

**ORIGINAL ARTICLE**

# Increasing voter participation and its obstacles: An analysis of youth organizations in political education in the Makassar mayoral election

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## Abstract

The implementation of the 2020 Makassar Mayoral Election shows that the level of political participation is still low. This condition needs to be evaluated by reviewing the extent of the role of various parties in encouraging increased community political participation. Political education is the main key in building public political awareness. The Indonesian Youth National Committee (KNPI) of Makassar City has a role in increasing voter participation through political education. The purpose of this research is to find out the political education of the National Committee of Indonesian Youth (KNPI) Makassar City in increasing voter participation. This research method uses a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, field observations, documentation, literature studies and online media. The results showed that the Makassar City KNPI has a role in increasing public political awareness, especially among young voters, through neutral and independent political education. This is realized through cooperation with the KPU and Bawaslu, board development, and physical and digital socialization efforts. However, effectiveness still faces various challenges, such as political apathy, distrust of the system, lack of method development, lack of youth representation in local politics, and the stigma of organizational independence. Therefore, there is a need for greater collaboration and innovative approaches to overcome barriers to youth political participation more effectively.

## Keywords

Voter Participation, Political Education, KNPI Makassar City, Mayor Election, Youth Studies.

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Community political participation is one of the important indicators in assessing the quality of democracy in a region. Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) as part of the democratic process is a momentum for people to exercise their voting rights actively and responsibly (Lengkoan et al., 2022). However, the level of voter participation in Pilkada is often influenced by various factors, one of which is the level of understanding, political awareness and lack of trust in the government (Hakim & Iztighfari, 2021). In this context, political education becomes a crucial instrument to increase public awareness and participation in elections (Harnom et al., 2019). Every part has an obligation to provide political education, one of which is from Youth organizations. So that youth organizations play a role in the political education process, especially building political awareness among the community, especially novice voters and young people (Hasibuan, 2021).

As mandated in Law No. 40/2009 on Youth. Youth organizations function to support national interests, empower potential, and develop leadership, entrepreneurship, and pioneering. Gathering youth and becoming a forum for various Youth Community Organizations (OKP) is the Indonesian Youth National Committee (KNPI) (Nursamsami et al., 2020). As stated in Law No. 8 of 1985 as the only forum for the youth movement. The dynamics of KNPI support the improvement of the quality of youth. The management of KNPI which comes from various OKPs demands increased achievements in organizational progress (Saputra et al., 2017). Its contribution is through involvement in various fields of service, be it in the political, economic and socio-cultural fields. KNPI can conduct educational programs through various activities such as training.

Education is not only in classrooms, but education can come from anywhere and in any form or what is known as non-formal education (Priandi & Roisah, 2019). The existence of KNPI has recorded a lot of history in producing leaders in the Republic of Indonesia (Zusma, 2017). Formed on July 23, 1973, this organization is a collection of critical thinking, a dynamic and democratic organization in guarding democracy and reform in Indonesia (Abadi & Wulandari, 2022). Given that KNPI has a role in non-formal education to build a political paradigm from the youth. Therefore, KNPI is needed in increasing political participation at the national and regional levels, especially among youth. Youth have the right to vote as much as 35-40% or 80 million of the 185 million voters in the 2019 General Election (Pemilu) (Zulkarnain & Saufi, 2021).

In general, the 2019 General Election recorded a voter participation rate of 81%, which exceeded the national participation target of 77.5%. This figure shows a significant increase compared to previous elections. In the 2014 elections, participation in the Legislative Elections (Pileg) was recorded at 75.10%, while in the Presidential Elections (Pilpres) only reached 69.58% (Rois, 2019). If traced further back, the participation rate in the 2004 presidential election was 79.76%, then decreased in 2009 to 74.81%, and again decreased dramatically in 2014. The surge in participation in 2019 can be an indicator of increased public awareness and political involvement in the democratic process.

