades) are a concrete manifestation of the implementation of democratic values at the lowest level of government. As the smallest administrative unit, the village plays a crucial role in supporting national development. As the frontline closest to the community, the village head not only plays a role in running the government but also bears the responsibility of empowering the community and managing the village's potential and resources.

Through Village Head Elections, it is hoped that a leader will be elected who not only possesses integrity and capability but also demonstrates a strong commitment to advancing the village and improving the overall welfare of the community. The ideal village head is expected to understand community needs, optimally manage local



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potential, and implement policies that favor the interests of the residents. Furthermore, an orderly, honest, and transparent election process involving active community participation is a crucial factor in building public trust. This also serves as a primary foundation for creating democratic, accountable, and mutually beneficial village governance, thereby promoting sustainable and inclusive village development.

As the previous village head's term of office comes to an end, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, it is necessary to hold a direct, general, free, secret, honest, and fair Village Head Election. This election is expected to produce a village head with integrity, capacity, and a strong commitment to realizing transparent, accountable, and participatory village governance.

The Village Head Election (Pilkades) is conducted in accordance with applicable laws and regulations as the legal basis for village governance. The primary basis is Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, which stipulates that village heads are directly elected by the community, prioritizing democratic principles: direct, general, free, secret, honest, and fair. This law also regulates the position, duties, authorities, and term of office of the village head to foster good village governance.

These provisions were subsequently updated through Law Number 3 of 2024, amending the Village Law (Dharma, et al., 2024; Marta, 2025; Sancaya & Weresmana, 2025). This amendment aims to adapt the village government system to evolving community needs and development dynamics. With this reform, the election mechanism and the continuity of village government are expected to become clearer, more effective, and more stable. Village Head Elections (Pilkades) play a crucial role as a means of ensuring village government accountability. Village heads elected through a democratic process have a moral and political responsibility to the community that elected them. Therefore, Pilkades not only serves as a forum for selecting leaders but also serves as a mechanism for public oversight of power at the village level, while simultaneously encouraging transparency and participation in development (Zaini Abdullah, 2022).

Furthermore, Pilkades also represents a strategic opportunity for realizing good village governance. An orderly, open, and accountable election process will support government stability and increase public political awareness. Therefore, the elected village head is expected to be able to carry out his or her duties optimally to achieve a developed, independent, and prosperous village.

However, in the reality of Village Head Elections, community political participation is often different from theory. Many people still choose candidates based on kinship relationships, closeness to traditional leaders, or certain rewards. Traditional leaders or local elites often influence citizens' choices, so public participation tends to be limited in quality, even though voter turnout appears to be high. The practice of money politics, mobilization of support for certain groups, and social pressure are also still found.

Thus, even though society appears to be actively participating, the quality of political participation does not fully reflect ideal democratic principles. Therefore, it is important for society to increase political awareness, the ability to evaluate candidates, and responsibility in exercising the right to vote, so that political participation in Village Head Elections is more rational and meaningful (Li & O'Brien, 2022; Noak, 2024; Manurung & Sunoto, 2025).



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The implementation of Village Head Elections is a means for village communities to exercise their right to vote freely, confidentially, honestly, and fairly. With active participation from the community, it is hoped that this election process will be able to reflect the will and aspirations of village residents in a democratic manner. Apart from that, the election of the village head also functions as an effort to strengthen the legitimacy of leadership at the village level so that the elected village head has the trust and support of the community (Zainudin et al., 2025; Zhang & Chen, 2025; Bazzi et al., 2025).

Through active political participation, the community can express their aspirations, interests, and hopes for potential village leaders. It is hoped that this will produce village heads who truly represent the will of the people and are able to run government in a transparent, accountable, and common-interest-oriented manner. Apart from that, political participation also functions as a means of political education for village communities to increase their understanding of democratic values, social responsibility, and civic life.

## Method

### Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore political participation among citizens during the Village Head Election in Ratte Village, Tutar District, Polewali Mandar Regency. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of social phenomena from the perspectives and lived experiences of individuals directly involved in the electoral process. Rather than measuring variables statistically, qualitative research emphasizes the interpretation of meanings, attitudes, motivations, and behaviors that shape political participation within a specific social context.

Descriptive qualitative research aims to provide a comprehensive and systematic description of actual social conditions without manipulating the research setting. As explained by Moleong (2020), qualitative research investigates phenomena in their natural settings, where the researcher serves as the primary instrument for collecting and interpreting data. Through this approach, the study seeks to understand how political participation is manifested during the Village Head Election and to identify the factors that influence citizens' willingness to engage in democratic processes. Accordingly, this design is considered appropriate because political participation is a multidimensional social phenomenon that cannot be fully understood through quantitative measurements alone.

