



Community Voting Behavior in the 2022 Simultaneous Village Head Election (Pilkades) in Demak Regency

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze voter behavior in the 2022 simultaneous village head elections (Pilkades) in Demak Regency, especially in Sayung Sub-district. The focus of this research is to identify the factors that influence voters' decisions in choosing a village head, by highlighting aspects of prominence, kinship, pressure, and money politics. This research used mixed methods involving four key informants and 100 respondents spread across 19 villages in Sayung Sub-district. The results showed that the candidate's character was the dominant factor in determining voters' choices with a percentage of 75%. Kinship factors accounted for 17%, political pressure for 7%, and the influence of money politics was relatively small, at only 1%. In addition, 78% of the community already knew the track record of elected candidates before the election took place. These findings show that voters in Demak Regency tend to have rational behavior patterns in determining their political choices. The better the programs promoted by village head candidates during the campaign, the greater their chances of winning the election. In conclusion, voter behavior in the 2022 simultaneous Pilkades in Demak Regency is dominated by rational considerations, where voters prioritize candidates' track records and work programs in determining their choices.

Keywords: Voting Behaviour, Village Community, Simultaneous Village Head Election, Demak Regency

1 Introduction

Village head election contests are a continuation of Indonesia's democratization at the rural level. The latest political policy at the village level based on Law No. 6/2014 on Villages regulates the implementation of village head elections (hereinafter Pilkades) which are held simultaneously. The village head election itself cannot be separated from the development of sources of power in the political dynamics that occur in the village [Firmanzah, 2007]. Village head elections are not only an arena for power struggles as a show of economic power that is the basis of oligarchic power, but also an arena to see whether or not there are non-material sources of power that are still being utilized by the contestants [Endik, 2018]. The organization of village head elections is a democratic celebration for the community because villagers can participate directly by casting their votes to elect candidates for village heads who are responsible and can advance the potential of the village. In this regard, a candidate for village head requires a winning strategy in order to gain votes from the local

community. In developing a winning strategy, candidates need to know the behavioral patterns of the people who are targeted by candidates for election [Firmanzah, 2006]. The election of village heads upholds the values of mutual cooperation and family principles carried out by the village community and is responsible to the village community. In the village government, we can see a picture of the political development process in Indonesia with a democratic system and direct elections because the roots of the Indonesian democratic system and government come from the culture of customary government in the form of villages [Erowati, 2023].

Kabupaten Demak consists of 14 sub-districts and 249 villages, which requires qualified village leaders through village head elections [demakkab.bps.go.id]. The election of village heads in Demak Regency has also become an arena for power struggles in each round of village head elections. Candidates for village heads use various methods to win the village head elections. The simultaneous village head elections in Demak were supposed to be attended by 183 villages, but only 182 villages were held; 1 village did not hold a village head election. The village head election will be held on October 16, 2022. One of the village head elections is in Sayung Sub-district. Reporting from the website demakkab. go.id Village Head Election in Sayung Subdistrict, there are 19 villages participating in the Village Head Election, namely Bulusari, Dombo, Jetaksari, Kalisari, Karangasem, Prampelan, Pilangsari, Tambakroto, Loireng, Sayung, Sriwulan, Bedono, Sidogemah, Gemulak, TimbulSloko, Surodadi, Tugu, Sidorejo, and Banjarsari. Of the 19 villages in Sayung Sub-district, there were 14 villages that won and were elected as villages with new village heads defeating incumbent village head candidates. Thus, there was a significant change in the voting behavior of the community in Demak Regency, especially in Sayung Sub-district, namely in Tugu Village, Sidogemah Village, Pilangsari Village, and Bulusari Village.

Based on data from the Demak Regency General Election Commission (KPU), the number of Permanent Voters List (DPT) in 2022 reached 896,901 voters. To accommodate and facilitate voters in giving their voting rights in the election, Demak Regency provides 3,658 polling stations (TPS) with the need for 25,606 KPPS. The demographics of voters in Demak Regency show that the participation of young voters is quite significant. There were 651 first-time voters spread across 14 sub-districts, with the following details:

Table 1. List of the number of first-time voters in the Demak Pilkades in 2022

Kecamatan	Jumlah Pemilih Pemula
Bonang	56
Demak	39
Dempet	6
Gajah	29
Guntur	31
Karanganyar	19
Karangawen	52
Karagtengah	75
Kebonagung	9
Mijen	5
Mranggen	127
Sayung	118
Wedung	53
Wonosalam	32
Total first time voters	651