**Table.1** Number of Regions, Voters, and Participation in Simultaneous Regional Head Elections (2015-2020)

Year Election	Province	District	City	Total Region	Number of Voters (DPT)	Participation Rate (%)
2015	9	224	36	269	96869739	69,2
2017	7	76	18	101	41199607	74,5
2018	17	115	39	171	152057054	73,24
2020	9	224	37	270	100359152	76,13

Source: (Ode et al., 2022)

Meanwhile, the level of participation in the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) was held in 270 regions, which included Governor Elections in 9 Provinces, Mayor and Deputy Mayor Elections in 37 Cities, and Regent and Deputy Regent Elections in 224 Regencies (Table 1). The table provides a comprehensive overview of the dynamics of the implementation of simultaneous regional elections during the period 2015 to 2020. It can be seen that the number of participating regions has increased, from 269 regions in 2015 to 270 regions in 2020, with the

number of provinces, regencies, and cities varying each year. In terms of the number of voters, the highest Permanent Voter List (DPT) was recorded in 2018, at 152 million voters. Voter participation was highest in 2020, at 76.13%. The data visualization in Figure 1 shows the increasing trend of voter participation from year to year. According to Ode et al. (2022), this was influenced by positive perceptions of the implementation of regional elections, handling the pandemic, increasing public confidence in the credibility of elections, and strong local political mobilization.

**Figure 1.** Voter Participation Rate in Regional Head Elections in Indonesia (2015-2020)



Source: Processed from General Election Commission (KPU) Data

This increase cannot be separated from the role of all parties in building political awareness both in General Elections and Regional Head Elections or Mayor Elections. In line with this, KNPI, which has Regional Representative Councils (DPD) in all regencies / cities in Indonesia, efforts to conduct political education as an effort to increase political participation can be easily carried out, given the dynamics that exist in this organization. One of them is KNPI Makassar City. KNPI Makassar City, which houses all youth in Makassar City, in 2020 has held a Mayoral Election consisting of four pairs including Danny-Fatma with serial number 1, Appi-Rahman with serial number 2, Deng Ical-Fadli Ananda with serial number 3, and serial number 4, Irman-Zunnu. In this contestation through an open plenary meeting of the General Election Commission (KPU), Danny-Fatma won with 218,908 votes or 41% of the total valid votes.

**Table 2.** Participation Rate of the 2008-2020 Makassar City Mayor Election

No.	Year	Participation (%)	Abstention(%)	Permanent Voter List
1	2008	58,48	41,52	959.814
2	2013	59,94	40,06	988.208
3	2018	57,02	42,98	990.836
4	2020	59,66	40,34	921.696

Source: Processed from various sources (Ali, 2020; Janji, 2014; Kasim, 2022; Syukur, 2020)

Based on the data (Table 2), the level of voter participation is still far from expectations because it is still far from the target set at 70% in 2020. In 2020, voter turnout was 59.66%, an increase of 2.64% compared to 2018 of 57.02%. This figure is still 0.28% lower than 2013 which reached 59.94%, but higher than 2008 which was only 58.48%. In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, this achievement should be appreciated. However, it certainly needs to be evaluated in order to increase political participation by all parties, including KNPI Makassar City. The way to increase political participation is political awareness. People who understand their rights and obligations in election activities (Nasution & Kushandajani, 2019). The effort to realize this is through political education.

Organizational activities and management dynamics, KNPI has a role so that political awareness through political education can be carried out. The implementation can be divided into two, namely direct and indirect media. Direct media are seminars, discussions, training, and open debates. Indirect media include making banners, leaflets,

pamphlets, bulletins, placing advertisements in the mass media, disseminating information via the internet, and so on (Prayugo & Prayitno, 2022). Increased political participation can also be seen from becoming active/passive members of political organizations, quasi-membership of political organizations, in rallies, demonstrations, political discussions (Rush & Althoff, 2003).