### Research Site

The research was conducted in Ratte Village, Tutar District, Polewali Mandar Regency, Indonesia. The selection of this site was based on several substantive considerations. First, previous village elections indicated variations in citizens' political participation, particularly regarding voter turnout and community engagement throughout the electoral process. Second, preliminary observations suggested that a portion of the community possessed limited political knowledge and awareness regarding the importance of electoral participation. Third, there were indications that some eligible voters chose not to exercise their voting rights despite having the opportunity to participate.



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These conditions make Ratte Village an appropriate setting for examining political participation at the grassroots level. Conducting the study within the natural social environment allows the researcher to capture the interaction between citizens, electoral institutions, and local political culture, thereby providing a richer understanding of the dynamics influencing voter participation.

**Research Informants**

The study employed purposive sampling to select research informants who possessed direct knowledge and experience regarding the implementation of the Village Head Election. Purposive sampling enables researchers to identify participants capable of providing rich, relevant, and credible information concerning the research problem.

Four key informants participated in this study. Two informants were members of the Village Head Election Committee, who were responsible for organizing and supervising the electoral process. Their perspectives provided information regarding election administration, voter registration, campaign implementation, and challenges encountered during the election. The remaining two informants were residents of Ratte Village who were eligible voters. These participants were selected because they represented community experiences related to political awareness, voting behavior, perceptions of electoral integrity, and factors influencing political participation.

The diversity of informant backgrounds enabled the researcher to obtain information from both institutional and community perspectives, thereby strengthening the credibility and richness of the qualitative findings.

**Research Focus**

The study focused on examining political participation among citizens during the Village Head Election in Ratte Village. Political participation was analyzed through three principal forms of participation and two influencing factors derived from political participation theory.

The first dimension concerns political discussion, referring to citizens' involvement in exchanging opinions, discussing political issues, evaluating candidates, and sharing information related to the village election through both formal and informal interactions. Political discussions demonstrate the extent to which community members engage cognitively in political affairs before making electoral decisions.

The second dimension examines campaign participation, which refers to citizens' involvement in campaign activities organized by candidates or their supporters. This includes attending campaign meetings, participating in socialization activities, receiving political information, and interacting directly with candidates during the campaign period. Campaign participation reflects the level of public engagement in the electoral process beyond merely casting votes.

The third dimension focuses on voting participation, namely the willingness of registered voters to exercise their constitutional right by casting ballots at polling stations. Voting behavior represents the most direct and observable form of political participation within democratic elections.

In addition to these forms of participation, the study also investigates two factors influencing political participation. The first is political awareness, defined as citizens' understanding of their political rights and responsibilities, knowledge of electoral



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processes, and recognition of the importance of participating in democratic governance. Individuals possessing higher political awareness are generally more inclined to participate actively in elections and make informed political choices.

The second factor is trust in electoral institutions and government, referring to citizens' confidence in the Election Committee, village government, electoral procedures, and the fairness of election implementation. Public trust is expected to influence citizens' willingness to participate because confidence in the integrity of electoral institutions encourages greater engagement in democratic processes.

**Data Sources**

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data to obtain comprehensive information regarding political participation.

Primary data were collected directly from research informants through interviews and field observations. These data provided firsthand information concerning participants' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes toward political participation during the Village Head Election. The use of multiple primary data sources enabled the researcher to capture diverse viewpoints and verify emerging findings.

Secondary data were obtained from official documents, government regulations, election reports, village administrative records, academic literature, previous studies, and other relevant publications. These documents were used to complement the primary data, provide contextual information, and strengthen the interpretation of research findings.

The combination of primary and secondary data enhances the completeness, credibility, and validity of the study by allowing information obtained from different sources to be compared and integrated.

**Data Collection Techniques**

Data collection was conducted using three complementary qualitative techniques: observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis.

Observation was undertaken to obtain direct evidence regarding community participation, election activities, and interactions among stakeholders throughout the electoral process. Through observation, the researcher was able to understand the social context in which political participation occurred and identify behaviors that might not be fully expressed during interviews.

Semi-structured interviews constituted the primary method of data collection. An interview guide containing open-ended questions was developed to ensure consistency across interviews while allowing participants sufficient flexibility to explain their experiences and perspectives in detail. Interviews explored issues such as political awareness, voting decisions, campaign involvement, trust in election organizers, and perceptions regarding democratic participation.

Document analysis was conducted to examine official election documents, village administrative records, policy documents, reports, and other written materials relevant to the implementation of the Village Head Election. Documentary evidence served to verify interview findings and provide additional contextual information concerning the electoral process.



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The integration of these three techniques enabled methodological triangulation and contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of political participation within the research setting.

**Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using the Interactive Model of Qualitative Data Analysis proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. Data analysis was conducted continuously throughout the research process, beginning with data collection and continuing until the final interpretation of findings.

The first stage involved data condensation, during which interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence were carefully reviewed, coded, and organized according to themes relevant to political participation. Irrelevant information was eliminated while significant statements were categorized based on the research focus.

The second stage consisted of data display, where categorized findings were systematically organized into thematic matrices and descriptive narratives. This process facilitated comparison across participants and enabled the identification of recurring patterns related to political discussion, campaign participation, voting behavior, political awareness, and institutional trust.

The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verification. The researcher interpreted relationships among emerging themes by comparing empirical findings with existing theories of political participation. Conclusions were continuously verified through repeated examination of the collected data to ensure that interpretations accurately reflected participants' experiences and remained supported by empirical evidence.

**Result And Discussion**

One of the main factors that determines the success of an election is the level of public participation. The greater the involvement of citizens, the stronger the legitimacy of the election results. Voter participation itself can be interpreted as the level of citizen participation in the election process, both in the form of attendance and voting. This level is usually measured by comparing the number of citizens who have the right to vote with the number who exercise their voting rights in elections.

The forms of community political participation in the election of the Ratte Village Head, Tutar District, Polewali Mandar Regency, can be seen through three main activities, namely political discussions, participation in campaign activities, and voting. These three forms reflect the level of community awareness and involvement in the democratic process at the village level. Therefore, to understand the level of participation and the factors that influence it, namely political awareness and trust in the government, the following presents the results of interviews with various informants regarding voter participation in the election of the Ratte Village Head.

**Forms of Community Political Participation in Village Head Elections**

Political discussions are activities to exchange ideas or engage in dialogue regarding various issues related to government, public policy, and other political issues. This activity can take place in various spaces, such as official forums, community meetings, social media, or small-group environments. The purpose of political discussions is to



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understand existing problems, find solutions, and form views or opinions on developing political issues.

In the context of political participation, community involvement in discussions is an important indicator. Therefore, political discussions can be seen from several aspects, namely the availability of discussion forums provided by the committee and the extent to which the public is involved in political discussions.

The first aspect of political discussions concerns the availability of discussion forums.

The following is an interview with the Chair of the Committee, who stated:

> *"Yes, before the election is held, we will hold a discussion forum with the community about how to elect the village head." (Interview, April 21, 2026)*

Furthermore, the Selection Committee stated:

> *"Yes, the committee and its members participate before starting election activities through discussion forums or certain groups." (Interview, April 14, 2026)*

The following is an interview with one of the village residents, Mr. AS, who stated:

> *"When it comes to political discussions, of course, we as voters, as residents of Ratte Village, have certainly had discussions about politics in the lead-up to the village head election. These things may be things that have never been done before in the community." (Interview, April 16, 2026)*

As for Mr. MA's statement as a village resident, he said:

> *"Yes, you could say that we have participated in that discussion because it is almost certain that we, as beginners, are part of the initiators of the figure who will be the next leader or village head." (Interview, April 18, 2026)*

Furthermore, regarding the extent of community involvement in political discussions on Village Head Elections, the following is an interview with the Chair of the Committee:

> *"Very responsive in the socialization because there were reciprocal questions related to how the village head election was carried out." (Interview, April 21, 2026)*

Furthermore, the Selection Committee stated:

> *"The point is that every election must be widely open. The rules that need to be understood in the election must be clear so that people understand what must be done and what must not be done." (Interview, April 14, 2026)*

The following is an interview with one of the village residents, Mr. AS, who stated:

> *"When discussing elections among the family, of course, we always do small sharing and other things. Of course, we do it every time we have free time to gather within the family." (Interview, April 16, 2026)*

As for Mr. MA's statement as a village resident, he said:

> *"We discuss it quite often because from that discussion it will give birth to ideas and leaders that are in line with what we hope for." (Interview, April 18, 2026)*

Based on the results of the interviews, it can be concluded that community involvement in political discussions during the Village Head Election was quite active. This can be seen from the discussion forums provided by the committee before the election, either through



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direct meetings or certain communication media. The community also showed a good response by participating, asking questions, and discussing both in official forums and within the family environment. In this way, political discussions become a form of participation that can increase community understanding and encourage their involvement in the Village Head Election process. From the results of the research, an analysis can be carried out regarding community involvement in the political process at the village level, especially in the election of the Ratte Village Head, which was in a fairly good category. This was reflected in the community's activeness in participating in discussion forums held before the election. This kind of participation is an important indicator in assessing the quality of local democracy because it shows political awareness and the community's willingness to be involved in the decision-making process.

