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Millennial Voter Behavior in Regional Candidate Elections in Southeast Sulawesi

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Abstract

This study aims to examine, identify, and describe the behavior of millennial voters in regional head elections in Southeast Sulawesi. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews and documentation studies, while data analysis was carried out qualitatively by interpreting the patterns and meanings obtained from the field research results. The results of the study indicate that the behavior of millennial voters is influenced by three main factors, namely sociological, psychological, and rational choice factors. Sociological factors place voting behavior in a social context, where political choices are influenced by demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds, such as family influence, place of residence, education level, occupation, income, religion, and social and cultural similarities. Psychological factors relate to voters' emotional closeness to candidates, such as admiration, personal closeness, and orientation toward candidate figures. Meanwhile, rational choice factors indicate that millennial voters increasingly consider candidates' vision and mission, track record, and previous political experience in making their choice. This study concludes that millennial voters in Southeast Sulawesi tend to exhibit increasingly rational voting behavior, although social and psychological influences still play a role in the political decision-making process.

Keywords: Voter Behavior, Millennial Voters, Regional Head Elections, Rational Choice, Southeast Sulawesi.

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INTRODUCTION

General elections are the main instrument in a democratic system for channeling the sovereignty of the people and increasing the political awareness of citizens. Through general elections, the public has the opportunity to freely and responsibly make political choices in accordance with their aspirations and interests. In the Indonesian context, the implementation of direct regional head elections, which began in 2005 based on Law No. 32 of 2004 on Regional Government, marked an important transformation in local democratic practices. This change signified a shift from an elite vote system to a popular vote system, while also strengthening the implementation of democracy at the regional level.

The implementation of direct regional head elections requires the commitment of all stakeholders to realize a democratic process that is honest, fair, transparent, and accountable. The success rate of regional head elections is not only determined by the performance of election organizers and political contestants, but is also greatly influenced by the political participation of the community. Political participation is an important indicator in assessing the quality of democracy, as it reflects the active involvement of the public in the political and governmental processes. High political participation indicates political awareness, while low participation may indicate weak public attention and trust in the democratic process.

One aspect that influences the level of participation and results of regional elections is voter behavior. In political science studies, voter behavior is generally analyzed through three main approaches, namely sociological, psychological, and rational choice approaches. The sociological approach views political choices as a reflection of the voter's social background, such as family, religion, neighborhood, and social identity. The psychological approach emphasizes the role of attitudes, perceptions, and voters' emotional closeness to candidates or political parties. Meanwhile, the rational choice approach views voters as rational actors who make choices based on considerations of benefits, vision and mission, and the track record of candidates.

In practice, voting behavior in Indonesia is not always based solely on rational considerations. Emotional factors, social ties, charisma, and cultural background often play a dominant role in determining people's political choices. This situation is further complicated by the increasing role of millennial voters as a significant and distinct group of voters.

Millennial voters are the generation born between 1985 and 2000 who grew up alongside the rapid development of information technology. This generation is known to be adaptive, open-minded, and creative, but on the other hand, they show varying levels of political literacy. Millennial voters rely heavily on digital media and social media as sources of political

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information, which do not always guarantee the accuracy and objectivity of the information. This makes millennial voters vulnerable to disinformation, identity politics, and pragmatic political approaches.

Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency, the proportion of millennial voters in national elections is around 20-30 percent of the total number of voters. In Southeast Sulawesi, young people and millennials also make up a significant proportion of the voter demographic, giving them a strategic role in determining the direction and outcome of regional elections. The large number of millennial voters makes this group a key target in various campaign and political communication strategies.

Despite their significant potential in determining election results, millennial voters still face issues of low political literacy and apathy toward formal political activities. This situation has implications for the quality of political participation and political choices made. Therefore, studies on millennial voter behavior are important for understanding the dynamics of local democracy and formulating more effective political education and communication strategies.

Based on the above description, this study aims to analyze the behavior of millennial voters in the Regional Candidate Elections in Southeast Sulawesi. By using Southeast Sulawesi as a case study, this study is expected to contribute academically to understanding the factors that influence the voting behavior of millennial voters and to provide recommendations for strengthening the quality of democracy and political participation at the regional level.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the behavior of millennial voters in regional elections in Southeast Sulawesi. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the meanings, perceptions, and political considerations of millennial voters in the surrounding social and political context.

The research data was sourced from primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews and direct observation of millennial voters residing in Southeast Sulawesi who had experience exercising their right to vote in regional elections. Informants were selected based on specific criteria, namely belonging to the millennial generation born between 1985 and 2000, residing in Southeast Sulawesi, and having participated in regional head elections. Informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques, considering that these informants were deemed to have the best understanding of the issues under study. The number of informants was determined gradually until the data obtained reached saturation.