Several studies have discussed the role of KNPI in increasing political participation through political education, both implicitly and explicitly (Abadi & Wulandari, 2022; Fauzi & Bestari, 2019; Hasibuan, 2021; Jis et al., 2015; Pahlepi et al., 2022; Pamungkas, 2022; Pardede, 2020; Rompis et al., 2019). Pahlepi et al. (2022) focused on the internal structure of KNPI without directly mentioning political agendas such as elections. Pamungkas (2022) highlighted the personal attitudes of administrators who tend to play politics. Rompis et al. (2019) also examined the issue of political participation efforts of KNPI South Minahasa but did not lead to Political Education and General Elections. once deceptively mentioned that participation (Hasibuan, 2021) criticized the weak role of KNPI Medan due to the lack of synergy with election organizers and internal problems. However, these studies have not reviewed many forms of participation and obstacles in political education.

Referring to the efforts that can be made in providing political education as an effort to increase political participation, KNPI Makassar City has a role in realizing this and contributing to elections as a means of increasing community participation. Therefore, through this research, researchers want to know and examine "Increasing Voter Participation and Its Obstacles: An Analysis of Youth Organizations in Political Education in the Makassar Mayoral Election".

## 2 | RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods in data collection, namely by obtaining information directly from the informants involved. Qualitative research aims to understand the phenomena experienced by the subject to analyze the role of KNPI in political education towards community participation in the Regional Head Election, namely the 2020 Makassar City Mayor Election. Secondary data in the form of interviews, observations, and documentation with KNPI administrators, literature studies and online media. This research was conducted at the Makassar City KNPI Secretariat for two months, namely October and September 2021.

Research informants were selected based on their involvement in the research object, both as main and additional informants, namely KNPI Makassar City (Main), General Election Commission (KPU) Makassar City, and Youth Leaders as well as various informants found in online media. Research instruments include observation, interview guidelines, and documentation tools such as cameras and voice recorders. Data collection techniques include direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation to strengthen the findings. The data obtained were analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1992). This resulted in a clearer understanding of the KNPI's role in increasing community political participation and its obstacles.

## 3 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 | Contribution of KNPI Makassar in Encouraging Political Participation through Political Education

The Indonesian Youth National Committee (KNPI) of Makassar city plays an important role in increasing public political participation in Regional Head Elections, in this case the 2020 Mayor and Deputy Mayor Elections. As a youth organization, KNPI is committed to providing political education to the community, especially first-time voters. Although it is not a practical political organization, KNPI remains active in socializing the importance of political participation by working with the General Election Commission (KPU) and the General Election Supervisory Board (BAWASLU) of Makassar City. This socialization effort aims to reduce apathy towards politics, especially among the younger generation. KNPI Makassar City is not allowed to be involved in practical politics, such as supporting or campaigning for certain candidates in elections or local elections. KNPI's main focus is to raise political awareness

through neutral and independent educational programs. Based on the results of an interview with Mr. Aiman Adnan (Chairman of KNPI Makassar City for the 2021-2024 Period) said that:

*"KNPI is a red plate (an institution under the auspices of the government) so it is unethical or not allowed to engage in practical politics and it is prohibited. KNPI can only provide education such as voter participation, do not abstain, provide awareness, not apathy, socialization to help the government carry out the democratic party," (Interview 24 September 2021).*

The attitude of KNPI Makassar City encourages an understanding that using voting rights is part of one's responsibility as a citizen. Gabriel Almond (Sudaryanto et al., 2022) asserts that political education is part of political socialization that aims to shape political values and build public participation in the political system. Political education creates an understanding of individual and collective responsibility in dealing with various national problems with a value-based approach to mentality and political ethics. Kirshner (2006) also emphasizes that political education in youth communities can build structural awareness of how individuals can contribute to social change. In the 2020 Makassar Mayor Election, KNPI acts as a facilitator in providing understanding to the community to more actively participate in the democratic process.