Furthermore, the existence of a discussion forum facilitated by the committee has a strategic role in improving the quality of participation. This forum not only functions as a means of conveying information but also as a space for dialogue between the committee and the community. Through this forum, the public gains a clearer understanding of the election mechanisms, rules, and stages. In this way, the potential for misunderstandings or conflicts can be minimized because the information received is open and equitable.

Apart from that, the discussion forum also reflects the application of the principle of transparency in holding Village Head Elections. The openness of information provided to the public shows that the election process was not carried out in a closed or elitist manner but rather involved the public at large. This transparency is important to build public trust in the organizing committee and in the election results themselves.

These forums can be seen as an effective form of political education. The public is not only the object of the election but also the subject who understands their rights and obligations as voters. As Surbakti (2019) stated, quality participation is participation that is based on awareness, knowledge, and access to adequate information. This has the potential to improve the quality of choices made by the public because they are based on sufficient information and rational considerations.

The findings from this research include community involvement in discussion forums that has reached the level of active and communicative participation, meaning that the community is not only present as participants receiving information but also acts as a party directly involved in the interaction process. Activeness in the form of questions, responses, and expressing views shows that people have sufficient understanding and courage to express their opinions in public spaces. As explained by Effendy (2018), participatory communication is characterized by dialogue, feedback, and active involvement from both parties in the communication process. This means that the public is not only a passive recipient of information but also has space to express opinions, ask questions, and provide responses to the information received.

The existence of reciprocal interaction between the committee and the community reflects effective two-way communication. This condition indicates that the discussion forum is not one-way or only a formal socialization medium but is truly a forum for dialogue. In situations like this, the committee not only conveys information but also listens to aspirations, answers questions, and responds to community concerns.

The next finding of this research is that the dynamics of community political participation are not limited to formal spaces facilitated by committees but also develop naturally in



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informal environments such as families and community groups. From these findings, it can be analyzed that this phenomenon is an important indicator that the political process has penetrated people's daily lives, so that discussions regarding Village Head Elections are no longer elitist or limited to official forums. According to Efriza (2017), effective political socialization processes occur in informal daily interactions because, in these spaces, individuals feel freer to discuss, exchange views, and form their political attitudes independently.

The existence of discussions within families and small groups reflects the process of internalization of political values at the grassroots level. This means that people not only receive information but also process, compare, and discuss it independently. This process allows for a more open and relaxed exchange of views, so that everyone has a greater opportunity to express opinions without the pressure of formality. In this way, the quality of the public's understanding of potential leaders and the election process can become deeper.

**Campaign Activities**

Campaign activities are a series of activities carried out by prospective leaders, political parties, or certain groups with the aim of introducing themselves and gaining support from the public. In a democratic system, campaigns have an important role because they are a means of conveying vision, mission, and work programs to voters, as well as influencing their views and choices in an election.

In the Village Head Election in Ratte, the campaign was also a form of community involvement in the political process. Through this activity, residents not only become recipients of information but also provide responses and assessments of the way campaign messages are delivered.

After confirmation with the Chair and the Village Head Election Executive Committee regarding the arrangements for campaign activities for each Village Head candidate, the following interviews were conducted.

The following is an interview with the Chair of the Committee:

> *"We schedule the campaign in certain places for each village head candidate." (Interview, April 21, 2026)*

From the statement above, the implementing committee also agreed, stating:

> "Okay, there are several ways for the committee to organize the campaign for village head candidates, one of which is by arranging a schedule for the candidates so that there are no collisions in carrying out the campaign. One of the ways is through several activities, such as putting up billboards and conveying aspirations through certain discussion forums." *(Interview, April 14, 2026)*

Furthermore, in an interview regarding the participation of village residents in campaign activities, Mr. MA stated:

> "Yes, we often participate in several campaign activities of one of the village head candidates." *(Interview, April 18, 2026)*

This was also conveyed by one of the informants, Mr. MJ, a village resident, who stated:



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> "Actually, personally, of course, I took part in the campaign, but in the campaign at that time I didn't really side with one person, but I sided with what I believed according to my common sense." *(Interview, April 14, 2026)*

In this campaign activity, there were also forms of campaigning that were permitted during the election. The following is an interview with the Chair of the Committee:

> "One, there is conveying the vision and mission, and the second, there is a kind of installation of billboards in certain places." *(Interview, April 21, 2026)*

In line with the Election Committee's statement, it stated:

> *"One of the campaigns that is permitted in village elections is to put up billboards at each voting point and then express your aspirations at that place without personally offending the candidate's opponent."* (Interview, April 14, 2026)

Meanwhile, Mr. AS, a village resident, stated:

> "Such as holding small thanksgiving events or openly conveying the vision and mission to the community." *(Interview, April 16, 2026)*

As for the statement from Mr. MA, a village resident, he stated:

> "From what I have seen, we often discuss with several youths and several community leaders whom we involve. Then, from hamlet to hamlet, we usually do that." *(Interview, April 18, 2026)*

Based on the results of the interviews, campaign activities in the election of the Ratte Village Head were carried out in an orderly and organized manner through setting schedules and clear campaign forms, such as conveying the vision and mission and installing billboards. The public also participated actively by attending campaigns, discussing, and evaluating candidates rationally. Overall, the campaign was an important means of increasing community involvement and understanding in the Village Head Election process.