Source: Demakkab.go.id

With the number of permanent voters (DPT) reaching 896,901 voters and the participation of 651 first-time voters, Pilkades Kabupaten Demak 2022 is an important momentum in local political dynamics. The high number of first-time voters indicates that the younger generation is getting involved in the democratic process at the village level. In addition, the sex ratio, which shows 98 males per 100 females, also provides an overview of the distribution of voters by gender, which has the potential to influence the campaign strategies of village head candidates. In the 182 villages that held simultaneous Pilkades, there was a shift in political power in some areas. Sayung Subdistrict, for example, is an example of a significant change in voter behavior, with 14 out of 19 villages electing new village heads, defeating incumbents. This phenomenon indicates the existence of political dynamics that are influenced by various factors, such as satisfaction with the previous village head, the influence of community leaders, and the campaign strategies implemented by village head candidates.

This demographic data is important for understanding the dynamics of voters in the 2022 Pilkades in Demak District, especially in developing effective winning strategies for village head candidates. This is the results of a pre-research interview conducted by the author on January 2, 2024, with Mrs. Khasanah as the wife of the Village Head elected for the 2022 Dombo Village Head Election, Sayung District, stating :

"It is true that there will be changes in the village head election process in 2022. Many people are changing their votes not to re-elect the old village head, it is possible that residents are dissatisfied with the old village head's policies. When my husband ran for the 2022 village elections, it was also because many residents complained to me, they wanted changes in the village and they complained about some development in the village being unequal, the distribution of BLT (direct cash assistance) being unequal. (author's interview with the wife of the Dombo Village Head on January 2, 2024)."

From the results of the pre-research interviews that the author conducted above, the author can conclude that the cause of the defeat of the incumbent village head candidate was community dissatisfaction with the incumbent candidate's performance. There are several approaches to looking at voter behavior, namely the sociological approach (Columbia School), the psychological approach (Michigan School), the rational approach, and the marketing approach [Nursal, 2004]. By using these three approaches we can describe in general what influences changes in people's voting behavior. Thus, the author is interested in researching what influences changes in voting behaviour because knowing the factors that influence political choices is needed in developing marketing strategies that are useful in activities to attract public sympathy in selecting candidates for participating in the Village Head Election so that the problem formulation is as following:

1. What is the picture of changes in people's voting behaviour in the Village Head Election in Sayung District, Demak Regency 2022?
2. What factors caused the defeat of the incumbent?

2 Methodology

This research uses a mixed method approach, combining qualitative methods through interviews with several key informants, and quantitative methods by distributing questionnaires and analyzing data using SPSS. The sampling technique in this study used purposive sampling to select key informants in qualitative interviews, namely individuals who have a direct relationship with the village head election process, such as village head candidates, success teams, community leaders, and active voters. Meanwhile, for quantitative data collection, this study used proportional stratified random sampling, by dividing the population based on the village where the incumbent candidate lost.

The respondents of this study consisted of 100 residents in several villages, where the incumbent village head candidate lost the election. The characteristics of voters who are respondents in this study are the people who participated in voting in the implementation of the Demak Regency Pilkades in 2022. In addition, the characteristics of respondents include demographic variables such as age, gender, education level, and occupation. In addition, socio-political factors such as the level of participation in elections, political preferences, reasons for selecting candidates, and the level of satisfaction with the performance of the previous village head were also analyzed to understand voting patterns and factors that influence voters' decisions. This research applies the voting behavior theory by Newman and Sheth, which develops a voter behavior model based on several domains related to marketing, as follows:

1. Political Issues and Policies
Support and loyalty require a long-term process and cannot be shaped solely during the campaign period leading up to the election. The social responsibility of political parties should be continuous, following societal developments. Indicators of political issues and policies can be seen through the programs offered by candidates.
2. Social Image

Social image can be influenced by various factors, including demographics (such as age, gender, and religion), socioeconomic factors (such as employment and income), cultural and ethnic factors, and political ideology. Social imagery reflects stereotypes about candidates or parties, aiming to attract voters by creating associations between candidates or parties and specific segments of society. Social imagery represents the candidate's image in voters' minds, reflecting in which social group or affiliation the candidate or political party is perceived to belong.

3. Emotional Feelings

This refers to the emotional dimension that radiates from a candidate or policy offered by the candidate. For example, a candidate proposing to deploy elite forces to suppress separatist movements may evoke feelings of patriotism, decisiveness, and commitment.

