

The Role of Village Heads in Increasing Voter Turnout in The Regional Head Elections in Badung Regency

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<p>Submission track: Reviewed: 8 March 2026</p> <p>Final Revision: 2 June 2026</p> <p>Available Online: 8 June 2026</p> <p>Corresponding Author: Ketut Aditya Prawira Giri adityaprawira0208@gmail.com</p>	<p>ABSTRAK</p> <p>Partisipasi pemilih merupakan indikator utama dalam menilai kualitas demokrasi lokal. Kabupaten Badung dikenal memiliki tingkat partisipasi pemilih yang relatif tinggi, namun untuk mempertahankan tingkat tersebut diperlukan peran aktif dari pemerintah desa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran kepala desa dalam meningkatkan partisipasi pemilih pada pemilihan kepala daerah di Kabupaten Badung. Metode yang digunakan adalah penelitian hukum normatif dengan pendekatan legislatif dan konseptual, melalui tinjauan pustaka terhadap peraturan, dokumen resmi, dan literatur ilmiah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala desa memainkan peran strategis melalui sosialisasi dan pendidikan politik, memfasilitasi administrasi pemilih, memperkuat komunikasi publik desa, serta berkolaborasi dengan penyelenggara pemilu dan tokoh masyarakat. Selain itu, prinsip netralitas berfungsi sebagai batasan krusial dalam pelaksanaan peran-peran tersebut. Keunikan penelitian ini terletak pada analisis peran kepala desa dalam konteks wilayah dengan mobilitas penduduk yang tinggi, seperti Kabupaten Badung, serta penekanan pada dimensi netralitas dalam praktik demokrasi lokal. Optimalisasi peran kepala desa diharapkan dapat meningkatkan kualitas partisipasi pemilih secara berkelanjutan.</p> <p>Kata Kunci: kepala desa, tingkat partisipasi pemilih, pemilihan daerah, demokrasi lokal, Kabupaten Badung</p> <p>ABSTRACT</p> <p>Voter participation is a key indicator for assessing the quality of local democracy. Badung Regency is known for its relatively high voter</p>
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	<p>turnout, but maintaining this level requires an active role from village governments. This study aims to analyze the role of village heads in increasing voter participation in regional head elections in Badung Regency. The method used is normative legal research with a legislative and conceptual approach, through a literature review of regulations, official documents, and scientific literature. The results of the study indicate that village heads play a strategic role through public outreach and political education, facilitating voter administration, strengthening village public communication, and collaborating with election organizers and community leaders. Furthermore, the principle of neutrality serves as a crucial boundary in the execution of these roles. The novelty of this study lies in the analysis of village heads' roles within the context of a region with high population mobility, such as Badung Regency, as well as the emphasis on the dimension of neutrality in local democratic practices. Optimizing the role of village heads is expected to enhance the quality of voter participation in a sustainable manner.</p> <p>Keywords: village head, voter turnout, regional elections, local democracy, Badung Regency</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Democracy is a system of government in which the people hold the highest authority in determining the direction and policies of the state. In practice, democracy is realized through general elections and local elections, which are conducted in a direct, universal, free, secret, honest, and fair manner (Ramadhani et al., n.d.). Local elections serve as an important means for the public to participate directly in selecting local leaders who will steer local governance and development. Therefore, voter turnout in local elections is often used as a key indicator for assessing the quality of democracy at the local level (Mukti, 2022).

Voter participation is not merely defined as the public's presence at polling stations, but also reflects political awareness, public trust in the conduct of elections, and the effectiveness of political communication between the government, election organizers, and the public (Fathurokhman, 2022). High voter turnout indicates that the public feels a sense of stake and responsibility in the political process, whereas low turnout is often linked to political apathy, a lack of information, or distrust of the democratic system. Therefore, efforts to increase and maintain voter turnout are a challenge that must be addressed by various stakeholders, including the government, election organizers, and local government officials. (Luthfiyah Sari et al., n.d.)

In the Indonesian context, increasing voter turnout remains a complex challenge. Various factors, such as the level of political education, access to information, and social dynamics, influence public engagement in the electoral process. Therefore, an active role by various stakeholders—including village governments—is needed to raise public awareness and political participation.