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Data collection was conducted through semi-structured and unstructured interviews with open-ended questions to obtain in-depth and comprehensive data related to the voting behavior of millennial voters. In addition, documentation studies were used to supplement primary data by examining official documents, archives, reports, and literature relevant to regional candidate elections and voter behavior. Documentation served as supporting data and comparative material to the information obtained through interviews and observations.

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively and took place concurrently with the data collection process. The stages of analysis included data collection, data reduction by selecting and focusing on relevant information, presenting data in the form of a systematic descriptive narrative, and drawing conclusions based on consistent patterns and findings. Through these stages, this study is expected to produce a comprehensive empirical picture of the behavior of millennial voters in regional elections in Southeast Sulawesi.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Trends in Millennial Voter Behavior in Regional Candidate Elections in Southeast Sulawesi

The results of this study explain the behavior of millennial voters in South Konawe Regency, referring to voter behavior indicators, namely voting activities by individuals that are closely related to election activities or decision-making to vote or not to vote in a general election , voters will choose or support certain candidates.

Broadly speaking, there are three models or schools of thought used in the study of voting behavior, namely the sociological model, the psychological model, and the rational choice model or political-economic model. The latter model is also known as the rational choice model. The following will describe the assumptions and factors offered by each of these three models based on the concept of voter behavior. Affan Gaffar states that there are several approaches to examining the reasons why voters choose certain candidates in an election.

Referring to these approaches, the author attempts to describe and analyze voter behavior trends based on these three models, resulting in the following findings:

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Table of research results from 25 informants in Southeast Sulawesi

Kecenderungan perilaku pemilih milenial		Keterangan
1.	**Faktor sosiologis dalam perilaku memilih**	sebanyak 32.00% informan generasi milenial mengatakan bahwa mereka memilih karena adanya dorongan pilihan orang tua (keluarga) dan juga memilih karena faktor kesamaan suku. peneliti menemukan bahwa tingkat pendidikan pemilih yang memilih berdasarkan faktor pendekatan sosiologis, dominan tingkat pendidikannya rata-rata lulusan SMA-Sederajat. Atau tingkat pendidikannya lebih rendah Yang mana dapat disimpulkan bahwa mereka yang termasuk ke dalam pemilih model sosiologis juga dipengaruhi oleh tingkat pendidikan yang rendah sehingga mereka tidak melek dan kurang paham akan politik, sehingga dalam menentukan pilihannya lebih mudah di pengaruhi oleh keputusan orang tua.
2.	**faktor Psikologis dalam perilaku memilih**	terdapat 12.00% Informan generasi milenial memutuskan memilih pada pemilihan kepala daerah di Sulawesi Tenggara karena mereka melihat kepopuleran kandidat di media sosial, kharismatik yang dibangun oleh pasangan kandidat mempengaruhi keputusan pemilih milenial dalam menentukan pilihannya. dengan kata lain penulis dapat simpulkan bahwa pemilih jenis ini memiliki orientasi terhadap kandidat.
3.	**Faktor pilihan Rasional dalam perilaku memilih**	Pendekatan pilihan Rasional merupakan model yang paling dominan di temukan peneliti berdasarkan hasil penelitian selama 3 bulan. Terdapat 56.00% pemilih milenial memilih pasangan calon karena melihat kondisi ekonomi daerahnya, dimana pemilih mempertimbangkan program-program kerja yang ditawarkan oleh Kandidat serta melihat kinerja kandidat pada pemerintahan sebelumnya. Mayoritas responden yang memilih berdasarkan faktor pilihan rasional tingkat pendidikannya lebih tinggi yaitu rata-rata Sarjana atau Sedang Menempu pendidikan di perguruan tinggi. Oleh karena itu, milenial yang tingkat pendidikannya lebih tinggi dan melek secara politik dan ekonomi ini yang kemudian mendorong munculnya independensi dan nonpartisan terhadap politik, dalam artian kelompok menengah ini tidak memiliki kesetiaan tunggal terhadap salah satu partai politik maupun Kandidat tertentu.

Based on the table described by the researcher above to clarify the results of this study, the results of the study are further described based on Affan Gaffar's voter approach indicators as follows:

Sociological factors in voting behavior

A sociological approach that tends to place voting activities in a social context. Where a person's choice in an election is influenced by demographic and socioeconomic background factors such as gender, family (parental roles), place of residence, occupation, class education,

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income, and religion. To provide an overview of voter behavior using a sociological approach.