4. Candidate Image

This refers to the essential personal traits perceived as part of a candidate's character. Image can be categorized as a party's 'positioning' strategy among other parties. Candidate personality refers to important personal traits considered characteristic of the candidate, with indicators including articulateness, compassion, stability, energy, honesty, decisiveness, and so forth.

5. Current Events

This involves a set of events, issues, and policies that emerge before and during the campaign. Generally, current events can be divided into domestic and foreign issues. Domestic issues include inflation rates, economic forecasts, separatist movements, security threats, rampant corruption, etc., while foreign issues include wars between neighboring countries, invasions, and other examples that impact voters, either directly or indirectly.

6. Personal Events

This refers to personal life events experienced by a candidate, with indicators including scandals, business activities, being a victim of a particular regime, involvement in specific struggles, participation in national defense, and so forth.

7. Epistemic Factors

These are specific election issues that can trigger voters' curiosity about new things, with indicators such as the emergence of public distrust toward political institutions that are part of the ongoing system.

To see tendencies in voting behavior, there are several approaches according to Dennis Kavanagh who states that there are 3 models of approach to voting behavior, namely the sociological, psychological and rational approaches.

3 Result and Discussion

Demak Regency has cultural and socio-political backgrounds that influence voter behavior in the 2022 Village Head Election (Pilkades). As the first center for the spread of Islam in Java, religious culture is still an integral part of the community's social life. The Great Mosque of Demak, founded by Raden Patah, as well as religious traditions such as Grebeg Besar, Dugderan, and Syawalan are still preserved and influence the mindset and social behavior of the community [demakkab.go.id, 2024]. The social

structure of Demak society is also still influenced by kinship and patronage relationships, where community figures have an important role in determining the political direction of their citizens.

In the socio-political field, Kabupaten Demak has a government structure consisting of 14 kecamatan, 241 villages, and 6 kelurahan. Community political participation is quite high, as seen from the participation rate in the 2004 legislative elections, which reached 83% [demakkab.go.id, 2024]. This high level of political participation was also reflected in the 2022 Pilkadaes, where the majority of voters had good political awareness in choosing the village head based on their track record and programs.

The number of respondents in this study is 100, with the majority being female, representing approximately 56% of the sample. Most voters in the 2022 Village Head Election in Demak Regency were aged 35–45. This indicates that millennial participation in the election is significant, as both incumbent and new candidate victories were influenced by the perspectives of the millennial generation in Demak Regency. Millennials, as a progressive, well-educated, and information-selective generation, are inclined to evaluate or assess the performance of incumbents. If millennials perceive the incumbent's performance as poor, they are more likely to support opposition or new candidates. This evaluative tendency led millennials to cast their votes in the 2022 Village Head Election in Demak Regency.

Based on the data obtained by the researcher, 78 respondents (78%) were well-acquainted with the background or track record of the candidate pairs they voted for, influenced by connections such as family and friends. However, 22 respondents (22%) did not know the background of their chosen candidates due to factors such as lack of community involvement or working out of town. Most respondents (69%) had no familial ties with the candidates. A total of 83% of respondents voted based on the programs proposed by the candidates, indicating that they valued the development plans or vision presented by the candidates as essential for advancing their villages. This aligns with the opinion of Wati, who stated, "I chose the candidate because I know them, and they have good programs for road repairs, mosque renovation, and cemetery maintenance." Thus, Wati's choice was based on both personal familiarity and the quality of the proposed programs.

The phenomenon of money politics is still a part of Pilkadaes in Demak Regency. All respondents (100%) admitted that they received incentives in the form of money or goods from candidates, although they still considered the candidates' programs. This creates a paradox, as voters ostensibly vote based on programs but are given incentives. One resident, Slamet, explained:

"In all village head elections across Demak, money is used. Some candidates give money just before the election, while others provide goods like cooking oil, noodles, and sugar when they announce their candidacy. Then, right before the election, they give 'transport money' to ensure we attend; otherwise, we'd prefer working for wages. Occasionally, they distribute funds at the inauguration, but that's rare."

Slamet's explanation suggests that financial incentives have become a habit, as voters are less likely to come to the polls without them. Of course, this is very linear when viewed in a socioeconomic context, as Demak Regency still faces challenges, such as a poverty rate that reached 37.92% in 2004 and an open unemployment rate of 9.10% [demakkab.go.id, 2024]. These economic factors contribute to the acceptance of political incentives by the community in Pilkades. For some voters, transportation money or basic food assistance compensates for their economic condition.