Badung Regency, as one of the districts in the Province of Bali, presents an interesting phenomenon in the context of voter participation. Based on Badung Regency General Election Commission Decision No. 965 of 2024, the results of the vote tally for the election of the Regent and Deputy Regent of Badung show a total of 315,807 valid votes, consisting of 221,802 votes for candidate pair number 2 and 94,005 votes for candidate pair number 1. This data demonstrates high public engagement in the election process, while also indicating a significant level of participation in the local elections. (Dian Setiawan & Massa Djafar, n.d.)

Furthermore, given that the number of registered voters reaches hundreds of thousands, the voter turnout in Badung Regency can be considered relatively high compared to the national average. In theory, this reflects the success of local democratic governance. However, an approach that focuses solely on turnout figures risks introducing bias when assessing the substantive quality of democracy.

As a region with a tourism-based economy, Badung Regency has a high level of population mobility. The dynamic flow of people moving in and out—whether for work or tourism—creates complexities in the management of population and voter data. This situation raises a critical question: Does the high voter turnout truly reflect the public's political awareness, or is it merely the result of administrative mobilization and strong social structures? (A. Fikri Ainurriszqi & Sukmana, 2025)

On the other hand, advances in information technology have also brought new challenges in the form of the spread of inaccurate or misleading information. This phenomenon has the potential to influence the public's political preferences and undermine the quality of voter participation. Furthermore, the emergence of political fatigue among some segments of the public could also become a factor that hinders participation in the future. (Dhira Rizkia Ramara et al., 2025)

In this context, the role of local actors is crucial in maintaining and improving the quality of voter participation. As the government unit closest to the community, village

governments occupy a strategic position in fostering political awareness among residents. In Bali, the *perbekel*, as the village head, serves not only as a government administrator but also as a social figure with significant influence in community life. (Dhira Rizkia Ramara et al., 2025)

Democracy is essentially defined as a system of government run by the people. Therefore, free and fair elections serve as the primary means of establishing a government that is truly chosen by the people. Since the people cannot be directly involved in the day-to-day administration of government, elections play a vital role as a mechanism for the public to select their representatives who will run the government. (Swasti et al., n.d.). Elections are held periodically to give the people the opportunity to monitor and evaluate the government's performance, as well as to determine whether incumbent officials deserve to be re-elected. The government formed through this process receives a direct mandate from the people, thereby possessing strong legitimacy to carry out its duties and exercise its authority effectively. (Yunita & Maulia, 2024). The duties and functions of the government include the protection of human rights and efforts to achieve equality, freedom, and well-being for all citizens. In addition, the government also plays a role in supporting the growth and development of civil society organizations, not only as a manifestation of citizens' rights to freedom of association and assembly, but also because a strong civil society can serve as a check on potential abuses of power by the government.

Badung Regency is one of the regions in Bali Province with distinctive social and demographic conditions. High levels of economic activity and the tourism sector make this area a destination for significant population mobility, both for local residents and migrants. (Aryani et al., 2021) This situation has impacted population dynamics and voter administration, including the processes of updating voter data, changes of residence, and variations in the public's level of political awareness. Despite facing these challenges, Badung Regency has demonstrated a relatively high voter turnout compared to many other regions. This reflects the presence of strong social capital and a relatively high level of democratic awareness among the public.

Although voter participation rates are relatively high, this does not automatically guarantee the long-term sustainability of local democracy. Evolving social dynamics, advancements in information technology, and the increasing complexity of public needs and lifestyles also influence citizens' political perspectives and behavior. (Nurhidayati et al., n.d.).