Although only focusing on education, KNPI Makassar City realizes that increasing political participation in the Regional Head Election is not an easy thing. People's political apathy is still a big challenge, especially among first-time voters. Based on the results of an interview with Mr. Aiman Adnan (Chairman of KNPI Makassar City for the 2021-2024 Period) said that:

*"Usually apathetic voters, especially beginners. They prefer to hang out instead of going to the polling station or choose to go to the mall instead of going to the polling station so that genius education is needed so that these young people are not apathetic" (Interview, September 24, 2021).*

However, Zhelnina (2020) argues that apathy occurs because disappointing personal experiences make them cynical and no longer believe in collective action to bring about change, family environment and cultural norms. They tend to keep their distance from politics and feel comfortable not getting involved. As a result, they prefer to spend their time on other activities rather than coming to the polls. Therefore, creative and effective educational methods are needed to prevent youth apathy towards elections. At the same time, it is the answer to overcoming the White Group (Golput) in Makassar City (Table 2).

Political apathy among first-time voters is often caused by distrust of the government system. Many of them avoid political discussions and perceive politics as something negative. This phenomenon can be seen in the lack of interest in political issues, distrust of political institutions, and reluctance to participate in political activities. Based on the results of an interview with Mr. Rijal Djamel (Youth Leader) said that:

*"KNPI is a bridge for young people who have minor voices to be noticed and conveyed to the government. Don't be synonymous with the government. If surveyed to young people in coffee shops, ask if you know KNPI, maybe he will call, what is the importance of me knowing KNPI" (Interview Results September 29, 2021)*

An opinion that implies how unimportant KNPI is to young people. This shows that the efforts of the political education process in increasing voter participation are difficult to achieve. In line with this, Husna (2019) argues that this low interest in politics shows that more creative and effective political education is needed. Creative efforts in political education to increase voter participation have been pursued by KNPI through socialization. The following is the explanation of Mr. Aiman Adnan (Chairman of KNPI Makassar City for the 2021-2024 Period):

*"Through education, through creative campaigns, now that we are in the age of digitalization, the campaign model certainly does not have to be manual anymore, there is no need to meet face to face,*

*education is now easier with just social media, of course these creative campaigns must be proposed by KNPI to educate voters to contribute" (Interview Results September 24, 2021).*

Creative campaigns through social media enable the rapid and widespread dissemination of political education without face-to-face meetings. In the digital era, creative campaigns through social media are an effective means to improve citizens' political literacy and encourage active and conscious voter participation (Juwandi et al., 2019). The involvement of KNPI Makassar City in Political Education to increase public participation in the 2020 Makassar Mayor election is recognized by the Makassar City General Election Commission (KPU). The following is an explanation from Mrs. Yuswita (Technical and Public Relations Staff of the Makassar City General Election Commission):

*"Overall, everything is good, the role of KNPI is very beneficial to the KPU because it really helps to increase participation, its job is to help socialize, such as helping the KPU to socialize helping how to use voting rights, golput champions, how we help the community to use voting rights". (Interview Result September 4, 2021).*

However, when referring to existing data (Table 3), political education as an effort to increase voter participation still requires creative and effective education. The data (Table 3) shows that there are still urban villages in Makassar City in the 2020 Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) that are relatively low and most of them are in Wajo District. Whereas it is known that Makassar City has 153 urban villages spread across 15 sub-districts.

**Table 3.** Lowest Participation Rate in the 2020 Makassar Mayor Election

No	District	Village	Participation (%)
1	Biringkanaya	Daya	45
2	Panakkukang	Masale	47
3	Wajo	1. Melayu Baru	47,78
		2. Butung	47,86
		3. Malimongan Tua	50,36
		4. Pattunuang	50,43
		5. Ende	43,95
4	Ujung Pandang	Baru	50,2
		Sawerigading	50,2
5	Wajo Baru	Bontoala	50,41

*Source: Processed from (Antony, 2021)*

In response to this (Table 3), the South Sulawesi KPU held political education in areas where the participation rate was still low. The purpose of this activity is to invite residents to discuss the obstacles that cause their low interest in participating in the Regional Head Election. In addition, the KPU also urges citizens to be involved not only as voters, but also as election organizers in the future (VOI, 2020). The following is an explanation from Mrs. Yuswita (Technical and Public Relations Staff of the Makassar City General Election Commission):

