

# The South Kalimantan Provincial Election Commission's Strategy to Increase First-Time Voters in the 2024 South Kalimantan Gubernatorial Election

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## Article Info

### Article history:

Received Oct, 2025  
Revised Oct, 2025  
Accepted Oct, 2025

### Keywords:

Political Communication  
First-Time Voters  
South Kalimantan KPU  
Regional Elections  
Voter Participation

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the strategy of the General Elections Commission (KPU) of South Kalimantan Province in increasing the participation of first-time voters in the 2024 South Kalimantan Gubernatorial Election (Pilgub). The study used a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews with KPU South Kalimantan commissioners and data obtained from official KPU South Kalimantan reports. The results show that the KPU South Kalimantan implemented a multidimensional political communication strategy through educational, participatory, and digital approaches. Several main programs carried out included the Election Procession activities, the launch of the "Bekantan" mascot, outreach at universities, and collaboration with mass media and youth organizations. The use of social media such as Instagram, YouTube, and X (Twitter) was also carried out interactively through quizzes with prizes to attract the attention of first-time voters. This effort proved effective with an increase in the number of first-time voters from 277,777 in the 2020 Pilgub to 702,500 in the 2024 Pilgub. However, the KPU South Kalimantan still faces obstacles, such as limited budget for outreach and the lack of grouping of voter data by age category. This research emphasizes the importance of sustainable, data-driven, and inclusive political communication strategies to strengthen youth participation in local democracy.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Regional head elections (Pilkada) are a concrete manifestation of democracy in Indonesia, where the public is given the space and freedom to express their political aspirations directly, publicly, freely, secretly, honestly, and fairly. Pilkada not only serves as a means of changing leadership but also

serves as an indicator of the success of the democratization process at the local level. Through the active participation of citizens in elections, we can measure the extent to which democratic values have taken root and the extent to which political awareness has

developed within a system of government based on law and public participation.<sup>1</sup>

In the context of local democracy, first-time voters hold a strategic position because they are a young generation participating in the political process for the first time. First-time voters are crucial for the sustainability of democracy and shape the future political direction of the nation. However, this group's political participation is often suboptimal. Lack of political knowledge, limited experience, and low interest in public issues make first-time voters tend to be apathetic towards the political process. This poses a serious challenge for the General Elections Commission (KPU), the election organizing body responsible not only for the technical aspects of election implementation but also for fostering public political awareness through ongoing education and outreach.<sup>2</sup>

In South Kalimantan Province, these challenges are increasingly complex given the region's diverse social and geographical conditions. Based on data obtained by researchers from the South Kalimantan Provincial Election Commission (KPU), the number of first-time voters in the 2020 gubernatorial election was recorded at 277,777 out of a total of 2,793,811 voters, while in the 2024 gubernatorial election, this number increased significantly to 702,500 out of a total of 3,041,499 voters. This significant increase indicates a rise in political awareness among young voters. However, behind this data lies a strategic effort undertaken by the South Kalimantan KPU in managing political communication and voter education to effectively and sustainably reach young people.

The urgency of this research stems from the need to gain a deeper understanding of how the political communication strategy implemented by the South Kalimantan General Elections Commission (KPU) can

significantly increase the participation of first-time voters. This is important not only from an empirical perspective but also theoretically, as it relates to the effectiveness of public communication by state institutions in the context of local democracy. Furthermore, the strategy implemented by the South Kalimantan KPU is not only informative but also persuasive and participatory, positioning young voters as active participants in the democratic process. Therefore, this research is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how political communication approaches contribute to increasing public political participation at the regional level.

This study aims to analyze the South Kalimantan General Elections Commission (KPU)'s strategy to increase first-time voter participation in the 2024 South Kalimantan gubernatorial election, by reviewing the form and effectiveness of the communication strategies implemented, as well as the factors that support and hinder their success. Another objective of this study is to identify innovations in the KPU's voter education and outreach activities, particularly in reaching young voters through digital and interactive approaches. The researchers hope that the results of this study can serve as a reference for election management bodies in developing more effective, inclusive, and adaptive communication strategies.

The theoretical basis of this research refers to political communication theory, which views communication as the primary means of shaping public opinion and political behavior. According to Dan Nimmo, political communication is the process of conveying messages aimed at influencing the political views, attitudes, and actions of individuals or groups through planned communication strategies.<sup>3</sup> Nimmo emphasized that the effectiveness of political communication depends heavily on the ability of political

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<sup>1</sup>Moleong, Lexy J. (2019). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.