Parents' choices for millennial voters are considered correct by most voters, without knowing the merits of the candidates. This is in line with Gaffar's opinion in Yustiningrum (2010) that a person's voting behavior tends to follow the political direction of the social environment in which they live, as well as various social ties that exist in society. In addition, David Apter in Indar Melani (2014) describes the influence of family on children's voting choices, namely the similarity between a child's choice and that of their parents. That is, "the alignment or similarity of choices between parents and their children is natural. This is because the family is the first to have access to the formation of self-identity, learning the values of their environment and society, including their political role.

A study of voting behavior in Indonesia using a sociological approach was first introduced by Afan Gaffar. In his book Javanese Voters, he shows that there is a tendency for voters to have socio-religious or socio-personal political preferences. Socio-religious preferences view political participation and voting behavior as being based more on the political context of the movement, while socio-personal preferences focus on the context of paternalism based on paternalistic relationships. This means that parents have a role and influence in determining voters' choices.

The earliest process, the formation of attitudes—including the formation of children's political attitudes—first occurs within the family environment. This phase is the family learning phase. During this phase, children first begin to learn from their parents about their parents' feelings toward political leaders, their parents' feelings toward political issues, and sociological bonds of this kind, which are still theoretically relevant today in terms of understanding a person's voting behavior.

This is in line with a 2017 Poltracking Indonesia survey, which found that parents' influence accounted for 13.30% of the 800 respondents' choices. This is because millennial voters' understanding of politics and elections in particular is still very limited and is supported by their apathy towards elections and the significant role of parents in determining their children's political choices.

Based on the author's observations of millennial informants, 32.00% of millennial voters chose the candidate for South Konawe Regent in 2020 because they followed their family's choice, in this case their parents, and also because of ethnic similarities, as they believed that their parents' choices were always correct. On average, voters who voted based on sociological factors in South Konawe Regency had a lower level of education.

A person's level of education will influence many things in life, including political participation. With a high level of education, people will be able to develop a mindset in

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determining their attitudes and choices, especially in political life. If voters have a high level of education, then their choices will be in line with their preferences, without coercion or pressure from any party.

Education in building an ideal political life. A high level of education and maturity will enable a person to better understand their political choices, including participation. Therefore, education and political participation have a strong relationship with people's voting decisions. This means that the better the education of the people, the better their political participation will be.

Psychological factors in voting behavior

The social psychological approach takes the form of orientation towards candidates ( ), whereby voters feel an emotional closeness and admiration for their chosen candidate. Popularity and admiration for candidates are the reasons why millennial voters make their choice; they feel that they know the prospective leaders they have chosen, both in terms of their background and previous political experience. Millennial voters make their choice because they idolize the candidate, so they find it easier to trust the leader, based on their experience and the emotional bond they feel with them due to their populist nature, which they believe makes them suitable to be a leader.

Based on the author's observations of the psychological model of millennial voters in regional elections in Southeast Sulawesi, millennial voters usually vote for candidates because they are well-known or popular, and this is what attracts millennial voters to vote. The choices of millennial voters, who spend most of their daily lives on the internet or social media, are determined by this factor.

From observations of 25 millennial informants who voted in the regional head elections in Southeast Sulawesi, 12.00% of millennial voters stated that they voted because they felt close to or admired one of the candidate pairs, or voters who voted based on their orientation towards the candidates.

Choice factors Rational in voting behavior

The Rational Choice Approach views voting as the product of calculating gains and losses. Economic/rational factors in voter behavior are related to evaluations of one's own economic condition, that of one's family, and also the national economic condition, which then influence one's choice of candidate. For voters, cost-benefit considerations are used to make decisions about which party or candidate to vote for, especially when deciding whether or not to vote in

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regional elections.

To provide an overview of voter behavior using a rational choice approach, interviews were conducted with millennial voters in Southeast Sulawesi.

In this case, millennial voters can vote rationally in exercising their voting rights by considering several factors, such as the programs promised and their previous experiences in politics. This is in line with Downs' theory, which emphasizes individual motivation to vote or not and how to vote based on calculations of the benefits resulting from the chosen decision.

Millennials in Southeast Sulawesi have extensive knowledge, feelings, and assessments regarding rational choice approaches. Millennials make decisions to vote or not to vote based on this rational choice approach because they know, feel, and assess that the vision and mission of the candidates and their leadership abilities are their considerations in voting. Millennials also fully support the idea that a candidate must have leadership, assertiveness, and discipline. The problems faced by society today should be a challenge for competing candidates to overcome properly and correctly with their abilities. Some millennials also assess and hope that the candidates' promises can be realized if they are elected later.

Higher education can provide information about politics and political issues, develop analytical skills, and create interest and political competence. The higher the level of education of the community, the higher their political awareness. Conversely, the lower the level of education, the lower the level of political awareness. In this case, voters prioritize the capabilities of political parties or election candidates based on their work programs. They evaluate these work programs by looking at the past performance of the parties or candidates, as well as the programs offered by the candidates or political parties to solve current problems.