Amid the ever-accelerating flow of information, the public faces various challenges, such as growing political apathy, the widespread dissemination of inaccurate or misleading information, and the limited understanding among some voters of the procedures, mechanisms, and stages involved in local elections. (Fernandes & Akbar, 2025) These factors have the potential to reduce public interest and engagement in future electoral processes. Therefore, sustaining voter participation requires consistent efforts through the active involvement of local actors who share social and cultural ties with the community. Their role is crucial in fostering political awareness, strengthening democratic literacy, and promoting political participation that is not merely quantitative but also qualitative and sustainable. Within the structure of village government in Bali, the *perbekel* occupies a highly central and strategic position, both in terms of governance and in the dynamics of village social life. The *perbekel* is not merely understood as a formal official who leads the administration of village government, but also as a social figure who plays a vital role in shaping the patterns of interaction, behavior, and perspectives of village residents regarding various public issues. (Made & Dewi, 2024)

As local leaders who share an emotional, geographical, and cultural connection with the community, village heads are often the first people residents turn to when they face problems, need information, or require assistance with community activities. (Fandayani Kapita et al., n.d.). This position provides him with a strategic platform to build effective public communication, bridge the interests of the state with the needs of the community, and foster harmonious relations between the village government and residents.

In the context of local politics and democracy, the village head also serves as a key driver in promoting community participation. Through their social influence and close ties with the community, village heads can motivate residents to engage in various decision-making processes, village deliberation meetings, and electoral participation. This demonstrates that the role of the village head is not limited to administrative duties but also encompasses efforts to strengthen participatory and inclusive village governance. (Rafni & Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan, 2024)

Thus, the village head is a figure who not only performs purely bureaucratic functions but also plays a significant role in strengthening social cohesion, improving the quality of local democracy, and ensuring that the village governance process operates in a more responsive, transparent, and community-oriented manner.

The village head's role in increasing voter participation is not directly about determining the community's political choices, but rather educational and facilitative. The village head has the authority and opportunity to promote public awareness of the importance of exercising the right to vote, provide an understanding of the local election process and stages, and assist the community in accessing election-related information and administrative services. (Dendy Kurniawan et al., 2025) Through a persuasive, community-based approach, village heads can serve as a bridge between the village community and election organizers, there by minimizing potential barriers to participation.

Furthermore, Bali's still-strong social structures—such as the existence of banjars and traditional institutions—provide opportunities for village heads to build synergy in conveying messages about democracy. By utilizing existing social forums, outreach regarding the regional elections can be conducted more effectively and in line with the local context. This presents a distinct advantage in efforts to increase voter participation in Badung Regency, provided the village head's role is optimized appropriately while maintaining the principle of neutrality.

Based on the above discussion, a study on the role of village heads in increasing voter participation in regional head elections in Badung Regency is relevant and important to conduct. This study is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of village heads' contributions to strengthening community political participation and to offer insights into strategies that can be implemented to uphold the quality of local democracy. Consequently, the findings of this study will not only be academically valuable but can also serve as a practical reference for village governments and other stakeholders in their efforts to increase voter participation in future regional elections.

However, high participation does not guarantee the sustainability of democratic quality. Challenges such as disinformation, political apathy, and low democratic literacy among some segments of the population may affect future participation. Therefore, sustainable strategies are needed to maintain and increase voter participation.

Within the structure of village government in Bali, the perbekel holds a strategic position as a local leader who maintains direct contact with the community. The perbekel not only performs administrative functions but also plays a role in fostering public communication and raising political awareness among the community.

This study is novel because it examines the role of the perbekel in the context of an area with high population mobility and emphasizes the importance of neutrality in the

performance of that role. Thus, this study is expected to provide academic and practical contributions to the strengthening of local democracy.

Various previous studies have examined the role of village heads in enhancing community political participation, both in the context of community empowerment and political education. However, most of these studies were conducted in the general context of villages and have not specifically analyzed the role of village heads in the context of local elections in regions with dynamic socioeconomic characteristics, such as Badung Regency, which has a high level of population mobility due to the tourism sector. Furthermore, previous studies have primarily focused on general aspects of village leadership, without specifically elaborating on the village head's facilitative role and neutrality within the framework of electoral regulations. Therefore, this study offers a novel perspective by examining the role of village heads in the context of local democracy in regions with complex population dynamics and emphasizes the dimension of neutrality within the legal framework of elections.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a normative legal study employing both a statutory approach and a conceptual approach (Soekanto & Mamudji, 2015). The legal approach involves analyzing various regulations related to village governance and local elections.