<sup>2</sup>Deni, Saiful, Aji Deni, Aswir Badjodah, et al. (2023). *Demokrasi & Komunikasi Politik*. Eureka Media Aksara.

<sup>3</sup>Nimmo, Dan. (1980). *Political Communication and Public Opinion in America*. New York: Longman.

institutions or actors to adapt messages and media to the characteristics of their audiences. Effective public communication is communication that takes into account the social and cultural context of society and involves feedback as a measure of its success.<sup>4</sup>

Political participation is at the heart of a democratic system, and the quality of democracy can be measured by the extent to which citizens have equal opportunities to participate in the public decision-making process.<sup>5</sup>The South Kalimantan KPU's political communication strategy in increasing the participation of first-time voters can be understood as a concrete implementation of the principle of participatory democracy that positions the community as the primary actor in political life.

Through the theoretical framework of this research, it is emphasized that the success of the South Kalimantan General Elections Commission (KPU) in increasing the participation of first-time voters depends not only on the technical readiness of the election administration, but also on the effectiveness of political communication carried out strategically, planned, and based on community needs. With an inclusive, interactive, and educational communication approach, the South Kalimantan KPU has not only succeeded in increasing the number of young voters who participate, but also fostering a more mature political awareness among the younger generation of South Kalimantan as a manifestation of the democratic responsibility of citizens.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 *Basic Concepts of First-Time Voter Participation*

Political participation is a crucial indicator for measuring the quality of a country's democracy. Through

participation, citizens demonstrate their involvement in public decision-making, both directly and indirectly. First-time voters are citizens who are eligible to vote in a general election for the first time, typically aged 17–21. This group is highly strategic because they represent the next generation of democracy and will determine the direction of future political development.

The characteristics of first-time voters are complex. They generally exhibit a high level of enthusiasm for current issues, but also lack political experience and may not fully understand the importance of electoral participation. First-time voter participation is often influenced by internal factors such as political awareness and civic education, as well as external factors such as the social environment, the media, and political outreach from election-organizing institutions like the General Elections Commission (KPU).

Political participation includes all forms of citizen activity aimed at influencing political policies or decisions, both in active (voting, campaigning, joining a party) and passive (following political issues without direct action) forms.<sup>6</sup>In the context of first-time voters, the most fundamental form of active participation is exercising their right to vote in general elections or regional elections. Therefore,

<sup>4</sup>McQuail, Denis. (2010). *Mass Communication Theory* (6th ed.). London: Sage Publications

<sup>5</sup>Dahl, Robert A. (1989). *Democracy and Its Critics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

<sup>6</sup>Samuel P. Huntington & Joan Nelson, *Political Participation and Political Development* (American Journal of Sociology, 1977).

understanding the behavior and motivations of this group is crucial in designing strategies to increase political participation at the regional level.

## 2.2 *The Role and Strategy of the South Kalimantan KPU in Increasing Voter Participation*

As the election organizing body, the General Elections Commission (KPU) has a constitutional mandate not only to conduct free and fair elections but also to ensure that all citizens understand their right to vote. One of the KPU's primary mandates, as stipulated in Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning Elections, is to conduct outreach, voter education, and public participation at every stage of the election.<sup>7</sup>

In the context of South Kalimantan, the General Elections Commission (KPU)'s strategy to encourage first-time voter participation is crucial, particularly given the diverse geographic and sociocultural challenges. The South Kalimantan KPU serves not only as a technical organizer but also as an educational and communicative institution. Through various activities such as election parades, outreach programs at schools and universities, and the use of mass media and official social media, the KPU strives to reach young people with an approach that aligns with the communication styles of the digital generation.

This kind of strategic approach is not only oriented towards increasing participation rates, but also towards forming long-term political awareness.

Effective political communication can foster democratic awareness and public trust in the election process.<sup>8</sup>The KPU's success in increasing first-time voter participation is measured not only by the number of voters present at polling stations, but also by the extent to which democratic values are instilled in the younger generation.

## 2.3 *Theoretical Framework (Political Communication Theory)*

Political communication theory serves as the primary conceptual framework in this research because the strategy for increasing first-time voter participation relies heavily on the effectiveness of the KPU's political messaging. Political communication is the process of delivering persuasive messages aimed at influencing public perceptions, attitudes, and political behavior toward specific issues or candidates.<sup>9</sup>In the context of the South Kalimantan KPU, political communication is not directed at winning over a particular party, but rather at building collective awareness regarding the importance of exercising the right to vote as a form of citizen participation.