*"Although we are constrained in carrying out our duties due to the Covid-19 pandemic, so our achievements are considered not optimal. However, we worked diligently to socialize in the community while complying with health protocols. By using democracy volunteers who help us, one of which is from the Makassar City KNPI," (Interview Result September 4, 2021).*

On the other hand, there are several urban villages that showed the highest level of participation in the 2020 Makassar City Regional Election (Table 4). Some villages such as Lakkang (Tallo District) and Untia (Biringkanaya District) have participation rates of more than 80%. Responding to this difference in participation rates, KNPI Makassar City continues to strive so that every cadre or administrator can fill existing political spaces and encourage novice

voters not to be apathetic towards politics. KNPI uses a more creative educational approach through social media and digital campaigns.

**Table 4.** Highest Participation Rate in the 2020 Makassar Mayor Election

No	District	Village	Participation (%)
1	Ujung Tanah	1. Ujung Tanah	69,63
		2. Pattingallaoang	69,37
2	Tallo	Lakkang	88,79
3	Biringkanaya	Utia	82,18
4	Ujung Pandang	Lae-Lae	76,1
5	Mariso	Bonto Rannu	74,9
6	Sangkarrang	Barang Caddi	74
7	Mamajang	1. Labuang Baji	68,12
		2. Bonto Biraeng	70,36
8	Tamalate	Barombong	68,1

*Source: Processed from (Antony, 2021)*

The approach used by KNPI Makassar City in political education is in line with the principle of youth organizing which emphasizes the active role of youth in political and social processes (Kim & Sherman, 2006). Not only focusing on social change, but supporting individual development in understanding and managing existing political dynamics. The following is the explanation of Mr. Aiman Adnan (Chairman of KNPI Makassar City for the 2021-2024 Period):

*"Apart from institutional work in political education through social media. Individual work from youth can fill strategic posts such as becoming board members, directors. Given a stage, the trust to contribute can be a political education to motivate voters, increasing participation," (Interview Results September 24, 2021).*

There is research showing that social media can be a trigger for political activism. Social media provides a platform for disseminating information and organizing grassroots movements (Lim, 2003). For example, the role of social media in the 2012 Jakarta gubernatorial election demonstrated its ability to mobilize young voters and influence political outcomes (Astuti & Hangsing, 2016). Ginwright and James (Rogers et al., 2012) also add that young people not only aim to increase participation, but also build critical awareness of existing power structures in society.

With creative efforts and synergy with the organizers of Regional Head Elections, including the 2020 Makassar Mayor Election, it is hoped that this can be a positive step in increasing public political awareness. Supervision from the KPU on this collaboration is also an important factor in measuring the effectiveness of KNPI's role in political education. Youth leaders in Makassar City emphasized that KNPI must be a forum that gathers various potentials of young people, both in terms of creativity, criticism, and productivity in entrepreneurship. Thus, KNPI can become a mecca for young people in understanding and contributing to politics. Evaluation of the methods of socialization and political education carried out by KNPI is still needed so that voter participation, especially among first-time voters, can be improved.

3.2 | Obstacles to Increasing Political Participation through Political Education in the 2020 Makassar Mayoral Election  
Political education is one of the fundamental aspects in building public awareness about the importance of involvement in the democratic process. In the context of the 2020 Makassar City Mayor Election, efforts to increase voter participation, especially among young people, face various complex challenges. KNPI Makassar City as a youth organization has a strategic role in the political education process. However, in its implementation, there are still various obstacles in political education as an effort to increase voter participation.

This obstacle can be seen that the level of voter participation in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in South Sulawesi placed Makassar City in last place as the lowest voter participation. The city, which should have insight and information openness, actually shows a low level of participation. Even Bulukumba, still recorded better numbers than Makassar (Ali, 2020). What makes various organizations unable to increase voter participation in the 2022 Makassar Mayor election?