According to Miriam (2019), in a healthy democratic system, political campaigns must provide fair space for each candidate to convey their vision, mission, and work program openly to voters. Apart from that, campaigns also need to be regulated by clear rules so that the political process runs in an orderly and competitive manner and does not give rise to social conflict. The findings of this research can be analyzed in relation to the schedule arrangements and campaign locations provided by the committee. Of course, this is an important factor in maintaining the orderliness of the process because each Village Head candidate gets relatively equal opportunities to convey ideas to the community. By having a clear division of time and place, the potential for clashes in activities and conflicts between supporters can be minimized.

The findings in this research can be analyzed from the active and diverse nature of community involvement in the election campaign for the Ratte Village Head. The community not only plays the role of witnessing the progress of the campaign but also attends and is involved in various forms of activities organized by the Village Head candidates. The presence of residents in various campaign agendas reflects their enthusiasm and concern for the process of selecting leaders at the village level. Forms of community involvement are not limited to one type of activity but include direct meetings between candidates and residents, social activities such as thanksgiving events, and



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informal discussions between residents and community leaders. This variety of activities shows that the campaign does not only take place in a formal format but is also integrated with the community's daily social activities.

Apart from that, the public also showed a critical attitude in participating in the campaign. Not all citizens sided absolutely with one candidate; there were also those who judged based on personal understanding and considerations. Of course, this shows that the campaign process not only functions as a socialization tool but also as a medium for forming people's rational attitudes in making choices.

**Voting**

Voting is one of the most important elements in a democratic system because it is the main means for citizens to determine the direction of government. Through this process, the public can elect the leader candidate they consider to be the most appropriate and capable of representing the public interest, or to give approval or rejection to certain policies proposed by the government or related parties. Apart from that, voting also reflects the political freedom of citizens in expressing their opinions in an official and organized manner.

Through voting, every individual has a role in determining the direction and future of the country or region where they live. This process is an important part of a democratic system because it allows the public to contribute directly to the election of leaders who will regulate the running of the government. Voting is not just a formal activity but is also a real manifestation of citizens' rights and responsibilities.

In the Village Head Election in Ratte, community participation can be seen through voting. Of course, in this Village Head Election, the committee must organize the process well so that the election can take place in a conducive manner.

The following is an interview regarding the level of community participation in voting. The Chair of the Committee stated:

> "If community participation on that day could be categorized, 90% attended." *(Interview, April 21, 2026)*

The Executive Committee stated:

> "In terms of community participation regarding voting that takes place in the field, if we look at it, there is indeed high participation, but there are also some people who just take part in the election without looking at what is in the election, without looking at the quality of the candidate." *(Interview, April 14, 2026)*

Furthermore, according to one of the village residents, Mr. AS:

> "Of course, as a citizen and also a member of the community in Ratte Village, of course I, as a member of the community, must cast my vote." *(Interview, April 16, 2026)*

Then, a statement from another village resident, namely Mr. MA, stated:

> "Yes, as obedient citizens, we should exercise our right to vote." *(Interview, April 18, 2026)*

As for Village Head Elections, voting can be conducted honestly and fairly. The Chair of the Committee stated:



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> "We carry it out in accordance with the rules, and we provide distance between voters and the executive committee, as well as assistance so that there are no leaks or fraud in the election." *(Interview, April 21, 2026)*

The Executive Committee stated:

> "One of the ways is that we have to vote in an open place. Don't let us vote in a closed place because the wider public will not know and there will be indications that the committee will commit violations in a closed room. So, to avoid that, we have to do it in an open place." *(Interview, April 14, 2026)*

Furthermore, according to one of the village residents, Mr. AS:

> *"Of course, as citizens, we have to guard against honesty or be more aware that there is no fraud in a vote count."* (Interview, April 16, 2026)

Then, a statement from another village resident, namely Mr. MA, stated:

> "Yes, it went smoothly. It was easy for the public to understand how the election process itself was. It was in accordance with what it should be." *(Interview, April 18, 2026)*

Then, to determine the quality of the Village Head Election, the voting community must fulfill the requirements of being registered. The Chair of the Committee stated:

> "All those who have met the requirements, because we registered them long beforehand and, thank God, yesterday 90% and above had already received their voting rights." *(Interview, April 21, 2026)*

The Executive Committee stated:

> "Yes, it is clear that in the Village Head Election, all people who have met the requirements have been registered as part of their village's DPT or Permanent Voter List in every election activity." *(Interview, April 14, 2026)*

Furthermore, according to one of the village residents, Mr. MJ:

> *"If I look at the voter list, all of them are people in the village and all of them are registered in the DPT, so they have fulfilled the requirements as voters."* (Interview, April 14, 2026)

Based on the results of the interviews, community participation in voting in the election for the Ratte Village Head was relatively high, with an attendance rate of around 90%. This shows that the community was quite active in exercising its voting rights and demonstrated awareness as citizens in determining village leaders. The voting process also ran smoothly, orderly, and conducively because it had been regulated by the committee in accordance with the provisions, such as implementation in an open place and supervision to prevent fraud. Apart from that, all eligible voters had been registered in the DPT, so that almost all eligible people could participate.

**Factors Influencing Voter Political Participation**

Based on Surbakti's theory (2019), political participation in the form of voting in elections or Village Head Elections is the most common form of conventional participation. In the research conducted in Ratte Village, the level of community participation reached around 90%, indicating that residents actively carried out their political participation function.



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High participation shows political awareness and legitimacy of the ongoing democratic system.

The community not only understands their rights as voters but also realizes that their involvement in Village Head Elections is part of their social and political responsibility. This awareness is usually influenced by several factors, such as social closeness between residents and prospective village heads, the intensity of political outreach carried out, and the level of community concern for village development.

The smoothness and conduciveness of the voting process in the Ratte Village Head Election can be understood as an important indicator of the quality of election governance at the local level. A situation that is safe, orderly, and minimally disrupted shows that the implementation of the election not only runs procedurally but also fulfills the substantive aspects of democracy, namely transparency and public trust in the election process.

Technical arrangements by the Election Committee, such as maintaining distance between voters and officials and using an open space, can be interpreted as forms of applying the principles of good electoral governance. This step is not merely technical but also strategic in building public perception that the voting process takes place honestly and is free from manipulation. In elections at the village level, where social relations between residents are very close, the potential for suspicion of fraud may be higher. Therefore, the design of open voting spaces is important for strengthening social control and reducing opportunities for unauthorized intervention.

The committee's success in maintaining order also shows that there is relatively good institutional capacity. The Election Committee not only functions as a technical implementer but also as the main actor in ensuring that each stage of the election complies with applicable regulations. This reflects the professionalism of election organizers at the village level, even though the committee is usually non-permanent and consists of members of the local community.

The supervision carried out by the community can be understood as an informal mechanism that functions to complement the formal supervision of the Election Committee. The presence of residents who participate in observing the voting process, monitoring the counting process, and ensuring that there is no vote manipulation is a real form of community-based transparency. In village communities that have strong social ties, this type of supervision can be effective because there is a strong sense of mutual recognition and social control among residents.

From an administrative perspective, the success of collecting data on all eligible residents into the Permanent Voter List (DPT) shows that the technical foundations of the election have been managed seriously and systematically. The accuracy of the DPT is one of the most crucial indicators in elections because this list determines who has direct access to their political rights. When almost all eligible residents have been accommodated, this indicates that the data collection process was not only carried out formally but also through careful verification at the local level.

The impact of an accurate DPT directly contributes to high levels of voter participation. When people feel that they are registered and recognized administratively, they tend to be more encouraged to attend and exercise their right to vote. On the other hand, in many cases, low participation is often caused by administrative problems, such as non-


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registration or data errors. The success of preparing the DPT in Ratte Village can be considered one of the main factors supporting the high participation rate found previously. According to Miriam Budiardjo (2019:463), the success of a democratic process is not only determined by community participation but also by the orderliness of the political system and administration that supports it. One concrete form of political administration is the preparation of accurate and inclusive voter lists. The DPT is an important instrument because it functions as an entry point for citizens to exercise their political rights. Therefore, DPT accuracy also plays an important role in preventing potential conflicts or disputes in elections. When the voter list is clear and acceptable to the public, the potential for protests regarding voting rights can be minimized.

**Factors Influencing Voter Political Participation**

According to Ramlan Surbakti (2018), there are two factors that influence voter participation, namely political awareness and trust in the government or Election Committee.

Political awareness is citizens' awareness of their rights and obligations. This refers to people's understanding of their political environment, as well as their interest in and concern for the political environment in which they live. Political awareness refers to the awareness of citizens, both individually and collectively, to actively participate in political activities. Political awareness greatly influences the level of a person's political participation. If an individual possesses political awareness, they will be aware of their position in civic life.