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<sup>7</sup>Undang-Undang Nomor 7 Tahun 2017 tentang Pemilihan Umum.

<sup>8</sup>Deni, Saiful, Aji Deni, Aswir Badjodah, et al. *Demokrasi & Komunikasi Politik*. Eureka Media Aksara, 2023

<sup>9</sup>Dan Nimmo, *Political Communication and Public Opinion in America*. New York: Longman, 1980.

The media plays a strategic role in the modern political communication process. It serves not only as a channel for information but also as an agent for shaping public opinion and political awareness.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the use of digital media by the South Kalimantan KPU, such as Instagram, X (Twitter), and YouTube, as well as mass media such as TV channels, radio, print media, etc., is an important part of its political communication strategy in its efforts to reach young voters. Social media and mass media allow for more interactive two-way communication, where the KPU not only delivers messages but can also receive direct feedback from first-time voters.

The South Kalimantan KPU's political communication strategy also reflects the two-step flow of communication concept, namely the dissemination of political messages through opinion leaders such as teachers, lecturers, youth communities, and local influencers who are trusted or are figures of speech for young voters.<sup>11</sup> This approach has proven effective because messages delivered through prominent figures or figures with social connections are more easily accepted by the audience. Crafting messages using simple language, engaging visuals, and relevance to the daily lives of

young people also increased the appeal of the South Kalimantan KPU's participatory campaign.

The effectiveness of the South Kalimantan General Elections Commission (KPU)'s political communication strategy can be seen in the increased participation of young voters in the 2024 South Kalimantan gubernatorial election. A communication approach that is not only informative but also educational and inspirational can create a more open and inclusive political environment. Political communication theory is the most appropriate analytical tool for understanding how messages, media, and audiences interact to shape the political behavior of first-time voters.

#### 2.4 Previous Research Review

Several previous studies have also provided insight into the strategies of election management institutions in increasing youth voter participation. Election awareness outreach activities among youth communities in Banjarmasin significantly increased understanding of the importance of exercising their right to vote.<sup>12</sup> In West Kalimantan, it was shown that community-based political communication and social media were the most effective approaches in mobilizing first-time voters in rural areas.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Denis McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory* (6th Edition). London: Sage Publications, 2010.

<sup>11</sup>Katz, E., & Lazarsfeld, P. *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications*. Free Press, 1955.

<sup>12</sup>Huda, Nurul et al. "Sosialisasi Sadar Pemilu Menjelang Pilkada pada Komunitas

Pemuda di Kota Banjarmasin." *Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 1(2), 2024.

<sup>13</sup>Irwan Putra, Suparno, Mardawani, Ade Verawati, & Nurul Fadilah. *Analisis Strategi KPU untuk Mendorong Partisipasi Politik Pemilih Pemula pada Pemilihan Umum Tahun 2024 di Desa Sungai Garong*. 2024.

The level of participation of young voters is influenced by the intensity of socialization and trust in election organizers.<sup>14</sup>From these research results, it can be concluded that transparent, creative, and technologically adaptive political communication is key to increasing youth voter participation in various regions. Therefore, research on the South Kalimantan General Elections Commission (KPU) strategy is crucial for providing new empirical contributions rooted in the local context of South Kalimantan.

### 3. METHODS

#### 3.1 Types and Approaches of Research

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type, because it aims to understand and describe in depth the strategies implemented by the General Election Commission (KPU) of South Kalimantan Province in increasing the participation of first-time voters in the 2024 South Kalimantan Gubernatorial Election (Pilgub). This approach was chosen so that researchers can trace the social phenomena that occur behind the KPU's policies and activities, not just measuring participation figures.

Qualitative research seeks to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perception, motivation, and actions holistically, by describing them in the form of words and language, in a specific natural context.<sup>15</sup>This approach allows researchers to obtain a comprehensive picture of how the

communication and socialization strategies of the South Kalimantan Provincial KPU shape the political participation of the younger generation.

A qualitative descriptive approach is also considered the most appropriate because it focuses on exploring meaning and interpretation, not just on the cause-and-effect relationships between variables. Qualitative research places greater emphasis on the meaning behind apparent phenomena, so the data obtained is in-depth and contextual.<sup>16</sup>Through this approach, researchers can understand the dynamics within the South Kalimantan KPU and identify factors that influence the level of participation among first-time voters.