Fig 2. Voter Participation Rate in the 2020 South Sulawesi Regional Election. Source: Processed from Ali, 2020

In addition, when viewed from Table 2, it shows that from 2008-2020 the level of voter participation in Makassar City is relatively low. This indicates that the role of all parties, both KNPI Makassar City, especially from the organizers of the General Election Commission (KPU), the Election Supervisory Agency (BAWASLU) and the Government, can be even better, and strengthen synergies with youth organizations, such as KNPI, especially KNPI Makassar City. Based on the observations and results of the research conducted, the following obstacles were found:

#### Lack of Development of Political Education Methods

Political education conducted by KNPI still uses conventional methods that are less attractive to the younger generation, such as invitations to vote through social media or testimonial videos that are often insufficient to encourage active involvement of young people. Campbell & Kwak (2011) argue that political communication on social networking sites has significant effects, but not for those who are short-sighted, so a link between offline and online political participation is needed.

“Active learning” that enhances political participation is relevant, where methods such as open classroom climate (Willeck & Mendelberg, 2022), meaningful service learning, critical pedagogy that builds social awareness (Nelsen, 2021), and experiential learning can be applied to increase the effectiveness of political education. Therefore, discussions are inclusive, reflective, and involve youth in various community activities. KNPI needs to apply more interactive and community-based methods that are closer to the daily realities of youth and society in general.

#### Lack of Youth Representation in Local Politics

One of the main obstacles in increasing political participation is the underrepresentation of young people in the local political arena. The dominance of senior politicians in the political structure creates a representation gap for the younger generation. Young people are often marginalized due to lack of experience, social connections and resources to actively participate as part of socio-economic factors (John, 2009). Youth involvement in politics is considered to represent equal value for first-time and young voters.

This is because personal values influence political participation, which can direct political activity and can become representation if supported by political efficacy (Munawarah & Kristanto, 2022). So that when youth representation is in power or political structures and is supported by political efficacy, it can be a representation in increasing political participation. In addition, perceptions of politics that are still considered transactional and pragmatic further reduce the interest of youth to be actively involved in politics. Without an improvement in the representation system and the creation of more inclusive spaces for young people, their political participation will continue to stagnate.

#### Stigma against Independence

KNPI Makassar City faces obstacles in building an image as an independent and neutral organization in political education. Some youth are still skeptical of the political education efforts made by KNPI because they are considered to have affiliations with certain political groups. This is in line with the findings of Citrin et al. (2001) that individuals who identify with political groups are more likely to be exclusive and less tolerant of other groups. As a result, public trust in the Makassar City KNPI political education program may decrease because it is considered affiliated, even though this is not the case. Therefore, wider socialization is needed so that various political education programs in increasing political participation can be realized. KNPI Makassar City can build trust and increase youth involvement in democracy more inclusively.

## 4 | CONCLUSION

KNPI Makassar City has a strategic role in increasing public political participation, especially young voters, through neutral and independent political education. By collaborating with KPU and Bawaslu, KNPI seeks to reduce political apathy through board development and physical and non-physical socialization such as on social media. The development of administrators can be a political education to increase participation and motivate youth. However, the effectiveness of the program still requires more interesting innovations so that the achievement of participation can exceed the target in the future. There are still challenges in political education carried out by KNPI Makassar City to increase voter participation in the 2020 Makassar mayoral election, namely, the lack of method development, the lack of youth representation in local politics, and the stigma of organizational independence.

Further research is needed in mediating the limitations of community informants and Youth Community Organizations (OKP) as well as data on Makassar City KNPI activities before, during and after the election process. Therefore, it is suggested that further research can include more informants from various backgrounds, complete various activities carried out and use mixed methods. In addition, it is important to explore how political representation of youth in local government structures can encourage increased political participation.

### Disclosure Statement

The authors declare that there are no potential conflicts of interest affecting the research, writing, or publication of this article. All data and information used in this study have been presented transparently and objectively for scientific purposes.

### Data Availability Statement

The data used in this article are sourced from interviews, documentation, literature studies in the form of articles, reports, online news media, and other publication sources relevant to political participation, political education, the Indonesian Youth National Committee, especially Makassar in order to complete this research. To get further access to the references used, readers can contact the author at the email address listed in this article.

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