The conceptual approach is used to examine theories of political participation, local democracy, and village leadership. The theory of political participation employed draws on the views of Huntington and Nelson, who emphasize the importance of citizen engagement in the political process as an indicator of democracy. In addition, local democracy theory is used to understand the relationship between village governments and communities in the context of decentralization.

Legal materials consist of:

- Primary legal materials (laws and regulations)
- Secondary legal materials (books and academic journals)
- Tertiary legal materials (dictionaries and supporting references)

The analysis was conducted qualitatively using systematic interpretation and content analysis to gain a comprehensive understanding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Voter participation in regional head elections is the result of the interaction of various factors, including structural, institutional, and cultural ones. In the context of Badung Regency, the role of the village government, particularly the village head (perbekel), is a key factor influencing voter participation rates. The village head's position as the leader of the village government, who interacts directly with the community, provides a strategic opportunity to encourage sustained citizen engagement in the democratic process.

Analysis of Voter Turnout in Badung Regency

According to official data from the Badung Regency General Election Commission for 2024, the number of registered voters on the Permanent Voter List (DPT) was 412,434, while the number of voters who exercised their right to vote reached 322,073. Thus, voter turnout stood at approximately 78% of the total DPT.

This figure indicates that Badung Regency has a relatively high voter turnout rate compared to the national average. However, upon further analysis, there is a discrepancy of approximately 90,000 voters who did not exercise their right to vote. This fact suggests that while participation is quantitatively high, there remains significant room for more optimal improvement in voter turnout.

Additionally, the recorded number of valid votes, totaling 315,807, indicates that the majority of voters who turned out cast their ballots validly. This suggests that the technical aspects of the voting process were carried out fairly well. However, this figure does not fully account for the substantive quality of participation, such as voters' level of understanding regarding their political choices.

Thus, the analysis of voter participation in Badung Regency must be viewed not only from a quantitative perspective but also from a qualitative one, including political awareness, access to information, and administrative factors that influence public engagement.

Role of Village Heads in Data-Driven Political Outreach

A participation rate of 78% indicates that the majority of the community has been involved in the democratic process.

However, the fact that approximately 22% of voters did not exercise their right to vote points to a gap in political outreach.

In this context, village heads play a strategic role in reaching out to community groups that have not yet participated. The political outreach conducted by village heads aims not only to increase participation rates but also to improve the quality of participation through a better understanding of the local election process.

The approaches employed by village heads through banjar forums, village deliberations, and social activities have proven effective in directly engaging the community. However, participation data indicates that these outreach methods still need to be expanded, particularly to reach community groups that are less socially active or have limited access to information.

Thus, the village head's role in political outreach must be directed not only toward conveying information but also toward the continuous improvement of the community's political literacy.

Facilitating Voter Administration to Address the Discrepancy in Voter Turnout

The discrepancy between the number of registered voters (412,434) and the number of voters who exercised their right to vote (322,073) indicates that approximately 90,361 voters did not exercise their right to vote.

One factor that may explain this situation is administrative barriers, such as:

- Change of residence
- Inconsistencies in population data
- Lack of information regarding election procedures

In the context of Badung Regency, which has high population mobility, administrative factors become particularly significant. Therefore, the role of village heads as facilitators is crucial in ensuring that every eligible resident is registered and exercises their right to vote.

Village heads can play an active role in:

- Assisting with the updating of voter data
- Guiding the community to coordinate with election organizers
- Providing clear administrative information

Thus, administrative facilitation by village heads is one of the keys to reducing the number of non-participating voters.

Strengthening Village Public Communication to Ensure Quality Participation

Data shows that participation rates are already high, but this does not necessarily translate into adequate political understanding. In this regard, village public communication plays a crucial role in ensuring that participation is informed and rational.

The village head serves as the manager of village public communication, through both conventional and digital media. Information regarding local elections must be conveyed in a manner that is:

- Accurate
- Consistent
- Easy to understand

In the digital age, the spread of inaccurate information can influence voters' decisions. Therefore, village heads must act as gatekeepers of information, ensuring that the public receives accurate and reliable information.