#### 3.2 Location and Time of Research

This research was conducted at the South Kalimantan Provincial General Elections Commission (KPU) office in Banjarmasin City. This location was chosen purposively because the South Kalimantan General Elections Commission (KPU) is the provincial-level election management body with direct authority to develop and implement voter education and outreach programs. As the institution responsible for the 2024 South Kalimantan gubernatorial election, the KPU plays a strategic role in reaching first-time voters across all regencies/cities in South Kalimantan.

The research was conducted on October 15, 2025, after the 2024 South Kalimantan gubernatorial election was completed. This date was chosen because it was an evaluative moment, when all outreach activities, participatory campaigns, and voter education programs had been completed. This allowed researchers to obtain reflective and comprehensive data, both regarding the success of the KPU's strategy and the

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<sup>14</sup>Setiawan, Heru Dian & Tb. Massa Djafar. "Partisipasi Politik Pemilih Muda dalam Pelaksanaan Demokrasi di Pemilu 2024." *Populis: Jurnal Sosial dan Humaniora*, 8(2), 2023.

<sup>15</sup>Moleong, Lexy J. (2019). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.

<sup>16</sup>Sugiyono. (2018). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.

obstacles that arose during the implementation process.

Determining location and time in qualitative research must take into account data accessibility and the relevance of the social context to be understood.<sup>17</sup>In this case, choosing the post-election time helps researchers collect more objective and evaluative information because respondents already have real experience with the implementation of KPU strategies during the gubernatorial election stages.

### 3.3 Population and Research Subjects

The population of this study included all officials or staff of the South Kalimantan Provincial General Elections Commission (KPU) involved in outreach, voter education, community participation, and human resources (HR). However, due to time constraints and the in-depth nature of the research, the researcher employed a purposive sampling technique, selecting informants based on specific considerations relevant to the research focus.

Purposive sampling allows researchers to select informants who best understand the problem being studied, so that the data obtained is more accurate and in-depth.<sup>18</sup>This approach differs from random sampling, which emphasizes statistical representation; in qualitative research, the depth of information and its relevance to the research focus are more important. This subject selection is considered capable of providing a comprehensive picture of the South Kalimantan KPU's strategy in the context of first-time voters.

The main subject of this study is Mr. M. Fahmi Failasopa, M.Pd., MIP, as a Commissioner of the South Kalimantan Provincial General Elections Commission (KPU) and also as the Head of the Division of Socialization, Voter Education, Community Participation, and Human Resources. The

researcher chose him because the data and in-depth information sought by the researcher were related to the division he was in charge of and he had direct knowledge and experience in designing and implementing programs to increase the participation of first-time voters in the 2024 South Kalimantan Gubernatorial Election. He also played a role in the evaluation process of the implementation of socialization activities throughout the Province of South Kalimantan.

### 3.4 Variables and Operational Definitions

The main variable in this study is the increase in participation of first-time voters in the 2024 South Kalimantan gubernatorial election. This variable is defined as the increase in the number and active involvement of first-time voters in the 2024 South Kalimantan gubernatorial election process compared to the 2020 gubernatorial election.

Data from the South Kalimantan General Elections Commission (KPU) shows that in the 2020 gubernatorial election, the number of first-time voters was recorded at 277,777 out of a total of 2,793,811 voters. Meanwhile, in the 2024 gubernatorial election, this number increased to 702,500 out of a total of 3,041,499 voters, or an increase of approximately 424,723. This increase demonstrates the significant impact of the KPU's strategy, although external factors such as the simultaneous implementation of elections and the post-COVID-19 situation also played a role.

In this study, increasing participation is understood not only quantitatively (the number of voters present), but also qualitatively, namely how the General Elections Commission (KPU) builds political awareness among first-time voters through voter education and public communication. This approach is crucial for assessing the

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<sup>17</sup>Creswell, John W. (2016). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

<sup>18</sup>Sugiyono. (2018). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta

effectiveness of the KPU's strategy within the context of political communication theory, which emphasizes the role of messages and media in influencing public political behavior.

### 3.5 Data Types and Sources

This research uses two main types of data, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly from in-depth interviews with a key informant, namely a commissioner of the South Kalimantan Provincial General Elections Commission (KPU), who has direct authority over the implementation of the program to increase first-time voter participation. The interviews were conducted using semi-structured questions to maintain flexibility yet focus on the research topic.