Political awareness refers to citizens' understanding of their rights and obligations in civic life, including active participation in political activities. In the Village Head Election in Ratte, community political awareness plays an important role in determining the quality of the election process and its results. People who have high political awareness will use their voting rights wisely by seeking information about candidates, understanding their vision and mission, and participating in monitoring the election process so that it is conducted honestly and fairly.

The following is an interview with the Chair of the Committee:

> *"In our opinion, people's political awareness has a big influence on the quality of elections. When people understand their rights and obligations, they will be more active in exercising their right to vote and participating in ensuring that the election remains honest and fair. Of course, this will make the democratic process at the village level better." (Interview, April 21, 2026)*

The Executive Committee stated:

> "In our opinion, political awareness makes people more active in participating in the election process, including looking for information about candidates and participating in monitoring the voting process so that it remains honest and fair." *(Interview, April 14, 2026)*

Furthermore, according to one of the village residents, Mr. AS:

> "I think it's quite good, because many residents are starting to care and look for information about candidates before voting, such as looking for information about the vision and mission of candidates so they can choose leaders who really suit the needs of the village." *(Interview, April 16, 2026)*



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Then, a statement from another village resident, namely Mr. MA, stated:

> "By looking for information about candidates so that they don't make the wrong choice and can support candidates who have a clear work program for village progress, the community will also be involved in monitoring the election of this village head." *(Interview, April 18, 2026)*

Based on the results of interviews with several informants, it can be concluded that the political awareness of the community in Ratte Village is relatively good and has a significant influence on participation in the Village Head Election. This can be seen from the increasing activeness of the community in exercising their right to vote, seeking information about Village Head candidates, understanding the candidates' vision and mission, and taking part in monitoring the election process so that it is conducted honestly and fairly. This increase in political awareness also encourages people to be more selective in making choices to support leaders who are considered capable of bringing progress to the village.

The research results can be analyzed through the finding that the political awareness of the Ratte Village community has an important role in shaping the quality of political participation, especially in the election of the Village Head. This political awareness is reflected in the public's increasing understanding of their rights and obligations as citizens, especially in the context of exercising their right to vote responsibly. Based on the results of interviews with informants, the public is no longer passive in the election process but is beginning to show more active involvement in the pre-election, implementation, and monitoring stages. This indicates positive developments in the political culture of the village community, which is increasingly characterized by more conscious and rational participation.

Community political awareness can also be seen from the increasing habit of searching for and accessing information about Village Head candidates. People do not only choose based on emotional closeness, tradition, or environmental influence but also begin to consider more substantive aspects, such as the vision, mission, and work programs offered by the candidates. This process shows an increase in the quality of voters' rationality in determining political choices. In this way, the decision to choose is no longer made arbitrarily but is based on more objective considerations and in accordance with village development needs. This is in line with the view that people who have high political awareness tend to be more selective and critical in determining leaders who are considered capable of bringing about positive change.

Likewise, the research results show that the people of Ratte Village not only act as voters but also participate in monitoring the process of selecting the Village Head. Involvement in this supervision reflects an understanding that honest and fair elections are not only the responsibility of the organizers but also the collective responsibility of all elements of society. Participation in election supervision is a form of social control that is important in maintaining the integrity of the democratic process at the local level. By involving the community in monitoring the election process, the potential for fraud can be minimized, so that the democratic process can run more transparently and accountably.



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Surbakti (2018) also emphasized that quality political participation is characterized by a rational attitude in choosing, namely when people use objective considerations based on adequate information before making their political choices. The findings of this research show that the people of Ratte Village have begun to implement this pattern, in which they no longer choose arbitrarily or based solely on emotional factors but instead consider the work programs and abilities of the candidates for Village Head.

**Trust in the Government/Election Committee**

Political beliefs relate to people's opinions about institutions and systems, including politicians, political systems, and political institutions. Political trust connects people and the institutions that represent them, thereby increasing the legitimacy and effectiveness of democratic government. Political trust is directed not only toward the government but also toward other institutions and actors associated with it. Apart from that, trust and satisfaction with democracy are factors that can influence political participation. Individuals who have positive experiences or perceptions of democracy tend to be more involved in the democratic process (Kiess, 2022; Singh & Mayne, 2023; Chapman et al., 2024).

In the election of the Village Head in Ratte, this trust was an important factor influencing the level of community participation. If village residents have high trust in the organizing committee, they are more likely to believe that the election process is fair, transparent, and impartial, thereby encouraging them to participate in voting. This trust also strengthens the legitimacy of the election results because the public feels that the elected leaders were chosen through a democratic process.

