

## **Political Participation Issues in the 2024 Bantul Regent Election: Insights from Bawaslu**

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### **Abstract**

*This article delves into the troubling violations of political participation that unfolded during the 2024 Bantul Regent Election, viewed through the lens of the General Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu). The study meticulously uncovers a range of infractions, including the insidious practice of vote buying, the alarming lack of impartiality among village officials, and the rampant spread of misinformation that has cast a shadow over public political engagement. Moreover, the research probes into the socio-economic dynamics and the intricate local power pressures that shape electoral participation, revealing a complex web of influences at play. The findings starkly illustrate how the involvement of officials in these violations and the prevalence of vote buying erode public trust in the very foundations of democracy. In light of these revelations, this article advocates for a robust strengthening of oversight, a commitment to political education, and a push for transparency in the electoral process, aiming to nurture a vibrant and cohesive form of political participation that truly reflects the will of the people. analyses socio-economic factors and local power pressures that influence participation. The results indicate that violations involving officials and the practice of vote buying reduce public trust in democratic mechanisms. This article recommends strengthening oversight, political education, and transparency of the election process to increase healthy and integrated political participation*

**Keywords:** Political violations, political participation, Bantul Regent Election

## Introduction

The election of a regent is a crucial part of the implementation of democracy at the local level, requiring transparency and integrity to ensure honest, fair, and democratic elections. According to Hisan and Utami (2025), within the context of democracy, regional elections serve as a means for citizens to express their voices and elect leaders believed capable of bringing change and progress. They also serve as a means of political education for the people. This activity affirms the principle of "popular sovereignty," which states that citizens have the right to determine their own destiny. However, achieving this goal requires effective oversight of the entire election process. Although the regional elections play a significant role in strengthening democracy, challenges to integrity and neutrality often arise, which can undermine the quality of local democracy.

However, in the 2024 Bantul District Head Election, various violations of political participation were found that could potentially undermine the essence of democracy. These violations included the practice of money politics, the lack of neutrality of civil servants and village officials, and the dissemination of invalid information. These violations not only threaten the principles of direct, general, free, secret, honest, and fair democracy but also create public apathy in exercising their right to vote. The decline in public participation is seen as a direct impact of an unhealthy political environment and suboptimal oversight processes. Furthermore, the socio-economic conditions of the people in Bantul increase their vulnerability to money politics and political manipulation. Economic dependence on social assistance and basic necessities makes some voters susceptible to material rewards from certain parties with an interest in winning political contests. Furthermore, social pressure and local power relations also play a significant role in limiting people's political freedom, especially when village officials lack neutrality and even become part of patronage political networks. This reinforces the distortion of local democracy and reduces the quality of active community participation.

The issue of civil servants' lack of impartiality has also been identified as a specific factor potentially leading to conflicts of interest in local elections. Civil servants, who are supposed to be independent and professional, are often involved in covert support for specific candidates, exploiting state facilities, or demonstrating biases that undermine the integrity of election administration. Furthermore, the use of social media for political campaigns poses the risk of spreading inaccurate information, hoaxes, and manipulating public opinion, thus weakening the quality of public political decision-making. In the context of oversight, the Bantul Regency Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) performs functions that include preventing, supervising, and taking action against election violations. However, Bawaslu faces various obstacles, including limited supervisory resources, inadequate coordination between supervisory agencies, and low public awareness about reporting violations due to fear of pressure or a lack of evidence. These obstacles result in less-than-optimal oversight effectiveness and the potential for violations to occur.

This study aims to examine the forms, causal factors, and impacts of political participation violations in the 2024 Bantul Regent Election. Using this approach, the study also explores the perceptions and role of Bawaslu (Elections Supervisory Agency) as an election supervisory body in maintaining the integrity and quality of local democracy. The results of this study will likely provide strategic recommendations for strengthening oversight mechanisms, public political education, and law enforcement, which can promote healthy, high-quality, and integrated political participation.

## **Method**

This study employed a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical approach, emphasising document analysis, interviews with the Bantul Regency Election Supervisory Agency (BPS), and direct field observations. Data were obtained from violation reports, in-depth interviews with election supervisors, and a review of relevant regulations. The data analysis process was conducted thematically to identify patterns of violations and contributing factors. Influence and Impact on Public Political Participation. This approach enables an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of violations within the local context of the 2024 Bantul Regent Election.

## **Result and Discussion**

This study demonstrates that the role of the Bantul Regency Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) is central to maintaining electoral integrity. Yet, its effectiveness is profoundly shaped by broader socio-political structures and community conditions. Based on Bawaslu Regulation Number 9 of 2024, Bawaslu functions not merely as an election monitor but as a comprehensive institution tasked with supervision, prevention, enforcement, and public political education. Empirical findings from interviews and violation-handling data indicate that these functions are formally well-defined but encounter substantial practical limitations in the field.

The supervisory role of Bawaslu encompasses all stages of the electoral process, from planning and nomination to voting and the determination of results. In the 2024 Bantul Regent Election, supervision revealed recurring patterns of violations, particularly administrative violations related to the lack of neutrality among village officials and election-related actors. These violations were not isolated incidents but reflected systemic issues rooted in local governance structures and patronage relations. Village officials were often found to be implicitly or explicitly aligned with specific candidates due to expectations of development assistance, infrastructure projects, or social aid distribution. This finding aligns with Surbakti's argument that administrative violations frequently arise not only from technical ignorance but also from weak institutional compliance and structural incentives that encourage deviation from formal rules.