Secondary data was obtained from official documents and publications of the South Kalimantan KPU, such as election stage reports, media releases, socialization content on social media, and news from trusted sources regarding the activities of the South Kalimantan Provincial KPU.

The combination of primary and secondary data is important for establishing validity and depth of analysis because it allows researchers to triangulate sources.<sup>19</sup>In this way, the findings from the interviews can be confirmed through written documents and digital sources, so that the research results are more credible and accountable.

### 3.6 Data Collection Technique

This study employed two primary data collection methods: semi-structured interviews and data collection from the South Kalimantan Provincial General Elections Commission (KPU) as the official data source. This approach was chosen to ensure that the researcher obtained data that was not only descriptive but also interpretive and

accountable. Therefore, the results of the study can provide a deeper understanding of the South Kalimantan KPU's communication strategy in increasing first-time voter participation in the 2024 gubernatorial election. Selecting the right data collection technique is crucial in qualitative research, as data quality will determine the accuracy of the conclusions drawn.<sup>20</sup>

This semi-structured interview was conducted with the main source, namely one of the Commissioners of the South Kalimantan General Elections Commission (KPU) for the Division of Socialization, Voter Education, Community Participation, and Human Resources, M. Fahmi Failasopa, M.Pd., MIP. This interview technique allows researchers to adjust questions according to the context of the conversation, as well as providing space for the source to express their views more openly. Moleong explained that semi-structured interviews are an effective way to explore the meaning of the research subject's experience in more depth, especially when researchers want to understand social phenomena from the source's perspective directly.<sup>21</sup>Through this interview, researchers obtained information regarding the form of communication strategies, challenges in the field, and innovations carried out by the KPU in reaching first-time voters throughout South Kalimantan.

In addition to interviews, researchers also obtained data from archives and official publications from the South Kalimantan Provincial General Elections Commission (KPU), including election outreach activity reports, voter turnout data, and internal documents relevant to the research focus. These data served as complementary sources of information that strengthened the interview results and provided a factual basis for the research analysis. Combining

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<sup>19</sup>Moleong, Lexy J. (2019). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.

<sup>20</sup>Sugiyono. (2018). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.

<sup>21</sup>Moleong, Lexy J. (2019). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.

interview data with institutional data increased the validity of the study because researchers could verify the correspondence between field findings and empirical data from official institutions.<sup>22</sup>

The use of these two data sources provides the methodological advantage of data triangulation, which strengthens the validity and reliability of the research results. Through triangulation, data obtained from interviews can be compared with data from official institutions, allowing researchers to obtain a complete and objective picture of the phenomenon being studied. Therefore, the data collection techniques used in this study serve not only to gather information but also to build trust in the research results through a systematic, in-depth, and empirically verified approach.<sup>23</sup>

### 3.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out using an interactive model that includes three main stages, namely: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.<sup>24</sup>

In the data reduction stage, researchers selected and focused on data relevant to the research objectives, namely the communication strategies and effectiveness of the South Kalimantan Provincial Election Commission (KPU) in reaching first-time voters. The data presentation stage was conducted in the form of a descriptive narrative that illustrated the relationship between political communication theory and field findings. The conclusion-drawing stage was conducted iteratively, with each finding verified with additional data or clarification from informants.

To ensure the validity of the research results, the researchers applied triangulation of sources and methods, comparing the interview results with documentation and

official KPU publications. The research results are expected to be not only descriptive but also have theoretical validity and practical implications for increasing young voter participation in the future.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 An Overview of the South Kalimantan Provincial Election Commission and First-Time Voters in the 2024 Gubernatorial Election

The South Kalimantan Provincial General Election Commission (KPU Kalsel) is an independent institution responsible for organizing general elections in the province. In the 2024 gubernatorial election, this institution not only serves as a technical organizer but also as an agent for public political education. According to data released by the South Kalimantan Provincial Elections Commission (KPU), the number of registered voters (DPT) increased from 2,793,811 in the 2020 gubernatorial election to 3,041,499 in the 2024 gubernatorial election, indicating an increase of approximately 247,688 new voters. Of this total, the number of first-time voters also increased dramatically to 702,500, significantly higher than the 277,777 in 2020.

This significant increase not only reflects demographic dynamics but also marks the success of the South Kalimantan Provincial Election Commission's (KPU) political outreach and education strategy. External factors such as the simultaneous elections and the end of social restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic also played a role. This increase in participation is inextricably linked to the KPU's systematic efforts to target young voters through various communication channels, both conventional and digital.