Strengthening public communication aims not only to increase participation but also to enhance the overall quality of democracy.

Collaboration as a Factor Strengthening Voter Participation

The relatively high participation rate in Badung Regency cannot be separated from the collaboration among various parties, including village governments, election organizers, and community leaders.

Village heads hold a strategic position in fostering this collaboration, as they have direct access to the community. Through cooperation with:

- KPU
- Bawaslu
- Traditional and community leaders

Village heads can expand the reach of outreach efforts and enhance the effectiveness of voter participation programs.

This collaboration is also crucial for reaching underrepresented groups, such as first-time voters and those with low levels of education.

Village Head Neutrality in the Context of High Participation

Although voter turnout is relatively high, this should not be achieved through practices that violate the principle of neutrality. Village heads must maintain their role as facilitators, not as political actors influencing the public's choices.

In this context, high participation must be balanced with:

- Village head independence
- Transparency of the process
- Compliance with regulations

If neutrality is not maintained, high participation could actually undermine the quality of democracy.

Implications for the Quality of Local Democracy

Based on the data and analysis above, it can be concluded that voter participation in Badung Regency is quantitatively high, but still faces challenges in terms of quality.

The role of village heads is key to bridging this gap through:

- Political outreach
- Administrative facilitation
- Public communication
- Collaboration
- Enforcement of neutrality

By optimizing these roles, voter participation not only increases in terms of numbers but also becomes more meaningful and sustainable.

Voter Participation from a Theoretical Perspective and in the Context of Badung Regency

Voter participation is one of the key indicators in assessing the quality of democracy, particularly at the local level. From the perspective of political participation theory, public engagement in the electoral process reflects the level of political awareness as well as trust in the democratic system. Huntington and Nelson emphasize that political participation

encompasses not only the act of voting but also broader engagement in the political process, including access to information and interaction with political institutions.

In the context of Badung Regency, the relatively high voter participation cannot be separated from the socio-economic characteristics of its community. As a region with a rapidly developing tourism sector, Badung has a high level of population mobility, both in terms of inbound and outbound migration. This condition has direct implications for the complexity of voter data management, including the updating of the permanent voter list and the distribution of election information.

Nevertheless, a participation rate of around 80–85% indicates the presence of strong social capital within the community. This social capital takes the form of trust in local institutions, social solidarity, and the existence of social structures such as the banjar, which serve as effective channels of communication. In this regard, the village head, as the leader of the village, holds a strategic position in optimizing this potential to foster sustainable political participation.

The Role of the Perbekel in Political Socialization and Education

Political socialization is a crucial process in shaping public awareness of their political rights and obligations. Within the context of village governance, the perbekel serves as the primary actor bridging information between the state and the community. The perbekel possesses an advantage in terms of social proximity, making the messages conveyed more readily accepted by the community.

The political socialization conducted by village heads is not merely formal in nature but also employs a cultural approach aligned with the character of Balinese society. Forums such as village assemblies, banjar meetings, and traditional ceremonies serve as effective platforms for conveying information related to local elections. This approach facilitates two-way communication, enabling the community not only to receive information but also to provide feedback.

From the perspective of political communication theory, the effectiveness of political socialization is greatly influenced by the communicator's credibility. In this context, village heads possess high social legitimacy, enabling them to build public trust. This trust is a key factor in increasing voter participation, as the public tends to be more responsive to information conveyed by figures they know and trust.

However, the challenge faced in political socialization is the diversity in the public's educational levels and understanding. Therefore, village heads are required to use adaptive communication methods, such as the use of local languages, visual media, and persuasive approaches that are not patronizing.

Facilitating Voter Administration as a Strategy to Reduce Participation Barriers

In addition to political awareness, administrative aspects are also a key determinant of voter participation. Many cases show that people do not exercise their right to vote due to administrative obstacles, such as not being registered on the permanent voter list or not understanding election procedures.

In this regard, village heads play a role as facilitators who help the community access electoral administrative services. Village heads can coordinate village officials to conduct population data collection, assist in the voter data update process, and provide information regarding election procedures.