The following is an interview with the Chair of the Committee:

> *"We carry out every stage of the election based on the rules that have been established, starting from compiling the Final Voter List, the nomination process, to voting and counting the votes. We also open access to the public to witness the voting and counting process directly. Then, the results of the counting are also announced openly so that the Village Head Election, especially in Ratte Village, does not arouse suspicion."* (Interview, April 21, 2026)

The Executive Committee stated:

> "We carry out all stages in accordance with applicable regulations and involve the public in the monitoring process, especially during voting and counting votes, so that everything is open." *(Interview, April 14, 2026)*

Furthermore, according to one of the village residents, Mr. AS:

> "I am quite confident because the committee seems to be working openly and providing clear information to the public. They also involve citizens in several stages, such as supervising the vote count, thus creating a sense of confidence that the process is running honestly." *(Interview, April 16, 2026)*

Then, a statement from another village resident, namely Mr. MA, stated:

> "I believe that because the committee seems to be working openly and giving the public the opportunity to witness the election process, this makes me confident that no fraud was committed." *(Interview, April 18, 2026)*



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Based on the results of interviews with several informants, it can be concluded that the level of public trust in the Village Head Election organizing committee in Ratte Village is relatively high. This is demonstrated by the implementation of the election stages, which are carried out openly, according to the rules, and provide opportunities for the public to be directly involved in supervision, especially in the process of voting and counting votes. This openness makes the public feel confident that the election process is honest and impartial.

From the results of the research, it can be analyzed that the level of public trust in the Village Head Election organizing committee is relatively high. This trust is one of the important factors influencing the success of the democratic process at the village level because political trust is the main basis that connects the community with government administrative institutions. When the public has confidence that the committee works honestly, transparently, and according to the rules, they will be more encouraged to participate actively in every stage of the election.

In this research, public trust is formed through transparency in the implementation of Village Head Elections. The organizing committee demonstrated openness at every stage, starting from compiling the Final Voter List and the nomination process to voting and counting the votes. This openness is strengthened by providing the public with access to witness the voting and counting processes directly. Apart from that, the open announcement of the results is also an important factor that strengthens public confidence that there is no manipulation in the election process. This shows that the principle of transparency implemented by the committee has contributed to building public trust in the democratic process taking place in Ratte Village.

Regarding community involvement in the monitoring process, this also has a major contribution to increasing trust in the organizing committee. By involving the community in monitoring the election process, especially at the voting and vote-counting stages, the community feels that it has a direct role in maintaining the integrity of the election. This condition not only increases feelings of trust but also strengthens the legitimacy of the election results themselves. The public feels confident that the elected leaders are truly the result of a fair and democratic process rather than the result of fraud or certain interests.

According to Delton (2017), trust in political institutions will increase the legitimacy and effectiveness of government. The results of this research show a clear correspondence with this view. The relatively high level of public trust in the organizing committee has contributed to the acceptance of the election results. The public did not show suspicion or rejection of the results because they felt that the election process had taken place openly and in accordance with applicable regulations. Therefore, political trust has an important role in maintaining social and political stability at the village level.

Public trust is also closely related to satisfaction with the ongoing democratic process. When people have positive experiences in participating in elections, such as openness of information, opportunities to supervise, and processes that are perceived as fair, satisfaction with the democratic system itself can be formed (Muhamad & Hermawan, 2023; Asimakopoulos et al., 2025). This satisfaction can then encourage people to continue participating in the political process in the future. Trust therefore not only affects the ongoing election but may also have longer-term implications for people's political participation.



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## Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion regarding community political participation in the election of the Head of Ratte Village, Tutar District, Polewali Mandar Regency, it can be concluded that the level of community participation is high and of sufficient quality. This can be seen from the three forms of political participation studied, namely political discussions, campaign activities, and voting. First, in the aspect of political discussions, the community shows active involvement both in official forums facilitated by the committee and in informal spaces such as families and social circles. These discussions play a role in increasing people's political understanding and strengthening their awareness in making choices. Second, in campaign activities, the community is not only an audience but also attends and participates in various campaign activities, such as open meetings, thanksgiving events, and discussions among residents. Well-organized campaigns by the committee help create an orderly atmosphere and provide fair opportunities for all candidates. Third, in the voting process, the level of public participation was very high, with voter turnout reaching around 90%. This demonstrates the political awareness and responsibility of citizens in exercising their voting rights. The voting process also took place in an orderly, transparent, and conducive manner, supported by accurate voter administration through the Final Voter List (DPT). In addition, factors influencing people's political participation include political awareness and trust in the organizing committee. Political awareness encourages people to be more rational in voting, while trust in the committee increases the legitimacy of the election process.

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