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<sup>22</sup>Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

<sup>23</sup>Creswell, John W. (2016). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

<sup>24</sup>Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Because first-time voters have unique characteristics, they are more open to information but also more vulnerable to media influence and disinformation. Therefore, understanding how the South Kalimantan General Elections Commission (KPU) adapts to building effective political communication with this group is crucial. The success of modern political communication depends on the ability of public institutions to build a two-way dialogue with the general public or community, rather than simply conveying one-way information.<sup>25</sup>The South Kalimantan KPU's strategy can be understood as an effort to build participatory communication between state institutions and the younger generation.

#### **4.2 The South Kalimantan Provincial Election Commission's Strategy to Increase the Number of First-Time Voters**

In an effort to increase the participation of first-time voters in the 2024 South Kalimantan gubernatorial election, based on information obtained by researchers from interviews, the General Elections Commission (KPU) of South Kalimantan Province implemented a political communication strategy oriented towards an educational, participatory, and community-based approach. The initial step taken was to provide direction to all district/city KPUs in South Kalimantan to analyze areas with low voter participation rates, especially among first-time voters, based on the results of the 2024 Election evaluation. The results of this analysis became the basis for district/city KPUs to approach or go directly to sub-districts and villages with low participation rates, in order to create a close relationship between election organizers and the community. This locally-based approach strengthens the KPU's function as an institution that not only educates but also

builds collective awareness about the importance of participation in democracy.

The South Kalimantan General Elections Commission (KPU) adopted a national activity that had been implemented in the General Election, namely the Election Parade. This implementation was also carried out in the 2024 South Kalimantan Gubernatorial Election called the 2024 Regional Election Parade, which was carried out massively in all districts/cities. This parade became a symbolic and educational means in the efforts of the South Kalimantan Provincial KPU in campaigning the importance of community role and participation in the 2024 Gubernatorial Election. Through this activity, democratic values were introduced in an interesting and inclusive way, especially to the younger generation. The South Kalimantan Provincial KPU also held the launch of the mascot "Bekantan" which is a regional icon and a symbol of local democratic identity. In the launch event, national artists were presented, which this event was part of the persuasive communication strategy of the South Kalimantan Provincial KPU because public figures were considered effective in attracting the attention of young voters and building emotional closeness with the audience, plus the artists who attended the mascot launch were directed to invite the audience who were present, which in fact were first-time voters, to participate in the 2024 South Kalimantan Gubernatorial Election.

In addition, the South Kalimantan General Elections Commission (KPU) also held a fun walk and thematic exhibition involving KPU district/city work units (Satker). In this activity, each Satker displayed attributes, props, and social media related to the stages of the regional elections at their respective stands. This approach emphasized that effective political communication is not only about conveying messages but also building meaningful interactions between institutions and the community. Through

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<sup>25</sup>McQuail, Denis. (2010). *Mass Communication Theory* (6th ed.). London: Sage Publications.

activities such as these, the South Kalimantan KPU created an interactive space that directly connected the community with election organizers. This aims to strengthen a sense of ownership of the democratic process and build public trust in election organizing institutions.

The South Kalimantan General Elections Commission (KPU) also expanded its outreach strategy through collaboration with the mass media. KPU commissioners actively served as resource persons on various broadcast programs, such as "Ayo Mencucuk" on TVRI South Kalimantan and educational programs on RRI South Kalimantan, as a form of digital media-based outreach that could reach a wider public. The KPU also continued to conduct offline (face-to-face) outreach by inviting youth groups, local communities, and youth organizations as part of an effort to strengthen the participation of first-time voters. Outreach activities were also conducted in academic settings, such as at Lambung Mangkurat University and UIN Antasari Banjarmasin, involving Student Executive Boards (BEM) and student organizations. This approach not only expanded the reach of the South Kalimantan KPU's political communication but also created a space for dialogue that encouraged the growth of political awareness among the younger generation.

In the digital realm, the South Kalimantan KPU optimizes the use of official social media such as Instagram, YouTube, and X (Twitter) as the main channels for socialization. Through creative content in the form of infographics, educational videos, and testimonials from inspiring young figures through social media, the KPU has succeeded in reaching young audiences or first-time voters in a fresher and more communicative way. As part of its interactive strategy, the South Kalimantan KPU also held quizzes and question and answer sessions on Instagram and YouTube, where participants who answered the questions correctly received official merchandise from the South Kalimantan KPU such as t-shirts, hoodies, jackets, mugs, etc. This strategy has proven effective in attracting attention and increasing

the involvement of young voters because it creates a fun participatory atmosphere. Based on data from the South Kalimantan KPU's social media activity, the level of public interaction increased by more than 50% during the 2024 gubernatorial election socialization period compared to the previous period, which shows the success of the digital communication strategy in increasing the participation of first-time voters while strengthening the image of the South Kalimantan KPU as a modern and responsive institution to current developments.