Election crimes, especially vote buying, emerged as the most persistent and socially damaging form of violation. Bawaslu identified multiple indications of material

distribution, including cash, food staples, and fuel, intended to influence voter behaviour. However, many of these cases could not be processed further due to insufficient evidence, uncooperative witnesses, or incomplete reports. This reflects the inherent difficulty of prosecuting money politics, which typically occurs in private, exploits economic vulnerability, and relies on informal social networks. As noted in previous studies, money politics thrives in communities with high economic dependence and low political literacy, conditions that were evident in several rural sub-districts of Bantul, such as Imogiri and Dlingo. Despite these violations, political participation in Bantul remains high, with voter turnout reaching approximately 87%. This paradox highlights a crucial distinction between the quantity and quality of political participation. While turnout figures suggest strong civic engagement, qualitative analysis reveals that participation is often shaped by pragmatic considerations, social pressure, and material incentives rather than autonomous political awareness. The open proportional electoral system exacerbates this condition by fostering transactional politics between candidates and voters, thereby reinforcing political pragmatism at the grassroots level.

The decline in political participation compared to previous elections, as reported by Bawaslu, cannot be attributed to a single factor. Instead, it reflects a convergence of apathy, distrust in political institutions, limited access to credible information, socioeconomic constraints, and the perceived lack of representative candidates. Many citizens expressed scepticism regarding the impact of their votes, believing that electoral outcomes are unlikely to bring meaningful change. This perception is exacerbated by repeated exposure to election violations and weak law enforcement outcomes, which gradually erode public trust in democratic mechanisms. Socioeconomic vulnerability plays a decisive role in shaping political behaviour. Communities with limited economic capacity are more susceptible to the influence of money politics and coercive political forces, as immediate material needs often outweigh long-term democratic considerations. In this context, political participation becomes a survival strategy rather than a civic expression. Power relations at the local level further constrain voter autonomy, particularly when village officials or local elites exert influence over residents by linking political support to access to public services or development projects. Such dynamics undermine the principle of free choice, transforming elections into arenas of negotiated dependency.

The digital dimension of political participation also presents new challenges. Social media has become a significant channel for political communication, but it simultaneously facilitates the spread of misinformation, hoaxes, and covert campaigns. Groups with low digital literacy are particularly vulnerable to manipulation, which distorts political perceptions and weakens rational decision-making. This finding reinforces concerns that technological advancement, without adequate political and digital education, may deepen rather than resolve democratic deficits. From an institutional perspective, Bawaslu's enforcement capacity is constrained by procedural limitations, particularly the narrow timeframe of two to three days for handling reports. This restriction, combined with public reluctance to testify and fear of retaliation, significantly hampers effective law enforcement. Consequently, the absence of formally

recorded violations does not necessarily indicate a clean election, but rather reflects the difficulty of producing legally admissible evidence for practices conducted discreetly and systematically.

Bawaslu's evaluation emphasises that strengthening political participation requires a shift from a purely procedural approach toward a more substantive democratic strategy. Preventive measures, political education, and participatory oversight are identified as critical pathways to improving the quality of participation. Programs such as the Participatory Supervisory Cadre School (SKPP) demonstrate the potential of civic education to enhance public awareness and encourage active involvement in election monitoring. However, the reach of such programs remains uneven, particularly in marginalised and information-poor areas. The findings also underscore the importance of structural reform in safeguarding electoral integrity. The persistent issue of civil servant neutrality highlights how bureaucratic power can subtly influence political behaviour and erode public trust. Without consistent sanctions and transparent oversight mechanisms, neutrality violations risk becoming normalised, further weakening democratic legitimacy at the local level. In conclusion, the results of this study suggest that a complex interplay among institutional performance, socioeconomic vulnerability, power relations, and political literacy shapes political participation in Bantul. While voter turnout remains high, the prevalence of election violations and structural constraints continues to threaten the quality of democratic participation. Strengthening healthy political participation, therefore, requires not only adequate supervision and law enforcement by Bawaslu, but also broader efforts to create a safe, inclusive, and pressure-free political environment in which citizens can exercise their political rights autonomously and meaningfully.

## Conclusion

This research reveals various violations of political participation that emerged during the 2024 regional head elections, which significantly impacted the quality of democracy at the local level. These violations included vote buying, the lack of impartiality of civil servants and village officials, and the spread of false information that undermined public trust in the election process. Vulnerable social and economic factors, as well as pressure from local authorities, were the primary drivers of the decline in election integrity, ultimately hindering healthy and fair political participation. The practice of vote buying has proven to be one of the most serious and complex violations to eradicate, as it is carried out covertly and exploits an unstable economic situation. Furthermore, the lack of neutrality of civil servants and village officials distorts democracy, as they exploit public positions and resources for their own political interests. Furthermore, social media serves as a channel for the spread of false information, exacerbating the political situation and eroding the public's ability to make informed choices. Bawaslu's role as an election supervisory body is crucial for preventing, monitoring, and enforcing violations. However, limited resources, challenges in coordinating with other institutions, and a lack of public confidence in reporting violations are key challenges that hamper the effectiveness of oversight. Furthermore, a lack of political understanding and public knowledge of oversight

mechanisms hinders active citizen engagement in the democratic process. The main recommendations emerging from this research are the need to strengthen participatory oversight mechanisms by involving the wider community, enhancing political education to foster legal awareness and integrity, and ensuring transparency throughout all stages of the election process. This is expected to increase not only the quantity but also the quality of public political participation, ensuring that elections authentically reflect the will of the people and provide healthy and sustainable local democracy.

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