In terms of social influence, 80% of respondents stated that community leaders did not influence their choice, while 20% of respondents said their choice was influenced by community leaders. In addition, 96% of respondents believe that a candidate's track record helps them predict the outcome of a candidate's leadership. It is assumed that candidates with a strong track record will lead positively. In addition, 97 respondents reported no pressure or intimidation, while three respondents mentioned experiencing coercion from candidates' campaign teams when they refused incentives, leading to obstruction by hired thugs on the way to the polling station. All respondents (100%) had witnessed candidate campaigns, 51% through banners/ billboards, and 49% in face-to-face meetings.

The utilization of campaign media in Pilkades also showed significant progress. All respondents (100%) stated that they witnessed candidates' campaigns, with 51% viewing through banners and billboards, while 49% attended face-to-face meetings. This suggests that candidates are using varied communication strategies to reach voters

This was reinforced by Mrs Ismiati as a resident of Gemulak village as follows:

"In the 2022 village elections, I chose Mrs. Lilik Latifah. Because I know him, she was the wife of the former head of Gemulak village the previous year. "When her husband served as village head, he was very friendly with the residents; he was also very liked by the residents here." (interview with Ismiati, Friday, June 21 2024).

The response from Muh.Sofa, as a resident of Dombo Village, recognizes the background of the selected village head candidate:

"From what I know, the incumbent village head in Dombo Village, when leading, was not by the people's wishes, such as services that were too complicated, so this made me choose Pak Kasran in the 2022 village elections. "Because in my opinion, Mr Kasran is a straightforward and proven person. Only 1 year into his leadership period, the alley here has been corroded/tidy." (interview with Muh. Sofa, Monday, June 24 2024).

As many as 83% of the public voted based on the program promised during the campaign. The program that is brought up will be taken into consideration by the community when selecting the candidate to nominate. Of course, the testimonials from residents reinforce the findings of this research. Mrs. Ismiati from Gemulak Village chose the candidate based on experience and personal closeness, while Muh. Sofa from Dombo Village chose the candidate based on dissatisfaction with the previous leaders.

Factors influencing candidate selection in the 2022 Village Head Election included candidate profile (75%), kinship (17%), coercion (7%), and incentives (1%). Voters generally prioritized candidates' personal qualities when making their choices. This finding contrasts with interviews with Slamet who supported Slamet's statement, saying, "The Village Head Election only happens once every six years. We get transport money, so why refuse? Here, it's about 50,000 to 200,000 rupiah, which replaces our work earnings. We vote for whoever gives the most, but if one candidate is family, we choose family. If neither candidate is family, then family members split their votes between A and B to receive transport money from both."

Regarding candidate selection based on appearance, 22% of respondents admitted choosing based on the candidate's looks, while 78% did not, indicating that appearance is generally not a deciding factor.

4 Conclusion

The 2022 Village Head Election (Pilkades) in Demak Regency reflects the complex dynamics of local democracy, where voter behavior is influenced by various factors, both rational, emotional and socio-political. The research results show that changes in voter behavior in the village elections were mainly influenced by evaluations of the incumbent's performance, candidate work programs, as well as social factors such as kinship and the influence of community leaders. Dissatisfaction with the incumbent leadership is the main reason why many incumbent candidates lost in the 2022 Village Head Election. Factors such as less than optimal public services, unequal distribution of aid, and development inequality are the main issues that trigger voters to look for alternative new leadership.

In the context of selection factors, the majority of voters (83%) stated that the candidate's work program was the main factor in determining their choice. Apart from that, the candidate's profile (75%) is also an important consideration, followed by kinship factors (17%) and coercion (7%). Money politics is still a phenomenon in the village elections, but it is not a dominant factor in determining choices, because the majority of voters still consider the candidate's vision and track record. Socially, religious culture and political patronage still have an influence on voting patterns, but final decisions tend to be determined by pragmatic evaluations of candidate performance. The role of the millennial generation is also quite significant, considering that this group is more critical in assessing the performance of incumbents and is more open to leadership changes.

Thus, these findings confirm that voter behavior in the 2022 Village Head Election in Demak Regency is dominated by rationality and evaluation of candidates, although there is still the influence of social and cultural factors. The results of this research also show that voters are becoming more selective in making their choices, indicating an increase in political awareness at the village level.

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