#### **4.3 Obstacles and Evaluation of the 2020 and 2024 South Kalimantan Gubernatorial Elections**

In the 2020 and 2024 South Kalimantan gubernatorial elections, the South Kalimantan General Elections Commission (KPU) faced several obstacles that provided important lessons for improving the quality of political participation in the future. In the 2020 gubernatorial election, the greatest challenge arose from the COVID-19 pandemic, which restricted all face-to-face activities and public mobility. This situation meant that outreach could only be conducted online through social media and digital platforms, and limited the implementation of field or offline activities that could directly involve the public. The 2020 gubernatorial election was not held simultaneously with the regional head elections in several regencies/cities, resulting in divided public attention and decreased voter enthusiasm. Limited mobility and public concerns about the spread of the COVID-19 virus also contributed to lower participation rates, particularly among first-time voters, who generally require a more direct and interactive approach to increase their political awareness.

In contrast, the 2024 South Kalimantan gubernatorial election demonstrated a significant increase in outreach activities and voter participation. The absence of a pandemic and the simultaneous holding of the gubernatorial election and the regional elections in South Kalimantan provided stronger momentum

for the General Elections Commission (KPU) to conduct massive online and offline outreach. Educational activities such as the Pilkada Parade, the launch of the Bekantan mascot, and collaborations with educational institutions were able to be implemented in person in various regencies/cities. However, there are also aspects that require evaluation in the implementation of the 2024 South Kalimantan gubernatorial election outreach: the inability to fully reach all sub-districts and villages, particularly in areas with relatively low participation rates. This occurred due to limited budget allocation for outreach, as the allocation only reached the regency/city level, not the sub-district level, resulting in under-implementation of outreach activities at the sub-district and village levels.

In addition to limited outreach, one important note in the 2024 gubernatorial election evaluation is the lack of grouping of final voter data (DPT) by age or generation. To date, both at the South Kalimantan Provincial Election Commission (KPU) and the Indonesian General Elections Commission (KPU RI), voter data remains general, with no classification based on generational groups such as Generation Z, Millennials, X, or Baby Boomers. As a result, the KPU has difficulty analyzing voter turnout based on age characteristics, even though it is crucial for designing a more targeted communication strategy tailored to the generation. This evaluation was discussed at the KPU RI National Coordination Meeting, where the KPU proposed that voter grouping be implemented from the DPT registration stage in the future to allow for more precise and accurate turnout analysis.

Through this grouping, the General Elections Commission (KPU) can compare the number of registered voters with the number of voters who actually exercise their right to vote. For example, if there are one million first-time voters registered but only 700,000 have exercised their right to vote, the KPU can

easily identify the 300,000 potential voters who have not yet participated and engage with that segment specifically. Effective political participation depends on the extent to which election organizers are able to recognize the social characteristics of voters and adapt their communication strategies accordingly. Lessons learned from the 2020 and 2024 gubernatorial elections demonstrate that the success of democracy is determined not only by the technical aspects of election implementation but also by the KPU's ability to adapt, evaluate, and develop data-driven strategies to increase political participation in the future.

#### 4.4 Analysis of Strategy Effectiveness Based on Political Communication Theory

When analyzed through the perspective of political communication theory, the South Kalimantan KPU's strategy can be said to have successfully created persuasive, participatory, and educational communication. The effectiveness of political communication is determined by three main components: the communicator (the sender of the message), the message (the message being delivered), and the audience (the recipient of the message).<sup>26</sup>In the context of this research, the South Kalimantan KPU plays a role as a public communicator who successfully conveys messages about the importance of participation in a way that is relevant to young voters.

The messages conveyed by the South Kalimantan KPU through various communication channels, from face-to-face meetings to mass media and social media, are not only informative but also build emotional connections and collective identity. Messages packaged with social and moral values have a greater influence on audience attitudes and behavior.<sup>27</sup>

Empirical results show that this approach significantly increased first-time

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<sup>26</sup>Nimmo, Dan. (1980). *Political Communication and Public Opinion in America*. New York: Longman.