Millennial voters with higher levels of education are characterized by their lack of concern for the ideology of a political party or candidate. The most important thing for them is what a party or candidate can do and has done. In this case, millennial voters can vote rationally by considering several factors, such as the work programs promised by candidates and even the political experience of previous candidates. This is in line with Downs' theory, which emphasizes individual motivation to vote or not and how to vote based on calculations of the benefits resulting from the chosen decision. The most important thing to note from the rational voting theory is that voting in elections contributes to collective outcomes, rather than influencing voters solely as individuals.

Based on the author's observations of the rational choices of millennial voters in the Candidate Election in Southeast Sulawesi, millennial voters are on average more interested in choosing candidates based on their vision and mission, their performance in previous

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administrations, and their approach to solving problems and improving the welfare of the community. Millennial voters, especially in Southeast Sulawesi, with higher education levels compared to previous generations, are automatically less easily influenced by what others say. Supported by advances in technology and information, everyone, including millennial voters, can easily obtain information from both the mass media and social media, making it very easy to compare candidates with each other, whether in terms of their political experience or their vision and mission.

A study of the behavior of millennial voters in regional elections in Southeast Sulawesi, which relates to the three factors that influence political choices, namely sociological, psychological, and rational factors, emerged in specific conditions through the results of the author's research.

Sociological factors reveal factors such as ethnic background and socio-personal influences that emphasize the context of paternalism based on paternalistic relationships, meaning that parents have a role and influence in determining voters' choices, and educational factors such as voters' educational backgrounds, which influence choices in regional candidate elections in Southeast Sulawesi. Psychological factors show that orientation towards candidates in the form of admiration for a candidate's charisma and the popularity of candidates can influence the voting decisions of millennials, even though this is the least common voter model found by the author. Meanwhile, the factor of rational choice shows that evaluation of the economic conditions of the region then influences the choice of political party and candidate in the regional candidate elections in Southeast Sulawesi. Voters consider the work programs promised by candidates and look at the track record of the candidates' leadership backgrounds before making a choice, which is a rational consideration for this type of millennial voter . This is in line with Downs' theory, which emphasizes that voting in elections contributes to collective outcomes rather than influencing voters solely as individuals.

Rational voters generally have a higher level of education, predominantly holding bachelor's degrees or currently pursuing higher education. This higher level of education makes rational voters politically literate and aware of the economic conditions in their region, which in turn encourages independence and non-partisanship in politics. In other words, this group does not have sole allegiance to any political party or candidate in the Southeast Sulawesi regional head elections. As a result, in regional head elections, this type of voter tends to consider the work programs offered by candidates that are in line with the needs of their region and look at the leadership track records of the candidates in the past.

Millennials can be said to have contributed significantly to the regional head elections in

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Southeast Sulawesi based on the sociological, social psychological, and rational choice approaches to voter , which are in line with the theory proposed by Affan Gaffar. From the results of interviews conducted with 25 informants who are millennials, 56.00% of informants stated that they are millennials who make their choices based on a rational choice approach, while 12.00% of informants stated that they are social psychological voters. Furthermore, 38.00% of informants chose based on a sociological approach or were voters who made their choices based on their parents' (family's) choices and ethnic similarities.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the behavior of millennial voters in the Regional Candidate Elections in Southeast Sulawesi is influenced by three main approaches, namely sociological, psychological, and rational choice approaches. These three approaches are intertwined in shaping the political preferences of millennial voters, although their levels of influence vary in the political decision-making process.

The results of the study show that the rational choice approach is the dominant trend in determining the political choices of millennial voters. Millennial voters give more consideration to the candidates' vision and mission, the performance of the previous administration, the candidates' ability to solve public problems, and the candidates' track record and popularity as obtained through social media. These findings indicate a shift in voting behavior towards more rational and information-based considerations. However, sociological and psychological approaches continue to play a supporting role, particularly through the influence of family, especially parents, as well as emotional closeness and attraction to the candidate.

In addition, this study also found supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the behavior of millennial voters in seeking political information. Social media and political socialization from political parties play a major role as supporting factors in increasing access to information about candidates and the programs they offer. Conversely, the rampant spread of false information (hoaxes) and money politics are significant inhibiting factors. Hoaxes circulating widely through social media tend to cause confusion, doubt, and changes in the political preferences of millennial voters, thereby potentially weakening their rationality in making choices. Thus, it can be concluded that although millennial voters in Southeast Sulawesi show a tendency toward more rational voting behavior, they are still vulnerable to social and emotional influences and information distortion. Therefore, improving political literacy and strengthening the quality of political information is important to encourage more conscious, critical, and responsible political participation among millennial voters in regional elections.

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