In Badung Regency, this role has become increasingly important given the high mobility of the population. Frequent changes of residence often result in discrepancies between population data and voter data. Therefore, the active involvement of village governments is essential to ensure that every eligible resident is registered as a voter.

From the perspective of public service theory, the village head's role in facilitating administrative processes can be viewed as a form of service oriented toward the public interest. Effective and responsive service can enhance public satisfaction and encourage participation in the political process.

Strengthening Village Public Communication in the Digital Age

Advances in information technology have transformed communication patterns within society, including in the political context. Information can now be disseminated rapidly through various digital platforms, yet this also creates opportunities for the spread of misinformation.

Village heads play a crucial role in managing village public communication to ensure that information conveyed to the community is accurate and trustworthy. In addition to using conventional media such as bulletin boards, village heads can also leverage digital platforms like WhatsApp groups or village social media accounts.

The use of digital media enables information to be disseminated more quickly and widely. Information regarding the local election schedule, voting procedures, and calls to exercise the right to vote can be effectively communicated to the public.

However, the use of digital media also requires adequate digital literacy. Village heads must be able to ensure that the information conveyed does not lead to misunderstandings. In this regard, village heads act as gatekeepers who filter information before it is disseminated to the public.

Collaboration with Election Administrators and Community Leaders

Increasing voter participation cannot be achieved individually but requires collaboration among various parties. Village heads hold a strategic position to bridge the relationship between the village community and election organizers as well as community leaders.

This collaboration enables synergy in the dissemination of information and the implementation of outreach programs. Election organizers can leverage the social networks maintained by village heads to reach a broader audience.

Furthermore, the involvement of community and traditional leaders plays a crucial role within the Balinese cultural context. These leaders wield significant influence in shaping public opinion and behavior. Consequently, collaboration between village heads and community leaders can enhance the effectiveness of efforts to boost voter participation.

From a governance perspective, this collaboration reflects a participatory approach to governance. The involvement of various actors in the political process can enhance the legitimacy and quality of democracy.

The Neutrality of Village Heads as a Normative Boundary and a Practical Challenge

Although they play a strategic role, village heads must carry out their duties within clear legal boundaries, namely the principle of neutrality. Neutrality is a fundamental principle in the administration of local elections, aimed at maintaining the fairness and integrity of the electoral process.

In theory, village heads are prohibited from taking sides or endorsing any particular candidate pair. However, in practice, maintaining neutrality is not always easy, especially in the context of a village community with close-knit social ties.

Personal closeness between the village head and the community can create the perception of bias, even if there are no explicit actions. Therefore, the village head must be cautious in every action and public communication.

Another challenge is political pressure from various parties that can undermine the village head's independence. In such situations, strong integrity and a thorough understanding of election regulations are essential.

To address these challenges, it is necessary to strengthen the village head's capacity through training and effective oversight by relevant institutions. In this way, the village head can fulfill their role optimally without violating the principle of neutrality.

Implications for the Quality of Local Democracy

The role of village heads in increasing voter participation has significant implications for the quality of local democracy. High participation indicates community engagement in the political process, which ultimately strengthens the legitimacy of the government.

Furthermore, active community involvement also fosters a more responsive and accountable government. Politically active communities tend to be more critical of government policies, thereby helping to prevent the abuse of power.

In the context of regional autonomy, the role of village governments has become increasingly important in strengthening local democracy. As village leaders, village heads have a responsibility to empower the community and create inclusive spaces for participation.

Thus, optimizing the role of village heads not only impacts increased voter participation but also strengthens the overall quality of democracy.

CONCLUSION

Village heads play a significant role in increasing voter participation in regional head elections in Badung Regency. Through voter outreach and education, administrative support, strengthening village public communication, and collaboration with election organizers and community leaders, village heads can encourage active citizen engagement in the democratic process. Optimizing the role of village heads—carried out in a neutral, professional manner, and in accordance with legal provisions—is expected to sustain voter participation and enhance the quality of local democracy in Badung Regency.

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