<sup>27</sup>McQuail, Denis. (2010). *Mass Communication Theory* (6th ed.). London: Sage Publications.

voter turnout. The increase in voter turnout and active participation of young people in the 2024 South Kalimantan gubernatorial election are concrete evidence of the success of this inclusively designed political communication strategy. Therefore, the South Kalimantan General Elections Commission (KPU) can serve as a model for effective public communication practices in encouraging political participation at the local level.

This analysis concludes that the South Kalimantan General Elections Commission (KPU)'s strategy successfully integrated democratic values and modern communication technology harmoniously. This success demonstrates that a healthy democracy requires not only a strong legal system but also political communication capable of reaching, educating, and mobilizing the public, especially the younger generation or first-time voters, to actively participate in politics.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the primary urgency of the study on the South Kalimantan General Elections Commission (KPU)'s strategy to increase first-time voter participation in the 2024 South Kalimantan gubernatorial election lies in how the election organizing body can build effective, innovative, and relevant political communication to the dynamics of the younger generation. In the context of evolving democracy, the political participation of first-time voters plays a strategic role in determining the direction of public policy and the quality of regional government legitimacy. The South Kalimantan KPU recognizes the importance of the younger generation's role as agents of social change, thus implementing political communication strategies aimed at strengthening political awareness and a sense of responsibility in exercising their right to vote.

The strategy implemented by the South Kalimantan General Elections Commission (KPU) reflects the application of participatory political communication principles. Through various programs and

activities such as the Regional Elections Parade, the launch of the Bekantan mascot, fun walks and exhibitions at the district/city KPU, and outreach through universities and youth organizations, the KPU has successfully created two-way interaction between the election organizers and the public. This strategy not only conveys information but also fosters awareness and interest in politics among young people. These efforts are reinforced by collaboration with mass media outlets such as TVRI and RRI, where commissioners actively serve as resource persons in public programs oriented towards voter education. All of these strategies contributed to a significant increase in first-time voter participation in the 2024 South Kalimantan gubernatorial election compared to 2020.

The use of digital technology is a key factor in expanding the reach of the South Kalimantan General Elections Commission (KPU)'s outreach. Through platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter, the KPU presents informative and creative content in the form of videos, infographics, and interactive quizzes. A question-and-answer program with prizes of official KPU merchandise, such as t-shirts, hoodies, and mugs, is an effective persuasive strategy in attracting young voters to actively follow the KPU's official accounts and pay attention to the educational messages conveyed. This approach demonstrates that political communication in the digital era demands creativity and interactivity so that democratic messages can be widely accepted by the digital native generation.

The 2020 and 2024 South Kalimantan gubernatorial elections also presented several challenges that constitute important evaluation material. In the 2020 gubernatorial election, the COVID-19 pandemic limited public outreach to online media, while the inconsistent scheduling of the gubernatorial and regional elections in several regions led to a disparity in public attention. This situation resulted in decreased voter participation, particularly among first-time voters who require face-to-face interaction. Meanwhile, in the 2024 gubernatorial election, although

implementation proceeded more optimally with online and offline outreach, the limited budget for outreach, which only reached the district/city level, hampered the expansion of activities to all sub-districts and villages with low participation rates.

The evaluation results indicate that the lack of permanent voter data grouping by generation or age category poses a strategic obstacle for the General Elections Commission (KPU) in designing a more targeted communication approach. This lack of data not only hampers voter behavior analysis but also limits the KPU's ability to conduct evidence-based policy interventions. The South Kalimantan KPU's proposal at the 2024 KPU RI National Coordination Meeting regarding the importance of grouping DPT data by generation is a crucial step towards increasing the effectiveness of future political communication strategies. By segmenting voters into Generation Z, Millennials, X, and

Baby Boomers, the KPU can assess the actual participation rate of each group and develop more accurate strategies to reach voters who have not yet exercised their right to vote.

It can be concluded that the South Kalimantan General Elections Commission (KPU)'s political communication strategy has proven successful in increasing first-time voter participation through a collaborative, digital, and community-based approach. This success demonstrates that the effectiveness of political communication depends not only on how widely a message is disseminated, but also on how the institution is able to build emotional closeness and public trust. Moving forward, the KPU is expected to continue strengthening its institutional capacity with data-driven, sustainable strategies that are responsive to social change and developments in information technology to strengthen local democracy.

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